

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | The College

AIMS OF EDUCATION ADDRESS 2015

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Please look around you at this remarkable reproduction of a medieval cathedral, this stunning simulacrum. It's beautiful, but it's also somewhat fake. Actually, the university was so intent on reproducing their vision of a "ye olde" campus, that they tried to build this whole thing out of stone. But the ceiling is held up by concrete, and the roof is supported by steel beams. Some of these stone pillars actually have steel inside them. These beautiful arches might not be quite necessary. Further, invisible concrete pylons go down 80 feet till they reach bedrock. That didn't happen much in the Middle Ages. Why build it like this? Did they think that education could only happen in a medieval environment? Actually, education in the middle ages left a lot to be desired. Or did the Northern Baptists who founded this University for the training of their clergy suddenly decide that the Catholic Church had been right after all?

What is going on? Where *are* we? This is a university that basically grew up overnight, thanks to the explosion of fossil fuels associated with advancing industrialization. And the school is named, most simply, after the city that it is in, a city that also grew up overnight, thanks to the replacement of river transportation by the iron horse of the railroad. This was the place where the agricultural produce of the west was concentrated, sorted, weighed, canned, and sent onwards. It was dirty money, made by robber barons covered with blood and oil figuratively, that paid for the university, a university in a city made by men covered with blood and guts literally, who sometimes actually drowned in grain.

And this is the University that made its reputation by letting in people that the other elite universities scorned—the lower middle and upper working classes, Jews, the scrappy ones from the nowhere places, the somewhat weird—so long as they were smart and willing to work hard here on the South Side of the academic world. And most important, the University didn't do this to be nice, out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*. They did it because they needed *someone* to come. And they had to let in people who were a tad...unrefined. It worked damn good.

There are two Chicagos here. There is the phony gothic one, the striving pretense of the parvenu that wants to deny that Chicago is *nouveau riche*, the youngest of the great Universities. Then there is the university of John Dewey and the pragmatists, those who were wholly committed to the life of the mind—but believed that this mind was one that had been given to a body for a good reason, namely to help coordinate that body's practical engagement with the environment. *That* Chicago had no embarrassment about living in a world of steel and concrete.

But this notion of two Chicagos doesn't mean that we can divide faculty, students or staff into one side as opposed to another. And that isn't because Chicagoans have a reticence about having a good argument when it's time for one. Instead, these two sides, these two impulses, are found within most of us. It's probably pretty clear which side I'm going to be pushing today. But I hope I'll be able to find something good to say about the other side, the cathedral side. Because we take it seriously. In fact, I think most of the presidents of the University of Chicago are with us right now—not the nice living one, I mean the others, interred somewhere behind me in this building. That's taking this place very seriously.

I hope that when you leave here, you also take this side seriously, though with a grain of salt. But I want to talk about the things that go behind the style, because it's easy to lose track of them, and to lose track of the aims of education.

That's what I'm here to talk about—the aims of education. This makes it sound like it's a goal-directed process—something we are trying to accomplish. What might that be? Well, we can start to think about this from the perspective of the educator—which means, basically, how *you* are supposed to be different after *we* get our hands on you. In this light, education is a form of molding. You probably don't feel very comfortable with the idea that others are all set to mold you, and we molders don't like admitting that this is our goal.

Fortunately for you, at Chicago, we don't agree enough on what you should become to have a strong molding program all ready to go. We agree that it's important that all students have a certain foundation across the humanities and sciences: that's why we have a strong core program. But we *disagree* about what precisely this is! That's why we have *five different* cores in the Social Sciences. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing I don't know, but I can tell you, if there *are* these sorts of “molding” aims of education, you're not entering a place that has a doctrinaire understanding of them.

Instead, we might try to think about the aims of education from *your* perspective. What are the wonderful things about leaving here as an educated person? Now I'm not saying that there aren't wonderful things about being an educated person, but it isn't *a priori* obvious to me that these wonderfulnesses, should we somehow add them all up, would outweigh the various wonderfulnesses of being an *uneducated* person, since these are not deprived of wonderfulness themselves. When we begin from the perspective of the educated (or the soon-to-be-educated), our praise of education is little more than disguised praise of ourselves. I am not sure if education gives people wonderfulness, but I am sure that talking for forty minutes about how wonderful we are would not be good proof of that hypothesis.

Talking about the aims of education, then, catches us on a dilemma. Either I describe our fiendish plans for you (with the only mitigating factors being our weakness and indecisiveness), or we begin congratulating ourselves for being the wonderful sorts of chaps that we are.

