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# Addams and Dewey: Pragmatism, Expression, and Community

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experience and which releases emotions, needs and desires so as to call into being the things that have not existed in the past. For every way of life that fails in its democracy limits the contacts, the exchanges, the communications, the interactions by which experience is steadied while it is also enlarged and enriched. The task of this release and enrichment is one that has to be carried on day by day. Since it is one that can have no end till experience itself comes to an end, the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute.



## Commentary by *Marilyn Fischer*, Addams and Dewey: Pragmatism, Expression, and Community

### INTRODUCTION

Chicago in the 1890s was home to two remarkable institutions, started by two remarkable activist-philosophers, experimenting with ideas and with social change. The first was Hull House, a social settlement, founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889. The second was the Laboratory School, an experimental school opened in 1896 by John Dewey, along with teachers Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards. Interaction was constant between the residents of Hull House and the teachers of the Laboratory School, as the participants learned from and taught each other. Through Hull House and the Laboratory School, Addams and Dewey formulated, tested, and enacted central tenets of classical American pragmatism.

Addams had been excited by her visit in 1888 to Toynbee Hall. A group of Oxford University students and faculty had moved into a poor London neighborhood, seeking to bring education and social reform to their new neighbors in the spirit of friendship. In September 1889, Addams and Starr, rejecting the social expectations placed on young women of their social class, rented a house in a congested Chicago neighborhood full of immigrant families representing eighteen different nationalities. Addams and Starr did not have a preconceived reform agenda. They wanted to be responsive to their neighbors' own perception of their needs. As additional residents moved into Hull House, they established education classes, recreational and social clubs, a daycare and a kindergarten, health clinics, and extensive art, music, and theater programs. Hull House became a center for social reform, as residents and neighbors worked together investigating public health, factory, and sweatshop conditions. Many unions, particularly women's unions, were formed at Hull House and held meetings there. Addams gives a wonderfully readable and reflective account of Hull House's activities and growth in her most well-known work, *Twenty Years at Hull House*.<sup>5</sup>

Newly arrived in Chicago to take a position as chair of the University of Chicago's Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy, Dewey was eager to try out some of his ideas about education. Children should be actively engaged in their own



learning, Dewey thought. At the school, six-year-olds, for example, built a model farm; they learned about measurement and simple geometry as they performed the carpentry involved. Cooking was the hook for acquiring knowledge of chemistry, biology, and geography. Through these projects the students acquired academic content while working cooperatively together in a way that simultaneously engaged their minds, emotions, and bodies. Teachers, in addition to knowing material of each academic subject, needed knowledge of child development, a great deal of imagination, and a penchant for teaching by indirection.<sup>6</sup>

Addams and Dewey were intellectual colleagues, fellow social reform activists, and friends. They freely and frequently acknowledged how much they learned from each other. Dewey was a member of Hull House's board of trustees. Addams commented on his performance, "Unlike many trustees, he actually worked on the job."<sup>7</sup> Dewey used Addams's book, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, as a text in his classes and invited Addams to lecture to his students.

Dewey and Addams were activists, working for social reform through countless organizations, locally, nationally, and internationally. They were both founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Both spoke and wrote vigorously on public issues, including women's suffrage and educational and workplace rights. Both were prolific scholars. Addams wrote eleven books, published hundreds of articles, and gave thousands of speeches. Dewey's collected works fill thirty-seven volumes.

"Only once in a public crisis did I find my road taking a sharp right angle to the one he recommended," Addams said, referring to her disagreement with Dewey about World War I.<sup>8</sup> Addams maintained her pacifism throughout; Dewey supported the U.S. entry into the war. While Dewey criticized most versions of pacifism, he referred to Addams's version as an "intelligent pacifism."<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Addams and Dewey were good friends. Dewey named his daughter Jane after Addams. Addams gave a eulogy at a memorial service for Dewey's son Gordon, who died when he was only eight. In her biography of her father, Jane Dewey wrote, "Dewey's faith in democracy as a guiding force in education took on both a sharper and a deeper meaning because of Hull House and Jane Addams."<sup>10</sup>

Hull House, the Laboratory School, and all of Addams's and Dewey's writings and activism were pragmatist expressions of their driving philosophical passion: democracy. Working toward democracy in industrial relations is a theme in Addams's essay, "A Modern Lear." The essay itself is a magnificent example of how to do pragmatist philosophy. Dewey's "Theories of Knowledge" lays out basic tenets of pragmatism. Their essays on democracy explain what the point of it all is.

