Socializing Democracy: Jane Addams and John Dewey

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The author argues that the contributions of Jane Addams and the women of the Hull House Settlement to pragmatist theory, particularly as formulated by John Dewey, are largely responsible for its emancipatory emphasis. By recovering Addams's own pragmatist theory, a version of pragmatist feminism is developed that speaks to such contemporary feminist issues as the manner of inclusion in society of diverse persons, marginalized by gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation; the strengths and limitations of standpoint theory; and the need for feminist ethics to embrace the social nature of morality. The model of social democracy that informs the pragmatist shift from a detached theory of knowing to an engaged theory of understanding differentiates it from both liberal individualism and communitarianism. Dewey's repeated attacks on the incoherence of the model of classical liberal individualism, for example, are even more persuasive when seen in the context of the model of the intersubjective constitution of the individual that Addams develops from examining the relation of personal development to social interaction among the women residents of Hull House.

According to John Dewey (1980a, 49), "the very process of living together educates."[1] It does so by enlarging and enlightening experience, stimulating and enriching the imagination, and creating responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought. He flies in the face of a long philosophical tradition of man as thinker, one who separates himself off from the distractions of the everyday world and who, in the privacy of his consciousness, reflects on reflection itself when he further asserts that a person really living alone would have no reason to reflect on her or his experience and extract its meaning. In contrast to such unmotivated reflection for its own sake, thinking is for Dewey (1980a, 49) "the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation," and he locates it in such improbable places as in the midst of the family. He says, for example, that it is in the interplay between immature children and

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more mature adults that the necessity for communicating the lessons of experience arises and calls forth the need to express it in understandable terms.

This move to find the origins of understanding in the needs of everyday life is startling in its break with the elitist intellectual tradition central to philosophy. It makes women, as the traditional caretakers and earliest socializers of children, central figures in efforts to understand experience. How did this remarkable shift from a detached "theory of knowing" to an engaged "theory of learning" come about? Thomas M. Alexander (1993, 371) attributes it to the pragmatist model of environmentally engaged rationality or intelligence in which imagination is the capacity to understand the actual in light of the possible. Imagination is the capacity to creatively explore inherited structures from past experience in light of the future as a horizon of possible actions, and so of possible meanings. William James (1981, 19) located the shift in the new pragmatist psychology, which takes "mind in the midst of all its concrete relations" and not as a pure spirit, isolated faculty, or brain in a vat. Dewey (1980a, 5) begins where thinking begins, namely, in the midst of life, with its "whole range of experience, individual and social." He uses the terms *life* and *experience* in the "pregnant sense," of "continuity through renewal."

Society can only exist through "the constant reweaving of the social fabric" by communicating its ideals, hopes, standards, and beliefs from one generation to the next (Dewey 1980a, 6). And "to learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication the effective sense of being individually a distinctive member of a community" (Dewey 1984a, 332). If communities exist in virtue of what their members have in common—preeminently aims, beliefs, aspirations, and knowledge—then there are few intact communities in contemporary postindustrial societies. Dewey recognizes that only through communication can a common understanding in the sense of similar emotional and intellectual dispositions be reached. The ideal of communities sharing common ends and directing their activities in light of them does not mean they must be homogeneous or intolerant of difference. But where communication breaks down, is hegemonically one-sided, or is distorted to foster self-serving ends, then community is unlikely to be achieved.

Because of the ambiguity of appeals to community, Dewey distinguishes between the traits that happen to describe existing communities and those that are desirable and can be used to criticize undesirable features and suggest improvement, thus preserving the connection of

our ideal goals with presently existing situations. The two traits he finds in any social group are some interest held in common and a certain amount of interaction with other groups. He derives from them a democratic standard—namely, "not only more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest, but greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control" and "not only freer interaction between social groups" but "continuous readjustment through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse" (Dewey 1980a, 88-92).

The diversity of experience, which grounds democratic forms of life, is more apparent now than ever in the past because of intense media exploitation of differences. But the presence of diversity alone cannot guarantee democracy if it results in misunderstanding, indifference, or hatred rather than in sympathy. Jane Addams ([1902] 1964, 9-10) attributes many social ills "to the lack of imagination which prevents a realization of the experiences of other people." She draws an unusual consequence of the assumption of the centrality of experience to understanding—namely, "that we are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences, since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life." If, in our contempt for others, we limit the circle of our acquaintances to those whom we have already decided to respect, "we not only circumscribe our range of life, but limit the scope of our ethics."

Addams identifies as a common conviction of selfish persons, for example, the belief that they are different from other people and deserve special treatment. They seek out others who share their political and religious convictions and thereby narrow their interests and experiences. Such exceptionalism is the antithesis of the democratic ethos: "Thus the identification with the common lot which is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the source and expression of social ethics" (Addams [1902] 1964, 11). In developing this pragmatist conception of democracy, Addams examines various groups who, under its influence, are accepting social obligations that are resulting in new patterns of conduct. A basic premise of the exposition is that "the cure for the ills of Democracy is more Democracy" (Addams [1902] 1964, 12).

