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IN TERMS OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE United States, World War I was an event of importance comparable with the anti-imperial revolution of 1776 and the bourgeois victory of 1865. While America's active military role in the European conflict covered a span of less than two years, institutional alterations which occurred concomitant with mobilization involved changes of epochal magnitude. The transformation can be epitomized as the supplanting, at the macro-institutional level, of the leadership of the great entrepreneurs and financiers by the directorate of the capitalist bureaucratic managers. The origins of the end of laissez faire lay in the latter 19th century, and the consolidation of the new order would continue into the second half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, World War I was the revolutionary moment; in 1917-18 time became compressed.

Mobilization brought in its wake the nationalization and centralization of the direction of industry, transportation, propaganda and other social processes. While much of this organization would be disestablished following the Armistice, the fabrications brought into being by wartime embodied the kind of political and economic institutional forms which would characterize the future development of the United States. The growth of monopoly capitalism was checked; the rise of state capitalism was begun. Business would no longer operate in relative freedom from government regulation. But, more openly and to a greater degree than ever before, government would be in intentional and active alliance with the radically deficient[1] standing order of corporation capitalism.

[1] A moral judgment in history, founded on democratic and humanistic criteria.

The popular or editorial political thought of John Dewey is readily divided into the categories of domestic and foreign.[2] The purpose of the present study is to explore Dewey's ideas respecting foreign relations during the period of the war, and to investigate the relationship of those ideas to the crescendo of patriotism which began in 1914, and increased most vehemently after April 1917. It is not misleading to regard Dewey as a prototypical example of the liberal-radical intellectual in the Progressive Era. In some ways he serves also as an articulate symbol of the American people. This article will be concerned with certain aspects of his response to the conservative revolutionary situation engendered by the Great War.

One of the most telling criticisms of Dewey, for anyone whose intellectual and political viewpoint approximated his, was the attack launched upon him by Randolph Bourne during the autumn of 1917. In the article "Twilight of Idols," published in the October issue of *The Seven Arts*,[3] Bourne contended that Dewey's instrumentalism was no longer an adequate ideology for radical reform in America. While Bourne's criticism extended to the character of Dewey's philosophy as a whole, and to its implications for the future of American progressivism, it originated in Bourne's outspoken disagreement with Dewey's support of American entrance into World War I. Dewey believed, Bourne summarized, that American military participation in the war had become inevitable, but that if the war was intelligently directed it could be used to achieve worthwhile ends beyond the defeat of Germany. This account of Dewey's viewpoint was substantially accurate, for although Dewey regarded no event as completely inevitable, he was convinced that from the standpoint of national interest the United States was forced to join the conflict in 1917.

Objecting to Dewey's position, Bourne argued that war was an uncontrollable force which could yield no international good and which would destroy the domestic reform movement. Bourne maintained that Dewey's failure to perceive that war was an unmitigated evil pointed to two defects in his philosophy. Its attitude was excessively optimistic, and its conception of the relation of thought to action overly stressed technique at the expense of value. Dewey committed the error of believing that the war could be guided to a constructive conclusion, Bourne contended, because Dewey's optimism led him to misconstrue the nature of war, and

[2] I have dealt with the development of Dewey's ideas respecting domestic reconstruction in another article.

[3] "Twilight of Idols," in *War and the Intellectuals*, ed. Carl Resek (New York, 1964), pp. 53-64.

because his emphasis on utility afforded him no elevated value with which to sustain a position in opposition to the predominant trend.