I hope you don't think I'm just taking the easy road of tweaking you guys for believing in things like education: "Book larnin' never did me no good!" and things like that. Rather, I think that when we talk about the aims of education, we tend to get confused.

Because I do not believe that what we are aiming at here in Chicago *is* education. What we are aiming at is *the world*. The *means* that we use to do this are what form the core of a great University. And then around that core we have various necessary support functions, and then some unnecessary but unobjectionable ones, and of course some downright pathological encrustations that grow up in any organization like barnacles on a ship.

So what is education? Or, better, what *should* it be? Let me work through an allegory. If you walk down 53rd street, you are likely to pass a large window in which you will see a great number of persons seemingly chained to endless treadmills, or perhaps fixed to stationary bicycles. They are going nowhere, achieving nothing; the futility of their action is obvious to even the most naïve observer. They remind one of nothing so much as milk cattle. Why do they do it?

You of course know the answer. They are "exercising." What is exercise? Well, we all know that we become what we do. Someone who spends his days digging, climbing, paddling, and running, tends to develop a rather even body; someone who only digs tends to have a bit of a lumpier one. Someone who sits at a desk all day may get a body without many muscles at all. People would like to have *one* life, one species of life-activity, and yet have a body that looks like it is associated with a *different* life. It's just as with those who go to a tanning salon so that they have a skin that looks like they are somewhere that they aren't doing things they don't.

I don't mean to make fun of these people at the gym, but it does seem a bit strange to see how easily we have allowed ourselves to exchange *actually* bicycling around somewhere in the fresh air for the activity that will have the same physical results (or at least so we believe) without any break in the mechanical monotony that constitutes our indoor, environmentally controlled lives. Because in "exercise," the aim has become the body that we end up with, and not the activity. Let the activity be as miserable, as confining, and as soul-deadening as possible, and we are content.

I hope I've created a vivid impression of the dreariness of exercise, especially in contrast to the similar activities that could be conducted out in the wild. Now think of what we mean by "exercises" in school. It's very similar, isn't it? We mean that we don't care about the answer to *this* particular problem. It's that when we're done, we're supposedly going to have the *mind* that we want. *That* is our only end.

This might seem to be so obviously central to education that no one would criticize it. But John Dewey, the great educator, philosopher and social thinker, founded the Laboratory School here with a different notion. He believed—and he has convinced me—that we don't learn well from exercises. We learn well when we solve *real* problems, not fake ones...even if those problems aren't problems for everyone. Give kids a real-world problem they'd like solved (for example, how to build a new piece of playground equipment) and help them solve it. That's quite different from giving them "exercises."

My argument here is that doing exercises is to a real education as running on a treadmill is to running around outside. I've put things in that wonderful SAT format that you all excel at. Or, rather, education isn't the running-around itself. It's the by-product of what Dewey called *experience*—our actual, sensorial and intellectual, living engagement with the world. Education is what you happen to be left with after the experience of spending years chasing certain things. There's something a bit off in our world right now that we often take things that should be side-effects, or by-products, and make *them* aims. In so doing, we limit our capacity for growth. Because you can't get educated to *prepare* for "critical thinking." We become educated *by* thinking critically. Not by doing exercises. What does a life of exercises teach you? *Not* to think for yourself, but to do whatever some authority tells you, no matter how senseless.

Instead, our education should take us out and into the world. Of course, a great deal of what's pursued and taught here is not about the external world, but about us ourselves—about the human world of culture and of thought. I'll explain later why I think that isn't so bad, but it *is* bad when we substitute knowledge about our *own* ways for knowledge about the world. Many people think that they know a lot about, say, birds, when all they really know is what other people *call* them ("That's a plover!"). Although such arbitrary memorization may be useful as a structure on which to hang real knowledge (as in, "Plovers eat bugs!"), it is easy for us to accumulate pseudo-knowledge in the place of real knowledge. Human beings, at least, modern Western ones, and when I was growing up, especially boys, seem to have an infinite thirst for the acquisition of useless pseudo-knowledge. Spontaneous and passionate memorization of baseball statistics or the powers of various Pokemon, later exchanged for dutiful memorization of capital cities and principal rivers. One can know the principal rivers of India without even knowing what a river *is*.

In fact, this might seem to be the lion's share of what we call "knowledge." It is simply reiteration of the human systems that we somewhat arbitrarily impose on the world. You might think that my next step is to urge you away from *all* that sort of introverted, navel gazing, pseudo-knowledge, such as philosophy. I'm going to say the opposite.