As long as such injunctions are understood as referring to the liberal notion of democracy as a process by which individuals seek to satisfy their own needs in complete disregard of those of others who are expected to protect their own interests or fall by the wayside, then having more of what ails such a political order would not cure it. But

the pragmatist model of democracy is radically different from the liberal model. Pragmatists see behind the political forms of democracy another reality altogether. Instead of taking the political form as an expression of isolated units of self-seeking individuals, they understand democracy as a form of association especially appropriate for persons who are constituted by the multiple relations through which consciousness evolves and values develop (see Dewey 1980a, 1983, 1984a, 1984b). Having imaginatively reconceived the behavior it encourages and the values it presupposes, they seek to cooperate with others in that continual transformation of varied and interactive forms of life toward those better ends that pragmatism seeks.

The horizontal linkage of persons, no one of whom is granted antecedent advantage, that constitutes democratic forms of organization profoundly challenges the assertion of privilege that underlies hierarchical forms of government in which power flows from the top down. The problem with the liberal model of democracy, especially as practiced in conservative politics, is that it claims to guarantee an equal voice to all while actually protecting privilege. It assumes that political outcomes produced by the merely additive deliberative process of one person, one vote are a just expression of the public good. To reach this conclusion, it also assumes that each person is equally positioned, that no person is any better situated or more powerful than another, and that persons do not aggregate into powerful coalitions that can not only diminish the input of those less well situated but can deliberately isolate them and encourage antagonistic behavior preventing a counterbalancing coalition. Moreover, whatever values one holds are irrelevant because the needs of each have equal weight and only equal weight with those of all others. The ends thus attained cannot be questioned from some other source of valuation because that would unfairly privilege that other source over all the values of the participants that have been mediated through a procedure that supposedly guarantees to each an equal say.

For those who challenge such assumptions, advocating more democracy under this rubric of democracy would simply perpetuate an unjust state of affairs. Dewey himself (1987b, 288) expressed dissatisfaction with democracy insofar that it operates under conditions of exploitation by special interests. Moreover, pragmatists argue that the liberal model of democracy is deeply flawed because its assumption of the isolated, autonomous individual as the subject of rights is false, and therefore it is not surprising that its actual political expressions are also deeply flawed (see Dewey 1984a, 1987a). As Dewey

argues against a minimalist view of democracy, it is not the numerical triumph of majority rule that constitutes the spirit of democracy but the principled inclusion of all persons in decision making because all are valued for their unique contributions. For W.E.B. Du Bois (1975, 144) too, "the real argument for democracy" is its recognition of the worth of each person's feelings and experiences as an invaluable resource for the community and consequent belief in the inherent capacity for learning of its members. Therefore, he says that "if democracy tries to exclude women or Negroes or the poor or any class because of innate characteristics which do not interfere with intelligence, then that democracy cripples itself and belies its name." Unlike pragmatists, Susan Okin Moller (1998) rejects the antiessentialist argument that race, class, and other aspects of identity are so intrinsically bound up with gender that ignoring them seriously undermines the worth of feminist theory that emphasizes gender. Nonetheless, she does recognize that since persons tend to generalize from their own experiences, and since it is still important to take such differences as class, race, and sexual orientation into account to avoid false generalizations, it is very important for feminist theory and practice to include a variety of voices.

In his denial of the plausibility of the self-interested individual of classical liberal theory, however, Dewey does not embrace communitarianism. He neither celebrates the status quo nor recommends a return to some nostalgically imagined traditional society. He is aware that most communities fall far short of the ideal setting for mutual growth and development and that members more often use each other for their own ends without the consent of those used. He states that as a matter of fact, most relations of parent and child, teacher and pupil, employer and employee, governor and governed fall far short of such communication of shared standards. From where, then, is Dewey getting his model of a democratic community as one in which social intelligence flourishes? Intelligence is social, I should add, because meaning arises from use; to have an idea of a thing means to be able to foresee the probable consequence of its action on us and of ours on it. And it is by observation and participation in how others around us use things, the recognition of the instrumentalities through which they reach their ends, that intelligence is developed from the earliest years of life (see Seigfried 1996, 95-101).

Pragmatists reject freely invented utopian models as exercises in wish fulfillment, preferring instead to locate ideality in intelligence naturalistically understood as "the sum-total of impulses, habits,

emotions, records and discoveries which forecast what is desirable and undesirable in future possibilities, and which contrive ingeniously in behalf of imagined good" (Dewey 1980b, 48). Pragmatically valid models start from some desirable good that is already present but not fully realized or secured or extended beyond its original boundaries.[2] According to Dewey (1984a, 329), it is "only when we start from a community as a fact, grasp the fact in thought so as to clarify and enhance its constituent elements, can we reach an idea of democracy which is not utopian." From where, therefore, is he deriving the "desirable traits of forms of community life which actually exist" in order to "employ them to criticize undesirable features and suggest improvement?" (Dewey 1980a, 89).

In the early years, when Dewey was developing pragmatist philosophy, there were two communities with which he was intensely engaged and that he frequently acknowledged as important influences but were largely ignored by subsequent scholars in favor of a more traditional history of ideas approach. One was the Laboratory School, from which Dewey drew his ideas on early childhood education and developmental psychology. He particularly singled out the theoretical and practical development of its experimental educational model by his wife, Alice Chipman Dewey, and the pioneer educational administrator, Ella Flagg Young (Dewey 1978b, 179).[3] The other community was the Hull House Settlement, founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in Chicago in 1889 as a way for some socially conscious members of the new generations of college-educated women to use their recently acquired skills to alleviate the worst effects of industrialization on the waves of immigrants crowding into the inner city.