As Bourne had forewarned, liberal expectations respecting the outcome of the war were disappointed. The Treaty of Versailles of 1919, instead of organizing the world for a lasting peace, planted the seeds for another world conflict. Beginning with the war, and continuing through the 1920s, the United States experienced on the surface a political and cultural reaction which sharply contrasted with the mood which had existed prior to World War I. In a sense, the war was responsible for both the international failure and the domestic relapse. If the United States had not participated in the strife, it perhaps would have suffered neither internationally nor at home. But Dewey believed that American involvement could not be avoided, for it was his unstated conviction that the consequences of a German triumph would endanger the future life of the United States. By April 1917 it appeared that Germany, employing the weapon of unrestricted submarine warfare, would defeat the Allies in France unless America intervened. Assuming that Dewey was correct in believing that a German Continental preponderance and colonial expansion would bode ill for the future of the United States, as he probably was, the vital question respecting Dewey's philosophy becomes not how it failed to keep American progressives out of the war, but how it did not succeed in bringing the conflict to a better conclusion. While Dewey's support for the war can be judged morally wrong, he was neither a fool nor a capitalist, and his choice is worthy of close historical attention. The issues raised by Bourne concerning Dewey's optimism and the utilitarian aspect of his thought remain relevant, but from a perspective which Bourne did not intend.

In view of the attack which Dewey drew upon himself because of support for the American declaration of war, it is important to recognize that as a basic principle he preferred peace to violence. In light of its relation to American national interest and its potential for future world peace, the battle currently raging in Europe formed an atypical case. Dewey did not believe that the improvement of the world should customarily be furthered through international conflict. A pacifistic theme was the most pronounced one in his thought. In a December 1916 lecture dealing with social psychology, Dewey commented, "The present war is too vast and too tragic to permit one lightly to summon it for any merely theoretical thesis."[4] In *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), which originated as a lecture series delivered in 1918, after Dewey's initial enthusiasm for the war had waned, he wrote, "War and the existing

[4] "The Need for Social Psychology," *Characters and Events*, ed. Joseph Ratner (New York, 1929), II, 719.

economic regime . . . are so fraught with evil consequences that any one who is so disposed can heap up criticisms without end."[5] In the summer of 1917, just after his declaration of support for the war, Dewey spoke with approval of "those who still think of themselves as fundamentally pacifists in spite of the fact that they believed our entrance into the war a needed thing"; and he identified this group with the "great mass of the American people . . ."[6] On this occasion, as was the case many times, Dewey metaphorically described his own view by assigning it to the American people in general.[7] Earlier in the summer he spoke of loving that peace which meant more than the "mere absence of military war. . . ."[8]

By this greater peace Dewey meant the quality of life in the good society. Since one precondition for the attainment of this society was the elimination of war as a fact of human existence, a war might be waged to terminate military conflict permanently.[9] Another prerequisite to achieving it was the extinction of class conflict, the domestic analogue of international battle.[10] Beyond these preliminaries, the substance of this society would emerge from the continuing results of the convergence of "all the instrumentalities of the social arts, of law, education, economics, and political science upon the construction of intelligent methods of improving the common lot."[11] But the happiness which would result would not be,

> any less unique than the individuals who experience it; any less complex than the constitution of their capacities, or any less variable than the objects upon which their capacities are directed.[12]

Through the media of the social sciences, natural sciences and the humanities Dewey sought the pluralistic fulfillment of individuality within the social context. One aspect of this consummation would be the discovery of a fundamental existential serenity, without complacency. The instrumental method employed would be oriented toward socialism rather than the ideology of laissez-faire individualism, and toward the intelligent management of the human environment rather than the ac-

5 *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York, 1922), pp. 331-32.

6 "The Future of Pacifism," *Characters and Events*, II, 584.

7 At this time the statement respecting the predominant pacifism of Americans probably possessed considerable empirical validity; what Dewey misjudged was the trend toward hysteria.

8 "Conscience and Compulsion," *Characters and Events*, II, 579.

9 "Force, Violence, and Law," *Characters and Events*, II, 640.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 636.

11 "Intelligence and Morals," in *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (New York, 1910), p. 69.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

ceptance of eternally valid natural laws. The instrumental technique combined empirical observation with the formulation and testing of tentative plans that would be reappraised in the light of observed results.[13] As Dewey was aware, his program was vague.[14] It indicated a direction which would assume a more concrete form as experimental steps were taken toward it. This direction was the elevated value which Bourne contended was insufficiently present in Dewey's philosophy.

