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A Working Democracy: Jane Addams on the Meaning of Work

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Abstract: By exploring Addams's lifelong fascination with work, this essay analyzes the ways in which her understanding of work fundamentally shaped her wider political vision. For Addams, work was the foundation of not only a personal sense of identity, but also a collective democratic character. The workplace had the potential to be the model of a cooperative community, providing a venue for social solidarity and civic reciprocity. By working together, Americans would develop a more cosmopolitan and inclusive politics. In short, the essay argues that Addams's political thought was an attempt to revitalize democracy by giving meaning to work. It concludes by suggesting that her arguments can be applied to many contemporary political problems, and that today's democratic theory and practice would be enlivened by a renewed attention to work.

From Aristotle to Arendt, a long line of political theorists have afforded work and the working life a central place in political theory. Yet given the amount of time human beings spend working, it is somewhat surprising that contemporary democratic thinkers have not paid more attention to the concept of work. Although liberal theorists, including John Rawls, have given attention to issues of justice in the workplace, much of liberal political theory has viewed work as somehow prepolitical, taking property and its distribution to be more salient political questions.[1] Similarly, while some republican thinkers such as Philip Pettit have brought attention to how work can be a site of domination and freedom, others have too often seen it as a sphere properly associated with commerce rather than politics.[2] And even as certain feminist

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[1]See Jeffrey Moriarty, "Rawls, Self-Respect, and the Opportunity for Meaningful Work," *Social Theory & Practice* 35 (July 2009): 441–59. For an excellent overview of the place of work in recent liberal political theory, see Nien-Hê Hsieh, "Justice in Production," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16 (March 2008): 72–100. For work along these lines, see Samuel Arnold, "The Difference Principle at Work," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 20 (March 2012): 94–118.

[2]See Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 141–46. Compare J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce,*

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theorists have noted the importance of the topic, discussing in particular the role of labor in the home and in the workplace, most have treated work too little.[3] Among the small number of studies in which work has been described as a central concern of democracy, none have seriously examined the meaning of work itself.[4] Thus today, as an alarming number of American citizens scramble to find satisfying work—or any at all—the task of understanding its place in our democratic politics remains as important as ever.

A good place to start is with Jane Addams, who responded to the debates of her time on the meaning of work with her own uniquely democratic vision.[5]

and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). See also Frank Lovett and Philip Pettit, "Neorepublicanism: A Normative and Institutional Research Program," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 11–29.

[3]Among those who treat the theme are Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 116–53; Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 134–69; Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Nancy Hirschmann, "Mill, Political Economy, and Women's Work," *American Political Science Review* 102 (May 2008): 199–213. For views that feminist theorists have given too little attention to class and work, see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[4]Robert Dahl, *After the Revolution? Authority in a Good Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970); Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Edward S. Greenberg, *Workplace Democracy: The Political Effects of Participation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Dennis Thompson and Amy Gutmann, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 277–90. See also Robert Mayer, "Robert Dahl and the Right to Workplace Democracy," *Review of Politics* 63, no. 2 (2001): 221–47; Robert Dahl, "A Right to Workplace Democracy? A Response to Robert Mayer," *Review of Politics* 63, no. 2 (2001): 249–53. On the workplace as a central site of democratic deliberation, see Diana C. Mutz and Jeffrey J. Mondak, "The Workplace as a Context for Cross-Cutting Political Discourse," *Journal of Politics* 68 (February 2006): 140–55. A noteworthy exception is Russell Muirhead, *Just Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[5]Of course, Addams is not the only American thinker who was concerned with the democratic character of work. See, for example, on Thoreau: Brian Walker, "Thoreau's Alternative Economics: Work, Liberty, and Democratic Cultivation," *American Political Science Review* 92 (December 1998): 845–56; on Whitman: Samuel Beer, "Liberty and Union: Walt Whitman's Idea of the Nation," *Political Theory* 12 (August 1984): 361–86; and on Herbert Croly: Joel M. Winkelman, "Herbert Croly on Work and Democracy," *Polity* (January 2012): 81–105. See also, on work as a political right, Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