The settlement movement began with the establishment of Toynbee Hall by an Anglican clergyman, Samuel Barnett, and some young Oxford men in the East End of London in 1884. It was inspired by personal service to the poor. By 1890, three settlement houses, founded independently of each other, were in operation in Boston, New York, and Chicago. According to Mina Carson (1990, 53), "they saw their role as mediators between competing social and economic interests, interpreters shuttling between the alien cultures of the recent immigrants and the entrenched and defensive 'natives.'" Hull House in Chicago developed a pragmatist experimental model of transaction that criticized top-down approaches to problem solving in favor of working with others in a way calculated to change the attitudes and habits of both the settlement workers, mostly middle- and upper-

class women, and members of the impoverished working-class neighborhood with whom they worked. Hull House attracted the admiration and support of the Chicago school of pragmatists, including Dewey and George Herbert Mead, and formed an important part of the milieu out of which the departments of sociology and social work were later established at the University of Chicago (see Seigfried 1996, 58-59, 73-79).

It seems to me that Dewey (1980a) in his 1916 book, *Democracy and Education*, is drawing on his experiences with Hull House, the story of which was published in 1910 by Addams (1981) in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*.[4] In one of the chapters, "The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements," previously delivered as a paper in 1892, Addams (1981, 90-100) develops a robust model of such a community as Dewey advocates. The traits of Dewey's (1980a, 89-93) ideal democratic community—namely, that it is "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience"—were actually instantiated at Hull House. It went beyond the merely physical and organic "associated or joint activity [that] is a condition of the creation of a community" to embody the moral dimension necessary to a genuine community, namely, one that it is "emotionally, intellectually, and consciously sustained" (Dewey 1984a, 330). In fact, in *The School as Social Centre* (1902), Dewey (1976, 90-91) says he is explicitly drawing on Hull House as his model of an ideal community. He thought especially noteworthy its ability to "provide means for bringing people and their ideas and beliefs together, in such ways as will lessen friction and instability, and introduce deeper sympathy and wider understanding."[5] No natural family unit could embody the reflective awareness Addams brings to an experimental community that is in a limited but real sense consciously constructed but also subject to the push and pull of unforeseen political, economic, and social circumstances. Addams's account concretely embodies those communicative practices and values that Dewey describes as inchoately existing in the need of communities to survive over time.

Addams's account also satisfies Dewey's pragmatic theory of knowledge as inquiry that resolves problematic situations. The problematic situation in question was that of the growing ranks of the working poor and unemployed, and the social dislocations and crime brought about by the industrial revolution. In explaining the function of the Hull House settlement in 1899, Addams exposes the class divisions that the general public would rather ignore than admit. She uses this very embarrassment over the existence of wealthy and poor

classes in an America proud of its democratic heritage and ideologically committed to equality to urge a radical reorganization of society to make its actuality match its self-image. She deliberately encourages the unspoken suspicion that the intellectual and moral superiority claimed by the upper classes stems from an economic status based on an accident of birth, that is, on an aristocracy of privilege rather than a democracy of merit. In further attributing class divisions to the superior educational advantages that the upper classes enjoy, she provides a way to undercut their elitist nature by democratically extending the benefits of education to all classes. The settlement supports the just claims that the poor have to be included in the goods of a democracy. It "represented not so much a sense of duty of the privileged toward the unprivileged, of the 'haves' to the 'have nots' . . . as a desire to equalize through social effort those results which superior opportunity may have given the possessor" (Addams 1982, 185).

Rather than appealing to the philanthropic motives of such a reconstruction of society to give equal opportunity to all, Addams draws on the pragmatist contention "that the most pressing problem of modern life is that of a reconstruction and a reorganization of the knowledge which we possess." She quotes both Dewey and James as urging that knowledge is not its own justification but a means of resolving the problematic situations in which it arises. Among the background conditions of such resolution is the understanding that beliefs are rules of action and the intention to understand the conditions under which knowledge can be most effectively employed in human action.[6] The women of Hull House consciously organized themselves into such a group for the express purpose of developing knowledge in action. She rejected the characterization of the settlement by members of the newly formed department of sociology at the University of Chicago as being a sociological laboratory or as aiming at gathering clinical material. In opposing the detached view of knowledge that was gaining strength in the universities seeking to emulate positivistic models of science, settlement members desired instead "to use synthetically and directly whatever knowledge they, as a group, may possess, to test its validity and to discover the conditions under which this knowledge may be employed." The advantage of their collectively living together was in the ability to share their methods and "make experience continuous beyond the individual," which involved "test[ing] the value of human knowledge by action" (Addams 1982, 186-87).

Addams defends the Hull House Settlement approach to solving problems as both objectively valuable and subjectively satisfying. Her explanation of the importance for women at a specific historical moment of living together as a community as a means of solving seemingly intractable social problems can illuminate pragmatist claims of the social character of intelligence. It is recognized that Dewey (1986) first developed the five steps of inquiry that lead to warranted knowledge in the context of educational theory, but the more refined model developed in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* is sufficiently rigorous and self-contained to be developed on its own terms. This tendency to treat *Logic* apart from Dewey's educational theory is exacerbated when it is also interpreted from an analytic epistemological perspective that emphasizes method at the expense of context and purpose and opens the way for the morally detached instrumentalist approach it was meant to subvert and that critics too often attribute to pragmatism.