Thus, it was not, as Bourne contended, the lack of a worthy destination which caused Dewey's expectations respecting the war to fail to come to fruition. Bourne's other argument, that Dewey's position was excessively optimistic, struck closer to the truth. The weakness, however, did not repose with the attitude of optimism itself. It lay with the insufficiently informed use of the attitude. In formulating his point of view respecting the war Dewey inaccurately appraised a central factor. He underestimated the pernicious affectivity of the irrational when its operation was intentionally stimulated by men of ill intent. Dewey was aware that individuals and groups could be afflicted with highly irrational states of mind.[15] He distrusted the "sweetly complete sense of certainty . . . " that was generated by an overly powerful patriotic emotion.[16] But in December 1918 Dewey would write, with new awareness, that

> There has been a remarkable demonstration of the possibilities of guidance of the news upon which the formation of public opinion depends. There has been an equally convincing demonstration of the effect upon collective action of opinion when directed systematically along certain channels. One almost wonders whether the word "news" is not destined to be replaced by the word "propaganda"—though of course words linger after things have been transformed.[17]

Prior to 1914 Americans had never experienced a conflict on the scale of World War I in which highly efficient means of public communication were available as weapons. The Spanish-American War provided a small-scale precedent and furnished a warning which, for all practical purposes, remained unheeded.

The communications facilities employed during the First World War were unmatched previously in efficiency and extension. Excepting new immigrants and the industrial and rural masses, there was never before

13 Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics* (New York, 1908), pp. 261, 262, 292, 298-302, 333; Dewey, "The New Social Science," *Characters and Events*, II, 737; "Political Science as a Recluse," *Characters and Events*, II, 731-32.

14 *Influence of Darwin . . .* pp. 68-69.

15 "Conscription of Thought," *Characters and Events*, II, 566.

16 "On Understanding the Mind of Germany," *Characters and Events*, I, 130.

17 "The New Paternalism," *Characters and Events*, II, 518.

an American audience so literate and attentive as that which had developed by the time war broke out in Europe in August 1914. London dominated the conveyance of European news to an American public whose education predisposed it to associate its own nationality with the national cause of the British, rather than with that of the Germans. British propaganda increasingly elicited a highly emotional favoritism for the Allies in combination with a similarly emotional enmity toward Germany. The influence of this propaganda, interacting with national values, yielded the American state of mind and actions which culminated in the declaration of war. German submarines did not attack American ships in early 1917 in a vacuum, but in specific response to the American role as banker and supplier for the Allies. Following Congressional approval of Woodrow Wilson's request for a state of war, official manipulation of opinion by the government of the United States brought about a decline by most Americans into an intellectual condition of unquestioning patriotism.[18]

Dewey's commitments to intelligence and to toleration saved him from falling into the obsessive patriotism with which most Americans became afflicted. But personal inexperience with the psychological environment produced by war propaganda, joined with the tendency of his philosophy sometimes to celebrate the irrational, caused him to be influenced to a considerable degree by patriotic emotion before as well as after American entrance into the war. This emotion, and the ideas he associated with it, led Dewey to support the war against Germany, to plan a reconstructive peace settlement and to elect an inadequate means for realizing the progressive peace which he envisioned. The means he chose was the democratic voice of the American people demanding of their President the arrangement of a progressive world settlement at the treaty conference. Dewey did not foresee that the force of propaganda would destroy the capacity of public opinion to consider rationally questions of policy.[19]

The patriotic trend in Dewey's thought, identifiable in part by a tendency to stereotype, developed under the pressure of British propaganda. It was manifested clearly in "On Understanding the Mind of Germany" (February 1916).[20] In this article Dewey analyzed the German national ideology and contrasted it with the British, French and American national outlooks. Although he believed in American excep-

[18] H. C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman, Okla., 1939), pp. 8-9, 13-14, 38-39, 56, 159, *passim*; James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919* (Princeton, 1939), pp. vii, 4-13, 46, *passim*.

[19] In spite of the caricature of democracy that the war represented, it is not my view, nor was it Dewey's, that social salvation can be attained by an elite.

