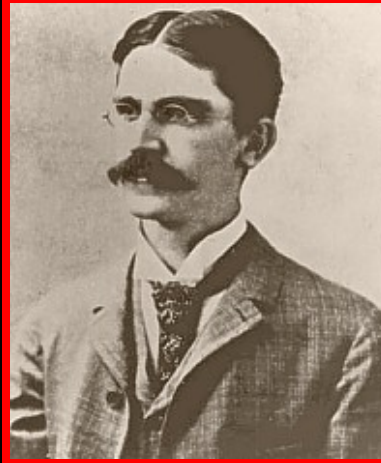
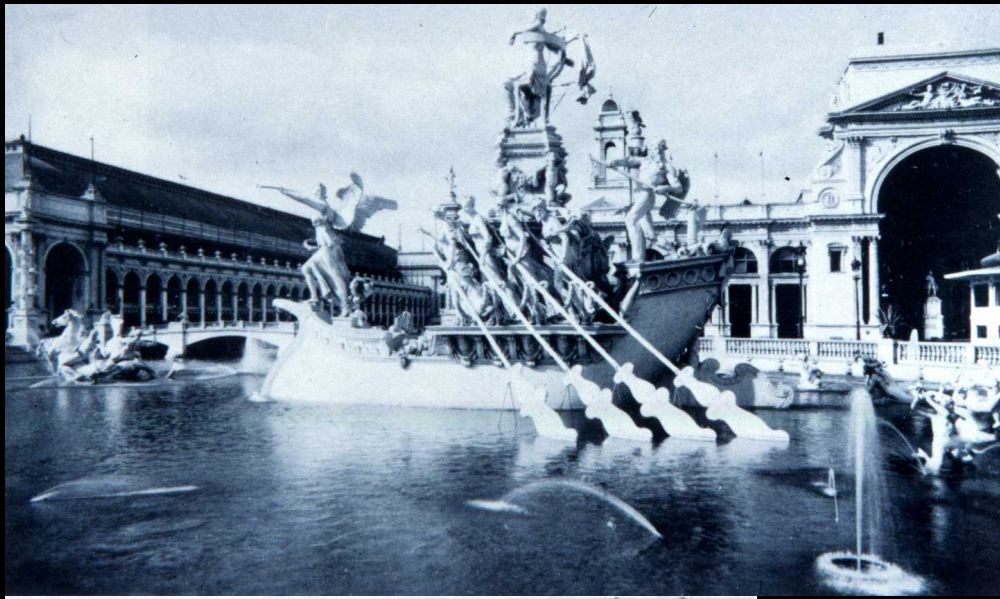




Upon arrival to chair the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago in July 1894, John Dewey joined a large, well-funded university in the fastest growing city in the United States in the middle of one of the greatest labor struggles in an era of great labor struggles.



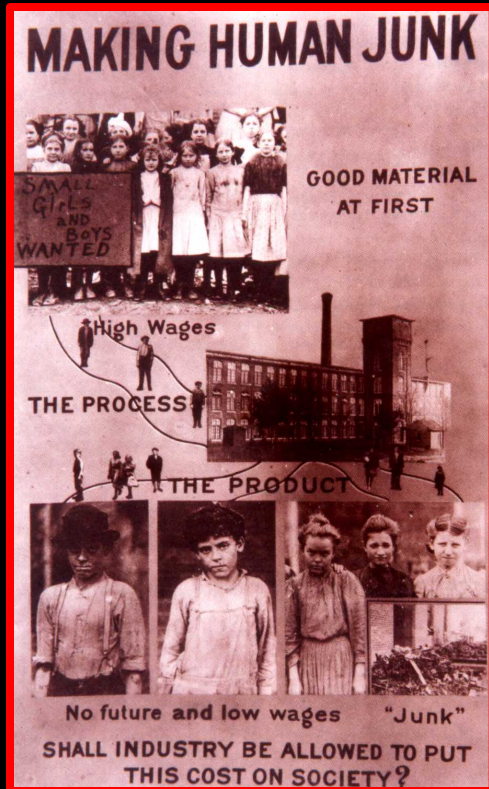


Part of an explosion of practical and utopian experiments that included the famous “White City” at the center of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, Rockefeller’s university and Pullman’s model town also confronted an organized labor movement demanding full participation in the life of the city.