After the Civil War the U.S. economy was largely fueled by the railroads. Industrialist George Pullman founded the Pullman Palace Car Company, specializing in luxury railroad sleeping cars. While most factory workers in Chicago lived in squalid tenements, Pullman built a model town for his employees and their families, providing them with tidy brick houses, nicely kept lawns, shops, a school, a park, a church, and a theater. Pullman owned the town, set prices at the shops, and controlled the rents. In 1893, an economic depression hit the country; in response Pullman cut his workers' wages by 25 percent and laid off 20 percent of his workforce. He did not, however, cut rents in the model town. Although they were not permitted to join unions or strike, his workers called



a strike in May 1894. Eugene Debs and his American Railway Union struck in sympathy. Addams, as a member of the Civic Federation of Chicago, tried to arbitrate the strike. She knew George Pullman; he had contributed small amounts of money to Hull House. *Addams had visited the town of Pullman and spoken directly with the people living there.* As tensions in Chicago mounted, President Cleveland sent in federal troops, who put down the strike after it turned violent.

Dewey moved to Chicago that summer, right in the middle of the strike. In the fall he heard Addams lecture on the labor movement and talked with her afterward. It was an intellectual turning point. Dewey wrote to his wife, Alice, that Addams's talk was "the most magnificent exhibition of intellectual and moral faith I ever saw."<sup>11</sup> Of "Modern Lear," Addams's analysis of the strike, Dewey wrote, "It is one of the greatest things I ever read both as to its form and its ethical philosophy."<sup>12</sup> *Forum*, *North American Review*, and *Atlantic Monthly* all rejected the essay as too inflammatory. It was finally published in 1912, in *Survey*, a social work journal, eighteen years after the events took place.<sup>13</sup>

In "A Modern Lear," Addams takes a pressing, problematic situation, one in which she is politically and personally invested, and tries to make some sense of it. She begins with the two opposing interpretations that people in Chicago gave to the events. Some argued that Pullman was generous, his workers ungrateful. Others, irritated by Pullman's recalcitrance, put justice on the side of the workers. Addams seeks an alternative interpretation that would be fair to both sides, set the tensions within a larger cultural and philosophical context, and give her some sense of how to proceed.

Addams's strategy is to look to the past and find a story rich enough to set side by side with the current tensions. She finds her resource in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Lear, eighty years old and awaiting death, wants to divide his kingdom among his three adult daughters. The two oldest, Goneril and Regan, gladly feign declarations of deep devotion to their father to get their shares. But the youngest daughter, Cordelia, newly aware of the world beyond the kingdom, responds honestly and awkwardly that she loves her father "according to my bond." Enraged that her loyalty to him is less than all-consuming, Lear denies Cordelia her inheritance.

Addams places several layers of analysis in the essay. She begins with an analysis of family relations in *King Lear*, makes an analogy between Lear's relation to his adult daughters and Pullman's to his workers, and uses these tensions to craft her own position on ethics and on social reform.

Addams interprets Lear's relation to his daughters as that of a classic patriarch. He is generous to them; he may even love them and want what is best for them. But he clearly holds it as his right and role to define their duties and to be given their obedience and gratitude in return. Lear rewards his older daughters' obedience, hypocritical though it was. Cordelia's honesty, however, cannot make up for her lack of obsequiousness.<sup>14</sup>

### ADDAMS'S "A MODERN LEAR"<sup>15</sup>

It is quite a distance from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, written in 1606 and set more than four hundred misty years earlier, to industrial strife in that steamy hot Chicago summer of 1894. Pullman was generous in providing decent living spaces for his workers, but in return he wanted their gratitude and obedience. When they responded to wage cuts



and layoffs with unions and a strike, Pullman saw only ingratitude in their actions, not their call for justice. His relationship with his workers was as patriarchal as Lear's to his daughters. Both relations, Addams observes, are barbaric.

