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# Jane Addams

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Jane Addams (1860–1935) can be labeled the first woman “public philosopher” in United States history. The dynamics of canon formation, however, resulted in her philosophical work being largely ignored until the 1990s.<sup>[1]</sup> Addams is best known for her pioneering work in the social settlement movement—the radical arm of the progressive movement whose adherents so embraced the ideals of progressivism that they chose to live as neighbors in oppressed communities to learn from and help the marginalized members of society. Although her activism and accomplishments were widely lauded by her contemporaries, Addams’ work was mapped onto conventional gender understandings: male philosophers such as John Dewey, William James, and George Herbert Mead were regarded as providing original progressive thought while Addams was seen as brilliantly administering their theories. Recent work by feminist philosophers and historians has revealed that Addams was far more than a competent technician. Her dozen published books and over 500 articles display a robust intellectual interplay between experience and reflection in the American pragmatist tradition. The near half-century that she lived and worked as the leader of the Chicago social settlement, Hull House, gave her an opportunity to bring her commitment to social improvement, feminism, diversity, and peace to direct action. These experiences provided the foundation for an engaging philosophical perspective. Addams viewed her settlement work as a grand epistemological endeavor but in the process she also never forgot the humanity of her neighbors. Addams was indeed a public

philosopher—one who was not afraid to get her hands dirty.

Addams' philosophy combined feminist sensibilities with an unwavering commitment to social improvement through cooperative efforts. Although she sympathized with feminists, socialists, and pacifists, Addams refused to be labeled. This refusal was pragmatic rather than ideological. Addams' commitment to social cohesion and cooperation prompted her to eschew what she perceived as divisive distinctions. Active democratic social progress was so essential to Addams that she did not want to alienate any group of people from the conversation or from the participation necessary for effective inclusive deliberation. Addams carefully varied her rhetorical approach to engage a variety of constituencies, which makes the identification of her social philosophy challenging. Accordingly, Addams did not intend to engage in philosophical narratives removed from social improvement, but neither did she intend to pursue social activism without theorizing about the wider implications of her work. In this respect, through her integration of theory and action, Addams carried pragmatism to its logical conclusion, developing an applied philosophy immersed in social action. Thus Addams' writing is replete with examples from her Hull House experience addressing atypical topics for philosophic discourse such as garbage collection, immigrant folk stories, and prostitution. For those steeped in traditional philosophy, it is easy to dismiss Addams' writings as non-philosophical if the full sweep of her projects and subsequent analysis is not considered. For those who persevere, Addams offers a rich social and political philosophy built on respect and understanding that is refreshing in its faith in the potential for collective progress.

Recovering Jane Addams as a philosopher requires appreciating the dynamic between theory and action that is reflected in her writing. A wellspring of nascent feminist philosophical insight can be found in Addams' work. Addams' ethical philosophy was guided by the notion of sympathetic knowledge that she described as "the only way of approach to any human problem" (NCA 7). Sympathetic knowledge is a mingling of epistemology and ethics: knowing one another better reinforces the common connection of people such that the potential for caring and empathetic moral actions increases. Addams not only theorized about this idea, but she lived it. Sympathetic knowledge underwrote Addams' approach to the diversity that she confronted in the immigrant neighborhood surrounding Hull House and allowed her to develop a precursor to contemporary feminist standpoint epistemology. The diversity and oppression in the neighborhood surrounding Hull House was staggering (HHM). Addams' leadership among the American pragmatists in understanding the poor and oppressed resulted in a more radical form of pragmatism than that of Dewey and James, a social philosophy imbued with a class and gender consciousness.

Ultimately, Addams exemplifies and theorizes about what today is described as care ethics. Addams' version of care ethics does not privatize caring relationships in metaphors of parent-child relationships, but assertively extends the notion to the community and society. Jane Addams was an original feminist thinker.

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## 1. Life

Addams' philosophical work is deeply connected to her extraordinary life. As witnessed by the many biographical accounts of Addams compared to the relatively few comprehensive considerations of her philosophy, her personal exploits often overshadow her intellectual contributions. Nevertheless, as an American pragmatist, Addams valorized experience making it appropriate to recount, at least briefly, her life story.

Laura Jane Addams was born in Cedarville, Illinois on September 6, 1860. She grew up in the shadow of the Civil War and during a time when Darwin's *Origin of the Species* achieved widespread influence. Her childhood reflected the material advantage of being the daughter of a politician and successful mill owner, John Addams. When Jane was two years old, her mother, Mary, died giving birth to her ninth child. Subsequently, the precocious Addams doted upon her father and in return benefited emotionally and intellectually from his attention. Although John Addams was no advocate of feminism, he did desire higher education for his daughter and sent her to the all-women's institution,

Rockford Seminary (renamed later, Rockford College) in Rockford, Illinois. Addams became part of a generation of women that were among the first in their family to attend college. At Rockford, she experienced the empowerment of living in a women-centered environment and she blossomed as an intellectual and as a social leader. Her classmates and teachers acknowledged this leadership. Ultimately, Addams spearheaded an effort to bring baccalaureate degrees to the school, and, after serving as class valedictorian, received the first one.

Like those of many women of her time, Addams' prospects after college were limited. She made a failed attempt at medical school and then slipped into a nearly decade-long malaise over the direction of her life. The energy and spirit of her undergraduate college experience did not translate into any clear career path, given that she had rejected both marriage and the religious life. Addams' malaise was somewhat analogous to the unidentified illness that her later acquaintance, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (as described in *The Yellow Wallpaper*) suffered. As a member of the privileged class, her soul searching included a trek to Europe, which Addams made twice during this period. On the second trip she visited Toynbee Hall, a pioneering Christian settlement house in London, which was to inspire her in a direction that propelled her toward international prominence (TYH 53).