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For years, scholars ignored Addams, arguing that while she should be remembered as an activist, reformer, and political radical, she could not be considered a serious thinker. Among those who even acknowledged that Addams had political ideas, most averred that they were far from original, describing them as a footnote in the development of the American liberal tradition.[6] More recently, however, a number of scholars have begun to give Addams a more central role in the history of democratic thought. The sociologist Mary Jo Deegan has emphasized her contribution to the development of American social science, arguing that Addams exercised a considerable intellectual influence on some of the period's seminal thinkers, such as George Herbert Mead and John Dewey.[7] Philosophers such as Charlene Haddock Seigfried place Addams at the center of Chicago's intellectual life in the early twentieth century, depicting her as an important agent in the creation of American pragmatism.[8] In the same way, the political theorist Eldon Eisenach has seen Addams as a leading figure in Progressive politics, arguing that she was part of an active alternative to the American liberal tradition rather than a footnote to it.[9] More recently, Jean Bethke Elshtain has argued that Addams's thought combined liberal and conservative ideological strands to create a distinctive version of democratic social reform.[10] Yet in spite of the renewed interest, scholars have overlooked at least one core component of Addams's democratic theory: her concept of work.

This essay attempts to build on and extend contemporary interpretations of Addams by emphasizing the conceptual centrality of work to her political thinking. It argues that Addams's political thought is best understood as an extended engagement with the meaning of work. Using her major writings, it explores three themes central to her thought—identity, community, and democratic politics—and demonstrates how reforming the experience of work was essential to each. For Addams, work was the foundation of not only a personal sense of identity, but also a collective democratic character. She considered the workplace to be the model of a cooperative community, providing a venue for creating social solidarity and civic reciprocity. Above

[6]Daniel Levine, *Jane Addams and the Liberal Tradition* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971).

[7]Mary Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988).

[8]Charlene Haddock Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also Maurice Hamington, *The Social Philosophy of Jane Addams* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

[9]Eldon J. Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Eldon Eisenach, *Sacred Discourse and American Nationality* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012); Eldon Eisenach, "Some Second Thoughts on Progressivism and Rights," *Social Philosophy & Policy* 29 (July 2012): 196–219.

[10]Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

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all, she believed that it was in working together that Americans would be able to develop a more inclusive democratic politics. In short, the essay argues that Addams's political thought was an attempt to revitalize democracy by giving a new meaning to work. It concludes by suggesting that her arguments can be applied to many contemporary political problems, and that democratic theory and practice would be enlivened by a renewed attention to work.

"Bread Labor" and the Search for Vocation: Addams's Lifelong Preoccupation with Work

"In labor alone is happiness."[11] A young Jane Addams, priggish and self-serious, delivered these words in her first public speech while a junior at Rockford (Illinois) Women's Seminary. With its echoes of Thomas Carlyle, Addams's 1880 oration was steeped in late nineteenth-century views of female moral reform. The title itself, "Bread Givers," is taken from one of the towering intellectuals of the Victorian period, John Ruskin, who in an influential essay called on women of his day to act as a moral force in society, not only providing bread for their own households but also distributing it "among the multitude."[12] In many ways, the speech is unremarkable, typical of the time and place. Yet the clichés of a school valedictory address belie a deeper preoccupation with work that would shape Addams in her early life and guide the career that grounded her democratic thought and brought her international renown that continued beyond her death in 1935.

Even before her days at Rockford Seminary, Addams longed for a life of work. Her father, John Huy Addams, cast a long shadow in the small town of Cedarville, Illinois, where he had begun his career as a miller, helped negotiate a railroad route through the rural town, and by middle age had risen to prominence as a banker and public servant. As a child, Addams was enamored of her father's "self-made" status, and attempted to emulate it. In *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910) she describes sitting contentedly for hours rubbing the freshly ground wheat from the millstones between her thumb and fingers in a consuming ambition to possess her father's "miller's thumb," while also holding her hands near the millstone "in the hope that the little hard flints flying from the miller's chisel would light upon" the backs of her hands "and make the longed for marks" she saw on her father's work-speckled hands.[13] The childish imitation of the father's labor

[11]Jane Addams, introductory speech at the Junior Exhibition, in *The Selected Papers of Jane Addams,* vol. 1, *Preparing To Lead, 1860–81*, ed. Mary Lynn McCree Bryan, Barbara Bair, and Maree de Angury (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 350–51.