Mark C. Smith (1994), for example, points out the anomaly that Dewey's social theory was invoked by the two opposing sides that have dominated debate in the social sciences from at least 1918 to 1941. The one that was eventually dominant advocated value neutrality and empiricist data collection, and the other held that all investigation was purposeful and encoded values. This contradictory appropriation can only happen if pragmatist theory is reduced to a methodological heuristic, freed from its background conditions. This all too frequent move is contrary to Dewey's argument that all theory is embedded in a context that includes background conditions and selective interest. These backgrounds of culture and theory, which are tacit and taken for granted, "are ways of interpretation and of observation, of valuation, of everything explicitly thought of." Selective interest refers to the fact that in every particular case of thinking, some attitude or bias is directive; "there is care, concern, implicated in every act of thought" (Dewey 1985a, 11-14). It is my contention that Addams's explanation of community is an indispensable part of the background that contributes to the meaning of the social nature of inquiry that is developed by Dewey (1986) in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*.

In a review of Dewey's *The Quest for Certainty*, Habermas (1998) criticizes Dewey for urging the use of the experimental method in moral and political value judgments and says he should have instead developed George Herbert Mead's theory of taking the perspective of

the other in social interactions.[7] But Dewey, who was a close friend of Mead and frequently shared ideas with him, does consistently urge the importance of taking the viewpoint of concrete others as a necessary part of experimental inquiry. These two positions are not antithetical but complementary in pragmatism, including pragmatist feminism.[8] According to Dewey (1980a, 8-9), if I am to be successful in communicating my experience to others, then I have to be able to see it as others do, to see points of contact of my own life with those of others, "to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him [or her] intelligently of one's own experience. All communication is like art." When social arrangements are so approached, they educate those who participate in them.

The advantage of using the Hull House Settlement, a voluntary, self-reflective, and goal-oriented community, as a model of the unity of theory and practice that Dewey advocates is that it demonstrates not only the possibility but also the actuality of such an ideal alliance. Although it did not exhibit all the features of that more traditional unit of society, the family, that Dewey also draws on, Addams's account does include the experiences of more traditional but diverse social units such as immigrant and upper-class families. In contrast to Dewey's explanation of how the sociality of human beings is demonstrated in the necessity for adults and children to cooperate in child-rearing practices, an explanation that can seem remote from contemporary experiences of the dysfunctionalism of many such arrangements today, Addams explores the problems encountered by families because of industrialism, capitalistic exploitation of workers, and immigration from rural to urban settings.

As Addams's work is being rediscovered and reevaluated in contemporary scholarship, the pragmatist context of her theory and practice is too often ignored or misunderstood. Dorothy Ross (1998, 236-37) adds to our understanding of Addams by situating what she calls Jane Addams's interpretive sociology within the genre of domestic discourse, defined as "the connected discussion of the home as a privileged moral space, of women's nature, and of child-rearing and education, that took shape in the late eighteenth century in England and America and continued in the United States at least until World War I." It was an amalgam of the interests of the native-born middle class and the domestic concerns of women that produced a highly gendered language of domesticity. As a way of understanding society, it privileged women's intuitive sensibilities, fine spiritual perceptions, and "sympathetic understanding of human and moral

relations." It used the model of child rearing as one affected by the environment and advocated engaging the child's own interests and feelings rather than unilaterally imposing authority. Emphasizing learning from experience, women in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era expanded their role in the domestic realm of concrete and interpersonal experience to encompass other classes such as slaves and the poor.

Ross (1998) emphasizes Addams's immersion in romantic writers, such as Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, and Emerson, who valorized feeling, subjectivity, individuality, and intuition as opposed to the mechanistic world of scientific understanding. She says that romantic intuition operated by sympathetic understanding rather than by the distanced analysis of scientific understanding. According to Ross's genealogy, Addams expanded her romantic intuitionism, individualism, and organicism through assimilating Huxley's and Darwin's scientific outlook. Feminine intuition expands into a painstaking observation of nature and perception of truth; it gains authority through the same painstaking efforts that scientific men use to become more accurate and self-critical in their observations. She also "soon folded her domestic class values into the larger goal of 'social democracy'" (Ross 1998, 241). All this analysis covers the years up to 1892 and includes Addams's college years and the first few years after the founding of Hull House in 1889.

Ross's explanation of the basic principles of domestic discourse is plausible, as is her explanation of the way that Addams incorporated into it elements of romanticism and used it as a means to justify her own as well as other reform-minded women's involvement in the social issues of the day. But I think she mistakenly drives a wedge between pragmatist theory and values and what she calls the genre of domestic discourse that women used to revalue their lives within the home and to extend their influence out of it. On one hand, pragmatist theory incorporates many traits that have been culturally assigned to women in modern Western societies, such as the role of feelings in intelligence, nurturing child-parent relationships as models of human development, a preference for negotiation over confrontation, and emphasizing an ethics of care (see Seigfried 1996, 202-23).[9] On the other hand, Addams's theories and methodologies are thoroughly pragmatist: she closely links theory and practice, the personal and the political, facts and values, experience and experimentation. For pragmatists, scientific understanding is engaged, not distanced, and sympathetic understanding is a valuable aspect of experimental inquiry.