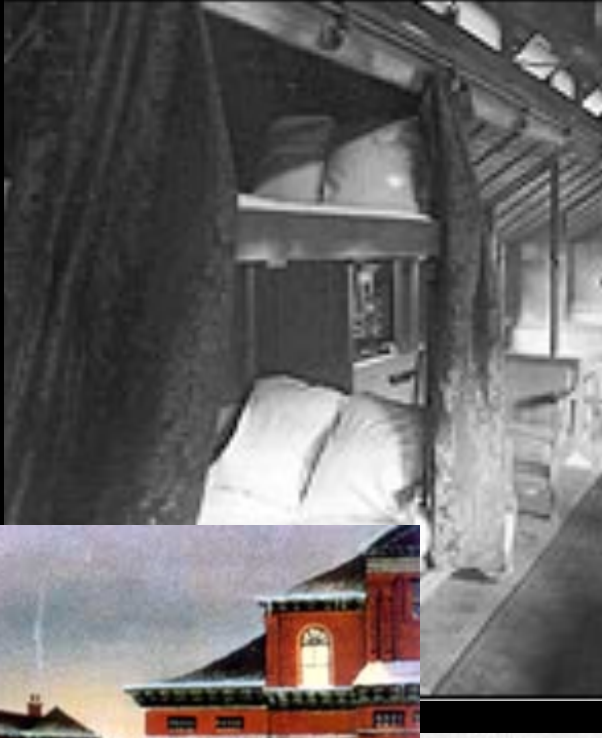
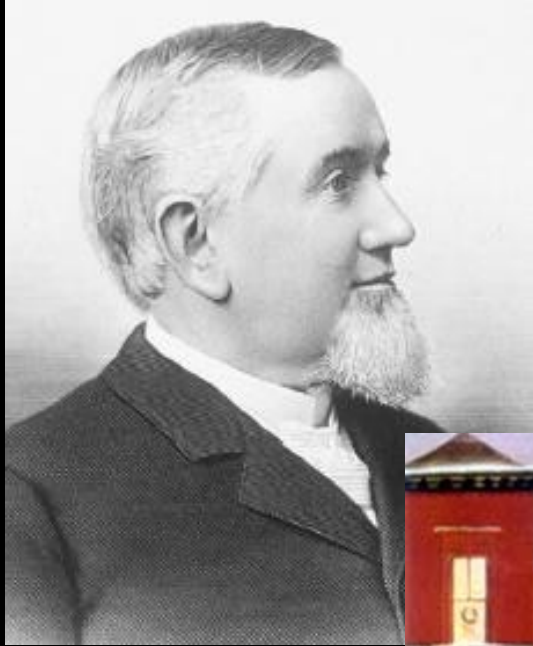




Soon after arriving, Dewey wrote to his wife Alice back in Michigan that “the city seems filled with problems holding out their hands and asking somebody to please solve them - or else dump them in the lake. I had no conception that things could be so much more phenomenal and objective than they are in a country village, and simply stick themselves at you, instead of leaving you to think about them. The first effect is pretty paralyzing, the after effect is stimulating....you can't really get rid feeling here that there is a 'method' and if one could only get hold of it things could be so tremendously straightened out.”



George Pullman Meets....



A STREET IN PULLMAN.



Pullman, Illinois • 1895





...Eugene V. Debs

HARPER'S WEEKLY

A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 31, 1894

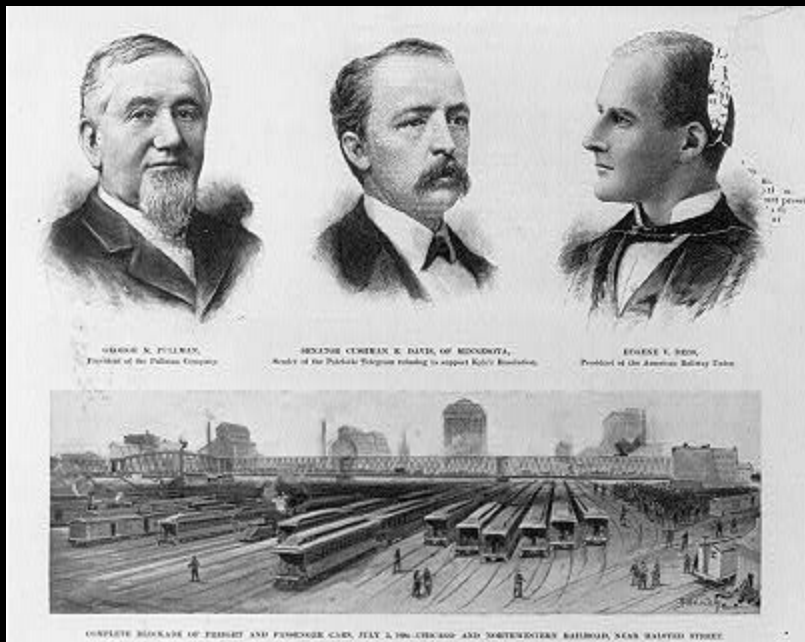


THE VANGUARD OF ANARCHY.



COMPLETE BLOCKADE OF FREIGHT AND PASSENGER CARS, JULY 2, 1894—CHICAGO AND NORTHWESTERN RAILROAD, NEAR WALTON STREET.