[20] *Characters and Events*, I, 130-48.

tionalism, Dewey here stressed the similarity of the British, French and American national characters, and argued that they were basically opposed to the German character. Because the United States, as Dewey perceived it, was the most advanced of these three libertarian nations, it afforded the most striking contrast to German absolutism. He was not entirely unsympathetic, though, with the German outlook, and he was unable to suppress completely insights into its resemblances to the American view. The principal similarities were commitments to natural and social science and to expansive nationalism, though the commitments differed in kind. In America science and expansive nationalism were wedded to an advanced concept of democracy, instead of to absolutism. They became factors in a would-be cultural conquest which was not conjoined, as it was linked in Germany, with territorial acquisition. This kind of ideological imperialism, bearing with it science and democracy, would comprise the vision developed by Dewey of a unique American contribution, by means of the war, to the postwar world.

Dissecting the "mind" of Germany in the February 1916 article, Dewey wrote,

> For the Kultur for whose preservation the war is waged is (to this mind) a sacred necessity for all humanity. The ideal [in waging the war] is not force; it is the systematic organization of all forces, natural and social, by means of devotion to science and to honest patient work, in behalf of the victory of the ideal of organization over the ideal of chaotic individualism; of science over blind muddling along; of thorough work over superficial display.[21]

Dewey, like the Germans themselves, saw German thought as dualistic. It consisted most importantly of *Kultur,* the accumulation of history, legend, literature, philosophy and music which constituted for Germans the substance of their national life. Science and society, conceived as mere material means, possessed an insignificant intrinsic value for German minds, when contrasted with the ideal *Kultur.* The religious, deterministic and absolutist connotations of his description of it as a "sacred necessity" ascribed to *Kultur* traits which were classic enemies of the liberal scheme of values. In contrast, the eternal and humble good of "honest patient work . . ." Dewey associated with science and organization, assigning to them a worth at least equivalent to that of the humanities. Here he took from the Germans one of the elements of their thought, an appreciation of the benefits of systematic labor, and reappraised it in the light of his conception of American values. One of these values was respect for material labor, in connection with ends,

[21] *Ibid.,* p. 136.

in its own right, and not only as the means by which spiritual ideals could be served.

If the Allies were less scientifically and administratively competent than was desirable, politically they were preferable to Germany. "In a most literal sense," Dewey contended, "the mind of Germany is foreign to us; it is not to be understood without an effort."[22] The German viewpoint was alien to the western tradition of political liberalism and realism. In its absolutism, instead of promoting individual responsibility, the German viewpoint merged "the idea of moral obligation into that of political obedience. . . ."[23] Further, the German intellect preferred subjectivity and insisted upon taking "refuge in an inner world, a world of consciousness. . . ."[24] It reveled in the activity of the imagination detached from external reality, especially from the reality of political affairs. German absolutism and subjectivism, Dewey maintained, contrasted unfavorably with the pluralistic freedom and objective realism characteristic of Britain, France and the United States. Unlike the peoples of the western nations, the Germans never had participated in a successful "struggle for self-government. . . ." For the peoples which had experienced it historically, such a struggle "has chastened the unbridled imagination of man; it has developed a sense of realities; it has brought a certain maturity of mind as its outcome."[25] Dewey meant that political realism prevented nations from indulging in efforts at territorial conquest. In his assessment he neglected the contributions of Britain, France and the United States to the new imperialism that emerged in the second half of the 19th century, and which became one of the causes of the Great War.

Dewey viewed America as the most valuable political and cultural model which the contemporary world offered. On one plane patriotism brought him to perceive close ideological bonds between Britain, France and the United States. On a more fundamental level it brought him to envision a special role for the United States in a world reconstruction. He differentiated the United States from the Old World Allies by describing it alone as embarked upon "the greatest enterprise which has ever enlisted human thought and emotion: the attainment of the common control of the common interests of beings who live together."[26] In February 1916 Dewey still viewed this development of democratic socialism as a purely national endeavor by the United States. In the spring of 1917 he reiterated the theme of America isolated and unique: "The war has shown that we are no longer a colony of any European nation nor of them all collectively. We are a new body and a new spirit in the

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

world."[27] It was not until after the formal entrance of the United States into the war that this understanding of America was transmuted into an internationalism. Dewey then wrote that for Americans the "great experience" of the war could be the discovery of the "significance of American life by seeing it reflected into a remaking of the life of the world."[28] Isolationism would be surrendered by the United States in order that its national values of democracy and science might be spread abroad.