Ross (1998) does say that "by 1899, pragmatism gave [Addams] the language to frame a theoretical justification of the settlement that realized her collegiate ambition for gendered knowledge." But in 1891, Addams had already met and worked both with Florence Kelley, with her strong socialist theories and activities, and by 1893 with the pragmatist John Dewey.[10] Ross (1998) chides Addams for her romanticism and separatism that kept her "from appreciating the fuller connection called for by the pragmatists' experimental conception of knowledge" (pp. 245-46). But what is her evidence for this claim? One piece is the fact that Addams did not want the settlement movement taken over and run as a laboratory for the benefit of the sociology department of the University of Chicago. She is aware of Addams's motivation for preventing Hull House from being taken over by the university but draws the wrong conclusion in regard to pragmatism. Addams wanted to keep an institution founded and overwhelmingly staffed by women from being subordinated to the male-dominated university and to keep intact its pragmatist commitment to the unity of theory and practice and to putting knowledge at the service of the community rather than using the community merely as a source of data for research projects unconnected to its welfare.[11]

Ross (1998) also quotes Addams's distinction of the settlement ideal from that of the university ideal as evidence that she did not agree with the pragmatists' experimental conception of knowledge. Addams (1982, 187) had said that "the settlement stands for application as opposed to research; for emotion as opposed to abstraction, for universal interest as opposed to specialization." But Ross seems to be confusing pragmatist theory with the institutions of higher education in which most pragmatists worked. Pragmatists in the multidisciplinary department that Dewey chaired while he was at the University of Chicago were pioneers in refashioning the realm of knowledge by holding it to account according to whether it contributed to the quality of the life of individuals in communities and by directing it toward resolving problematic situations outside the academy. They often clashed with the classic ideal of a disinterested search for the truth advocated by President William Rainey Harper and his successor Robert M. Hutchins until eventually most quit or retired in protest. Dewey frequently criticized private or economic interests for co-opting knowledge under the guise of disinterested research. When Addams (1982, 187) says that "the ideal and developed settlement would attempt to test the value of human knowledge in action, and realization, quite as the complete and ideal university would concern

itself with the discovery of knowledge in all its branches," she is also expressing the pragmatist ideal of knowledge and contrasting it with the traditional ideal of the university. She is not separating the application of knowledge from research and extending the boundaries of knowledge, as Ross accuses her of doing.

Ross (1998) is also mistaken in thinking that Addams viewed knowledge "as ideal truths, progressively realized as they are 'universalized' in history" in contrast to "the pragmatists' provisional, open-ended view of knowledge in which research and application fed into one another" (p. 246). Addams shares the same pragmatist principle of universalization as the progressive realization of values by ever larger and more diverse groups of people, a process by which they literally become universal or widespread, not a process that merely confirms that they were somehow already universal in some implausibly abstract and misguided sense. *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (Addams 1981) is a sustained practical demonstration of how research and application are inseparable and what dire consequences follow when theory imposes on practice instead of being constantly revised as a result of the experimental outcomes that follow from acting on high-minded but unavoidably limited beliefs.

The social dimension of ethics is paramount for all the pragmatists, and this means for Addams and Dewey a special emphasis on democracy as a way of life. Addams's first book, *Democracy and Social Ethics* ([1902] 1964), had a strong impact on William James as well as Dewey. James called it "one of the great books of our time" because of its "sympathetic interpretation to one another of the different classes of which society consists" (Lasch 1965, 62). A student of Dewey's, Jessie A. Charters (1982), reported that by the turn of the century, he was already much influenced not only by James and Rudolf Hermann Lotze but also "by the social philosophy of Jane Addams, then the head of Hull House." Mrs. Charters remarked about the first class she had with Dewey in 1901: "In fact, one of my pleasant recollections is of Dr. Dewey's inviting Jane Addams to his class, his tributes to her, and his having us students buy Jane Addams['s] *Democracy and Social Ethics*."[12]

In *Democracy and Social Ethics,* Addams ([1902] 1964, 7) rejects the tradition of individualistic ethics that reflects the isolated individual of classical liberal theory and instead identifies social morality with the democratic spirit because "it implies that diversified human experience and resultant sympathy which are the foundation and guarantee of democracy." She argues that to remain content with individual

morality, with its emphasis on personal effort, in an age that demands social morality is to utterly fail to understand the current situation. The salient characteristics of the current situation for Addams ([1902] 1964, 2-3) were the growing dissatisfaction with the banality of everyday life expressed by the new generation of men and women, their creeping disenchantment with "the dreary round of uninteresting work" that was all they could look forward to, and revulsion toward what had become a suffocating morality centering on self-development, family, and one's own friends.

Although Addams refers to a general malaise and bewilderment, her characterization most accurately describes the lives of the first generations of women to attend colleges in substantial numbers, only to find themselves trapped in traditional roles. She is describing the growing dissatisfaction of mainly middle-class white women with their confinement to domestic roles and their desire to participate more fully in the public sphere. It is their growing consciousness of wider social obligations that creates the conditions for recognizing the inadequacy of an individualistic ethics that limits their obligations to family and personal integrity. Their consciousness has been raised enough to feel an intense maladjustment between their aspirations and their actions, but not yet enough to have effected desirable social changes or new laws. Addams hopes to respond to their needs by developing a clearer understanding of what constitutes social morality and its practice.

Her explanation has striking parallels with Betty Friedan's (1963) analysis in *The Feminine Mystique*, written more than 50 years later, of "the problem which has no name," namely, many women's feelings of being trapped as housewives. But equally striking are the contrasting solutions offered. Friedan's liberal analysis is individualistic and does not challenge capitalistic economic arrangements. She advocates that women see through the delusions of the feminine mystique that glorify the life of wife and mother as excluding any other meaningful commitment for women. She also argues that housewives should give up voluntary community projects for serious professional engagement leading to paid, professional work. She even proposes that to free themselves from being overburdened, middle-class women should stop trying to be supermoms and be willing to hire cleaning women (Friedan 1963, 338, 346-50). By contrast, Addams's perspective is social and emancipatory. She shows how white, upper-class women exploit the immigrant women they hire, and she

argues that it is not merely work but a conscious endeavor to transform the conditions under which work is undertaken, especially by the poorer members of society, that will free better-off women from their malaise.