Laissez-Faire or Intersubjectivity? Dewey also believed that even in defeat the strike had been a great victory for working people, forcing the issue of industrial slavery into the open and serving “to get the social organism thinking.” (see Dewey’s colleagues in Chicago) Neither Pullman nor Debs could control the strike; both were astounded that what they helped to start might lead to “the starvation of a nation”

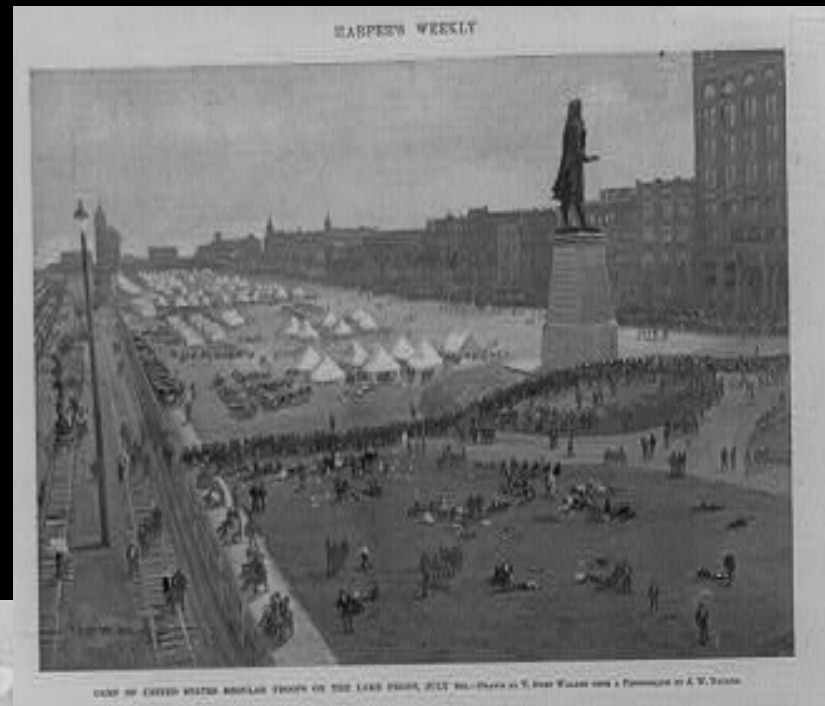


The academic world advanced what Lester Ward called “the mind as a social factor,” advancing what has been called “reform Darwinism” as an alternative to social Darwinism and laissez-faire (i.e. it is perfectly “nature” for the human organism to try to consciously manipulate its environment).

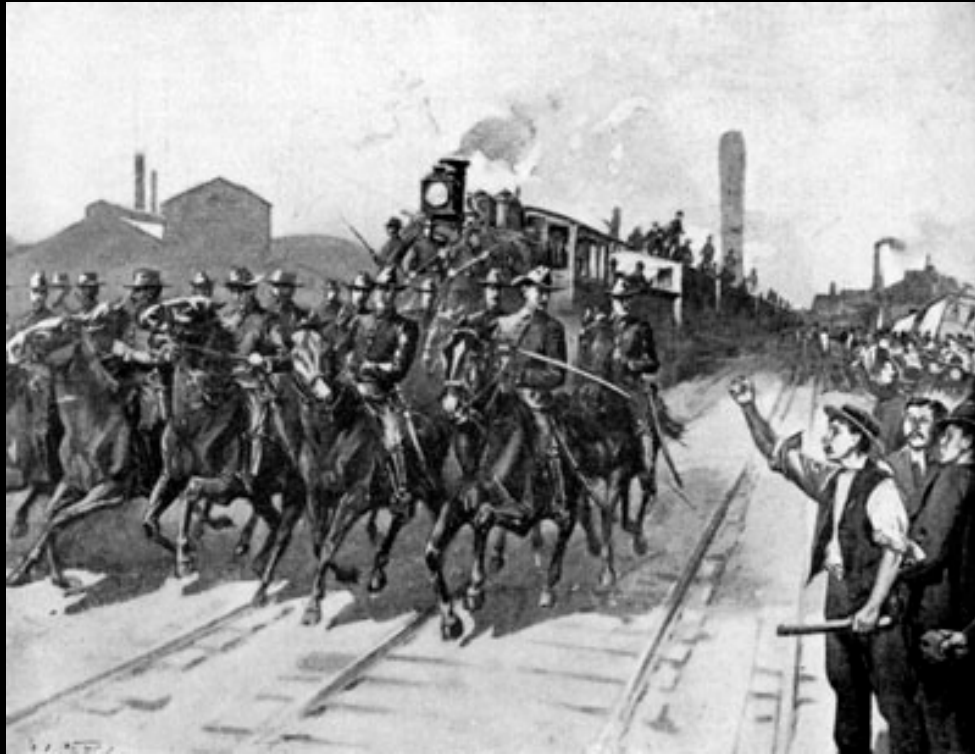


Richard Ely formed the American Economic Association to counter laissez-faire and promote reform. Henry Carter Adams argued that property could and should be regulated in the public interest. George Herbert Mead argued that selfhood arose from interaction with others.

In his response to Henry Maine's indictment of popular government, Dewey insisted that democracy was not the sum of ill-advised and selfish individual preferences. We can't see "the popular will" but that does not mean it doesn't exist. It is the non-social individual, the individual with everything that makes us human stripped away, that doesn't exist. Society is the undeniable fact.



Dewey's colleague at Chicago, Albion Small conceived of sociology as an "engaged" discipline (not a statistically-minded and speculative one) and insisted "that action, not speculation, is the supreme teacher" (305). Thorstein Veblen challenged the conception of the person as "a homogeneous globule of desire of happiness." The people were not "passive reactors to stimuli, but...actors for ends" (306). Profit and loss did not exhaust human motivations; economic interests were always embedded in larger social purposes ("the economic interest does not lie isolated and distinct"). We are experimenters in the multi-faceted goods of experience.