Toynbee Hall was a community of young men committed to helping the poor of London by living among them. After visiting Toynbee Hall, Addams was rejuvenated by the idea of a scheme to replicate the settlement in the United States. She enlisted a college friend, Ellen Gates Starr in the plan. However, to identify their vague idea as a "plan" is a bit of hyperbole. There was very little by way of specific directions for what the settlement would be other than a good neighbor to oppressed peoples. A suitable location in a devastatingly poor Chicago immigrant neighborhood was found and on September 18, 1889, Hull House opened its doors. Working amidst one of the greatest influxes of immigrants the United States has ever known, Hull House quickly became an incubator for new social programs. Without any formal ideological or political constraints, the settlement workers responded to the needs of the neighborhood by starting project after project. The list of projects started at Hull House is astounding, including the first little theatre and juvenile court in the United States and the first playground, gymnasium, public swimming pool and public kitchen in Chicago. The work of Hull House residents would result in numerous labor union organizations, a labor museum, tenement codes, factory laws, child labor laws, adult education courses, cultural exchange groups, and the collection of neighborhood demographic data. Hull House was truly a dynamo of progressive initiatives, all of which Addams oversaw.

The reputation of the settlement rapidly grew and women, mostly college educated, from all over the country, came to live and work at Hull House. Although Hull House was co-educational, it was clearly a woman-identified space. There were male residents at Hull House, some of whom later became prominent leaders, however the policies, projects, decision-making, and methodologies of the Hull House community were gynocentric—foregrounding women’s experience, analysis, and concerns. Furthermore, although a few of the residents were married, most were single and some were in committed relationships with other women. Given the drastic shifts in sexual mores in the twentieth century, the contemporary understanding of what it means to be lesbian cannot straightforwardly be mapped onto the late and post Victorian eras, but it can be argued that Hull House was lesbian-friendly space. Addams set the tone for this identification with her own long-term intimate relationships with women, first with Starr and then Mary Rozet Smith (Brown, 2004).

From the outset of its operation, Addams theorized about the nature and function of Hull House. The language she used reflected her philosophical approach. For example, in one published essay, Addams describes the application and reorganization of knowledge as the fundamental problem of modern life and then claims that settlements are like applied universities: “The ideal and developed settlement would attempt to test the value of human knowledge by action, and realization, quite as the complete and ideal university would concern itself with the discovery of knowledge in all branches” (FSS 187). This kind of reflective analysis and wider thematization of her work and the work of the social settlement was a hallmark of Addams’ writing. Because of her insightful reflections on the Hull House community, Addams became a popular author and sought-after public speaker. Eventually, she extended her cosmopolitan analysis to issues of race, education, and world peace. For Addams, local experiences were always a springboard for political theorizing.

Addams became one of the most respected and recognized individuals in the nation. She played a key role in numerous progressive campaigns. Addams was a founding figure in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Her popularity was such that when Theodore Roosevelt sought the presidential nomination of the Progressive Party in 1912, he asked Jane Addams to second the nomination, the first time a woman had participated in such an act. There was a gendered dimension to this popularity however. Addams had challenged the borders of the public and private spheres through her work at Hull House, but her forays into masculine domains were masked by the “social housekeeping” characterization of the settlement



activism. After World War I broke out in Europe, her outspoken pacifism and refusal to endorse the war or the U.S. entry into it, was more gender role transgression than the public could tolerate from a woman. Addams' popularity fell and she became the victim of vicious gender-specific criticism. Biographer Allen Davis reports that one writer indicated that what Addams needed to disabuse her of her pacifism was "a strong, forceful husband who would lift the burden of fate from her shoulders and get her intensely interested in fancy work and other things dear to the heart of women who have homes and plenty of time on their hands" (240). A reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* quipped,

If Miss Addams and her peace mission are a sample of women in world affairs, I want to take it all back. I am sincerely sorry I voted for suffrage. (Davis, 253)

Her new role as social outcast and critic gave an opportunity for the public philosopher in Addams to reflect on the nature of citizenship and patriotism in her many books and articles—some of which had difficulty getting into print because she was perceived as being anti-American. Although she had written on peace early in her public career (NIP), from 1914 through the end of her life, Addams' publications became decidedly more focused on issues of peace and war, including two books exclusively dedicated to the topic (WH, PBT) and several books with sections devoted to the nature and politics of war (LRW, STY, MFJ). Although initially criticized, Addams' pacifist tenacity was ultimately recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize (1931). In the last years of her life, she spent less time at Hull House and more time working for world peace and an end to racism. Addams died of cancer on May 21, 1935, leaving a tremendous intellectual legacy that has yet to be fully explored.

## 2. Influences

Addams was well read and could claim numerous and varied influences. However, Addams was no one's protégé. Addams picked and chose intellectual resources that resonated with her notion of sympathetic knowledge in the process of bringing about social progress. A few significant influences are recounted here. Addams read Thomas Carlyle's (1795–1881) work while she was attending Rockford Seminary. Carlyle's social morality held a particular appeal to Addams. He believed that the universe was ultimately good and moral and led by a divine will that worked through society's heroes and leaders. Carlyle wrote biographies of social saviors that came in the form of poets, kings, prophets, and intellectuals, mixing in commentary that explicated his moral philosophy. However, Carlyle's heroes reflect the evolution of society, as

different contexts require different leadership. These heroes are able to recognize the social dynamics at work and use them for the benefit of others. Carlyle's heroes evolved over time. For Carlyle, a duty extends to all to find themselves or realize their place in the world and what their work on behalf of society should be. Because of his emphasis on powerful individuals, Carlyle was not particularly fond of democracy. Although Addams shed Carlyle's notion of individualistic heroism and his disdain for democracy, she retained the valorization of moral action throughout her career. Furthermore, Carlyle's morality was grounded in social relations: to be moral is to be in right relation with God and others. A precursor to Addams' notion of sympathetic knowledge can be found in Carlyle's relational ethics.

Addams was also influenced by John Ruskin (1819–1900) who theorized that art and culture reflected the moral health of society. Although Ruskin maintained a certain elitism in his view that great people produced great art, he also saw such great cultural works as a manifestation of the well-being of society as a whole. The plight of the oppressed was tied to a sense of the aesthetic. Certainly, Addams' valorization of art and culture as exhibited in the appearance and activities of Hull House resonates with Ruskin's aesthetics. For Addams, "Social Life and art have always seemed to go best at Hull House" (STY 354). Addams viewed art and cultural activities as reinforcing essential human bonds (DSE 29). Ruskin also influenced Arnold Toynbee and other future settlement workers by identifying the problems in large industrial cities and calling for reforms foreshadowing the safety nets typical of later welfare states. Ruskin valued labor as a noble means of self-actualization. This became a crucial concept for Addams as she sought meaningful labor for those in the Hull House neighborhood. For example, Addams expresses sympathy for laborers who skipped work or came in late for work because "all human interest has been extracted from it" (SYC 129). Although Addams valued Ruskin's moral imagination, concept of labor, and ideas about transforming the city through infusing culture, she rejected his romanticization of the preindustrial past. With a strong belief in social progress, Addams did not desire a return to a previous era. For Addams, society should grow and adapt to its conditions even in regard to moral philosophy.