In fact, the same lack of outlet for their powers that drew college-educated young women of Friedan's generation out of suburban domesticity and back into the workforce motivated some idealistic young women of Addams's generation to join the settlement house movement. They not only resented the family claim that disproportionately restricted their opportunities but also keenly felt that their lives were being wasted by cultural restrictions on women's meaningful participation in the larger social issues of the day. Addams (1981, 92) directly links the "longing to socialize their democracy" felt by both young women and men with the realization of a fatal lack of harmony between their theory and their lives, between thought and action. By this she means the recognition that in a democracy, "the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain . . . until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life." In her explanation of "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," she rejects the liberal ideal that Friedan holds out of individual self-fulfillment achievable apart from the good of the community. Individual and social fulfillment are reciprocal. It was no mere platitude that in helping others, the settlement workers were helping themselves. Addams carried this insight further as she realized through daily interactions that those with whom she worked that they had as much to contribute to the resolution of neighborhood problems as the settlement workers did.

Like all pragmatists, Addams begins with experience. How does her analysis differ from that of the canonical classical pragmatists? It does so in at least two ways. In the first place, she explicitly draws on a wider and more diverse range of experiences in her reflections, particularly those outside of the white, male middle class, such as factory and domestic workers, various ethnic groups of recent immigrants, and poor and working-class women. In the second place, she develops a pragmatist account of experience from women's experiences, particularly those of early generations of white, college-educated women like herself and other women settlement members who were beginning to redefine their roles outside the home, as well as those of inner-city working-class women of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including a usually neglected segment of this population—namely,

poor, elderly women. As a result, she demonstrates the radical consequences of taking the pluralism, perspectivism, and finite limitations of human understanding seriously.

As Addams develops the relation of theory to experience, she argues for replacing the individual ethics represented by charity work with the social ethics represented by settlement work. Just as the men who compose the Western canon of philosophy assumed that they could make claims about humanity as such based on their own experiences, so also Addams assumes that what is learned from the experiences of women, minorities, and working-class lives offers valuable insights into the human condition. Her rhetoric can obscure her practice, however, as when the putative subject of the explanation is explicitly "men and women," but the supposedly common experiences she draws on are obviously women's. In an interesting historical twist, I think that her multiculturalism and pluralism led to an inclusive language and outlook in most of her writings that did not lend itself to developing an explicitly feminist theory, although it incorporated an explicitly feminist point of view and practice.[13]

My claim does not seem to apply to those of her writings that argue for women's suffrage and those that extol women's strengths as peacemakers. But because of her commitment to a pluralism of perspectives, even in these writings she argues that a woman's point of view would complement, rather than displace, more dominant points of view, always keeping in mind that efforts to accommodate each other would inevitably transform both perspectives. In the case of *Democracy and Social Ethics* ([1902] 1964), for example, where the first three substantive chapters out of six are recognizably feminist analyses of women's roles as charity workers, family members, and housewives, the feminist emphasis is nonetheless decentered because the organizing themes and central issues are the gender-neutral ones given in the title. The theory can only be abstracted from her practice through a conscious intention to do so. The absence of such an intention among pragmatist philosophers generally may be one reason why pragmatist feminism remained unrecognized and undeveloped for so long.

One example of Addams's tendency to veil women's experiences as gender-neutral ones can be found in the introduction to *Democracy and Social Ethics* ([1902] 1964, 5), where she explains that men and women, eagerly seeking a fuller participation in life, consciously make the decision to trust their experiences. She imagines them saying that they have met the obligations of family life spontaneously

because of the memories and affections out of which obligation develops, but they need guidance on how to meet larger social obligations. But it is women, and not men, who have been socialized to unquestionably assume family obligations. And as Carol Gilligan (1982) has since argued, it is more characteristic of women than of men to think that obligation develops out of affection. Society certainly does not leave men in doubt about what their larger obligations outside the family are. Women's experience is implicitly being taken as the norm for experience.

Like Dewey, Addams shows how morality can evolve out of the intimate relations central to human development. She says that obligations spontaneously develop out of family life because of a common fund of memories and affections. Such obligations are rational because we have learned from daily experience the folly of expecting that ideals imposed from without will actually be practiced in everyday life. Just as ideals must themselves be a rational development of life, so they are most likely to be secured from interest in life itself. "We slowly learn that life consists of processes as well as results, and that failure may come quite as easily from ignoring the adequacy of one's method as from selfish or ignoble aims" (Addams [1902] 1964, 6). Addams thus comes to the pragmatist principle of the inseparability of means and ends. She also concludes that her analysis leads to a conception of democracy as a way of life. Social morality results in a democratic temperament, if not always in its practice, because it recognizes that the diversity of human experience should elicit sympathetic understanding.