[12]John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, ed. Deborah Epstein Nord (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 89.

[13]Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House, with Autobiographical Notes* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 12.

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gave way to an adolescent vocational struggle. Addams's education was fraught with a frustrating tension between her own desire to find a personally satisfying vocation and the expectations of her teachers that she take up the kind of calling—in her case, medical missionary—commonly afforded to women of her status. Following an abortive attempt at medical school she spiraled into a prolonged depression that left her often bedridden.[14] On a European voyage undertaken to help cure her condition, Addams caught her first glimpse of modern urban poverty, in the face of which she recalls her realization that she and other women like her had received a liberal education that had obscured the social problems of her time in a tangle of literary allusions and abstractions, what Tolstoy called the "snare of preparation."[15] What she sought instead was a kind of work that arose from "that simple and almost automatic response to the human appeal, that old healthful reaction resulting in activity from the mere presence of suffering or of helplessness," a pursuit which culminated with the foundation of Hull-House in 1889.[16]

However lonely her vocational anxieties might have made her, Addams came of age among a cohort of intellectual fellow travelers who were wrestling as well with the question of how to preserve the meaning of work in a rapidly industrializing society. The era's most prominent economists, among them Richard Ely and Simon Patten, along with sociologists John R. Commons, E. A. Ross, and Thorstein Veblen, built their careers considering the proper role of work in industrial society.[17] Socialists like Eugene V. Debs and proponents of scientific management like Herbert Croly clashed over differing assessments of the responsibilities of employers, their relationship to workers, and the type of community constituted in the

[14]Like many of her class, Addams was given the diagnosis of "neurasthenia" or nervous exhaustion. For more on the ideas and practices surrounding mental health in Addams's time, see F. G. Gosling, *Before Freud: Neurasthenia and the American Medical Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[15]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 88.

[16]Ibid., 71.

[17]On the economic thought of the period, see Daniel M. Fox, *The Discovery of Abundance: Simon N. Patten and the Transformation of Social Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); James Livingston, *Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 1850–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) remains the definitive history of American social science; see also Thomas Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-century Crisis of Authority* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

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workplace.[18] Progressives of all stripes—from early feminists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman to democratic theorists like John Dewey—turned their attention to the role of work in building a more inclusive society and grappled with the proper role of women, immigrants, and professionals in democratic politics.[19] Although Addams participated in all of these debates, she also developed her own views based on her everyday experience in the manufacturing quarters of Chicago, where she saw firsthand not only the soul-crushing conditions of industrial life but also the potential power of work in developing political identity, creating forms of community that bridged ethnic, cultural, and economic differences, and ensuring that the best features of society were "secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."[20]

Work and Identity

In one way or another, most accounts of Addams's life and thought construe her as a Victorian moral reformer rather than a serious political thinker. Early biographies like John Farrell's *Beloved Lady* and Allen Davis's *American Heroine* offer sentimental versions of Addams's activism,

[18]On Debs and American socialism, see Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1949); Harold Currie, *Eugene V. Debs* (Boston: Twayne, 1976); Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). For more on Addams's relationship to socialism, see Hamington, *Social Philosophy of Jane Addams*. On Croly and scientific management, see Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); R. Jeffrey Lustig, *Corporate Liberalism: The Origins of Modern American Political Theory, 1890–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Marc Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of Reform in the United States and Britain, 1909–1926* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[19]For background on Gilman see Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism*; Judith Allen, *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, Progressivism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Cynthia Davis, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Biography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[20]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 116. For more on the political and social thought of the settlement movement, see Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) and Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890–1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984). For more on the relationship between Addams and "the Chicago School," see Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School*; Andrew Feffer, *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). For an overview of the period, Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) and Jean Quandt, *From the Small Town to the Great Community: The Social Thought of Progressive Intellectuals* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970) remain excellent introductions.