Addams does not analyze these conflict-ridden relations in terms of good versus evil, nor in terms of clashes in the parties' self-interest. Instead, she locates the source of the tension by hypothesizing that Lear and Pullman adhere to one moral code, while Cordelia and Pullman's workers are working their way toward another. Lear and Pullman base their actions and expectations on the "family claim," and on "individual virtues and family virtues." Within this code, they have extensive power over persons and property under their control. Cordelia and Pullman's workers are responding to a "larger claim" that extends beyond the family or workplace and embraces "social virtues."<sup>16</sup> The workers, as part of the international labor movement of that time, aimed for universal justice for all workers. They called for egalitarian rather than hierarchical relations, where everyone's participation in decision making is welcomed.

Addams's challenge in "A Modern Lear" is to figure out how to proceed when well-meaning people hold conflicting codes about what are morally appropriate expectations and behaviors. Addams asserts that these "mal-adjusted" codes need to be brought into adjustment. She argues that just as social patterns evolve, so moral codes should evolve to match. Social life in late-nineteenth-century Chicago was densely urban, industrial, and multicultural. People's extended families were in some cases a continent away, while they shared a neighborhood with people of different languages, customs, and beliefs. Economic life was highly interdependent; think of the complex chain of relationships created by industrial production and distribution. Addams calls for an ethics appropriate to this social interdependence and based on equality, participation, and concern for the well-being of all.

Pullman's hopes for patriarchal authority in industry were tragically out of date. While his control over his workers' lives was enormous, he did not know them very well. We hear the poignancy in Addams's remark, "We can imagine the founder of the town slowly darkening his glints of memory and forgetting the common stock of experience which he held with his men. He cultivated the great and noble impulses of the benefactor, until the power of attaining a simple human relationship with his employees, that of frank equality with them, was gone from him."<sup>17</sup>

Toward the end of the essay Addams draws out the implications of her theory for social change and gives a stunning critique of philanthropy in the process. Today, as well as in Addams's time, many generous individuals give time and money to create and sustain the public good. Yet like Lear and like Pullman, they seek to control how "the public good" is defined. Genuine social progress, Addams counters, can only be achieved when all members of the public participate in defining and creating that good.

## DEWEY'S "THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE"<sup>18</sup>

This chapter from *Democracy and Education* gives an excellent summary of Dewey's conception of pragmatism, mixed in with his critique of previous ways of doing philosophy. The chapter is particularly valuable in showing the implications of Dewey's epistemology and metaphysics for education. This linkage was intentional. Dewey wrote, "Philosophiz-



ing should focus about education as the supreme human interest in which, moreover, other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head."<sup>19</sup>

After explaining Dewey's objections to previous ways of doing philosophy, I will describe his conception of pragmatism, summarize the implications Dewey sees for education, and then show how Addams's reasoning in "A Modern Lear," written more than twenty years before *Democracy and Education*, employs the pragmatist method.

In "Continuity versus Dualism," the first section of the chapter, Dewey gives a sweeping critique of philosophical approaches to reality and knowledge that are structured around central divisions, or dualisms. Many of the most influential epistemological and metaphysical theories in the history of philosophy have dualistic divisions at their core. Think of how Plato's divided line separates the physical, changing, imperfect world of everyday experience from the immaterial, unchanging and perfect world of Forms. Remember Descartes's divisions between reason and sense experience, between intellect and emotion, between mind and body. (You might go through each of the dualisms Dewey names in this chapter and see if some of the philosophies you have studied incorporate these dualisms.)

These dualistic philosophies were engaged in what Dewey calls a quest for certainty.<sup>20</sup> The philosophers used dualisms to posit some permanent, fixed order, for example, Plato's Forms, Aristotle's unmoved mover, or the transcendent God of Augustine and Aquinas. Descartes searched for an epistemological equivalent to these realms of perfect order, a method of perfect thinking that could guarantee he would never believe something that was false. Dewey writes, "The conceptions that had reigned in the philosophy of nature and knowledge for two thousand years, the conceptions that had become the familiar furniture of the mind, rested on the assumption of the superiority of the fixed and final; they rested upon treating change and origin as signs of defect and unreality."<sup>21</sup>

For Dewey, the central problem with previous, dualistic philosophies is that they have little connection with actual human experience. Change and chance, becoming and decaying, stability and precariousness, predictability and random chance, and our own fallibility are essential features of life as we experience it. Mixed inseparably together are stability and disorder, predictability and random luck. The kind of perfection and certainty posited by past philosophers is unattainable. Nothing in human experience warrants belief in it.<sup>22</sup>

Why so many dualisms in the history of Western philosophy? Why did previous philosophers place such stock on describing ultimate Truth and Reality in terms so distant from our everyday experience? Dewey interprets such divisions in theories as mirroring hierarchical divisions in the social order. He notes that societies from which Western philosophy emerged were structured by divisions between the powerful and the powerless, between rich and poor, between those who labor with their muscles and those privileged not to, and between men and women. Dualistic philosophies reproduce in thought the hierarchical divisions that exist in social fact.<sup>23</sup> Philosophies throughout the history of Western thought have been profoundly antidemocratic.