There was a time when I tried to learn about the nature of the human visual system; this was, I have to say, one of the most fascinating and rewarding side trips I ever made, and I commend it to you all. Strangely enough, it was also a great way to learn about the *world*. Knowing something about how you see the world tells you something about the world itself; it lets you know, for one, what conclusions to attribute to your own constitution. Similarly, the study of philosophy can be an amazing tool for deepening your capacity to experience the world. Studying the human world doesn't really come at the expense of understanding the natural one. Indeed, we may not really be able to do one without the other. And then, of course, one of the interesting things about being human is that we *make* our world—we reshape it physically, we make new forms of stuff, and then we make a whole additional world of ideas and notions and all that. These can confront us in just as world-like a manner as those rivers.

It might seem odd to move from talking about plunging into the world to talking about learning the history of philosophy, which has been the West's chief example of traditional pedagogical passivity. Philosophy certainly *can* be taught as just what famous person said this or that. But many of the great philosophers had a capacity to write so that the reader does not simply *learn* what someone else declared to be the case. Rather, the reader *re-experiences* and in fact *discovers* the points made by the philosopher.

Further, I'm proud to say that there are teachers at Chicago who believe just this—that there are some things that you will discover for yourselves, and the fact that someone else has discovered them before in no way detracts from the reality of your discovery. And many people at Chicago are not at all surprised if you come up with a novel version of this discovery, and one that changes their own conceptions. But anyway, the fact that others may have learned this already changes nothing: an education is about the discovery of the world. You don't have to be the *first* to see something about the world. You just have to *see* it.

Now here is where the speaker usually moves on to talk about how this discovery and seeing and all that will transform you. As it certainly will, in ways that are key for thinking about the nature of experience. For it is through experience that we become something in particular—we go from indeterminate potentiality to determinate actuality. Our past experience, in other words, determines our constitution, and that in turn shapes our future experience, or how we can receive the world. Kittens raised exposed only to horizontal stripes develop optical systems that don't respond to vertical stripes. Don't try this at home.* In other words, all our experience is *cultivated* experience, because it builds on our past experience. Absent the cultivation, we lack the capacity to respond to certain qualities of the world, and thus we lack the capacity to further incorporate parts of the world in ourselves.

This deep truth is often used to shore up our conviction in the importance and indeed, necessity, of traditional education. For education *is* an enculturation project. But danger lurks a bit further down this road, as others have found.

This idea about the importance of cultivation for experience has been best worked out in theories of aesthetic appreciation. The puzzle of aesthetics is as follows: most of us think we aren't being totally arbitrary when we say, for example, this stained glass is beautiful. But we can't *prove* this to others, the way we can prove that the glass is colored by the addition of metallic salts. One solution is to say that for people who have undergone a particular series of cultivation experiences, the window is beautiful. Beauty is always "beautiful to one sort of creature." Without being cultivated to *be* that sort of creature, you don't see the beauty. No cultivation, no experience of beauty. That's why we have classes in art appreciation.

But now consider the student who wants to learn to understand art—to become the sort of beast that will appreciate whatever those crazy things are that are hanging in that museum. We recognize that this can be done for reasons of social advancement—to be able to out-sophisticate one’s peers, let’s say—and so we start with a little bit of resentful hostility to this project, and for good reason. The good reason is that our student is vulnerable to being taken in by all sorts of emperor’s new clothes. That’s why we take such malicious delight in stories of people fooled by paintings done by a monkey, or of MBAs in wine tasting class tricked into drinking urine. We think that people who uncritically cultivate themselves in this goal-directed way are either suckers or phonies; that there is nothing more ridiculous than the person who has deliberately cultivated herself to get by in an arbitrarily coded world of art.

On the other hand, there is nothing more beautiful than a person who is truly transported by beauty, whether or not she can explain or defend it. And interestingly, the person who is *indirectly* cultivated by the *pursuit* of an aesthetic experience ends up cultivated quite differently from the person who pursued the cultivation itself. In this sense, it can be better to be beautiful than educated, for those who are educated by exercise can be too picky for their own good, refusing to taste that which others tell them is distasteful. And they may never taste that which they would find not only pleasing, but nourishing.

