Caring Globally: Jane Addams, World War One, and International Hunger

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Caring Globally

Jane Addams, World War One, and International Hunger

Marilyn Fischer

Several feminist philosophers, including Virginia Held, Joan Tronto, and Fiona Robinson, see the need for, and the potential of, care ethics for achieving far-reaching political and even global transformation. Tronto recommends that care be used as "a basis for political change" and a "strategy for organizing" (Tronto 1993, 175). Held advocates that "the ethics of care should transform international politics and relations between states as well as within them" (Held 2006, 161). During and immediately after World War One, Jane Addams attempted to do just that. She sought to bring perspectives and moral sensibilities that have since been theorized in the ethics of care to bear on concrete, international problems. She worked with the U.S. Food Administration to meet the needs of Europeans who faced malnutrition and starvation because of the war and advocated that the League of Nations adopt as its first and foundational task feeding all those made hungry by the war. In her work on behalf of these organizations, Addams presented a theoretical framework of global ethics that connected women's care-giving activities with structuring international institutions principally in response to basic human needs.

After briefly describing current views on care's potential for international ethics, I will describe how Addams tried to place American women in relations of caring connection with the hungry in Europe. I will then show how she used the proposed League of Nations as a focal point for an interna-
tional ethic based on meeting human needs. I will conclude by projecting
how Addams would respond to contemporary concerns about extending
care into the international arena, specifically concerns about how to care
for those far distant, and about how to avoid maternalism/paternalism or
imperialism in one’s efforts to care. To avoid anachronism, I do not claim
that Addams’s theory was an ethics of care. Her conceptual framework
relied upon outdated conceptual apparatus, particularly nineteenth century
theories of evolutionary anthropology and psychology. However, Addams’s
patterns of thought are strikingly similar to those used by contemporary
care theorists, and her responses to their concerns may be helpful today.

CARE’S POTENTIAL FOR POLITICAL AND
GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Tronto and Held claim that care is a political concept, one that is useful
beyond the personal or familial levels of relation. Tronto writes that
through exercising the practice of care, with its components of attentiveness,
responsibility, competence, and responsiveness, people develop the
skills and capacities they need to function as democratic citizens (Tronto
1993, 167–68, 161–62).1 Held argues that care is more embrace than
concepts of justice or rights, and takes priority over justice and rights both
in the family and in the social and political realms. Caring relations create
and sustain the degrees of trust and social cohesion that are prerequisite to
respecting rights and working out issues of justice (Held 2006, 135–36).

As a political concept, care can function as a useful lens for analysis and
critique. It can point out the limitations of liberal theory, revealing how
liberalism’s emphasis on autonomy and rational agreement masks the
amount of care-giving and interdependence upon which autonomy rests
(Tronto 1993, 162–63). Instead of focusing exclusively on the procedural
and contractual dimensions of politics and the market, a care perspective
asks how well political and economic institutions foster cooperative and
consensual working relations and serve basic human needs for health care,
education, and so on (Held 2006, 159–68).

Held and Robinson claim that a care ethic is relevant in analyzing inter-
national relations. A care perspective focuses attention on the inadequacies
of the Hobbesian conception of an anarchic collection of sovereign nation-
states, accompanied by unbounded global market relations (Held 2006,
154; Robinson 1999, 55–56, 81–82). Held envisions that if practices of care
were improved and extended globally, the military-industrial complex and
the market driven excesses of globalization could be restrained. A care anal-
alysis would make explicit the masculinist cast to these practices, in which
women’s and children’s safety and well-being are disproportionately disad-
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vantaged (Held 2006, 159–67). Robinson advocates a "critical ethics of care" for examining international relations, one that views the world in terms of the moral relationships in which people are engaged and the institutional structures in which those relationships are enacted. A care perspective assesses those relationships and structures in terms of how well they meet needs, facilitate and sustain care, and prevent conflict and injustice from arising (Robinson 1999, 2, 110, 29–32).

A care perspective places relationships, rather than the autonomous individual of liberal theory, at the center of analysis. To capture the dynamics of relationships, a care perspective is particularly attentive to context, noting concrete interactions among persons within the environments in which they function. Narratives, with their ability to show the interplay between intellect, emotion, and action, are particularly appropriate for describing these contextual features. In what follows I will tell the story of how Addams used moral sensibilities and methods of analysis that today's care ethicists employ to create cross-national ties of understanding and affection, and to advocate for an international order founded on meeting human needs. ²

WEAVING WEBS OF CONNECTION: ADDAMS AND THE U.S. FOOD ADMINISTRATION

The Great War began in Europe in August 1914 when the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary aligned against the Triple Entente of Great Britain, France, and Russia. The United States remained neutral until April 1917. Once the U.S. entered the war, Addams worked under the auspices of the U.S. Food Administration, directed by Herbert Hoover, to ameliorate disruptions of the food supply caused by war. Hoover, having made his fortune as an international mining engineer, was in London when the war began. At close range he watched Germany march across Belgium, disrupting its fields and cutting its supply lines for importing food. By October Belgium's prospects were bleak; Hoover was told that Brussels had only four days' supply of flour left. Using an engineer's efficiency at problem solving and dedicated to public service, he quickly organized the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and found cash, grain, meat supplies, and ways of delivering food to hungry people throughout Belgium and German-occupied Northern France (Smith 1984, 78, 81–82). His biographer, George H. Nash, gives this assessment: "For the next 2 ¹⁄₂ years Hoover's London-based organization, in collaboration with the Belgians' own Comité National, acquired, transported, and distributed over 2,500,000 tons of foodstuffs to more than 9,000,000 helpless people in Belgium and German-occupied northern France. An emergency relief effort directed by an American engi-
neer evolved into a gigantic humanitarian undertaking without precedent in history" (Nash 1996, 4).