Hull House on left, Toynbee Hall on right

The intellectual who most profoundly shaped Dewey's thought, however, was a practicing rather than an academic sociologist. Addams opposed the boycott for philosophical reasons derived from her growing faith in democracy. She had abandoned the top-down, do-goodism philosophy of Hull House and come to believe that it only perpetuated class divisions and animosities.

The problem of democracy was not simply to extend the good to all classes. Until “all men and all classes contribute to a good,” she argued, “we cannot even be sure that it is worth having” (312).





A Modern Lear and Addams' Conversion of Dewey: In "A Modern Lear; An Industrial Tragedy," Addams argued that the Pullman strike reflected a conflict between the older values of individualism and paternalism against the newer values of mutuality and self-determination. But what made it a tragedy was that both sides wanted - needed - the same outcome but misunderstood one another. Pullman genuinely wanted to be a great man who did good, but he left "those ideals unconnected with the consent of their fellow men." The strikers also failed to understand how the "new claim on the part of the toiling multitude [and] the new sense of responsibility on the part of the well-to-do, arise in reality from the same source" and "logically converge into the same movement"



Big Shoulders, Big Brains in Nature's Metropolis: Cronon took on the idea of Chicago as "nature's metropolis," arising on a site destined to be a great city. Instead he saw Chicago as an act of will and a product of capital investment. Garry Wills adds that we must see Chicago as the city of big brains as much as big shoulders. He urges us to recognize it as a city of manic artifice and cultural ambition- seen here in that "functionalist" architecture.



“The Unity of Knowledge”: Thinking and Doing at the Dewey School:

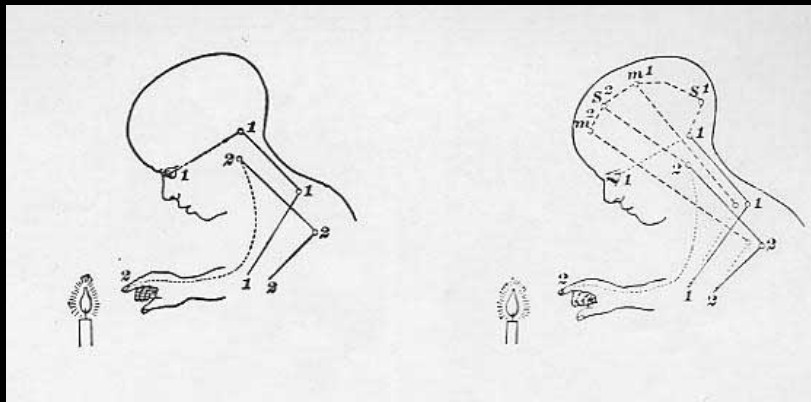
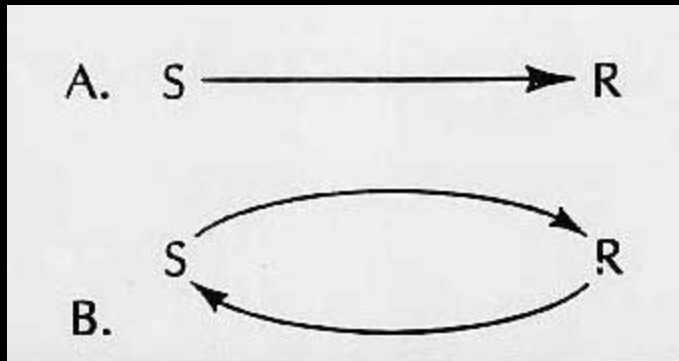
Dewey's experimental school at the University of Chicago - an experiment in philosophy rather than psychology or education - came out of his interest in his own children, his idea of Chicago itself as a laboratory, and his educational experiences at Hull House and with Jane Addams. The Dewey school, in which learning proceeded through practical activity, organically linked thinking and doing. The school represented one application of Addams' conviction that there were no absolute antagonisms, neither between capital and labor, nor self and society, nor thinking and doing. The school also represented Dewey's view of ideas as tools which, if they led to bad outcomes, needed to be revised.



“Knowledge is a by-product of activity”



The Reflex Arc Experiments: Dewey argued that abstracting unified experience into discrete parts (sensation, idea, response) “breaks continuity and leaves us nothing but a series of jerks, the origin of each jerk to be sought outside the process of experience itself.” Actions have goals built into them, as in the case of the child reaching out to touch the candle. Rather than “seeing and then touching” with some intervening idea coming from (literally?) God knows where, the child is “seeing-in-order-to-touch.” We are not passive reactors to stimuli but active experimenters in the goods of experience.