Before I came to Chicago, I taught social theory at some large state universities. When we read Karl Marx, I would begin discussions by asking students to talk about the *worst* job they had ever had. This was a good way of beginning to think concretely about the labor process. When I came here, I tried the same thing, and it failed, because few in my class ever held really terrible jobs. One or two students struggled to make a short internship with a colorful psychopath more depressing than it really was, but it didn’t work as an example of alienating, estranged labor. Then one student bravely volunteered: “violin practice.” Half the class nodded.

Then stories came out like a flood. Students described the savage delight with which, upon unpacking here, they brutally shoved that violin under the bed, never to come out again. “Oh, did I hurt you? Well, you hurt *me*.” All those exercises had made them into people who *had had* the right experiences to appreciate the violin—and to loathe it.

And so yes, it is true, through experience, we cultivate ourselves to be certain types of people. Only through compiled and iterated experience do we go from being a no-sort-of-beast to a some-sort-of-beast. But we must beware of using this fact to convince us to go back to the gym, back to doing exercises, back to the debasement of experience to a mere *means* of future experience, and future experience itself only a means whereby we will become that which we *want* to become.

Now there's nothing wrong with *wanting* to be one sort of beast as opposed to another, though of course it's impossible to know what it's truly like to be something *before* becoming it. But even worse, focusing on wanting to *be* something, even through *doing*, is to lose the world, for it rips us from our own spatio-temporal existence. Always anticipating being *done* with whatever we are doing now seems a pretty depressing way of life, but that's often our idea of education. Wanting to be the sort of beast that *has had* certain types of experience means living life facing backwards, prematurely senescent, missing it all even when having it all. It means facing one's cell phone to take a picture of 'me by the Grand Canyon' so that (in the future) you can 'remember when we were at the Grand Canyon,' which means that you never *were* in the Canyon then, rather, then, you were in your phone, now. We turn our back on experience, and thereby the world.

I'm not simply saying that you shouldn't buy your jeans pre-faded and now even pre-torn, to make it seem as if you've had experience you haven't. I'm saying that when it comes to experience, and *especially* educative experience, thinking in terms *to have had*—living in the future perfect at the expense of the present—produces an inferior species of experience. Because the problem with doing in order to be is that being *is* doing. Doing exercises makes one...an exerciser. Contrary to the implicit philosophy of the nautilus machine, there is nothing wrong with rowing and *looking* like a rower because you *are* a *rower*...and not looking like one if you aren't.

And so the reason that a liberal education *is* a good thing—and I think that it is—isn't because it leaves you a well-rounded mind. It doesn't, and it certainly doesn't leave you a well-rounded person. It isn't like the Nautilus machine, there to leave you with a body looking *as if* you swam, ran, climbed and rowed. It's more that it is the chance to swim, run, climb or row. It is a marvelous platform for jumping out, up, and into experience of the world. A liberal education means you get to explore the history of China, learn plate tectonics, read Gerard Manley Hopkins and—I hope—John Dewey. "If you do not do these things, you should; these things are fun, and fun is good."

So I've been talking about discovery, about novelty, about trying to learn something new about the world. That seems very different from this homage to the middle ages, back when conformity to doctrine in Universities was enforced by expulsion, fines, and, every now and then, torture. But the relation between progress and conservatism might not be what we would first think.

Chicago is sometimes understood as a conservative institution. I definitely admit that this impression is not easy to shake, what with all the fake Gothic around, and the attachment of large numbers of the faculty to sports jackets that were manufactured in the 1950s. But a conservative is someone who wants to keep things basically the way they are now, or were very recently. (Someone who wants to return them to the days of way-back-when is a *radical*.) Whatever is now, thinks the conservative, is the way it should stay. Faculty members, like old people everywhere, tend to be conservative in the sense that we have worked very hard to excel in the system as it is now, and we are a little worried about changes that will devalue our assets. But this is something generic that you would see almost anywhere.

Chicagoans, rather than being conservatives, tend to be *conservationists*. A conservationist in no way assumes that the *way* that things are now is the *way* that they should be in the future. But a conservationist thinks that the *things* that we have now should not be discarded lightly. Some of them are junk, to be sure, but they aren't *all* junk, and it's worth looking over them carefully before getting rid of them. You might think that conservationists will tend to be *hoarders*, but the human mind is far too small to indiscriminately collect things. As Sherlock Holmes said, it's an attic with a little bit of space and if you want to bring something new in, you'll need to throw something else *out*.