When the U.S. entered the war in April 1917, the food needs in Europe continued, while the food supply in the U.S. was itself unstable. The 1916 harvest had been weak, food supplies were tight, and prices rose very rapidly. Women marched and protested; food riots broke out in northeastern cities (Nash 1996, 9). President Wilson appointed Hoover to head the U.S. Food Administration, with the authority to regulate all aspects of food production, distribution, and pricing. Using a blend of regulatory control and calls for voluntary cooperation, Hoover set out to meet his objectives of delivering enormous quantities of food to the Allied populations in Europe, while keeping food supplies and prices at home within reasonable limits (Nash 1996, 25, 31).

Under his slogan, “Food Will Win the War,” Hoover sought to persuade the American public to conserve food in every possible way. Hoover knew that women were crucial to the war effort, as they prepared most of the food for America’s 22 million households. To him, women were “a great army drafted by conscience into what is now the most urgent activity of the war” (Nash 1996, 153). He enlisted public relation firms, news organizations, teachers, ministers, children’s clubs, restaurants, and schools in the effort. This voluntary cooperation, he believed, was more American, more democratic, more efficient and effective, than Europe’s formal programs of food rationing (Nash 1996, 153–58, 18–19).

Before the war, Addams had been widely admired for her work with immigrants at the Hull House settlement in Chicago, for her efforts on behalf of women’s suffrage, and for her many books and articles. After the U.S. entered the war in April 1917, however, Addams’s opposition to the war quickly made her a persona non grata. Most of her family and the majority of Hull House residents supported the war (Linn 1935/2000, 332); fellow pragmatists such as Dewey and Mead did as well (Dewey 1917, 267; Mead 1917). Civil liberties were suppressed, greatly restricting what Addams and her fellow pacifists could say. Newspaper accounts eliding “pacifist” with “traitor” and “pro-German” were ubiquitous (Addams 1922/2002, 43). Addams herself was placed under surveillance by the Department of Justice (Davis 1973/2000, 247). Addams opposed war, arguing that hostility and violence are destructive to mutual tolerance, understanding and willingness to cooperate, without which democracy is impossible. To Wilson’s claim that he was making the world safe for democracy, Addams responded, “Was not war in the interest of democracy for the salvation of civilization a contradiction of terms, whoever said it or however often it was repeated?” (Addams 1922/2002, 82).

Addams knew Hoover from his work in Belgium; their paths had overlapped in 1915 when Addams was in Europe for the meeting of the Interna-
tional Congress of Women at the Hague. Addams welcomed Hoover's invitation to work on behalf of the Food Administration (Linn 1935/2000, 330). This gave Addams the "anodyne of work" she had been craving, thinking that "here was a line of activity into which we might throw ourselves with enthusiasm" (Addams 1922/2002, 43, 44). She particularly enjoyed speaking to members of the country's extensive network of women's clubs, saying that such work was "both an outlet and a comfort to me" (Addams 1917e).

In her speeches to these clubwomen, Addams fulfilled her responsibilities to the Food Administration. She outlined the dimensions of the food crisis, giving many details of crop failures in France and Italy, of famine in Russia (Addams 1918a, 1659–60). She encouraged her audience members to plant backyard gardens, to cut back on fats, sugar, wheat, and red meat, substituting perishables for foods that could be shipped (Addams 1917d, 1596). She gave specific advice: "One potato used universally instead of a slice of bread is many million bushels of wheat a year. A universal corn muffin at breakfast instead of a piece of toast is so many million bushels more" (Addams 1917c, 1574).

However, in other ways, Addams's speeches did not conform to Food Administration expectations. Taking hold of Hoover's statement that "the situation is more than war, it is a problem of humanity," Addams placed her emphasis entirely on addressing the "problem of humanity," without mentioning the partisan task of winning the war (Addams 1917d, 1587). Absent from her speeches were popular Food Administration slogans such as "Sow the Seeds of Victory," "Every Garden a Munitions Plant" and "Food is Ammunition: Don't Waste It."s

Addams's reasoning patterns in these speeches will feel familiar to readers of feminist ethics today, although some of the specific content is outdated. For Addams, the purpose of these speeches was to help clubwomen and their families find the "motive power" to make extensive changes in their habits of food preparation and consumption (Addams 1918a, 1670). Robinson shows a similar appreciation for motives when she writes, "From the perspective of an ethics of care, it is our personal and social relations—our feelings of connection and responsibility—which motivate us to focus our attention and respond morally to the suffering of others" (Robinson 1999, 157). Addams wanted the audience members to construct such feelings of connection and responsibility, hoping they would "so enlarge their conception of duty that the consciousness of the world's needs for food should become the actual impulse of their daily activities" (Addams 1922/2002, 47).

