
7 Men Who Rule the World From the Grave

A Book Study based on the book by Dave Breese

#5: John Dewey

A Brief Review

- Charles Darwin (1809-1882) changed the way we look at origins
- Karl Marx (1818-1883) changed the way we look at value and necessity
- Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) changed the way we look at the Scriptures
- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) changed the way we look at ourselves

Some background

- Like the others, Dewey lived in the heart of the greatest period of change the world has ever known, an age in which Americans were able to be *thinkers* rather than *workers*.
 - Of interest is that during the 1860-1940 time frame, the American church worked *with* the liberal thinkers of social change rather than standing against these thinkers.
 - With the popular post-modernism of the day, creating a better society was a paramount virtue of the church.
 - The church (especially in academia) abandoned the idea of sin separating man from God (and thus the need for the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ), and became an *agent of social change* for the betterment of mankind.
 - It was during this period of time that “Western thinking” became void of God.
 - Prior to 1850, Greek, Hebrew, and the study of Scripture was at the core of every type of higher education.
 - From Harvard University, 1655-- “In the first year after admission, for four days of the week, all students shall be exercised in the study of the Greek and Hebrew Tongues.”
 - After 1850, for the first time in any Western institution of higher learning, the Bible (in its original languages) was not foundational to *all* education.
 - From, “The Harvard Crimson,” 1971, a statement which drips with Deweyism--

This trend [sic] towards abolition or reduction of the language requirement came for several reasons. Dean Edward Sullivan of Princeton where the language requirement was doubled a few years ago points out that there is a growing opposition to academic restraints in general. He says that the foreign language requirements is the first to be assaulted because it is likely to be the most rigorous and the most visible.

Another reason which Bolinger points out is that a student who learns in a language class against his will is likely to bring down the level of the class. This unwillingness can stem from dislike of the language learning process or from more deeply rooted mental blocks.

Finally, there is the case of the student who simply finds it extremely difficult to learn a foreign language, but has no legitimate reason for exemption. Although may be very

conscientious and spend a vastly disproportionate amount of time studying for his class, he is unable to complete the coursework competently. The student's other classes may suffer from this lack of attention. This raises the question of whether or not it is fair to require such a student to learn a foreign language.

- It was “godless” economics, philosophy, education, science, etc. that produced the worst century of the world’s history.

John Dewey (1859-1952): A New Look at Truth

- How did the godless worldview take over so quickly? In a name: *John Dewey*. His influence on education was so broad that he literally changed the world.
- “Deweyism” is pragmatism, where *what works* is more important than ultimate reality.
- For Dewey, nothing was concrete or final, everything was fluid. In short, **there was no absolute truth**.
 - His writing took almost every position, because he positioned himself *circumstantially*.
 - He would argue against one position, and refuse to accept the opposite position.
 - Reality was some kind of mix of ideas on a subject, and was subject to change.
 - Everything was *provisional or experimental*.
- He was one of the most prolific writers of all time, writing on every major field of study.
 - A bibliography of Dewey’s works is 150 pages long.
 - The vastness of his writing brought him into the realm of “expert,” even if he wasn’t.
- His disdain for *classical education* was because it was based on dogma. He preferred “the experimental method.” (See quote, pg. 162).
- His belief was that the public school system should be in “production of social change.” And the teaching of fundamental truths does not *change* a society, it keeps it the same.

A summary of Dewey Thinking

- Final truth is illusory – a rejection of the *doctrine of objective value*.
- We should not concern ourselves with *truth* but rather with *meaning* – Meaning is how the facts interact with the tide of the moment.
- Truth is resident in experience (thus Dewey rejected the lecture method of teaching because the student was not *experiencing* the content).
- Teaching depends on experiment (and our kids are the lab rats). –example: School busing.
- Religion needed to be transformed to serve mankind.
 - Being dogmatic about anything was anathema.
 - The general theory of Christianity is fine, but dogmas of Christianity are not

Next Week: John Maynard Keynes