The world situation involved immediate realities as well as ultimate values. Examining Europe in 1916, he perceived there the operation of reason of state:

> It should be possible for us to see that every nation has its peculiar self-interest, and hence its own mode of partly disguising and partly justifying the operation of that self-interest.[29]

Dewey did not undertake analysis of the self-interest of the United States. Though unmentioned by him, important aspects of it were the insurance of the security of the loans extended to the Allies, the preservation of safety upon the seas for American ships and cargoes, the sustainment of the new predominance of the United States in the New World, the attainment of new markets and the curtailment of competition where possible.[30] Most Americans, however, could not speak of selfishly serving the interest of their nation for its own sake; their psychology required justification on wider grounds than those afforded by patriotism and reason of state. Analyzing their dilemma, Dewey explained that "in a world organized for war there are as yet no political mechanisms which enable a nation with warm sympathies to make them effective, save through military participation."[31] He thus suggested the legitimization which he and other Americans would finally set forth in apology for making war in Europe. It would be embodied in the demand for the construction of such international nonmilitary political mechanisms as were presently lacking, on the basis of plans provided by the United States. When Dewey associated the need for international reconstruction ("as yet no political mechanisms . . . ") with patriotism ("a nation with warm sympathies . . . "), he candidly illustrated the psychological connection between them.

There were numerous American visions of the reconstruction. The principal plan, outlined in Wilson's Fourteen Points, was mainly

[27] "In a Time of National Hesitation," *Characters and Events*, II, 446.

[28] *Characters and Events*, II, 570.

[29] *Characters and Events*, I, 133.

[30] Curiously, the defense by the United States of this conception of its self-interest in World War I issued in World War II, the Cold War, Korea and Vietnam.

[31] *Characters and Events*, II, 582.

political in character, in the sense that it ignored questions of economic needs. But in July 1917, six months before Wilson enunciated his program (January 8, 1918), Dewey insisted,

> The more one loves peace . . . the more one is bound to ask himself how the machinery, the specific, concrete social arrangements, exactly comparable to physical engineering devices, for maintaining peace, are to be brought about.[32]

Where Wilson was most concerned with regulating the external relations of nations, Dewey sought to describe a politics which involved social engineering. He desired to affect the internal lives of nations to cure them of the impulse to make war. Toward the attainment of this end he elaborated a program which stressed the socializing modification of international economic affairs. He pointed out that the distresses of wartime clearly demonstrated

> how much more important questions of food supply, of coal and iron, of lines of railway and ship-transportation are for the making and ordering of states than the principle of isolated nationality, big or small.[33]

As a naturalistic philosopher, he understood that human beings needed to eat.

By December 1918 he had prepared a concrete program which took economic factors into account. The plan he delineated was intended to cure the poorer nations of their economic disabilities, and by that means achieve an international economic equality which would vanquish the need and envy which were the basic causes for war. Dewey maintained that the free trade provisions contained within Wilson's Fourteen Points were prerequisite, but that more was needed than the mere liberation of commerce to cause "have-not" nations to prosper. Credit and raw materials had to be made available to them by the more prosperous and naturally endowed countries at interest rates and prices low enough to ensure growth in the relative wealth of the recipients. All countries, except the United States, Great Britain and perhaps Germany (prior to Versailles) and France, needed such aid. Without it their chronic economic difficulties would cause them continually to threaten world peace. With help, though, from the standpoint of industrial development and general prosperity, in proportion to magnitude of population, the poorer nations would rapidly evolve toward equality. The generosity expected of the wealthy nations would come as a function of their en-

32 *Characters and Events*, II, 579.
33 *Characters and Events*, II, 585.

lightened self-interest. They would see that by sacrificing some profits a more costly future war might be avoided, and more affluent markets would be developed.[34]