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was another type of hero to Addams. Unlike Carlyle, Tolstoy did not valorize individuals standing out from the crowd as exemplary moral paragons who wield socially ordained positions of power. He valued solidarity with the common laborer. Addams' wide intellectual curiosity made such extremes in influences possible. Addams read Tolstoy's works from the time that she graduated from college until the last years of her life and she often praised his writing in articles and book reviews. Tolstoy's emphasis on

working for and with the oppressed, while simultaneously writing novels and essays that influenced a wider audience, resonated with Addams' work and writings. However, Tolstoy was a moral idealist. He left everything behind to take up the plow and work as a common farm laborer. Addams was moved by Tolstoy's account and—typical of her self-critical, thoughtful approach--she questioned her leadership role in the social settlement, but only for a short time.

Motivated by Tolstoy's troubling moral challenge to work in solidarity with the common laborer, Addams sought him out while she was on vacation (and recovering from typhoid) in Europe in 1896. The meeting made a lasting impression on Addams (TYH 191–195). Tolstoy came in from working the fields to be introduced to Addams and her partner Mary Rozet Smith. The meeting began with Tolstoy questioning Addams' fashion choice because the sleeves of her arms, consistent with the style of the time, had “enough stuff on one arm to make a frock for the girl” (TYH 192). Tolstoy was concerned that the trappings of material wealth alienated Addams from those she was working with. This criticism continued when Tolstoy learned that part of Hull House's funding came from Addams' estate that included a working farm: “So you are an absentee landlord? Do you think you will help the people more by adding yourself to the crowded city than you would by tilling your own soil?” (TYH 192) Addams was humbled by the remarks and on her return to Hull House was determined to take up more direct labor by working in the new Hull House bakery. However, reality demonstrated how Tolstoy's idealism was incompatible with her work in social settlements: “The half dozen people invariably waiting to see me after breakfast, the piles of letters to be opened and answered, the demand of actual and pressing human wants—were these all to be pushed aside and asked to wait while I saved my soul by two hours' work at baking bread?” (TYH 197) Theoretically, the shared experience of common labor would break down class distinctions. Addams had experienced such camaraderie at Hull House, and she never stopped appreciating Tolstoy's social criticism. However, she saw the value of intelligent leadership. Someone had to organize the clubs, arrange for philanthropic support, and chair the meetings. To a certain extent, Addams found Tolstoy's labor demand to be self-indulgent: if she engaged in the labor of the poor exclusively, she might alleviate her upper class guilt but she would no longer be working holistically toward changing the structure of society. Addams' own philosophy of civic activism valued engagement through ongoing presence and listening. Indeed, Hull House had a very flat and responsive organization structure. Nevertheless, Tolstoy's absolutist moral demands failed to take into account context—a hallmark of Addams' approach.



Addams also found Tolstoy's pacifism inspiring. She admired the manner in which Tolstoy sympathized with revolutionaries in the 1870s but did not compromise his moral convictions because of these sympathies. Tolstoy offered a doctrine of non-resistance that sought to substitute moral energy for physical force. Addams once again did not accept Tolstoy's pacifist ideas uncritically. For example, she questioned the clarity of the categories (moral energy versus physical force) that Tolstoy created in his doctrine of non-resistance (TYH 195). Addams also questioned whether Tolstoy reduced social issues too simplistically, albeit eloquently. Despite her less than congenial meeting with him, Addams cited Tolstoy as a positive moral example throughout her life. However, like all of her influences, Tolstoy's philosophy could not be accepted uncritically. Addams had to adapt and infuse her own insight to make it work for the society of which she was a part.

As previously mentioned, Toynbee Hall was the inspiration for Hull House and Canon Barnett (1844–1913), who served as “warden” of the settlement for over twenty years, was the inspirational force. Prior to his service at Toynbee Hall, Barnett worked as Vicar of St. Jude's, Whitechapel where he instituted a number of improvements to the slums surrounding the Church, including building educational and recreational programs. It was St. Jude's that students from Oxford would visit, working to help improve conditions for residents of the surrounding community, all the while engaging in discussions about how to institute social reforms. One of those students was Andrew Toynbee.

Barnett describes a threefold rationale for the development and growth of settlements: First, a general distrust that government-sponsored institutions could care for the poor. In particular, government and private philanthropy appeared to be failing the masses. The second reason Barnett gives for the rise of settlements is the need for information. Barnett believed there was widespread curiosity regarding oppression that he could satisfy with documented observations regarding the circumstances of the poor. Finally, Barnett notes a groundswell of fellowship not driven by traditional “Charities and Missions” but by a fundamental humanitarianism. Settlements provided an outlet for these fellow feelings.

Addams was familiar with Barnett's writings and referred to them on many occasions. For example, when Addams wrote “The Function of the Social Settlement,” Barnett's philosophy played a prominent role. She agrees with him that settlements should not be missions because if they become too ideological, they will fail to be responsive to their neighbors (FSS 344–345). However, despite acknowledging that the term “settlement” was borrowed from London, she finds subtle differences between the philosophies of Toynbee Hall and Hull House: “The American Settlement, perhaps has not so

much a sense of duty of the privileged toward the unprivileged of the ‘haves’ to the ‘have nots,’ to borrow Canon Barnett’s phrase, as a desire to equalize through social effort those results which superior opportunity may have given the possessor” (FSS 322–323). Addams is very sensitive about a sense of superiority in settlement work. She always eschewed the notion that she was a charitable “lady bountiful.” She wanted to learn about others so that she could develop the proper sympathies and strategies for assisting—sympathetic knowledge. For Addams, Hull House always combined epistemological concerns with moral ones.