"Neither mere sensation, nor mere movement, can ever be either stimulus or response; *only an act* can be that..." (Dewey, 1896, p. 367;

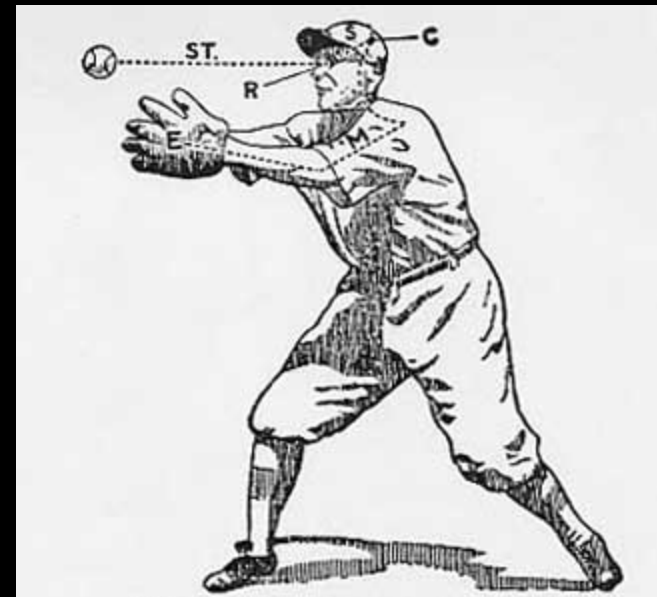


FIG. 2. SEEING AND ACTING

St. = stimulus; light waves from the ball. R = receptors; the eyes. S = sensory nerves, running from eyes to brain. C = center of nervous system; the brain. M = motor nerves, running from brain to arm. E = effectors or motor organs; muscles of arm and hand.

The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology

By Professor John Dewey
University of Chicago

That the greater demand for a unifying principle and controlling working hypothesis in psychology should come at just the time when all generalizations and classifications are most questioned and questionable is natural enough. It is the very cumulation of discrete facts creating the demand for unification that also breaks down previous lines of classification. The material is too great in mass and too varied in style to fit into existing pigeon-holes, and the cabinets of science break of their own dead weight. The idea of the reflex arc has upon the whole come nearer to meeting this demand for a general working hypothesis than any other single concept. It being admitted that the sensori-motor apparatus represents both the unit of nerve structure and the type of nerve function, the image of this relationship passed over into psychology, and became an organizing principle to hold together the multiplicity of fact.

In criticising this conception it is not intended to make a plea for the principles of explanation and classification which the reflex arc idea has replaced; but, on the contrary, to urge that they are not sufficiently displaced, and that in the idea of the sensori-motor circuit, conceptions of the nature of sensation and of action derived from the nominally displaced psychology are still in control.

The older dualism between sensation and idea is repeated in the current dualism of peripheral and central structures and functions; the older dualism of body and soul finds a distinct

(358) echo in the current dualism of stimulus and response. Instead of interpreting the character of sensation, idea and action from their place and function in the sensory-motor circuit, we still incline to interpret the latter from our preconceived and preformulated ideas of rigid distinctions between sensations, thoughts and acts. The sensory stimulus is one thing, the central activity, standing for the idea, and the motor discharge, standing for the act proper, is a third. As a result, the reflex arc is not a comprehensive, or organic unity, but a patchwork of disjointed parts, a mechanical conjunction of unallied processes. What is needed is that the principle underlying the idea of the reflex arc as the fundamental psychical unity shall react into and determine the values of its constitutive factors. More specifically, what is wanted is that sensory stimulus, central connections and motor responses shall be viewed, not as separate and complete entities in themselves, but as divisions of labor, function factors, within the single concrete whole, now designated the reflex arc.

What is the reality so designated? What shall we term that which is not sensation-followed-by-idea-followed-by-movement, but which is primary; which is, as it were, the psychical organism of which sensation, idea and movement are the chief organs? Stated on the physiological side, this reality may most conveniently be termed coördination. This is the essence of the facts held together by and subsumed under the reflex arc concept. Let us take, for our example, the familiar child-candle instance. (James, Psychology, Vol. I, p. 5.) The ordinary interpretation would say the sensation of light is a stimulus to the grasping as a response, the burn resulting is a stimulus to withdrawing the hand as response and so on. There is, of course, no doubt that is a rough practical way of representing the process. But when we

As Menand puts it, Dewey took Hegel's idea of the divine Idea working itself out in history and turned it into "the unified biological activity of adapting to the environment" (264, 329). But I think Dewey had done more. Darwin appeared to have left us with two options. Either reject Darwin and cling to a conception of humanity as the working out of a divine idea or embrace Darwin and accept humanity as the product of earthy clay, red in tooth and claw. Dewey suggested a third option. By placing ideas inside human experience, as part and parcel of doing, Dewey showed "how man had evolved into a thoughtful, purposeful creature" – a special sort of earthy clay.

The Reflex Arc Experiments: The unity of knowledge had a second meaning. Breaking experience down into parts (sensation, idea, response) “breaks continuity and leaves us nothing but a series of jerks, the origin of each jerk to be sought outside the process of experience itself” (328).

Actions have goals built into them, as in the case of the child reaching out to touch the candle. Rather than “seeing and then touching” with some intervening idea coming from (literally?) God knows where, the child is “seeing-in-order-to-touch.” The idea is part and parcel of the stimulus and the response - the ideas comes from inside of experience, is part of experience. Dewey took Hegel’s idea of the divine Idea working itself out in history and turned it into “the unified biological activity of adapting to the environment.”

The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology

Citation: John Dewey. "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology", *Psychological Review* 3, (1896): 357-370.