Dewey's program, while it was far from international socialism, which would have required an ethics of common interest, instead of the ethics of enlightened self-interest, was a step beyond international laissez faire. Requiring centralized planning and administration, it was antithetical to the outlook which called for the free operation of the market, such operation modified in practice by tariffs and navies. Dewey's plan would not permit nations to remain self-enclosed atoms, carrying on their internal affairs, including foreign trade for profit, with little consideration for the health of the external international environment with which they interacted. It called for, by means of an effective international agency, enforcement of high wage standards for labor, prevention of the monopoly by a single nation of the manufacture of a particular product, regulation of shipping and, for a time at least, the control of emigration-immigration and of food distribution.[35] In view of the short-term advantages of war for a deficient national economy, not to speak of the profit for special industrial interests, it is dubious that the language of profit and loss, though in the moderate form of enlightened self-interest, was the most effectual one in which to couch an appeal for a program to insure peace. Nevertheless, Dewey's program struck at the fundamental causes for international instability, fear and jealousy.

Despite its merit, Dewey's plan was never seriously considered by statesmen, American or European, as a blueprint for the postwar world. It was never put into effect because Dewey chose to rely upon the American people to see to its acceptance as the policy of their government and as the terms which the American representatives would demand at the peace conference. The problem was not that Americans were incapable of making intelligent judgments in respect to matters of state. Rather, it was that the environmental conditions necessary for the deliberate consideration of public issues were not only not made available to them, but were intentionally destroyed. Like the felt need to repulse German expansionism, and the desire to rebuild the world at the conclusion of the war, the reliance upon democracy was an outgrowth of patriotism and the expression of a national value. Americans had experienced a "struggle for self-government . . ." and consequently possessed a "sense of realities. . . ."[36] Dewey failed to foresee the enormous scale of the official propaganda effort which came in the wake of the American proclama-

[34] "A League of Nations and Economic Freedom," *Characters and Events*, II, 610-14.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Characters and Events*, I, 147.

tion of belligerence, and his own patriotism led him to overestimate the capacity of Americans to resist the malevolent psychological environment generated by war. Most of them would become, in varying degrees, intellectually subject to the arbitrary dictates of propagandists, and thus be politically incapacitated.

Following the entrance of the nation into the conflict, it was some time before Dewey became aware that Americans were not behaving in a rational and reliable way. In July and August 1917, he was less concerned with the danger of hysteria than with the problem of gathering support for the war. While sympathetically noting the "immense moral wrench involved in our passage from friendly neutrality to participation in war,"[37] he contended that the only realistic remedy for the conscience of the pacifist was to "connect conscience with forces that are moving in another direction."[38] To be effective the pacifist had best join the war effort and work for the construction of a postwar world designed to perpetuate peace. Arguing retrospectively, Dewey pointed out that

> He was a poor judge of politics who did not know from the very day of the Lusitania message—or at all events from that of the Sussex message—that the entrance of the United States into the war depended upon the action of Germany.[39]

Dewey did not go one step further to observe that the German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, which served to bring the United States into the war, was caused by the American practice of supplying the Allies. Rather, he argued simply that because it had been for some time a possibility, the recalcitrant should have been prepared for the declaration of war, and possessed little grounds for complaint now that it had come. But his most important contention was that the initiation of military belligerence "had the sanction of the country," for "morally neutral the country never was. . . ."[40] The declaration of war was justified because the people supported the cause of Britain and France. Dewey was yet far from perceiving any danger in patriotism.

The Committee on Public Information, the American agency for domestic and foreign propaganda, was established on April 14, and the energetic George Creel was chosen to head it. In an article entitled "What America Will Fight For" (August 18), Dewey described the work of the Committee:

> The orthodox technique is exhibited in gross in any collection of war posters; in more refined ways it is seen in any anthology of

[37] *Characters and Events*, II, 577.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 580.
[39] *Characters and Events*, II, 581.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 582.