When Addams’ philosophy is considered, if at all, it is usually associated with the work of John Dewey (1859–1952). This association is appropriate given their friendship and mutual interests; however her intellectual deference to Dewey is often overstated. Dewey is considered one of the greatest American philosophers and his name, along with William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Josiah Royce form the traditional list of founding fathers of what is labeled American Pragmatism. His work appealed to Addams because they shared many of the same commitments including the value of a robust democracy as well as the importance of education that engaged the student’s experience. Addams and Dewey were intellectual soul mates from the moment they met in 1892. Dewey visited Hull House shortly after it opened and before he moved to Chicago to teach at the University of Chicago. Following the meeting, Dewey expressed to Addams an appreciation for Hull House’s work and he would become a frequent visitor. There was much intellectual cross-fertilization between Hull House and the University of Chicago and *vice versa*. Historian Rosalind Rosenberg describes Addams as a *de facto* adjunct professor at the University of Chicago. Mary Jo Deegan documents that over the course of a decade Addams taught a number of college courses through the Extension Division of the University of Chicago. In addition, she refused offers to join the undergraduate and graduate faculty (Deegan, 1988). Furthermore, Dewey assigned Addams’ books in his courses. Addams and Dewey worked together personally and politically. When Hull House incorporated, Dewey became one of the board members. He often lectured to the Plato Club, Hull House’s philosophy group. Dewey would dedicate his book *Liberalism and Social Action* to Addams. Dewey named one of his daughters in her honor and Addams wrote the eulogy for Dewey’s son Gordon (EBP).

Although Dewey and Addams would gain celebrity status in their lifetime, their fame and legacies are characterized much differently. Dewey was the great intellectual—a thinker—and Addams was the activist—a doer. As contemporaries, they represent classic archetypes of gender: the male as mind generating theory and the woman as body experiencing and caring. However,

there is much evidence that such a characterization is inaccurate. Both John Dewey and his daughter, Jane, credit Jane Addams with developing many of his important ideas including his view on education, democracy, and ultimately philosophy itself (Schlipp, 1951). Despite the lack of attribution in Dewey's written work, many scholars document Addams' significant influence (Davis, 1973; Deegan, 1988; Farrell, 1967; Lasch, 1965; Linn, 2000; Seigfried, 1996)

Overshadowed by Addams' relationship with the celebrity philosopher, Dewey, was her strong tie to George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) who is considered the father of “symbolic interactionism,” an approach to social inquiry that emphasizes how symbols create meaning in society. Mead's work on development through play and education influenced Addams but, as with Dewey, the influence was mutual. Addams maintained a long-term close personal relationship with Mead and his wife, Helen Castle Mead. They often dined together and visited one another's family. Like Addams', Mead's intellectual legacy is not altogether settled. His works have been recognized as significant by sociologists but many philosophers have overlooked him.

Mead and Addams worked on a number of projects together including pro-labor speeches, peace advocacy and the Progressive Party. When Addams was publicly attacked for not supporting the U.S. entry into World War I, Mead defended her even though he did not agree with her position. Like Dewey, Mead was a frequent lecturer at Hull House. Also, like Dewey, Mead could not help but be impressed with Addams' intellect. In 1916, Mead advocated awarding Addams an honorary doctorate from the University of Chicago. The faculty supported the award but the administration overturned the decision (eventually making the award in 1931).

Addams also maintained a friendship with William James (1842–1910), whose work she cites on many occasions. James was a pragmatist whose vision of urban improvement would have been shared by Addams. James and Addams both valued experience and among the “professional” pragmatists his style of writing is closest to Addams' in terms of its readability and use of tangible examples.

Addams clearly influenced and was influenced by the Chicago School. Although she was often frustrated with the abstract trajectory of the university, Addams embraced reflective analysis. Through her Hull House experience Addams took many opportunities to theorize about the interchange between theory and practice. For a time, American philosophy, sociology, and social work existed in a symbiotic harmony—each not clearly differentiated from the other but benefiting from the interchange. Unfortunately, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Mead, Dewey, and Addams were together in Chicago, the intellectual

genealogy of American philosophy, sociology and social work has more drastically diverged to a point where crossover is less likely and perhaps less welcome. Lost in the compartmentalization of these disciplines is how Jane Addams played a role in each.

In addition to the Romantics (Carlyle and Ruskin), the social visionaries (Barnett and Tolstoy), and the pragmatists (Dewey and Mead) Addams was influenced by the great collection of feminist minds who came to work at the social settlement. Hull House has been described in many different ways, reflecting the complexity and multiplicity of its functions. Perhaps an overlooked descriptor is as a pragmatist feminist “think tank.” Although the “Metaphysical Club” has taken on something of a mythical status among some in American philosophical circles (Menand, 2001), the intellectual, social, and political impact of the Hull House residents dwarfs that of the Cambridge intellectuals. Hull House residents dined, slept, did domestic chores, and engaged in social activism together. They also discussed and debated ethics, political theory, feminism, and culture while immersed in their tasks and stimulated by the many speakers and visitors to Hull House. The prolonged contact, shared gender oppression, and common mission made for a unique intellectual collective that not only fostered action but also theory.

Ostensibly, Hull House was the first co-educational settlement. Addams recognized the need for male residents so that men in the neighborhood could better relate to Hull House endeavors. However, it was quite clear to visitors and residents that Hull House was a woman’s space. Hull House boasted some of the great minds and agents of change of the era. Alice Hamilton (1869–1970), a physician who trained in Germany and the U.S. and who is credited with founding the field of industrial medicine, lived at Hull House for 22 years. She went on to teach at Harvard where she became a nationally recognized social reformer and peace activist. Julia Lathrop (1858–1932) was a Vassar graduate who, in 1912, after residing at Hull House for 22 years, became the first woman to head a federal agency, the Children’s Bureau, which, in terms of conduct, she modeled after Hull House. Rachel Yarros (1869–1946), a twenty-year resident at Hull House, was also a physician who taught at the University of Illinois. The university created a position for Yarros in recognition of her tremendous contribution to social hygiene and sex education. Author and feminist theorist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935), was a resident for a short period of time. Gilman thought highly of Addams but had no stomach for settlement existence amongst the oppressed. However, Gilman’s groundbreaking work on gender and economics likely influenced Addams. Sophonisba Breckinridge (1866–1948) graduated from Wellesley and went on to obtain both a Ph.D. in political science and a J.D. from the University of Chicago. Her greatest contribution