Enlarging their conception of duty would require a synthesis of intellect, emotion, and action. Addams told her audiences, "A great world purpose cannot be achieved without our participation founded upon an intelligent
understanding—and upon the widest sympathy. At the same time the demand can be met only if it is attached to our domestic routine, its very success depending upon a conscious change and modification of our daily habits” (Addams 1918a, 1665). Care ethicists today could identify elements in this statement with the practice of care. With sympathetic attentiveness and an intelligent understanding of the needs to be addressed, one takes responsibility by structuring one’s activities in response to these needs (Held 2006, 39, 119; Tronto 1993, 102–5).

Addams tried to place her audience members in what Robinson terms a “relational ontology—that is, from the position of a self delineated through connection” (Robinson 1999, 39). Held describes this as seeing persons “enmeshed in relations with others” (Held 2006, 156). The challenge for Addams was enormous: to help audience members see themselves “enmeshed in relations” with people who lived thousands of miles away, and whom they had never seen. This sense of relationship would need to be strong and deep enough for the women and their families willingly to alter their food habits and the family dynamics associated with food, for the undetermined duration of the war, and beyond. The need for food was a powerful theme with which to make these connections. Tronto writes about care as “a universal aspect of life,” noting how women throughout history have been associated with care (Tronto 1993, 110, 113). The need for food has been a constant, universal need throughout history and across all cultures. It has also been historically associated with women, defining their relations with and responsibilities to family and social group.

Today’s theorists stress context and narrative as appropriate methodologies for care ethics (Held 2006, 157; Walker 1998, 109–15). Addams created narratives about the need for food through the very specific context of the clubwomen’s activities. She described the audience members as women “who are accustomed to look at questions from the larger horizon,” drawing on the clubwomen’s penchant for study groups (Addams 1917c, 1575). Addams told an audience, “And because thousands of women made a sustained effort to comprehend the world in which we live, it may now be possible to summon to the aid of the clubwomen everywhere an understanding of woman’s traditional relation to food, of her old obligation to nurture the world” (Addams 1918a, 1666). That is, by connecting what the women were being asked to do for the hungry in Europe with “woman’s traditional relation to food” as described in literature with which they were familiar, Addams hoped that the women would be able to see themselves as partners in a much larger drama.

Drawing on myth and anthropological theories of the day, Addams wove webs of connection temporally back to the Neolithic era, and spatially across continents. Addams took her audience back to hunter-gatherer days, telling them, “Students of primitive society believe that women were the
first agriculturists and were for a long time the only inventors and developers of its processes” (Addams 1918a, 1667). In this narrative, Addams presented women’s traditional activities regarding food as activities of nurture, as taking responsibility for the needs of their families and tribe. Addams’s narrative stressed the political and economic dimensions of nurture, with women as strong agents of change. When the women could not carry out their care-giving responsibilities under hunter-gatherer patterns of food procurement, they insisted that their tribes adopt settled habitats and agricultural patterns that were adequate for carrying out their responsibilities to feed. Addams also added a mythic and religious dimension to this account. Noting that myths present a people’s morality in narrative form and that their basic truths are often later confirmed by science, Addams reminded her audiences of Demeter, the Corn Mother, the Rice Mother, and other female deities of food found in myths from all over the world (Addams 1918a, 1666).

To us today it seems a long distance from Neolithic women to the clubwomen Addams was addressing. She bridged this distance by talking about recent immigrants to the U.S. and peasants from around the world, telling her audience, “Those of us who have lived among immigrants realize that there is highly developed among them a certain reverence for food. Food is the precious stuff which men live by, that which is obtained only after long and toilsome labor.” She spoke of having seen peasant women all over Europe, in Palestine, and in Egypt, working the fields, carrying water, and grinding grain (Addams 1917d, 1600, 1605). She mentioned Russian peasant soldiers, eager to leave the field of battle and perform “bread labor,” working the land to feed their families. Her immigrant neighbors and these peasants were living connections to the ancient deities of Corn and Rice, embodied in myth.