In his critique of previous philosophies in "Theories of Knowledge," Dewey sketches out some of the key commitments of classical American pragmatism: that evolutionary process gives an accurate account of human and nonhuman reality, that concrete experience underlies our account of knowledge, and that the experimental method is the appropriate one for doing philosophy.



For Dewey, the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* made dualistic philosophies untenable. Darwin's evolutionary theory swept away the idea that permanence and fixity underlie and guide change. Instead, order and change in the world both emerge from chance variations, their fate resting upon environmental conditions. Genetic mutations in organisms occur by chance; those that help an organism adapt to a given environment persist; those that do not, disappear. For a given organism, a chance mutation may mean felicitous survival in one environmental context, but death in another.

The implications of Darwin's evolutionary theory for philosophy are vast. Dewey writes, "Philosophy forswears inquiry after absolute origins and absolutes finalities in order to explore specific values and the specific conditions that generate them."<sup>24</sup> Everything—nature, experience, and ourselves—is constantly in process; we come to understand truth by investigating that process. Since chance cannot be eliminated from that process, we must abandon the quest for certainty and remain content with the fact of human fallibility.

Humans and human culture are a part of nature. Humans, like animals and plants, are biological creatures. We change and are changed by adapting to the environment and adapting the environment to us. Humans are not simply in nature; we are a part of nature. Dewey explains, "Human nature exists and operates in an environment. And it is not 'in' that environment as coins are in a box, but as a plant is in the sunlight and soil. It is of them, continuous with their energies, dependent upon their support, capable of increase only as it utilizes them, and as it gradually rebuilds from their crude indifference an environment genially civilized."<sup>25</sup>

The plant lives by incorporating features of the environment and in turn, modifying its environment as it moves into future environmental conditions of uncertainty, such as not knowing whether there will be enough water, or whether it will be trampled or eaten. Likewise, the most salient conditions of human existence are processes that take place in specific physical and social contexts, in interaction with other human and nonhuman organisms. To understand this evolutionary process, we may find it helpful at times to make distinctions, and sometimes dualistic ones. But these are at best mental tools for reflection, useful for understanding specific dimensions of life's continuous processes for specific purposes. These dualisms do not describe actual, objective divisions in the nature of reality.

Thinking about experience in evolutionary terms, as continuity or process rather than as dualistic, we direct our attention away from universal, highly abstract descriptions and instead focus on experience as local and concrete. We attend to specific conditions, specific changes at specific historical times and locations. Thus, experience and experiencing are always from a particular point of view. Dewey writes, "To be 'objective' in thinking is to have a certain sort of selective interest operative. One can only see from a certain standpoint, but this fact does not make all standpoints of equal value. A standpoint which is nowhere in particular and from which things are not seen at a special angle is an absurdity. But one may have affection for a standpoint which gives a rich and ordered landscape rather than for one from which things are seen confusedly and meagerly."<sup>26</sup>

When we think about experience as continuity or process, it is more accurate to talk about "knowing" rather than "knowledge." "Knowledge" connotes something static



and fixed. "Knowing" is an active term that conveys how experience itself is an ongoing process of continuous mutual adaptations of organism and environment. For pragmatists, "knowing" is the activity of reflecting on past experience and making connections between that and present perplexities.