was in the area of social work education. Edith Abbott (1876–1957) and her sister Grace Abbott (1878–1939) joined Hull-House about the time as Breckinridge (1907). Edith Abbott would obtain a Ph.D. in Political Economy from the University of Chicago while Grace Abbott earned a Ph.D. from Grand Island College in Nebraska. Edith would have an academic career at the University of Chicago prior to her appointment as Chief of the Children's Bureau after Julia Lathrop's departure. Mary Kenney (1864–1943) became an important labor organizer for Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor and influenced Addams' sensitivity to the plight of organized labor, something that all progressives did not share. These are only a few of the more well-known residents but numerous feminists used their Hull House experience as a springboard to careers in social reform or professions of various sorts.

Although Hull House was replete with extraordinary minds, no one was likely to be as intellectually challenging to Addams as Florence Kelley (1859–1932). A Cornell graduate, Kelley translated Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and Karl Marx' *Free Trade* into English. She was an active member of the Socialist Labor Party until the leadership, threatened by Kelley's forceful style, expelled her. A single mother with three children, Kelley found a home at Hull House where she opened an employment center and began conducting research on sweatshops for the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics. Kelley would later go on to become the general secretary of the new Consumer's League, an organization dedicated to using consumer pressure to ensure that safe and high quality goods were manufactured. Kelley was one of the most distinguished social reformers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

At Hull House, Kelley altered the dynamics of the resident community. She brought a sense of class-consciousness along with a great strength of conviction. After Kelley's arrival (and Mary Kenny's coming a year prior) Hull House became more deeply involved in supporting the labor movement, which was heretofore dominated by men. Kelley also learned from Addams, who she admired throughout her life. Perhaps the legacy of the many accomplishments of the Hull-House residents suffered because of the fame of their leader, but given the opportunity, each expressed their admiration and gratitude to Addams for making Hull House the hotbed of ideas and action that it was. Addams was the most visible leader of a remarkable group of educated activists whose mutual respect allowed intellectual growth to flourish.

Finally a few other influences are worthy of mention. Although she was not personally religious, Addams' Christian roots left their mark. Addams was quite well versed in the Christian bible and had attended a number of religious courses during her time at Rockford Seminary. Addams used religious language on occasion to help get her message out to Christian constituencies. Addams



was also well acquainted with Greek philosophy and made references to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in her work. Addams was attracted to the ability of Greek philosophers to move between personal and social concerns rather than compartmentalizing their philosophical analysis. Some have suggested that Addams was influenced by August Comte (1798–1857) and the positivists. Comte, who coined the term “sociology,” believed sciences need their own logic drawn from experience rather than the *a priori* universal rationalism of Descartes. Addams would have been attracted to his ideas about social progress and his development of a religion of humanity. Finally, Addams also read a great deal of literature, which influenced her ideas concerning culture and which sometimes seeps into her analysis, as it does when she uses Shakespeare’s *King Lear* to understand labor-management relations. Although she did not believe that reading was a substitute for direct experience, she did suggest more than once that reading great works of fiction was a means of developing a sympathetic understanding.

Although Addams had a wide variety of influences, as we have seen, she was not a derivative thinker as many commentators suggest. She drew upon a number of great theorists to develop her ideas about social morality but never dogmatically followed in anyone’s footsteps. All the while, she influenced many others as she made her unique contributions to American and feminist philosophy.

### 3. Addam’s Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist philosophers have attended to the impact of context on theory more than mainstream philosophers. Although there are lively debates within feminist philosophical circles regarding the nature of objectivity, many including Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Hilary Rose, Alison Jaggar, and Sandra Harding have developed the notion that knowledge is indeed situated. In particular, feminist standpoint theorists valorize the perspectives and theories derived from oppressed positions in society such as from women’s experience. Harding describes a feminist standpoint as something to be achieved rather than as a passive perspective. All women have lived experience in a woman’s body and therefore have a woman’s perspective but a feminist standpoint requires an effort at stepping back to gain a holistic picture of power struggles. Through the understanding of the perspectival aspect of knowledge claims, standpoint epistemology can create libratory knowledge that can be leveraged to subvert oppressive systems. One of the challenges of standpoint theory is how to give voice to multiple positions without falling back on hierarchies that favor certain standpoints over others.

Jane Addams demonstrates an appreciation for the spirit of standpoint theory through her work and writing at Hull-House. Despite the privileged social position she was born into, her settlement avocation immersed her in disempowered communities. Addams poetically describes her moral mandate to meet, know, and understand others: “We know at last, that we can only discover truth by a rational and democratic interest in life, and to give truth complete social expression is the endeavor upon which we are entering. Thus the identification with the common lot that is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the source and expression of social ethics. It is though we thirsted at the great wells of human experience, because we know that a daintier or less potent draught would not carry us to the end of the journey, going forward as we must in the heat and jostle of the crowd” (DSE 9). One might object that although these are admirable sentiments, they are still spoken as an outsider. What constitutes an outsider? Addams lived the better part of a half-century in the diverse immigrant neighborhood of Hull House in Chicago. She didn’t go home to the suburbs or return with her data to a university office. She lived and worked amongst the crime, civic corruption, prostitution, sweatshops, and other ills of the community. When they first started Hull House, Addams and Starr were involved outsiders—an oddity that neighbors looked upon suspiciously. However, time, proximity, and an earnest desire to learn and help won the trust and respect of the neighborhood. The outsiders became insiders. When Addams wrote or spoke about single women laborers, child laborers, prostitutes, or first and second generation immigrants, she employed first-hand knowledge gained from her own social interactions. Addams leveraged her Hull House experiences to give voice to standpoints marginalized in society. Simultaneously, she worked to give the oppressed their own voice through college extension courses, English language courses, and social clubs that fostered political and social debate. Addams was self-conscious about speaking for others: “I never addressed a Chicago audience on the subject of the Settlement and its vicinity without inviting a neighbor to go with me, that I might curb my hasty generalization by the consciousness that I had an auditor who knew the conditions more intimately than I could hope to do” (TYH 80). Addams did not try to arrive at universal moral truths but recognized that the standpoint of Hull House neighbors mattered.