This democratic spirit clashed with the ideologically driven movements of the time. In the decade (1890-1900) following the Haymarket riot, socialists of every stripe demanded identity of creed as the criterion of fellowship and repudiated the Hull House commitment to "similarity of aim and social sympathy" as too loose and vague. Although also longing for a definite creed that would both analyze the situation and provide steps to resolving it, Addams (1981, 139, 134) remained wary of such totalizing solutions and the fanaticism and dogmatism exhibited in a lack of tolerance and zeal to convert everyone else to the truth of one's own position.[14] The dogmatic demand that everyone submit to one creed, the confidence that one person or political group could speak for all others and knew their plight better than they did, reminded Addams too strongly of the sense of moral superiority felt by the upper classes as they smugly manipulated the lower classes. One of her major aims in *Democracy*

and Social Ethics ([1902] 1964) was to undercut this self-righteous view of charity workers, society matrons, and leaders of industry that they knew better and had better motives than those dependent on them and so had a right to compel by force what was not freely given. She showed that good motivations alone, the core of private morality, were insufficient not only as a moral guide but as a guide to understanding the situation and what was required to justly resolve conflicts. She even argues in "A Modern King Lear" that the president of the Pullman Company, George M. Pullman, not the workers, was guilty of inciting the explosive Pullman strike of 1894 because he believed in personal morality, which emphasizes the virtues that support capitalism—namely, self-control, respect for property, sobriety, and hard work—when he should have been developing the social virtues—namely, those that foster solidarity with others (see Seigfried 1996, 229-30).

Addams's awareness of her privileged status in regard to the disadvantaged persons she was eager to help led her to reflect on how important it was to recognize one's own biases and to take steps to minimize their impact on communicative encounters so that marginalized voices could be heard. Lynn M. Sanders (1997) has confirmed the importance of Addams's insight by showing how ignoring the influence that dominant genders, classes, and races exert in contemporary deliberative settings perpetuates inequality and undermines the democratic worth attributed to participation. Addams's awareness sets her off from other pragmatists of her generation such as Dewey, whose lack of suspicion of the motives of others led him to underestimate the extent and depth of misogyny, racism, homophobia, and classism in personal habits and societal institutions and to neglect the development of an account of the more irrational sides of human understanding and use of power (Seigfried 1998b, 194). More recently, pragmatists have followed Addams in recognizing the distorting effects of unrecognized biases on social and political decision making (see Hickman 1999 [this issue]).

Addams (1981, 40) begins *Twenty Years at Hull-House* with the observation that earlier generations of Americans, like her father, still confidently believed they possessed "a fund of common experiences." They also held to the belief that if the American experiment in democracy was to work, "it must be brought about by the people themselves." But by moving to the poorest part of the inner city with the intention to contribute to the social good, Addams put herself in the way of experiences that radically changed these beliefs. She

demonstrates over and over the mistakes made by the Hull House residents in their assumption that they drew on the same fund of common experiences as the immigrants they worked with. Only by questioning their assumption of transparent access to reality through immediate observation and painfully replacing it with a recognition that all understanding is perspectival and value laden could they begin to take from their experiences something that would be of value in future experiences. She says, for example, that employers are

> too often cut off from the social ethics developing in regard to our larger social relationships, and from the great moral life springing from our common experiences. This is sure to happen when he is good "to" people rather than "with" them, when he allows himself to decide what is best for them instead of consulting them. (Addams [1902] 1964, 154)

Only by sympathetically seeking to understand the experiences and values of those differently situated could they begin to develop shared experiences. Instead, too often,

> there is a pitiful failure to recognize the situation in which the majority of working people are placed, a tendency to ignore their real experiences and needs, and, most stupid of all, we leave quite untouched affections and memories which would afford a tremendous dynamic if they were utilized. (Addams [1902] 1964, 207-8)

Sanders (1997, 361) finds the same problem with assuming that all members of society can call on shared beliefs and shows how "preferred attention to what's common increases the risks of outright denial of the perspectives of minorities."

Because Hull House was "soberly opened on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other was reciprocal," the residents were able to get beyond the myopia of seeing "we the people" as only those of the same race and class (Addams 1981, 76). But they little imagined the dramatic revisions in their own thinking that resulted from including not only the perspectives of their immigrant neighbors but their cooperation in solving problems. In anticipation of later feminist standpoint theory (Hartsock 1983; Harding 1993), Addams (1981, 137) says that "no one so poignantly realizes the failures in the social structure as the man at the bottom, who has been most directly in contact with those failures and has suffered the most." Only by bringing these missing perspectives into a community's search for understanding and resolution of shared problems can intelligence be

effectively employed. This is why Addams insists on the importance of experience and sympathetic understanding as necessary prerequisites for knowledge. But she differs from contemporary standpoint theorists in her denial that subjugated knowledges are self-certifying. She says that

> we continually forget that the sphere of morals is the sphere of action, that speculation in regard to morality is but observation and must remain in the sphere of ineffectual comment, that a situation does not really become moral until we are confronted with the question of what shall be done in a concrete case, and are obliged to act upon our theory. (Addams [1902] 1964, 273-74)

Socializing democracy requires more than developing intellectual competency and technical skills in each new generation. Dewey says that he does not care how much technical learning people have if they cannot see the relation of their knowledge to the common and cooperative life of the community to which they belong. Schools ought to inculcate a social vision. This means recognizing the meaning and realities of the social life of which they are a part and developing the inner resources and skills to participate fully and effectively in contributing to its further development. Persons should be empowered, not just filled with facts or techniques, and should be able at the same time "to sympathize with the work and activities of others and to cooperate with them in the carrying on of the common life" (Dewey 1990, 76). Such a common life is not a preexistent state of affairs but a working, explicitly pluralistic ideal. If we deplore the dismantling of public safety nets for the poor or the current state of political corruption, then we should also ponder Jane Addams's ([1902] 1964, 256) sobering words:

> We are all involved in this political corruption, and as members of the community stand indicted. This is the penalty of democracy,—that we are bound to move forward or retrograde together. None of us can stand aside; our feet are mired in the same soil, and our lungs breathe the same air.