You might think that conservationists will be *antiquarians*, but that's also rarely the case. An antiquarian always prefers the oldest version of anything. We must appreciate the antiquarian impulse—there is something mind-expanding about trying to wrap one's head around an object that implicitly makes reference to ways of living, laboring and loving that we no longer see around us. But we must also appreciate its antithesis, the *futurist* approach. The futurist is not only in love with whatever is next (“Next!”), the futurist is *appalled* at what is taken to be the hoarding of the conservationists. Burn down all the museums, and make way for something new! This is a wonderful attitude, for two reasons. The first is that it is an attitude of youth, of vitality, and of utter *cheek*, and it is such things that make life worth living. But the second is that it is a *memento mori*, a remembrance of the finitude of all earthly things, for the conservationist.

Because, as Kurt Vonnegut said, God—the inventor of volcanoes, earthquakes, hurricanes—God is not a conservationist. If we are preserving things because we believe that they *must* last forever, we are engaging in insanity. There *will* be a last time for everything; the last time Plato is read, the last time the Mona Lisa is viewed, and so on. If this frightens us—and leaves us feeling naked and alone in the face of the infinitude of an indifferent universe—then it suggests that we have stopped using our various artifacts as tools to see and experience the world *through* and have been looking *at* them, treating mortal things as if they were the immortal universe.

Yet a world of dedicated futurists is in many cases the most conservative one. To explain this, I'd like to make a distinction that is increasingly being forgotten in academia, and this is between *research* and *scholarship*. Research is when you go out, armed with your various theoretical and methodological tools, and try to wrest something new from reality. Universities are, we all know, dedicated to research. We are always encouraged to do *more* research, to get *graduate* students to do more research, and now, increasingly, to have *undergraduates* do research. I'm all for research. But it's not all that there is.

Scholarship is when you learn about what others have done, and, in particular, the *greatest* and *most important* things that were accomplished, as well as being able to put these in some sort of coherent history. If research looks towards the future, scholarship looks towards the past. Why do it?

For one thing, most research is a dead end. Most papers are *never* cited. I am not making this up. Science is an evolutionary project, but most of us leave no descendants. Of the research being done here, right now, we could eliminate perhaps half of it without decreasing the future of science one whit. And overall, we could eliminate 90% without loss. We should be able to save a great deal of resources by only doing the important stuff!

The problem is, no one has figured out how to determine in advance *which* 10% to preserve. And so we follow the inefficient, but immensely entertaining, process that God chose for life on earth—diversify, try things out, and become extinct, most of you. On the way we get dinosaurs built like an armored car, jellyfish that are more purchasing cooperatives than individuals, and animals that change their sex depending on the weather.

Well, we humans have one advantage that life as a whole doesn't, which is memory. Scholarship is, in part, our memory. And it is also our treasure, as it has been picked over, though imperfectly, by conservationists. I urge that you personally not cut out scholarship in favor of pure research. The chance that the work that your professor is doing now is superior to that done by Aristotle is vanishingly small, and reading your professor at the expense of Aristotle is not a good use of your time. But that's not because people were smarter back then. It's that of the thinkers who lived two to three millennia ago we've narrowed things down to a handful, while there are actually millions of people right now working making new things, most of which are junk. The reason everyone likes the oldies station isn't just that the songs are familiar. They're actually *better* on average than what you'd hear on the top 40 station; though in 30 years, we'll have selected the 10 really great songs from 2015 that are worth hearing over and over and over again.

But I also think that we need to understand the reason why research without scholarship is ineffective. Without a memory, research tends to go in circles, like Pooh and Piglet thinking that they are on the trail of the Heffalump, but only following their own footsteps. There are, of course, some sciences in which scholarship is more necessary than in others, but *some* is necessary in *all*. Without scholarship, research tends to focus on how things are being done right here, right now. That can be progressive, in the sense of continually moving away from where it is at any time. But it can lack overall direction, because it isn't tethered to a clear idea of what we know and what we don't know. Wandering in an amnesiac haze, we can re-do things over and over again that were done long ago, and better, by someone whose work is right across the street, in the library.

And this is why conservationists are often critical for progress, both for science and for students. When you get excited about some idea you have, it's common for faculty here to immediately refer you to something to read; for example, "Oh, then you must read Augustine." You might feel that they are trivializing you or brushing you off—saying, "Shut up kid. Nothing you think is new. It's all been done by someone smarter." But really, they are saying, "I see where you are on the map. There's a road near you. It's smooth going for a while and will save you a lot of time. Why don't you take that as far as you want, and *then* start off-roading."