In an 1896 article in *The American Journal of Sociology*, “A Belated Industry,” Addams addresses the plight of women in domestic labor. These were the most powerless of laborers: predominantly women, many of them immigrants with limited English language skills and in a job that afforded little legal protection or organizing possibilities. Addams begins the article with a footnote claiming that her knowledge of domestic laborers comes from her experience with the Woman’s Labor Bureau, one of the many Hull House

projects. Addams goes on to address the powerlessness of domestic work particularly as it entails isolation and a highly inequitable power relationship: “The household employé[sic] has no regular opportunity for meeting other workers of her trade, and of attaining with them the dignity of corporate body” (ABI 538). Addams identifies the gendered dimension of this oppressive work: “men would ... resent the situation and consider it quite impossible if it implied the giving up of their family and social ties, and living under the roof of the household requiring their services” (ABI 540). Addams extrapolates her experience of these workers to imaginatively inhabit a standpoint and give them voice. She explicitly claims as much, “An attempt is made to present this industry [domestic labor] from the point of view of those women who are working in households for wages” (ABI 536). Addams repeatedly gave recognition to the experiences of oppressed peoples that she came to know in an effort to have their concerns acknowledged in the social democracy she was trying to foster.

Addams believed recognizing alternative standpoints was important in promoting social progress through sympathetic understanding. Accordingly, if a voice is given to individuals inhabiting marginalized positions in society, it fosters the possibility of better understanding between people as well as actions that can lead to improving their lot. Addams engaged in the tricky balance of honoring standpoints while simultaneously seeking connections and continuities to build upon. This is exemplified in Addams’ books on young people, *Youth and the City Streets*, and elderly women, *The Long Road of Woman’s Memory*. The latter work is a treatise on memory, which is based on the memories of first generation immigrant women. Rather than grounding her theory upon the experiences of famous women theorists or writers—and Addams knew most of the prominent women of her day—Addams based her analysis on the women who were her neighbors at Hull House. Addams not only grounded her philosophical work in experience, but in the experiences of those on the margins of society. Addams puts experience before theory. She did not begin by positing a theory about these women. Instead, she retold a number of stories she had heard from them and then drew out conclusions about the function of memory. For Addams, theory follows experience. Addams was in the minority among her peers in philosophy or feminism to believe that working class immigrant women not only should be given a voice but also had something important to contribute to the community of ideas.

An example of Addams’ application of feminist standpoint theory (or at least a forerunner of it) can be seen in the “Devil Baby” which recounts what transpired after three Italian women came to Hull House to see a possessed infant. One can form a whimsical image from Addams’ account, “No amount of denial

convinced them that he was not there, for they knew exactly what he was like with his cloven hoofs, his pointed ears and diminutive tail; the Devil Baby had, moreover, been able to speak as soon as he was born and was shockingly profane” (LRW 7–8). This would be an amusing anecdote if it stopped there, but Addams described a six-week period of time when Hull House was inundated with stories about the alleged Devil Baby. Visitors even offered Hull House residents money to see the creature despite adamant responses that there was no such baby. Multiple versions of how the Devil Baby came to be arose in the neighborhood and eventually the hysteria made the newspapers. One version of the story claimed that the Devil Baby was the offspring of an atheist and a devoted Italian girl. When the husband tore a holy picture from the wall claiming that he would rather have a devil in the house, his wish was granted in the form of his coming child (LRW 8). Although a fascinating social phenomenon, the Devil Baby story is of little obvious philosophical importance and it would be easy to dismiss those who perpetuated the story as simpletons caught up in hysteria. Not for Jane Addams. She applied a familiar approach by refusing to pass judgment, listening carefully, and developing a sympathetic understanding. Addams actively worked to grasp their subject position.

Although Addams dismissed the “gawkers” who came to see the Devil Baby as a sensationalist seeking mob, she wanted to understand the older women who had perpetuated the myth: “Whenever I heard the high eager voices of old women, I was irresistibly interested and left anything I might be doing in order to listen to them” (LRW 9). What she found were women who were serious and highly animated about the Devil Baby. They used the appearance of the Devil Baby and the excitement it created as an opportunity to discuss important and troubling matters of their life. Addams, who never sought simple answers to complex issues, found a convergence of class, race, and gender dynamics fueling the Devil Baby phenomenon. These immigrant women were in very unfamiliar surroundings and had to adjust to foreign ideas and practices. They had been alienated by their children who adapted to the new country more easily, keeping the old ways at arm’s length. Many of these women also had been victims of domestic abuse long before such acts had a distinct label. One woman tells Addams, “My face has this queer twist for now nearly sixty years; I was ten when it got that way, the night after I saw my father do my mother to death with his knife” (LRW 11). For these forgotten and beaten women the Devil Baby represented a connection to a past that made more sense to them: one that had clear moral imperatives. Another woman tells Addams, “You might say it’s a disgrace to have your son beat you up for the sake of a bit of money you’ve earned by scrubbing—your own man is different—but I haven’t the heart to blame the boy for doing what he’s seen all his life, his father forever went wild when the drink was in him and struck me to the very day of his death. The

ugliness was born in the boy as the marks of the Devil was born in the poor child up-stairs” (LRW 11). Addams’ recounting of tale after tale of violence provides a depressing view of immigrant women’s lives at the turn of the century. For women who had lived such a hard life, the Devil Baby provided a momentary opportunity for resistance. Husbands and children would listen to them and temporarily forsake beating them for fear of divine retribution as evinced by the Devil Baby. Addams describes memory as serving to “make life palatable and at rare moments even beautiful” (LRW 28). Although this is a specific explanatory analysis, it demonstrates how Addams sought connections among the personal stories: “When these reminiscences, based upon the diverse experiences of my people unknown to each other, point to one inevitable conclusion, they accumulate into a social protest ...” (LRW 29). Addams proceeds to view the Devil Baby in light of the women’s movement and the fight against oppression. Given the position of the old women, the Devil Baby was the vehicle of resistance and an opportunity for Addams to interject feminist analysis.