Editors' Notes : "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" is Dewey's single most influential article (at least in our humble opinion). Like his analysis of emotional experience, published in the preceding two volumes of the same journal, it is simply working through of the insight contained in James's statement of the 'psychologist's fallacy.' But rather than applying it to the substantive area of emotional experience, he tackles the basic units of analysis within psychology -- stimulus and response.

The argument is more or less simple. The neural circuitry of the reflex arc was being misinterpreted within turn of the century psychology. Whereas the underlying physiology implied a unity of coordinated action, psychology was treating it as if there were a "stimulus" separable from its "response" -- an isolatable and independent event which could be termed cause to a subsequent and isolatable (albeit contingent) event which could be termed the effect. Dewey's argument is similar to that put forth by Alan Watts in his discussion of Zen Buddhism: An observer peers through a gap in the wall to watch a line of passing cats. Because he always sees the whiskers first and the tails last, and there are never tails without whiskers, the observer concludes that whiskers cause tails. He fails to realize that what he is able to consistently observe is simply an illusion created by his perspective on the phenomena.

While this insight is simple, its implications become remarkably complex and far reaching. "The Reflex Arc" became the spring-board for functionalist psychology and the work that would later come to be known as "social behaviorism." It would provide much of the foundation (typically unacknowledged) for the modern usage of the term "attitude" within the behavioral sciences. More importantly, for George's Page, it provides impetus for two other theoretical contributions: Mead's analysis of the act and the conversation of gestures.

Mead's work diverges from Dewey in two important aspects. Where Dewey proposed a "circular act," Mead saw linear organizations. In fact, David L. Miller argues that Mead, not Dewey, is responsible for the insights contained in the "Reflex Arc" article, based on passages in Mead's discussion of Laszitz history of measurement in physics. While this argument is highly debatable, Mead takes up this prior notion when reformulating Dewey's analysis into his own discussion of the act as the unit of analysis for behavior. Whatever the origins of the insight informing Dewey's analysis, Dewey's arguments for circular act are echoed in Mead's analysis of the conversation of gestures. What we know as Mead's "social act," is an extension of the arguments presented by Dewey into a transactional or social sphere.

The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology

By Professor John Dewey
University of Chicago

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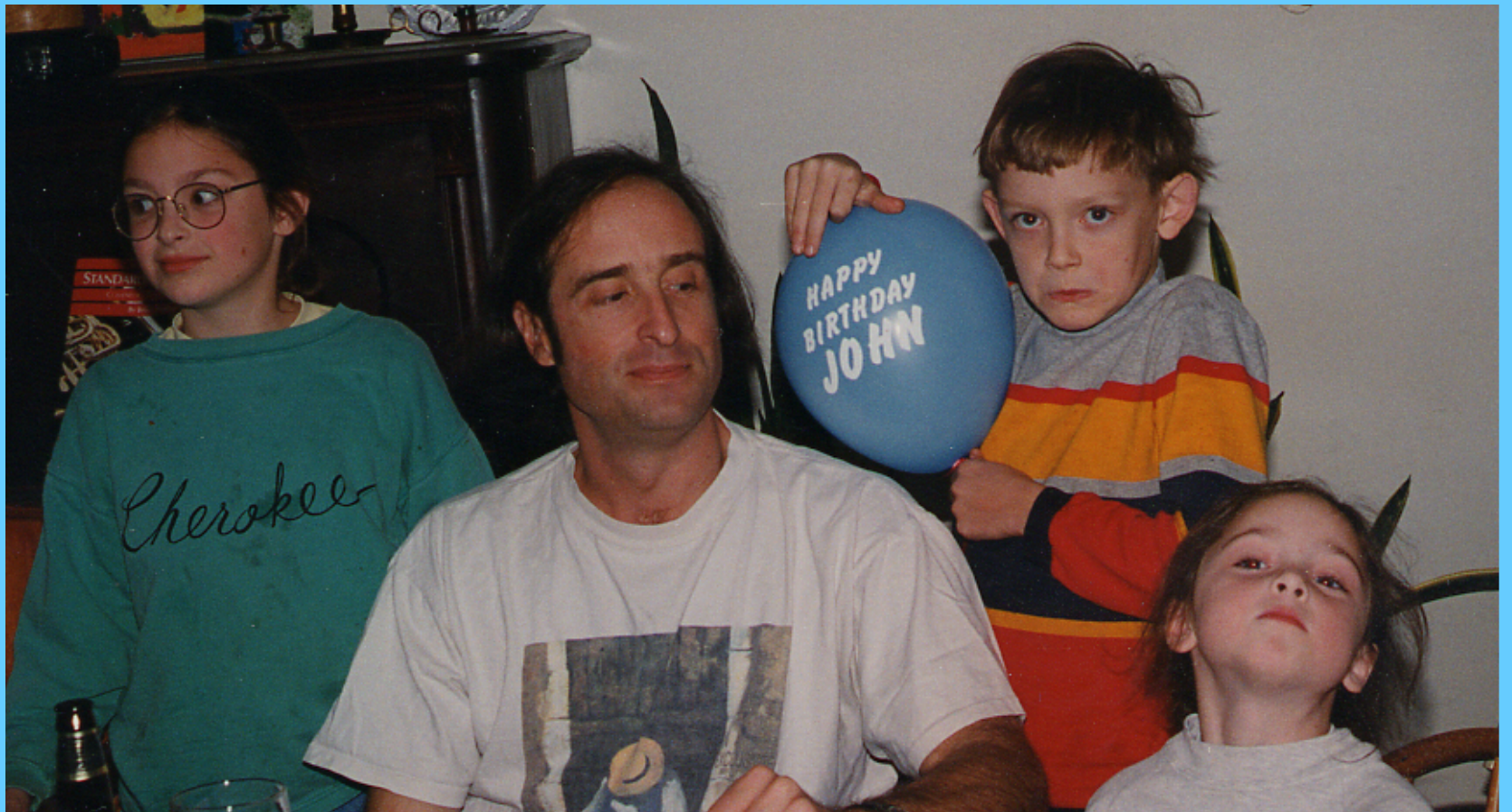
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Done