In moving seamlessly from Neolithic women to immigrants and peasants of her day, Addams was calling upon her own and the clubwomen’s familiarity with how anthropologists wrote at that time. Their reasoning seems dizzy to us today, but the convention was to use the practices of existing nonindustrialized cultures, which they called “primitive” and “uncivilized,” as evidence for the practices of Neolithic cultures. It is true that these theories embodied racist and cultural stereotypes and were often used to reinforce western imperialism. However, Addams gives these theories an interesting twist. Rather than presenting immigrants and peasants as the “other,” Addams in effect framed the clubwomen as the “other,” and their activities as the exception rather than as standard practice. It was only because industrial methods were used in U.S. agriculture that the women had leisure to form such clubs. It was only because of their exceptional circumstance that the past seemed so past to them, rather than being in vivid connection with the present (Addams 1917d, 1605).
Addams also connected the Neolithic past to the present through her appeal to “primitive instincts.” Theorists at that time often referred to a variety of instincts, acquired in early stages of human evolution, to explain human behavior. War was a demonstration of the instinct of pugnacity, or the fighting instinct, allied with a host of other instincts. The question under debate was whether and how these instincts leading to war could be controlled, redirected, or subordinated to the social instincts. Using this logic, Addams appealed to the clubwomen’s instincts to feed the helpless, which she claimed were a million years older than the instinct to fight in war. She asked, “Could not the earlier instinct and training in connection with food be aroused and would it be strong enough to overwhelm and quench the later tendency to war?” (Addams 1922/2002, 44).

In these speeches Addams appealed to sensibilities and methodologies utilized by care ethicists today. She showed sensitivity to context by drawing on the clubwomen’s ongoing study and activism. She used narrative, incorporating information about food needs in Europe with anthropological and psychological theories of the time. She hoped this would prepare the clubwomen intellectually and emotionally to enmesh themselves within webs of connection, leading to humanitarian activism that was international in scope.

**A NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER BASED ON AN INTERNATIONAL ETHIC OF NURTURE**

In her speeches on behalf of the Food Administration, Addams identified the efforts underway to feed the hungry in the Allied nations as “a new internationalism” and “a new international ethic” (Addams 1918a, 1670; 1922/2002, 49). Her advocacy for the Food Administration and for the Proposed League of Nations was essentially an argument for placing an international ethic of nurture at the heart of the international order.

During the war Americans widely believed that the international order needed to be reconstituted. President Wilson justified both the United States’ initial neutrality, and its subsequent participation in the war, in terms of his ability to influence the reconstruction of the international order after the war ended (Knock 1992, 34, 96, 118, 121; Addams 1922/2002, 38). People along the entire political spectrum agreed that the old international order was bankrupt, although they disagreed about what form a new order should take (Knock 1992, Chapter 4).

To Addams, the need for a new international order, structured by an international, humanitarian ethic, was apparent; the war itself was a devastating demonstration of that. In a May 1917 speech, given shortly after the U.S. entered the war, Addams said, “May we not say in all sincerity that for
thirty-three months Europe has been earnestly striving to obtain through patriotic wars, that which can finally be secured only through international organization? Millions of men, loyal to one international alliance, are gallantly fighting millions of men loyal to another international alliance, because of Europe’s inability to make an alliance including them all” (Addams 1917a, 160).

Much like Held and Robinson, Addams associated flaws in the old international order with classical liberalism, which she termed “the eighteenth century conception.” That international order was essentially a Hobbesian state of nature among nation-states that claimed exclusive rights of sovereignty. Addams argued against that order on grounds that it was “maladjusted” to meeting the most pressing needs of the time. Addams often used the notion of “adjustment” in identifying moral and social concerns that needed to be addressed. In her 1902 book, Democracy and Social Ethics, her basic argument was that a morality based on individual virtues, and governance based on protecting individual rights, were maladjusted to meeting the needs of a highly interdependent, urbanized, industrialized society. Analogously, the international order as constituted before the war was maladjusted to addressing the central issues of the day. These issues were international in character, having social and economic, as well as political dimensions that crossed national lines (Addams 1919b, 1859–66).

Addams made this claim in her many speeches on behalf of the proposed League of Nations. One example she frequently used to illustrate the failures of the old international order was the political response to repeated cholera epidemics in Europe from 1851 onward. Political representatives, she claimed, “got so mixed up in questions of national prestige, of national honor, of not giving over to some other nations their national prerogatives that after they had met for months, they disbanded and did nothing whatever about quarantining cholera.” Only after meeting six times in forty years could they arrive at a minimal and largely ineffective agreement. Meanwhile, international medical associations found some ways to work around this political impasse, but the eighteenth century conception of sovereignty hindered efforts toward effective, international public health measures (Addams 1919b, 1855–56).

Furthermore, living and working with immigrants, and with families of mixed national citizenship, enabled Addams to offer more intimate illustrations of how maladjusted the old international order was. She told audiences about a widow in Illinois who could get a state pension for her U.S.-born 3-year-old son, while she could not get a pension for her 5-year-old who was born in Italy. He “needed exactly the same thing his brother needed, but was not getting it because we are still going along in this old Eighteenth Century nationalism” (Addams 1919c, 0011). This example
Marilyn Fischer illustrates how even national policies based on humanitarian motives did not map onto the needs of actual, existing families. Only international coordination and cooperation, transcending particular nationalisms, could deal adequately with these needs.