## 4. Radical Meliorism

If “radical” is defined as challenging existing structures of power, Jane Addams was the least elitist and the most radical of the American philosophers of her era. Addams consistently took and eloquently supported inclusive positions that sought the benefit of society. While pragmatists typically advocated for social progress, Addams radicalized the extent of that social progress. Rather than defining progress by the achievements of the best and the brightest, Addams advocates the betterment of all in what she calls “lateral progress.” For Addams, lateral progress meant that social advancement could not be declared through the breakthroughs or peak performances of a few, but could only authentically be found in social gains held in common. Addams employs metaphor to explain the concept:

The man who insists upon consent, who moves with the people, is bound to consult the feasible right as well as the absolute right. He is often obliged to attain only Mr. Lincoln’s “best possible,” and often have the sickening sense of compromising with his best convictions. He has to move along with those whom he rules toward a goal that neither he nor they see very clearly till they come to it. He has to discover what people really want, and then “provide the channels in which the growing moral force of their lives shall flow.” What he does attain, however, is not the result of his individual striving, as a solitary mountain climber beyond the sight of the valley multitude, but it is underpinned and upheld by the



sentiments and aspirations of many others. Progress has been slower perpendicularly, but incomparably greater because lateral.

He has not taught his contemporaries to climb mountains, but he has persuaded the villagers to move up a few feet higher (AML 175).

Whether one refers to them as “robber barons” or “captains of industry,” the rise of commerce in the United States was defined by the winners of the game: those who amassed wealth. The wealthy enjoyed tremendous progress in healthcare, education, and material well-being. Addams was not satisfied with narrow social development and redefined progress according to the common person’s experience. This redefinition continues to elude us today as class disparity in the United States continues to grow. Ironically, Addams is often chastised for expounding middle class values, which was her point of reference as she started Hull House, but Addams’ experiences pushed her to more fully understand and appreciate the immigrant poor in the neighborhood.

Addams applied the idea of lateral progress to numerous issues. When she discusses the role of labor unions, she argues that in their attempt to improve conditions for all workers, unions are fulfilling a vital function that society has abrogated. Addams, who had a track record of supporting labor, makes it clear that she does not view collective bargaining as an end in itself. Addams views unions as trailblazers who obtain working conditions that eventually benefit everyone in society: “trade unions are trying to do for themselves what the government should secure for all its citizens; has, in fact, secured in many cases” (FSS 456). Addams is not interested in improving the lot of one group of workers over another. “Any sense of division and suspicion is fatal in a democratic form of government, for although each side may seem to secure most for itself, when consulting only its own interests, the final test must be the good of the community as a whole” (FSS 461). For Addams, unions are important in as much as they improve working conditions, raise wages, reduce hours and eliminate child labor for all Americans—lateral progress.

Although the first chapter of Addams’ *Democracy and Social Ethics* is ostensibly a critique of charity workers and their preconceived notions of the needs of the destitute, it also reveals Addams’ disposition toward the poor and the oppressed. She decries the historical position of blaming the victim: “Formerly, when it was believed that poverty was synonymous with vice and laziness, and that the prosperous man was the righteous man, charity was administered harshly with a good conscience; for the charitable agent really blamed the individual for his poverty, and the very fact of his own superior prosperity gave him a certain consciousness of superior morality” (DSE 11–12). Such a judgment serves to separate the wealthy from the poor. Accordingly,

the rich can make progress intellectually, materially, technologically, etc., while the poor are thought to be left behind largely due to their own actions. Addams argues that the poor are often victims of circumstance and that it is the responsibility of society to first understand those who are marginalized and then develop means for their participation in lateral progress.

Charity, although a good, is not lateral progress. A temporary transfer in wealth, while noble, does not constitute real progress in alleviating economic disparity. Addams never viewed herself as a charity worker nor did she characterize the work of Hull House as charity: "I am always sorry to have Hull House regarded as philanthropy" (ONS 45). What Addams sought was a lateral progress that could be brought about by the collective will and manifested through social institutions. She believes there would be no need for settlements if "society had been reconstructed to the point of offering equal opportunity for all" (ONS 27). Addams is not advocating a *laissez-faire* capitalism version of equal opportunity that is abstract and rights based. Free market economics influences modern understandings of democracy as merely assuring the adequate opportunity to participate. Addams' approach to equal opportunity is set in a context of active democracy where citizens and social organizations look out for one another because they all have a stake in lateral progress or what today might be termed democratic socialism.

Addams' radical pragmatism ultimately had a feminist dimension as she continually gave voice to women's experience, addressed women's issues, and saw a vibrant social democracy as only possible if there was full participation by both men and women. When it came to issues such as women's suffrage, Addams manifests a feminist pragmatism. "If women had no votes with which to select the men upon whom her social reform had become dependent some cherished project might be so modified by uninformed legislatures during the process of legal enactment, that the law, as finally passed, injured the very people it was meant to protect. Women had discovered that the unrepresented are always liable to be given what they do not want by legislators who merely wish to placate them" (STY 89–90). Note that Addams does not argue the application of abstract human rights but she instead makes a functional claim about the role of voting in proper democratic representation. It is not that Addams opposes rights but she will continually opt for pragmatist arguments on feminist issues. Her male pragmatist colleagues were sympathetic to feminist positions but did not make the claims as forcefully or consistently as Addams (Seigfried, 1996).

Addams' notion of lateral progress exemplifies again how she has been misrepresented as merely a reformer. Radical discourse, a la Marx, has been associated with the call for extreme changes in social institutions and

systems. Although such changes may be arguably desirable, they entail upheaval that will disrupt social relationships at great potential personal cost. Addams sought substantial social progress through mutual agreement and tapping into communal intelligence. Her radical vision refused to give up on the individuals in society and their caring relationships. Mixing theoretical notions of social change with concrete experiences of community organizing, Addams was a caring radical. Addams was indeed interested in ameliorating social problems, but that does not preclude a broadly construed radical edge to her social philosophy.