Dewey later argued that “when the sentient organism, having experienced natural values, good and bad, begins to select, to prefer, and to make battle for its preference; and in order that it may make the most gallant fight possible picks out and gathers together in perception and thought what is favorable to its aims and what hostile, then and there Nature has at last achieved significant regard for good.”

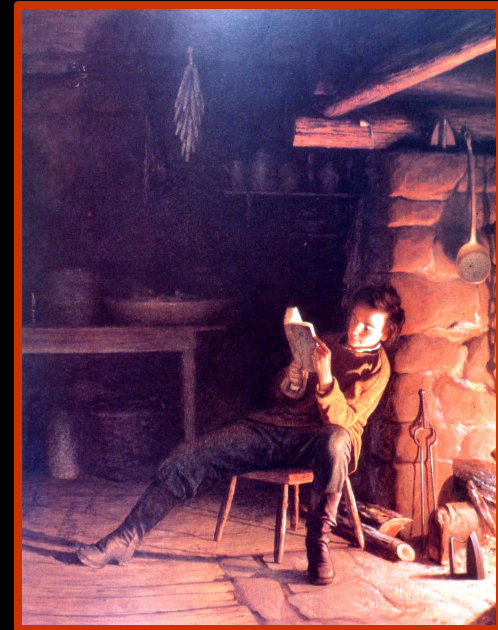


Dewey's Reconstruction of Philosophy

Dewey never could understand why epistemologists made such a fuss over the “fit” between the mind and the world. No one made a similar fuss over the fit between the hand and the world, but simply used hands when and in ways that worked. He thought the mind no different, producing ideas as tools little different from forks and spoons.



Mr. Allen, Henderson, Miss Clark, Whitener, G. H. Merrill, John Dewey, Amy Tanner, A. Japanese, A. W. Moore, J. D. Forrest
? E. S. Ames Mrs. S. F. McKeenan ? ?
Chicago Philosophy Club 1896



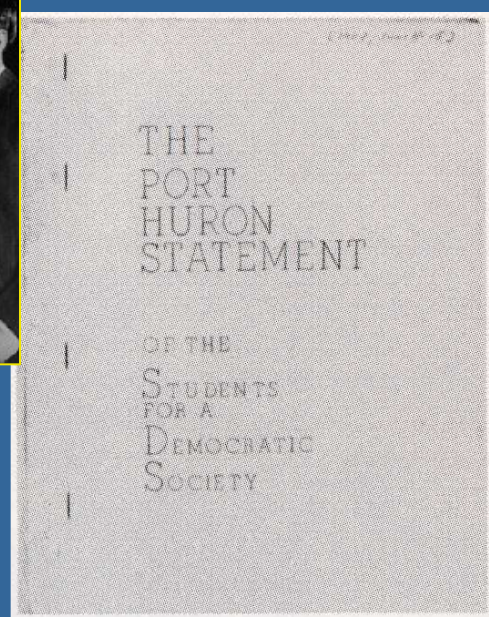
A Reunion of Labor and Learning?

John Dewey, Public Intellectual?

“Philosophy recovers itself,” Dewey argued, “when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.” Dewey practiced what he preached.



Dewey engaged practical issues from the future of radio to academic freedom. SDS's analysis of "a politics without publics" owed much to Dewey's The Public and Its Problems