In the liberal conception, peaceful relations between nations are essentially commercial ones, based on national self-interest. According to Addams, these commercial relations were also maladjusted to meeting human needs. Addams noted, “In international affairs the nations have still dealt almost exclusively with political and commercial affairs considered as matters of "rights," consequently they have never been humanized in their relations to each other” (Addams 1918a, 1669). Even food, essential for human survival, was treated as a purely commercial commodity, and exchanged only when profitable. This commercial basis for relations among independent, sovereign states, Addams called “that aspect of national life which is least human and least spiritual” (Addams 1918b, 176). In a similar vein, Held points out how the market system is at times inimical to care. Noting the pernicious effects of increasing commercialization on health care, education, and other care-giving functions, Held argues that fostering caring relations should be the guide for assessing where limits on markets should be drawn (Held 2006, Chapter 7).

The end of the war was a historic pivot point, a brief window of opportunity for making Addams’s proposed new international ethic truly international by extending the feeding programs to include the Central Powers. All across Europe, a desperate need for food aid would continue after the Armistice until crops could be planted and harvested, and transportation and distribution networks reestablished. Hoover returned to Europe and, as Director-General of Relief for the Allied and Associated Powers and Chair of the American Relief Administration, organized food delivery to people in over twenty nations, many of which had barely functioning governments (Nash 2003, 52–53).15 Hoover, Addams, and others were horrified when the victorious allies stated their intention to keep the naval blockade against Germany in place after the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, and not to lift it until Germany agreed to the terms of the peace treaty (Nash 1996, 494).16

Traveling with the Friends Service Committee in summer 1919, Addams was one of the first Americans to enter Germany after the war (Hamilton 1943/1985, 243). After seeing listless, skeletal children in cities all across Germany, Addams and her traveling companion, Dr. Alice Hamilton, wrote, “What they are facing is the shipwreck of a nation and they realize that if help does not come quickly and abundantly this generation in Germany is largely doomed to early death or a handicapped life” (Addams and Hamilton 1919, 210). Addams noted that without adequate nutrition, German citizens would be incapable of exercising the democratic rights and
responsibilities that the Allied victors were demanding of them (Addams 1919c, 0014). This was a concrete manifestation of Held’s insight that having needs for care met is prerequisite to exercising the responsibilities of citizenship and addressing issues of rights and justice (Held 2006, 135–36).

Addams recommended that the fundamental, organizing function of the new League of Nations should be feeding all those made hungry by the war, thereby placing an international, humanitarian ethic at the League’s very center. Just as the members of the women’s clubs needed a motive with which to stretch their sense of obligation, so Addams asks, “Must not the League evoke a human motive transcending and yet embracing all particularist nationalisms, before it can function with validity?” (Addams 1922/2002, 115). The League needed a motive strong enough to make the trajectory of cooperation, already established among the Allies and enacted in their food programs, fully international by extending it to include the hungry among their former enemies. Only in this way could the new international order overcome the hypernationalism that led to the destructiveness of war (Addams 1922/2002, 98). Just as Addams asked the clubwomen to bring their obligation to family into adjustment with meeting food needs in Europe, so she asked that national loyalties be adjusted in response to international, humanitarian needs.

Seen from the viewpoint of changing the international order from one based on liberalism to one based on a humanitarian ethic, Addams’s proposal may seem revolutionary and perhaps idealistic. Addams did not see it this way. She claimed she was not giving an idealistic call for peace and harmony among nations. Her proposal, she claimed was based on “actual achievements” rather than being “a counsel of perfection” (“Addams 1918b, 180). Addams identified herself as a sociologist; much of her theorizing took the form of identifying emerging patterns in the social and political landscape. Thus, her ethical arguments often took the form of identifying which emerging patterns, if encouraged and reinforced, could lead to social justice and international cooperation and well-being. In keeping with her theme of adjustment, Addams pointed out that many of the humanitarian motives and practices needed for a new international order were already in place. Extending these to include former enemies was more a matter of continued adjustment than of radical change (Addams 1919a, 1836–38).

Addams located the Allied food programs within several of these emerging patterns. She considered the progressive social reform legislation enacted in the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and other counties as evidence that within individual nations, nurture of life and obligations of care-taking were coming to be seen as legitimate governmental functions. The process was gradual, but signaled a fundamental change in the nature of government itself, i.e., nurture was gradually replacing military control.
and protection of property rights as the state's primary responsibility. Although the circumstances were tragic, the war was the historical occasion through which a parallel development was emerging among nations (Addams 1918a, 1669). Addams noted that of the world's forty-eight nations, thirty-four Allied and neutral nations had already institutionalized structures, organized expressly to meet humanitarian needs, replacing "commercial motives" with humanitarian ones (Addams 1919a, 1834; 1919b, 1857). She pointed to the maps in Hoover's Paris office that located existing food supplies and ships as concrete indications of this (Addams 1922/2002, 95).

Also, those women and families who had participated in the U.S. Food Administration program during the war had already stretched their intellects and sympathy and adjusted their daily routines to provide for the hungry in Europe (Addams 1919a, 1834). In a speech on behalf of the League of Nations, Addams told the audience that through this effort, "Thousands of men, women and children not only entered European life through a sense of participation in a great cause; they entered it through an enlargement of their sympathies, through a stretching out of their imagination, so that they knew not only with their means ["minds" was most likely meant here—ed.], but they knew with their deepest sympathetic understanding that those people were dependent upon them, and dependent upon them almost hourly" (Addams 1919c, 0013).