Throw away Augustine, and you make a lot of wasted time for lots of undergraduates. I'm glad we saved his work. And I guess I'm glad we saved the gothic cathedral. I hope that in 10 years, they have dynamited Pick, because it's quite ugly. But this might be a keeper. Not because it's phony ye-olde. But because actually, when you really look at it, it's quite pretty, especially from the inside. Maybe not as nice from the outside as the Harper Library, I'd say, but certainly nicer than most. Even the unnecessary arches are beautiful.

The idea of the gothic arch was not only that it was a great way to support weight, but that it would naturally draw the eye upwards to think of heaven. Of course, as the low Church Baptists complained, often what one appreciated and pondered was the splendor of the physical human structure, the might of the human institution, and not its insignificance from a divine perspective. Without taking a side in this particular fight, I think something comparable can be said about our intellectual institutions. They are a means to an end, but as is so often the case, means wind up getting treated as ends in themselves.

We often oppose the “ivory tower,” with its faux medievalism, to the real world. The life of books is understood as some sort of irrelevant retreat, and we must admit that we are being selfish if we choose to devote ourselves to study. This notion that the ivory tower is something to stay inside of, to be locked up in, like the tower of London, suggests that we have a forced choice. On one side, we might indefensibly choose to remain within the artificial cognitive structures of our own academic culture, enjoying studying the works of our own hand: using sunlight only to illuminate our stained glass creations. If we reject this, we see no option other than to go vandal on the whole thing—to smash through the windows that separate us from natural life, and instead to sunbathe on a pile of rubble. If that be to embrace irrationalism, what other choice do you have? But it isn’t so. The reason we are here is not to flee the world, but to join it. The key thing about a real ivory tower isn’t the ivory. Rebar and concrete will do just as well if you need to make an observatory, so that you are in the best possible position to aim your telescope towards the heart of the universe.

So we don’t aim at *education*, we aim at the *world*, and when we hit the world, this is what we call “experience.” Do we really “hit” it? Sometimes, yes, like going straight into a brick wall. But just as often, when we find the world, we realize that the world was reaching out for us. Those who end up at Chicago are usually very good at working, working, oh so hard. But it is also necessary to make your ear attentive to the world and to “hear what the material has to say to you,” to “let it come to you,” in geneticist Barbara McClintock’s words. The reason that wisdom is with the humble is that sometimes in order to learn more, we have to unlearn, and allow ourselves to be reschooled by the world. Sometimes it offends our pride less to deny that there really is a world with its own ways that are not (or at least not *yet*) our ways. And we can convince ourselves of just that.

For as John Dewey knew, those who stay inside the cathedral for too long start to doubt that there is anything outside; they are so used to looking at stained glass windows that they don’t believe that an open window is any different. That so-called outside, they think, is just a pattern of coloring on the glass! But, argued Dewey, this is not so. Experience penetrates down into the world; it really does, and there is nothing that is more deserving of the term *real* than this experience.

Sometimes, though, the only way to get at the world is to leave it. This is true if only because, as Hannah Arendt said, to *think* means to put our immediate sensations at least temporarily on hold. But this is also true for eminently practical reasons. You can see a mountain, you can feel a rock, you can taste dirt, but past a certain point, to pursue the nature of matter will require that you set up a vacuum chamber and, if you yourself can’t get in it, you will somehow need to transport your questioning there.

This is why the tension between the two sides of Chicago can't, I think, be solved simply by dynamiting all the old buildings, though if it can, I call I get to push the plunger. It's because experience requires supports; to understand what is outside, even the best field researchers need to come inside. And there isn't anything wrong with loving your tools: including the vacuum chamber, the observatory, even that tower. The only problem comes, as Heraclitus said, when we seek truth in "our own little worlds, and not in the great and common world." It is that world, great and common, wide and wonderful, and wild as anything, that we are aiming at, and when we find it, that is what we call experience.

When you are done here, I hope that you are experienced.

Not necessarily educated, but beautiful.

Welcome to the University of Chicago.

* Note: this was spontaneously changed in delivery to "You can try this at home," to the general approval of the audience.

Further reading:

Edith Abbott and S. P. Breckinridge, "Women in Industry: The Chicago Stockyards" (*Journal of Political Economy* 19 [1911]: 632-654)

Hannah Arendt, *Thinking*

John Dewey, *Experience and Nature; Education and Experience*

Evelyn Fox Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism*

Wolfgang Köhler, *The Mentality of Apes*

William McNeill, *Hutchins's University*

Georg Simmel, *Fundamental Problems of Sociology*