This is where Dewey's notion of "habits" or "dispositions" is important. We often think of habits primarily in a negative sense as ritual behaviors we would like to get rid of, such as procrastinating, smoking, and whining. Dewey defines habits more generally as patterns of behavior, or "dispositions," some of which are unproductive, but many others are vitally important. We need to develop habits that we can apply flexibly and intelligently in light of the current situation. For example, I was grateful when my sixteen-year-old acquired the habit of driving at the speed limit. I was even more grateful when he learned to apply that habit intelligently by adjusting his speed each time to actual traffic conditions. Knowledge for Dewey is our stock of habits as intellectual resources, our supply "of all the habits that render our action intelligent."<sup>27</sup>

Evolutionary theory has implications for how we do philosophy, for how philosophical thinking can and should proceed. Dewey argues that we need to adopt a way of doing philosophy, a "logic of inquiry," as Dewey calls it, that is well suited to exploring experience as process and will yield knowledge as useful habits, intelligently applied. Methods used in the past such as Plato's rational contemplation of universals, Aquinas's scholastic system building, or Locke's dividing sense experience into isolated bits are all ill suited for our post-Darwinian understanding of experience as process.

Dewey proposes the experimental method as an appropriate pattern for philosophical thinking. The model goes like this: a problematic situation arises. We feel anxiety, our old habits or ways of thinking are inadequate. (For example, my healthy habit of eating homemade granola for breakfast every morning works just fine, except for those rare occasions when I open the refrigerator and find that my son used up all the milk for his late night snack.) We redefine the situation as a problem to be solved. We call on past experience and use imagination to formulate hypotheses on how to solve the problem. (I can adjust the environment to my desires by going out and buying milk; I can adjust my desires to the environment by eating leftover pasta salad; or I can just wait until lunch.) We then test our hypotheses in actual fact. Sometimes we solve the problem, giving us more control over the environment, but not always. In an uncertain world there are no guarantees of success; unanticipated variables can always arise. Following this method yields "a reconstruction of experience." Dewey writes, "The function of knowledge is to make one experience freely available in other experiences."<sup>28</sup> We notice patterns, make connections, and make past experience useful by modifying and transforming it in light of current, changed conditions.

Dewey's experimental method may suggest the stereotyped image of a detached, calculating, laboratory scientist. Dewey would say that image is not only unfair to scientists, but it is far too narrow. The experimental method, in fact, is a general pattern for effective thinking. Artists choosing which colors to use, car mechanics diagnosing an odd rattle, and caretakers deciding how to sooth an unusually anxious child employ the experimental method when they intelligently adjust old habits to the a situation. In each case they are thinking, using the same pattern, the same "logic of inquiry" as philosophers.<sup>29</sup>

The stereotyped image of the detached, calculating scientist is also too narrow if we take it to suggest that emotion has no role in the scientific method. Dewey does not



discuss the role of emotion in inquiry in "Theories of Knowledge," but he discusses it elsewhere and, like Addams, frequently stresses how important emotional engagement is to gathering data and resolving problems. Used appropriately, emotions sustain commitment to the enterprise, without clouding intellectual clarity. Addams expresses this point well when she writes, "Sympathetic knowledge is the only way of approach to any human problem."<sup>30</sup>

## JOHN DEWEY'S CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

What then, for Dewey, is philosophy? Just as Dewey is against dualisms and divisions, except when they are helpful in solving specific problems in specific circumstances, so he does not give a fixed, precise definition of philosophy that differentiates it strongly from other disciplines. Philosophy is not system building. It has no distinctive subject matter. Instead, philosophy is method; it gives a critical examination of ordinary things and particularly of a culture's most basic and influential beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

How do we know when philosophy has done its job? Dewey tells us, "A first rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered us: Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us and make our dealings with them more fruitful?"<sup>32</sup> Philosophy for pragmatists begins with the on-going processes of everyday experience. Its abstractions are warranted if we can then return to everyday experience with a richer, fuller, understanding.

There are connections between theories of knowledge and the educational practices that schools adopt. Dewey's pragmatist conceptions of experience as process and knowing as a form of activity were developed in true pragmatist fashion: through educational experimentation in the Laboratory School.

In "Theories of Knowledge" Dewey makes several explicit connections between his epistemology and his theory of education. First, from a pragmatist point of view, education should not be viewed as the process whereby information, warehoused in books, media, or teachers' minds, is somehow transferred into students' heads. Dewey repeatedly speaks of knowledge as the activity of making connections between the problem at hand and past events, and between the current particular set of circumstances and a more general range of considerations. Brewing a cup of Earl Grey tea, for example, can lead to explorations of India's geography and climate and of Britain's history as a colonial power.