Addams projected a hope that if food needs were addressed through the League of Nations irrespective of national borders, participants would continue to develop the sympathy and the skills at cooperative action and organization with which to address other international issues and concerns. She wrote, "Could [the League] have considered this multitude of starving children as its concrete problem, feeding them might have been the quickest way to restore the divided European nations to human and kindly relationship... Might not the very recognition of a human obligation irrespective of national boundaries form the natural beginning of better international relationships?" (Addams 1922/2002, 98). If nations could cooperate on providing food, these acts might restore them "to human and kindly relationship." This would strengthen the attitudes and habits of international cooperation needed for dealing with other pressing issues of the day (Addams 1918a, 1670). Here Addams indicated that she, like Held, believed that attending to nurture and care creates a basis of social trust and cooperation upon which just decisions can be made.

As the League began to function, Addams was disheartened when she saw that the League's "first work involves the guaranteeing of a purely political peace and a dependence upon the old political motives" (Addams 1920, 217). She described the League's first representatives as "fumbling awkwardly at a new task for which their previous training in international
relations had absolutely unfitted them” (Addams 1922/2002, 114). Unlike the clubwomen, these representatives had not stretched and synthesized their intellects, emotions, and actions, and so they failed to bring local, national, and international obligations into adjustment.

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT CARE ETHICS: CARING AT A DISTANCE AND AVOIDING IMPERIALISM

In much of the literature on care ethics, intimate settings form the paradigm for caring relations (Tronto 1993, 109; Held 2006, 32–33). Tronto worries about extending care to more distant arenas (Tronto 1993, 170). Held writes that it is possible to form caring relations with far-distant others, but does not elaborate on how to do this (Held 2006, 157). Addams did not offer arguments about whether or to what extent people in privileged positions had obligations toward needy, distant others, a question much debated by liberal theorists today. Instead, she offered narratives to help people make conceptual or paradigm shifts, so as to locate themselves within webs of connection in which their responsibility and motivation for care would become obvious. We have already discussed how Addams used narratives about women's traditional relation to food and about primitive instincts to enable the clubwomen to understand and feel themselves connected with the hungry in Europe. Here are two additional narratives that Addams offered to diminish distance and enmesh people in caring relations.

The first narrative, sketched explicitly for the U.S. context, asked Americans to question the assumption that “distant others” are distant at all. Given the intense anti-immigrant rhetoric of the day and expressions of hostility given sanction by the war, it was an astonishing counter-narrative to the standard tales of American exceptionalism. In her May 1917 speech for the City Club of Chicago, Addams made her point, as she so often did, by telling stories of her immigrant neighbors. Neighbors with relatives in European countries on both sides of the war, she pointed out, worried about their loved ones' suffering and deprivation. For those Americans who came from Germany and other nations of the Central Powers, the war was "exquisite torture." These neighbors' experiences with the war, Addams recounted, gave poignancy to "the cosmopolitanism which is the essence of (America's) spirit" (Addams 1917a, 158, 160). According to Addams, to be an American is to be connected by ties of history, blood, and labor to all the nations of the earth. Americans are members of a nation whose history is a story of migration, including involuntary migrations from Africa as well as Native Americans' forced internal migrations. When Americans
understand and feel themselves so connected, for them there are no distant peoples. Americans cannot understand who they are without seeing themselves as enmeshed in relations that stretch across the globe. When Americans go to war, they go to war against themselves.

In the second narrative, Addams described how distance could be overcome through fostering an “international mind.” Her use of the term gave a twist to its usual associations at that time. Nicholas Murray Butler, longtime president of Columbia University and of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, gave the phrase its prominence. In *The International Mind* Butler set forth his vision of a peaceful world of independent nations, linked through an international judiciary that derived its principles from natural, international law. Only those rare persons with this judicial temperament, Butler thought, had international minds (Butler 1912/1972, 73, 102; Herman 1969, Chapter 2). Butler’s image of internationally minded persons is not far removed from that of many liberal cosmopolitans today. Robinson identifies these cosmopolitans as holding a Kantian-based ethic in which persons are viewed as abstract and autonomous, and as having a sense of duty guided by impartial and universal ethical principles (Robinson 1999, 54, 70).

Addams used the term “international mind” more widely to refer to many diverse groups of people, only some of whom might qualify under Butler’s definition. For example, she included research scientists whose international connections were based on a shared dedication to the methods and findings of science, irrespective of national boundaries (Addams 1915, 91). Among the internationally minded Addams also included migrant farm workers who formed international connections as they traveled with the harvest, picking the crops from the southern to the northern halves of the western hemisphere. For Addams, an international mind was not achieved through intellectual abstraction, via respect for natural law or for the inherent dignity of all rational beings. Addams would agree with Robinson’s criticism of liberal cosmopolitans insofar as they “ignore both the particularity and connectedness of persons” (Robinson 1999, 54). For Addams, people developed international minds in versions that reflected their own particular histories, through the connections they made with particular others. There are many paths through which understanding, affection, and ties of affiliation come to cross local and national boundaries.