## 5. Socializing Care

An analysis of Addams' moral philosophy suggests at least three claims about her relationship to feminist care ethics *avant la lettre*. One, Addams' approach to the important social issues of her day reflected the relationality and contextualization that are important to what is called care ethics today. Two, although Addams employed caring in response to the needs of others, she contributes an active, even assertive, dimension to care ethics not commonly found in feminist theory. Third, Addams advocates what might be called "socializing care": systemically instantiating the habits and practices of care in social institutions.

Although care is a simple and widely invoked word, many feminist theorists have invested it with a particular meaning as it applies to ethics. The original motivation for developing care ethics was an acknowledgement that traditional forms of morality, in particular principle-based and consequence-based ethics, did not adequately address the richness of the human condition. These approaches are said to bracket-out emotions, relationships, temporal considerations, reciprocity, and creativity to focus on immediate adjudication of moral conflicts. Accordingly, the use of rules or consequences can become a reductionist and formulaic response resulting in shortsighted responses to complex and systemic issues. For care ethicists, while principles are not totally ignored, they are tempered by a concern for interpersonal connection. Principles and consequences have an important place in moral deliberation but care theorists seek a more robust and complex sense of morality that cannot ignore the context and people involved. For example, the claim that people who spray-paint graffiti on a building ought to be punished because they have damaged someone else's property (rule/principle violation) will likely receive widespread assent. Care ethicists do not necessarily deny such an assertion but they want to know more. The person doing the spray-painting is a human being whose motivations and circumstances may reveal other variables not

sufficiently addressed by the mere recognition of rule violations. There may be systemic issues involving social opportunities or discrimination or lack of voice that have contributed to this behavior. Care ethicists shift the moral focus from abstract individuals and their actions to concrete, situated people with feelings, friends, and dreams—persons who can be cared about. Care ethics demands effort, experience, knowledge, imagination and empathy to effectively understand the totality of the moral context. The result is not exoneration of personal responsibility but a richer understanding of the human condition where we are all actors and acted upon.

Addams consistently moves beyond formulaic moral accounts of principles or consequences to apply a kind of care ethics to her experiences in the Hull House neighborhood. Proximity is once again crucial as she has direct experience of individuals which better provides the resources for a caring response. However, as a philosopher, Addams extrapolates her experiences to theorize about others of similar circumstances. For example, in *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* Addams addresses juvenile delinquency. She recounts charges against young men who were brought before the Juvenile Court in Chicago (which Hull House had helped establish). These charges were categorized by type such as stealing, which included the pilfering of pigeons, blankets, and a bicycle. Another category was disorderly conduct which included picking up coal from railroad tracks, throwing stones at railroad employees, and breaking down a fence. There was also vagrancy, which included loafing, sleeping on the streets all night, and wandering (SYC 56–57). Addams does not deny the seriousness of some of these infractions but she does not rush to judgment, instead choosing to investigate the context further. She talks to the young men and asks them about their motivations. She identifies a listlessness, a desire for adventure not quieted by what the city has to offer: “their very demand for excitement is a protest against the dullness of life, to which we ourselves instinctively respond” (SYC 71). Addams views the city as built around the possibility of factory production but ignoring the needs of future workers. She finds in the “juvenile delinquents” many young people who simply seek adventure and excitement because their lives have little of it. Had Addams merely abstracted youth as a category of individuals who seem to be prone to break the law, she could have easily found principles to place a negative judgment on them. However, Addams saw them as humans, many of whom she witnessed grow up in the neighborhood and she cared for them beyond the alienating label of “troubled youth.”

More than merely prefiguring care ethics, Addams infuses a high standard of social responsibility into this moral approach. Addams advocates a duty of social awareness and engagement thus creating the potential for care. Many

care ethicists are wary of the notion of duty, as it has been traditionally formulated. Moral duties have historically entailed claims regarding actions that a person is required to offer on behalf of another. Because the “other” is an abstract other and the requirements are universalized (I must act in such a way in all cases) duties toward others have tended toward moral minimums of obligation. For example, if someone’s life is in peril and minimal effort is required to prevent it, such as an infant drowning in 3 inches of bath water, a moral obligation to act is present. Although such cases get widespread agreement, it becomes more difficult to ascertain what obligation one has to distant others with unclear expectations of success. For example, many Americans have disposable income that could save the life of someone in a poverty stricken country on a distant continent; do they have a moral obligation to give them money and to what extent? Addams constructs the duty to care differently. Hers is an epistemological demand. Addams claims that good citizens actively pursue knowledge of others—not just facts but a deeper understanding—for the possibility of caring and acting on their behalf: “if we grow contemptuous of our fellows, and consciously limit our intercourse to certain kinds of people whom we have previously decided to respect, we not only tremendously circumscribe our range of life, but limit our scope of ethics” (DSE 8). For Addams, care ethics must be actively pursued not passively fostered. Addams’ language is more assertive than much current care ethics discourse.

Finally, Addams extends care ethics to the public realm. She is not content to compartmentalize personal and social morality. Caring is what she desires for democracy and its various institutions. Addams views the residents of social settlements, for example, as having “an opportunity of seeing institutions from the recipient’s standpoint” because they are not distant institutions but neighbors. She finds this perspective significant and believes that it should ultimately “find expression in institutional management” (OVS 39).

Furthermore, she differentiates the epistemological project of the settlement from the university in language that acknowledges a caring element: “The settlement stands for application as opposed to research; for emotion as opposed to abstraction, for universal interest as opposed to specialization” (FSS 189). While social settlements epitomize a democratic endeavor for Addams, she applies the same caring values to other institutions. The creation of the juvenile courts in Chicago represented an example of caring because it mandated contextualized regard for the context of young people. The creation of adult education that addressed tangible and contemporary issues also demonstrated a caring regard for the needs of Hull-House neighbors. Perhaps most of all, the comportment of the Hull-House residents manifested care ethics in their willingness to listen, learn and respond. Addams viewed



socializing care as participating in a rich ideal of democracy.

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Changing my mind: An encounter with Jane Addams, social stratification understands under a principle of perception.

Women reformers and American culture, 1870-1930, the normal distribution, within the limits of classical mechanics, is wavelike.

Socializing democracy: Jane Addams and John Dewey, the deviation, as paradoxical as it may seem, absurdly constructs an out-of-act Hamilton integral.