> patriotic poetry. Home and hearth, defense of ancestral altars and graves, glory and honor, bravery and self-immolation are its familiar themes.[41]

He maintained, however, that it was unlikely that this technique was the most effective one for generating support among the citizenry for the military endeavor upon which their nation was embarked. He referred to the popular memory of August 1914, observing that

> to create a war motivation by resort to "patriotic" appeal when large numbers of people are convinced that nationalistic patriotism was chiefly responsible for the outbreak of war is to operate against the tide of events and almost to invite failure.[42]

Dewey suggested that an "alternative motivation" to which the government could appeal was the "sense of a job to be undertaken in a business-like way . . . ," and the already existent "vague but genuine vision of a world somehow made permanently different by our participation in a task which taken by itself is intensely disliked." [43] The rationality of the businessman, conjoined with the elevated ethical aim of improving the world, would be a more constructive attitude to evoke and to appeal to than the mood of primitive patriotism. An invocation of intelligence would be more successful than a call to emotionalism. He warned that

> any other course involves a dangerous under-estimation of the political education undergone by the American people during the past years and of the average level of political intelligence.[44]

He was convinced that they had progressed too far intellectually and psychologically to be aroused into or to be susceptible to hyper-patriotism.

Dewey first recorded the occurrence of hysteria two weeks later in "Conscription of Thought" (September 1):

> We have not suffered as yet in this country from a bad attack of war nerves; the scene is too remote. On a small scale, however, practically all of the phenomena of Europe in the first year of the war have been duplicated. The most striking effect up to the present has been the morbid sensitiveness at any exhibition of diversity of opinion.[45]

There had been evidence of "war nerves," but the affliction was not serious. While he criticized the intolerance which the phenomenon

41 "What America Will Fight For," *Characters and Events*, II, 562.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 563.
43 *Ibid.*, p. 564.
44 *Ibid.*, p. 565.
45 *Characters and Events*, II, 566.

brought in its wake, he was not "specially concerned lest liberty of thought and speech seriously suffer among us, certainly not in any lasting way." [46] Dewey was more worried about the effect of propaganda, hysteria and intolerance on the

> freedom . . . of those who do the attacking or who sympathize, even passively, with the attack. Absence of thought, apathy of intelligence, is the chief enemy to freedom of mind. And these hasty ill considered attempts to repress discussion of unpopular ideas and criticisms of governmental action foster general intellectual inertness.[47]

Although the danger was not yet serious, the seizure of the minds of the most bellicose citizenry by a numbing patriotism would prevent them from understanding the need for, and from calling for, a creative peace. If intellectual stagnation of this kind became prevalent, it might cause Americans to miss the "great experience of discovering the significance of American national life by seeing it reflected into a remaking of the life of the world." [48] But such an attitude did not yet prevail.

During the autumn of 1917 Dewey watched Americans become obsessed with an enthusiasm for the war effort for its own sake. The impulse toward thoughtless conformity predominated, while intelligence was smothered by irrationality. In the article "In Explanation of Our Lapse" (November 3), Dewey wrote,

> The increase of intolerance of discussion to the point of religious bigotry has been so rapid that years might have passed. In the face of such intense and violent reactions as now prevail, commendation of sanity is no more audible than is any other still small voice of reason amid howling gales of passion.[49]

He retained the hope, though, that this intellectual condition was but the temporary outcome of the inexperience of Americans with war, and stated the expectation that "positive achievement will restore sanity because it will mean attainment of maturity and of the self-confidence and orderly discipline that mark the passage of youth into maturity." [50] As it turned out, Dewey's expectation of maturity was inaccurate. Through the war, and afterward, though then in a less intense but still substantial degree, the populace remained in the grip of patriotic homogeneity.

In October 1919, two years after he had seen them become consumed by patriotism, Dewey placed the principal blame for the catastrophe at

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 568-69.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 569.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 570.
[49] *Characters and Events*, II, 571.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 574-75.

Versailles on the "American people who revelled in emotionalism and who grovelled in sacrifice of its liberties. . . ."[51] Significantly and characteristically, he identified himself with the people: "If they—if we—had been different . . . ," he contended, Wilson would have behaved differently at Versailles.[52] Democratic action could have compelled a better peace. But Americans had commonly fallen prey to the type of emotionalism which propaganda generated. They had done so, Dewey argued, referring to the dying cult of the genteel, because they romantically placed too much faith in emotion divorced from intelligence. Excessively sentimental, they valued emotional commitment in its own right too highly.