NOTES

1. Earlier versions of this paper were given as the Irving Thalberg Memorial Lecture, University of Illinois at Chicago, 19 September 1996, and the John Dewey Lecture at the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, California, 13-17 April 1998.

2. Addams ([1902] 1964, 207-9) made the same pragmatist connection between situation and ideality in 1902, saying that our task "is to take actual conditions and to make them the basis for a large and generous method of education, to perform a difficult idealization doubtless, but not an impossible one." The work of extending a good discoverable in a particular situation to others to which it is applicable or of ridding the bad features that first come to light in a specific situation to others more broadly is the method by which pragmatists have reconstructed universals. Instead of applying already recognized universals to particular situations, universals are generated out of situations only insofar they are found after the fact to be of value in other situations. In the process of finding out if and to what extent they continue to be valuable, such ideals themselves undergo modification. See Jakobson (1998, 141-43) for a similar analysis in which she argues that Seyla Benhabib's failure to "sustain both her commitment to diversity and her commitment to adjudication in the terms of western rationalism . . . raises a number of questions about reworking the normative relationship between the general and the particular."

3. The best developed clarification of Dewey's pragmatic reconstruction of knowledge, which culminated in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1986), was a book on education, *How We Think* (1978b, 179), in which he expressed the conviction "that the native and unspoiled attitude of childhood, marked by ardent curiosity, fertile imagination, and love of experimental inquiry, is near, very near, to the attitude of the scientific mind."

4. Since *Democracy and Education* is the first book in which Dewey (1984c, 156), "most fully expounded" his philosophy, recognizing Addams's influence has wide-ranging implications.

5. Dewey also credits Addams more than once with the development of the idea that democracy is a way of life, not just a political form (see Jane Dewey 1939, 30 and Kellogg 1969, 171). Despite such explicit acknowledgments, Dewey scholars such as Sidney Hook still ignore her contributions and suggest more remote but historically famous great men as possible influences: "Dewey had developed the idea, expressed in germ in Jefferson's later writings, that democracy was not only a political form of government but a way of life, that it 'must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community'" (Dewey 1990, xxiv).

6. The pragmatist account is not problematized by assuming that knowing how to act cannot be laid out in words, as Schatzki (1997, 284, 294) implies in linking Dewey's account of habits to Bourdieu's habituation of the acting body.

7. For an explanation of what pragmatists mean by instrumental reason, which contrasts with what Habermas means, see Seigfried (1996).

8. For more on the complex but historically obscured relationship between pragmatism and feminism, see Seigfried (1996, 1998a).

9. This is not to deny that a good case can be made for attributing the prominence in pragmatism itself of culturally assigned feminine traits to the influence of women such as Addams, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Alice Chipman Dewey, Ella Flagg Young, and Elsie Ripley Clapp on the first generation of pragmatists (see Seigfried 1996).

10. In 1893, while still a professor in Michigan, Dewey traveled to Chicago to meet Addams and give a lecture at Hull House, and he became a member of its board of trustees when it was incorporated in 1895.

11. Addams (1982, 195-96) skewers the "idle search for knowledge which lacks any relation to human life" by recounting how she once asked a professor of anthropology to give a lecture on cultural diversity to night school teachers who took as proof of the

ignorance of their Greek, Armenian, Bohemian, and Italian adult students the fact that they could not speak English. After initially agreeing to lecture, the professor could not follow through because he admitted that he had no resources for doing so. Later, three of his pupils came to her asking her to help them in their research project for which they needed to identify people who had six toes.

12. Since Charters was recalling incidents from her association with Dewey from 1901-1904 almost 70 years later, she may have been confused about the date of the class in which Dewey first mentioned *Democracy and Social Ethics*, which was published in 1902, not 1901. The influence of the book did not diminish with the years. Dewey referred to it in his 1908 *Ethics* and included it in the "General Literature for Part III," and in the almost completely rewritten 1932 *Ethics*, he retained the "General Literature" citation and even added a long quotation from *Democracy and Social Ethics* to introduce and explain the central theme of his third section on "The World of Action" and drew attention to the book in a footnote (Dewey 1978a, 136, 382; 1985b, 313, 315).

13. Jakobson (1998, 90, 96) refers to the struggles with diversity of the various women's movements from the 1970s through the 1990s as evidence for her thesis that "a politics which is simply dedicated to diversity and differences will not successfully address issues of domination, sexism, classism, heterosexism—within and among movements, nor will it provide an adequate basis for alliance formation." She argues that as long as feminist movements struggle to be autonomous, unique, and separate from other forms of social movements, they will not desire alliances. Jakobson takes alliances to be necessary for "taking effective action to eliminate or at least work against class, race, and heterosexual oppression." Ironically, Addams's de-emphasis (but not disavowal) of a specifically feminist position and the alliances Hull House was constantly making with many different groups fighting oppressions of all kinds support Jacobson's thesis by showing how one historically specific women's movement that de-emphasized diversity did emphasize alliance.

14. According to Sidney Hook (Dewey 1990, xxii), Dewey also thinks that "the major threats to democratic political and social life stem not from relativism or skepticism but from fanaticism."

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