Addams did not reject nationalism per se. She valued the love of country, as adjusted to one’s plurality of affiliations. In her Presidential Address to the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom’s 1924 Congress, Addams said, “In offering you this welcome I am speaking in a dual capacity as it were. First, as your international officer and servant, and second, as an American citizen. To my mind these dual roles do not conflict. I am not
of those who believe that devotion to international aims interferes with love of country, any more than devotion to family detracts from good citizenship; rather as Mazzini pointed out, the duties of family, nation, and humanity are but concentric circles” (Addams 1924, 259). Holding onto what Robinson calls “a complex world composed of overlapping networks of personal and social relations” (Robinson 1999, 55), Addams maintained that becoming internationally minded included bringing one’s plurality of affiliations and responsibilities into adjustment.

Thus, Addams’s response to concerns about how to extend care to distant others employs the moral sensitivities and methods that care ethicists recommend. She closes distances through narratives that attend to persons’ concrete contexts, forming webs of connection that cross political boundaries.

Interventions in the name of care or benevolence are not necessarily benign but can carry imperialistic overtones. Tronto worries about paternalism/maternalism that might accompany efforts to extend care beyond the intimate and local (Tronto 1993, 170). Held and Jaggar note imperialistic tendencies in both liberal feminist and radical feminist writings (Held 2006, 164; Jaggar 2005a, 185–86). Held states, “the ethics of care . . . must be attuned to the dangers of neocolonial insensitivities” (Held 2006, 165). Jaggar warns feminists in the global North against criticizing practices that oppress women in the global South without also attending to how structural features that carry this oppression are often strengthened by a history of western political and economic imperialism (Jaggar 2005a, 189–95).

Addams had expressed opposition to imperialism since 1899. During the Spanish American War she opposed not only the United States’ territorial land-grabs, but also its commercial and economic imperialism (Addams 1899, 1900). Much as she supported President Wilson for maintaining U.S. neutrality during the early years of World War I, she condemned his imperialistic interventions in the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico (Addams 1922/2002, Chapter 3).19 Addams would agree with Jaggar that “social criticism should be immersed rather than detached and immanent rather than transcendent” and that people of privilege need to be self-reflective and aware of the power they bring to cross-national relationships (Jaggar 2005a, 189, 194). She would appreciate Held’s insight that “Those from the global North need to listen and understand, as in friendship, rather than bestow limited benevolence” (Held 2006, 167). Where Addams is helpful, though sobering, is in her accounts of the process through which well-intentioned persons of privilege could reach the point Held and Jaggar recommend. Rather than asking, “How can people of privilege avoid imperialistic insensitivity?” Addams would reframe the question: “Through what processes can people of privilege mitigate these tendencies that are deeply inscribed in themselves?”
I will point to two discussions in which Addams described these processes. Both discussions illustrate how our perceptions and moral sensibilities are shaped and limited by the contexts in which we live, and indicate that we change these sensibilities through action and through enlarging our realms of experience. Addams wrote, "We are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences, since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life" (Addams 1902/2002, 8). As we encounter new contexts of experience, we bring our limitations into these encounters. Inevitably, we will blunder and offend, but given goodwill, attentiveness, and persistence, change is possible.

The first and more extended discussion is in Addams's chapter on the charity visitor, a young, educated, well-meaning social worker, who visits an Italian immigrant washerwoman to teach her and her family the virtues that will lead to middle-class success (Addams 1902/2002, Chapter 2). Through many perplexing encounters the young woman comes to recognize that her own values and perspectives are parochial, while the washerwoman's values are sensible adaptations to the problems posed by living in urban poverty. Because she is attentive, open, and reflective, the charity visitor mitigates her parochialism to some extent, though it is left ambiguous at the end of the chapter just how successful she has been.

A second, though less developed discussion comes from Addams's speech at the National Conference on Foreign Relations in May 1917. She pointed out how rubber workers in the Congo and diamond miners in South Africa were exploited ruthlessly by the colonial powers, and advocated establishing an international commission that would give these workers protection. She asked, "What would be more natural than to begin the new international morality, so sorely needed, with that simple impulse to protect the weak?" (Addams 1917b, 166, 167) Here Addams appealed to pity and benevolence as motives for intervention, motives that are often accompanied by imperialistic tendencies. But her next move is instructive. She went on to identify "three great human instincts or tendencies, exhibited in striking degree by laborers . . . which I believe will in the long run result in finer conceptions of internationalism." These were bread labor, the instinct for workmanship, and a reverence for food, all well-known and admired virtues at the time. We can read Addams here as making the point that though intervention may begin with pity, the privileged can come to see that the recipients themselves have resources to offer. Toward the end of the speech Addams observed, "Such a conception of international relationship may be sound not only because it is founded upon genuine experience, but because it reaches down into the wisdom of the humble" (Addams 1917b, 167, 169). Even if one starts with pity, one's relations can be transformed through attentive engagement toward equality and reciprocity.
However, even if one's relations with others are transformed, this is not sufficient in itself to determine outcomes. Care ethicists recommend responsiveness to context in carrying out the practices of care. Addams knew from experience that contexts are ambiguous; one cannot anticipate, much less control, all the variables. This awareness underlies many of Addams's stories. A pacifist, she chose to run Hull House as a democracy. The Hull House residents, exercising democratic decision-making, chose to locate a draft office there. Addams recounts one draftee's bitterness as he said to her, "I really have you to thank if I am sent over to Europe to fight. I went into the citizenship class in the first place because you asked me to. If I hadn't my papers now I would be exempted" (Addams 1922/2002, 68). Addams was clear-headed about how irony and tragedy can accompany the most well-intentioned, well-planned, humanitarian practices.