Although, when he made this charge against them, Dewey identified himself with the American people at large, it was not clear that he realized how directly the criticism against excessive fondness for emotion applied to an element in his own philosophy. In November 1918, after all he had seen of hysteria, and in spite of his knowledge of its consequences, Dewey was still able to say,

> in such a vast crisis as war there is something wholesome in the popular feeling which regards marked absence of indignation, and an excessive exhibition of balanced judgment, as signs of apathy as to the ends of the war.[53]

But while "indignation" was frequently an admirable trait, and excessive "balanced judgment" often a deplorable one, the autumn of 1918 was a moment when indignation was overly plentiful and good judgment in short supply. Considering the circumstances, Dewey's emphasis would better have been the opposite of what it was.

The tendency to assign unusual worth to the irrational was a characteristic factor in Dewey's thought. The basic assumption behind his praise for popular opposition to balanced judgment, stated in the same article ("The Cult of Irrationality"), was that,

> All the instincts, impulses and emotions which push man into action outside the treadmill of use and wont are irrational. The depths, the mysteries, of nature are non-rational. The business of reason is not to extinguish the fires which keep the cauldron of vitality seething, nor yet to supply the ingredients which are in vital stir. Its task is to see that they boil to some purpose. To this end, there must be proportion in the ingredients and a certain regulation of the temperature.[54]

51 "The Discrediting of Idealism," *Characters and Events*, II, 634.
52 *Ibid.*, p. 633.
53 *Characters and Events*, II, 587.
54 *Ibid.*, p. 587.

The problem was not that Dewey failed to define a role for reason, or that the part which he gave it was too small. It is the connotative implications of his description of the relation of reason to unreason which have to be questioned. Dewey credited the irrational so highly as to leave reason at a disadvantage as the manager of emotion. The irrational was the creative element in human nature, pushing "man into action outside the treadmill of use and wont. . . ." The irrational constituted the essence of the universe: "The depths, the mysteries, of nature are nonrational." In a world overwrought with patriotism, he would better have emphasized the virtue of reason.

In spite of his untimely compliments to the irrational, already in 1917 Dewey had warned the "liberal who for expediency's sake would passively tolerate invasions of free speech and action, take counsel lest he be also preparing the way for a later victory of domestic Toryism." [55] His warning was insufficiently heeded. The reaction of 1919-20 and the provincialism of the 1920s were largely the result of the survival of the attitude of patriotic conformity which the propaganda of war had imposed. Confronted by the revelation of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, followed by the Palmer raids, Dewey abandoned hope for any immediate rebuilding of the world behind American leadership. He counseled Americans, indecisively, to recognize that they could no longer remain isolated from European affairs, but to avoid as far as possible for the time being political entanglements with the Old World.[56]

While surrendering his expectation of extensive international progress in the immediate future, Dewey reaffirmed his faith in democracy:

> We have a preference for democracy in politics. Our attachment is doubtless halting, and subject to deflections and corruptions, to say nothing of not being adequately enlightened. But it is genuine. Responsible government and publicity are our ideal, and upon the whole the ideal fares as well as most ideals in a rude and imperfect world.[57]

However, numerous faults in the American political arrangement had revealed themselves in the course of the war. During the 1920s, in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922) and *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), he contended that to improve democracy the exercise of intelligence was necessary. The goal was the synthesis of an environment in which intelligence was the normality and not only a sometime occurrence. The creation of that environment lay along the open road to the good society.

[55] *Characters and Events*, II, 575.
[56] "Our National Dilemma," *Characters and Events*, II, 619.
[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 616-17.

The Depression and the New Deal, and the renewal of patriotism which accompanied them, brought Dewey to argue once more, in *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), that the method of social progress was to be found in the intelligent and informed initiative of the populace, and not in faith in the government. The lessons of the war, like its consequences, were enduring.[58]

[58] I express my gratitude to Professor Loren Baritz, in whose exceptional seminar in American Intellectual History this article originated.