Also, education is a process of acquiring those "habits that render our action intelligent."<sup>33</sup> Dewey's example of physicians' education illustrates this well. The aim is to enable physicians to draw upon what they learned from books, laboratory experiments, and clinical experience, and modify it appropriately for new patients, for sets of symptoms not previously encountered, and for broader issues of public health.

Finally, Dewey claims, education should be "the acquisition of knowledge in the schools with activities, or occupations, carried on in a medium of associated life"<sup>34</sup> By "occupation," Dewey does not just mean wage-earning endeavors. He includes all of those activities through which the community meets its needs. Education should prepare students to be skillful participants in and thoughtful critics of their communities.<sup>35</sup>



## PRAGMATISM AND LEAR

After examining Dewey's conception of pragmatism in "Theories of Knowledge," we can now identify how Addams's reasoning in "A Modern Lear" is distinctively pragmatist. First, Addams has an evolutionary theory of ethics, claiming that our understanding of ethical obligations needs to evolve as patterns in economic production and social living change. Ethical practices of a previous generation are a valuable inheritance, but they need to be adapted to current situations. In advocating social morality, Addams does not appeal to timeless, universal principles or to a set of ideal virtues. Instead, social morality is an intellectual, an emotional, and an active stance toward others that can evolve through mutual adjustment of persons to each other in their shared environment.

Next, Addams grounds her analysis in concrete experience. Her knowledge of the case is intimate, local, and deep. She was directly involved in the Pullman strike and was well acquainted with the pain and dislocation her fellow Chicagoans suffered because of industrial tensions. Addams works with the idea that each person has his or her own standpoint on experience. Pullman, she says, "felt himself right from the commercial standpoint, and could not see the situation from the social standpoint."<sup>36</sup> To move conflicting standpoints into adjustment, Pullman and his workers will need to enter sympathetically into the standpoint of the other. Addams speaks of "the justice that can only come through affectionate interpretation."<sup>37</sup> Dewey makes the same point in a 1931 essay when he speaks of "that experience which one makes one's own through sympathetic intercommunication."<sup>38</sup> We enlarge our own experience, and thus our own standpoint, through sympathetic interaction with others.

Finally, in thinking through the events in Chicago in 1894, Addams uses the pragmatist experimental method. The problematic situation was real enough: the troubled relations between Pullman and his workers had spread through Chicago and out into the rest of the country. As a member of the arbitration committee, Addams had tried out various hypotheses on how to resolve the strike. All had failed. She turned to philosophy as a method for coming to understand the situation. She adapted the pattern of past troubled relations in Lear's family to the industrial tensions in Chicago. This led her to critique many basic beliefs of the culture. She examined basic beliefs about power relationships in the economic system, about relations between family responsibilities or workplace loyalties and larger social obligations, and about how social change should proceed.

The essay meets the "first-rate test" Dewey poses for philosophy. We can return from Addams's more comprehensive critique of these basic beliefs to the concrete situation of labor relations in Chicago, now "rendered more luminous," to use Dewey's felicitous phrase.

## DEMOCRACY AND PRAGMATISM: ADDAMS'S "INTRODUCTION" TO *DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL ETHICS* AND DEWEY'S "CREATIVE DEMOCRACY—THE TASK BEFORE US"<sup>39</sup>

Addams's and Dewey's essays on democracy glow with optimism. But they are not flourishes of utopian rhetoric, nor were their authors oblivious to the troubles of the times. In 1902, when *Democracy and Social Ethics* was published, Addams experienced daily



the toll taken on her neighbors by industrial exploitation, substance abuse, and political corruption. When Dewey wrote "Creative Democracy" thirty-seven years later, Nazi Germany had conquered much of Eastern Europe and Japan occupied Manchuria and eastern China.

In political theory, "democracy" is often defined in terms of governmental procedures based on creedlike beliefs. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," writes Thomas Jefferson, drawing on John Locke's social contract tradition. People have but to consult reason and natural law to know that equality and liberty are moral rights that should be encoded in constitutions and laws. Addams and Dewey see it differently. At Hull House Addams worked and socialized with people from every social class and from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. She knew firsthand how inadequate a creedal foundation for democracy was. Her immigrant neighbors, in spite of being equal under the law, faced discrimination every day. Their legal equality paled in significance when placed next to industrial exploitation and social ostracism.