Implicit in much of Addams's writings is the belief that all we can do is the best we can with what we have, and then treat gently and with tolerance those well-meaning people who see things differently. If this statement feels too sober, we can pair it with her statement of hope, uttered on a dark day shortly after the U.S. entered the war: "We realize that it is only the ardent spirits, the lovers of mankind, who will be able to break down the suspicion and lack of understanding which has so long stood in the way of the necessary changes upon which international good order depends" (Addams 1917a, 163). Addams deeply believed that humanitarian nurturance belongs at the heart of the international order, and she was willing to face ambiguity and failure to work toward that vision.

NOTES

1. Tronto writes that care is not the only political ideal; it needs to work in tandem with concepts of rights and justice, concern for due process, and so on (Tronto 1993, 161, 167, 169).

2. Addams used the term "international" where we today would use "transnational" or "cross-national" to describe relations among persons and groups that cross or transcend national boundaries. John Dewey captures this dimension of her thought in his foreword to the 1945 edition of Peace and Bread in War Time: "The process of organization upon which Miss Addams would have us depend is one which cuts across nationalistic lines. Moreover, instead of setting up a super-state, it also cuts under those lines" (Dewey 1945, 152). Addams also used "international" to refer to relations among nation-states. I will follow her pattern and use "international" for both meanings. The context should make clear which one is intended.

3. For discussions of Addams's pacifism see "Jane Addams's Pragmatist Pacifism" (Fischer 2000), and the editors' introductions to Thoemmes Press's four-volume set of Addams's peace writings (Fischer 2003a, 2003b; Whipps 2003a, 2003b).


6. For a history of women's clubs that focused on study, see Theodora Penny Martin, *The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs 1860–1910* (Martin 1987).


10. In *Primitive Culture*, Tyler writes, "This hypothetical primitive condition corresponds in a considerable degree to that of modern savage tribes" (Tyler 1871/1958, 21). In *Ancient Society*, Morgan developed a highly detailed sequence of stages of social development from savage to barbarian to civilized. His evidence was based on his field research with Native American tribes (Morgan 1877/1963).

11. The following journal articles make this argument: George Malcolm Stratton, "The Docility of the Fighter" (1916); D.E. Phillips, "The Psychology of War" (1916); and Mary Whiton Calkins, "Militant Pacifism" (1917).

12. Spencer hypothesized that the earliest humans had instincts to aid the helpless and to care for their offspring (Spencer 1896, Vol. 1, Part 1, 6–7, 66–67). Nicolai, in *The Biology of War*, wrote, "Universal brotherhood among men is older and more primitive than all combat, which was not introduced among men until later" (Nicolai 1918, 15). Nasmyth, in *Social Progress and the Darwinian Theory*, writes that war was a relatively recent anthropological development (Nasmyth 1916/1973, 168).


14. For an introduction and collection of primary documents on widows' pensions, see Kleinberg, "How Did the Debate about Widows' Pensions Shape Relief Programs for Single Mothers, 1900–1940?" (Kleinberg 2005).

15. The need was enormous. In Austria, 96% of the children were suffering from malnutrition. It is estimated that Hoover and his organizations fed more than 83 million people between 1914 and 1923 (Nash 2003, 53–54).

16. A resolution to lift the blockade was passed unanimously at the May 1919 Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Zurich, of which Addams was president (Addams 1922/2002, 91–92). Many Americans, both public officials and citizens, were strongly opposed to feeding the enemy. A Washington Post editorial read, "Let the Enemy Starve First" (Nash 1996, 497–98).

17. See, for example, anthologies on global justice edited by Deen Chatterjee (2004) and Thomas Pogge (2001a).

19. Addams's critiques evidently had an effect. As President of the Woman's Peace Party (WPP) and a founding member of the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM) she and others protested Wilson's military interventions in Mexico in 1916. Knock writes, "Although the evidence is not altogether conclusive, it appears that the crucial factor in averting war was a series of extraordinary steps taken by the AUAM and the WPP" (Knock 1992, 82).

20. Addams refers to Tolstoy's writings on "bread labor" (Addams 1922/2002, Chapter 5) and his belief that Russian peasants had an instinctual love for working the land. She attributes the "instinct for workmanship" to Veblen (Addams 1922/2002, 23–24). Veblen published *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* in 1914.