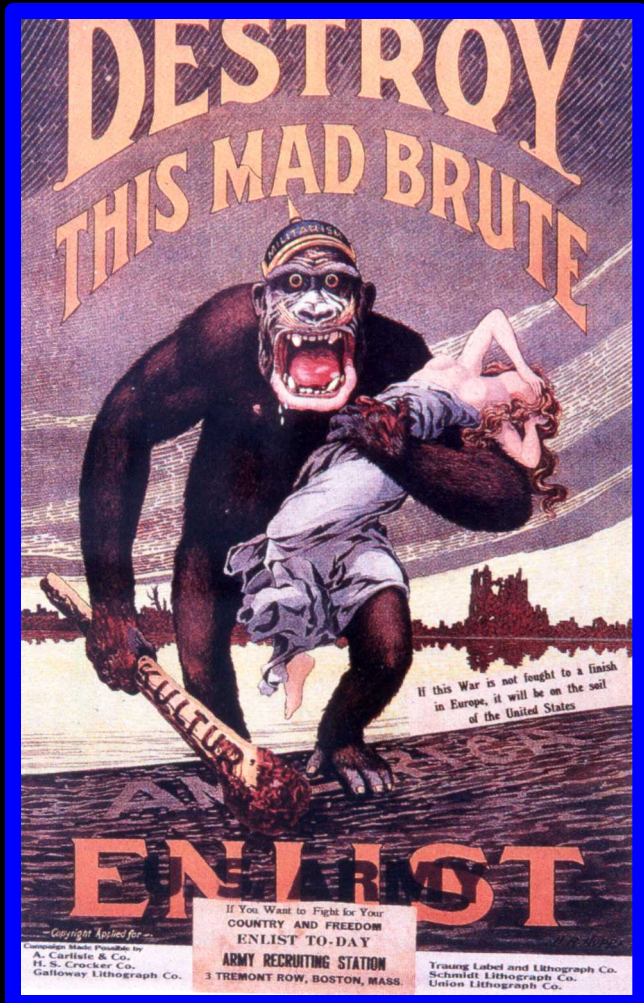
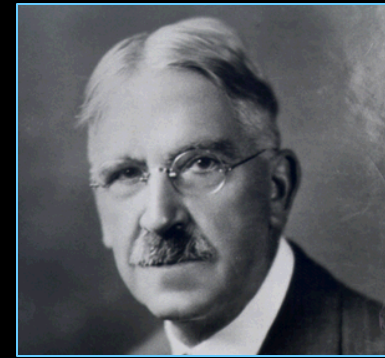
John Dewey's portrait by Matisse (1931). Mrs. Dewey characterizes it a "cartoon."

Sat Rev of Lit. Nov. 21, '59



The Palmer Raids, 1919-1920; seizing literature, closing newspapers, suppressing radical groups, deporting immigrants.

Dewey wrongly thought American intervention into World War I might be a “plastic juncture” when the state might use war powers for democratic ends.

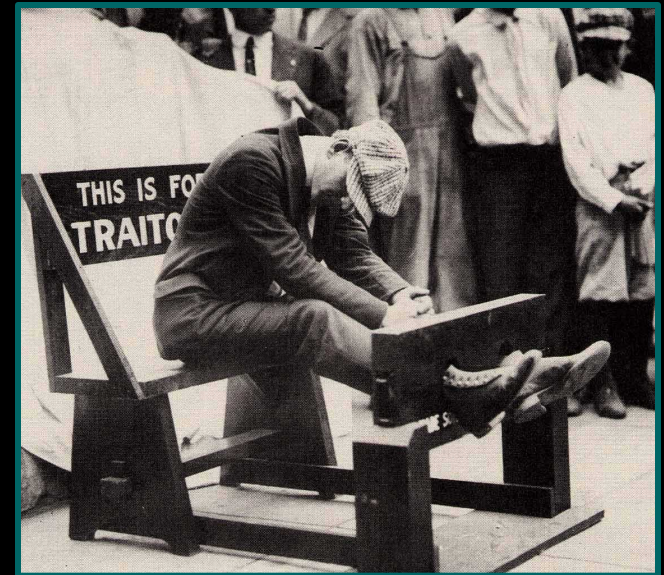




Bisbee, Arizona deportation, July 12, 1917 —

After the U.S. Army refused to end a strike of copper miners, 2,000 “deputized” vigilantes forced 1,200 striking workers onto cattle cars and left them in the New Mexican desert without food and water until they were rescued by the Army two days later. After initially refusing to indict the vigilantes (or the mine owners who armed and paid the vigilantes) for kidnapping, Attorney General Thomas Gregory finally indicted a few vigilantes but no company officials. After several months the case was dropped.

The German-born conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony forced out during WWI



Cincinnati, 1918: an innocent bystander demonstrates the device





The Sedition Act of May 1918 promised to replace vigilantes, some 250,000 of whom the Attorney-General had placed on the federal payroll, with more resolute and comprehensive federal agents. The Sedition Act strengthened the Espionage Act, essentially outlawed any criticism of the government, and provided wide latitude for local federal attorneys. Over 11,000 Americans were arrested in 1918 for criticizing the government or the war, including Eugene Debs who was sentenced to ten years in federal prison for a “treasonous” speech that declared it had become *“extremely dangerous to exercise the right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe for the world.”*



Tivoli Theater, Cottage Grove and 63rd, South Side of Chicago

Refusing to hang human dignity "on the one assumption about self-government," Lippmann insisted the people did not desire "self-government for its own sake."

People had an interest "in all kinds of things, in order, in rights, in prosperity, in sights and sounds and in not being bored."





The Pastime Theater,
West Madison Street,
Chicago, circa 1924:

“Vision is a spectator,” Dewey wrote in 1926, but “hearing is a participator. Publication is partial and the public which results is partially informed and formed until the meanings it purveys pass from mouth to mouth.”

. The findings of a democratic social science would “have such an enormous and widespread human bearing that its bare existence would be an irresistible invitation to a presentation of it which would have a direct popular appeal,” Dewey added. Democracy “will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication.”