For both Addams and Dewey, democracy is a way of living in association with others. It should extend far beyond political machinery and into workplaces, neighborhoods, and families. In "Creative Democracy" Dewey eloquently describes democracy as a personal way of life. One lives a democratic life when one's character is deeply imbued with faith in the potential of every person to be creative, contributing, and fully participating in society, and one's actions are directed toward bringing this about.

Both Addams and Dewey stress that democratic living is based on equality understood as an active, living reciprocity. Dewey describes "the habit of amicable cooperation," as "a priceless addition to life." In light of contemporary calls for greater appreciation of diversity, it is noteworthy that in the same paragraph Dewey explicitly connects "amicable cooperation" with appreciation for difference and indicates how differences benefit both self and others. He writes, "To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life."<sup>40</sup> Throughout her writings Addams points out in concrete detail how much people born in the United States could learn from socially ostracized groups. She does not temper her frustration when she exclaims, "All members of the community are equally stupid in throwing away the immigrant revelation of social customs and inherited energy."<sup>41</sup>

For both Addams and Dewey, the aim of democracy is more democracy. Dewey ends his essay stating, "The task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute."<sup>42</sup> Addams has the same conception of democracy in mind when she writes in "A Modern Lear," "Nothing will satisfy the aroused conscience of men short of the complete participation of the working classes in the spiritual, intellectual and material inheritance of the human race."<sup>43</sup>

Addams's and Dewey's essays on democracy reflect pragmatism's emphasis on evolutionary process, concrete experience, and the experimental method. *Democracy and Social Ethics* is primarily addressed to middle- and upper-class Americans whose lives of relative ease and amusement somehow feel trivial and empty. These Americans can see how the needs of poor people, immigrants, and former slaves are exacerbated by discrimination and industrial exploitation. "Each generation has its own test," Addams writes at the beginning of the chapter. Her generation's test is to meet the needs of both



groups through crafting a democratic way of life. Addams ends the chapter by noting that "actual attempts at adjustment are largely coming through those who are simpler and less analytical."<sup>44</sup> She bases this statement on her years of experience in the Hull House neighborhood. People from nationalities with historic antagonisms learned to live peacefully as neighbors, working democratically together in labor unions and enjoying the pleasures of Hull House hospitality.

Addams and Dewey used the pragmatist experimental method in their activism. For pragmatists, inquiry is a social pursuit. Hull House and the Laboratory School were both cooperative ventures where participants formulated and tested hypotheses about democratic living and learning. Through such inquiry they learned that democratic results can only be achieved through democratic means. People cannot be coerced into democratic "associated living." These relations arise as people acquire habits of living that express sympathetic understanding and reciprocity. Addams writes, "The cure for the ills of Democracy is more Democracy."<sup>45</sup> Dewey ties method, experience, and democracy together when he says, "Democracy is belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness."<sup>46</sup>

## Questions for Reflection

Go through each of the dualisms Dewey names in "Theories of Knowledge" and see if some of the philosophies you have studied in this book incorporate these dualisms.

This commentary gives the example of Dewey using cooking as a hook for studying chemistry, biology, and geography and brewing a cup of Earl Grey tea for studying of India's geography and climate and of the history of British colonialism. How does each example illustrate Dewey's view that knowledge is the activity of making connections between particular or concrete problems (situations, contexts) and general—often philosophical—issues and considerations?

Think of a social group in which you participate such as your family, a social club, sports team, or your workplace. Using Addams's and Dewey's conception of democracy, how democratic is your social group? For what sorts of social groups do you think this conception of democracy is appropriate? Inappropriate?

## Notes

1. Jane Addams, "A Modern Lear," *Survey* 29 (November 2, 1912): 131–37.
2. John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916), repr. in Jo Ann Boydston, ed. *John Dewey: The Middle Works*, vol. 9 (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), chap. 25.
3. Jane Addams, "Introduction," *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 1–12.
4. John Dewey, *Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us* (1939), repr. in Jo Ann Boydston, ed. *John Dewey: The Later Works*, vol. 14 (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 224–30.
5. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990).
6. For discussions of the Laboratory School placed in the context of Dewey's philosophy of education, see Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, *The Dewey School* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936). Also see Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001), 316–31; and Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), chap. 6. Charlene Haddock Seigfried, in *Pragmatism and Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,