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emphasizing her involvement in moral crusades for peace, children's causes, and the reform of prostitution laws.[21] Following these sentimental portrayals, scholars like T. J. Jackson Lears, Daniel Rodgers, and Paul Boyer have maintained that however well intentioned, her Hull-House reform experiments were quaint examples of Victorian middle-class morality ill suited to an urban, industrial society defined by class antagonisms and glaring economic inequality.[22] Lears in particular has criticized her industrial experiments as a kind of bourgeois affectation, providing therapy for middle-class reformers rather than achieving any meaningful social change. By contrast, Jean Elshtain's *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy* (2002) celebrates the Victorian morality that the historians have derided, lauding Addams's role as an Americanizer struggling to improve the character of recently arrived immigrants and their children. According to Elshtain's account, Addams used Hull-House to deliver "identity and dignity" to immigrant lives, to "heal the yawning chasm between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters."[23] Yet it can be argued that Addams's primary concern was not with the moral issues dear to Victorian moralists, nor even the assimilation of immigrants and their families to American life, but rather with the cultivation of a common political character.[24] And it was only by redefining work that Addams believed that reformers and immigrants alike would be able to produce for themselves a political identity as working people, both individually and collectively.

Although she was predisposed to view labor in connection with older ideals of craftsmanship, Addams did not understand work to be simply production, let alone heroic, manly production. To be sure, her views of work shared much in common with activists in the Arts and Crafts movement like Hull-House cofounder Ellen Gates Starr, but she lacked their nostalgia for the preindustrial workshop. Instead, much like Hannah Arendt later, she recognized a distinction between the toilsome connotations of "labor" and the creativity that was attached to the activity of "work."[25] Most

[21]John C. Farrell, *Beloved Lady: A History of Jane Addams's Ideas on Reform and Peace* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967); Allen F. Davis, *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[22]Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 81–90; T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 79–80; Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[23]Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy*, 146.

[24]On this count, Elshtain would agree in that she argues that middle-class family values would have included a broader sense of social responsibility central to citizenship. See ibid., 104–10.

[25]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 57–79.

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factory work was monotonous and intellectually deadening, but she contended that it was possible to "lighten this incubus" by educating workers about the importance of their work.[26] Thus as new industrial machinery parceled workers into increasingly unskilled tasks, Addams argued that the apparently isolating effects of the division of labor could be offset by the recognition that in fact it actually increased social interdependence. A more complete awareness of this interdependence did not weaken individual identity, but supported and maintained it, giving the worker an understanding of the "sequence between his acts and the far-off results" that would bring "meaning into his life."[27] Moreover, all kinds of work, both domestic and industrial, professional and menial, could potentially furnish workers with a more meaningful experience of working, engaging their intelligence, educating them about their world, and offering what she would call "the power to see life as a whole."[28] Put simply, if labor could be made to provide a wider understanding of the world, it would be "lifted from drudgery" into "self-conscious activity."[29]

For Addams, the most important reward of work was not its material compensation, but the creation of a stronger sense of self. In contrast to economists like Ely and Patten, her view of work did not emphasize raising the standard of living in material terms, which she saw as a product of the attitude that "work is merely provisional."[30] While not averse to raising living standards for all workers, she argued that improving work meant more than increasing wages. After all, an improved standard of living was no salve for labor that reduced the worker to a specialized automaton, an effect that could accompany even higher-status occupations. In her view, industrial labor could provide the worker with the same benefits that had previously been associated with both craft labor and commercial occupations, namely, a sense of self that would strengthen the worker's feelings of individual efficacy, allowing him to become "a man on his own feet."[31] Nor did the rewards of industrial work accrue only to men. In fact, one of the principal reasons Addams lauded industrialization was that it made women's work public, bringing the traditional domestic occupations, and with them many women, out of the home and into the workplace. Thus it was industrial labor that would give women as well as men "larger interests," a stake, as she put it, in "the affairs lying quite outside personal and family claims."[32]

[26]Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 85.
[27]Ibid., 93.
[28]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 236.
[29]Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 122.
[30]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 84.
[31]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 376.
[32]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 74. To be sure, Simon Patten also contended that women should work outside the home, writing several controversial articles in the

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Work was the source not only of a stable identity, but also of a morally upright one. As Lears, Boyer, and Rodgers have noted in their interpretations of Addams, she worried over the moral decay in the industrial city. Addams argued that the source of this disarray, at least among the working class, was an occupational life dominated by toilsome labor. In *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902) she argues that the drudgery of most industrial work made life less wholesome because dull factory labor only made more attractive the "lurid and unprofitable pleasure" to be found in the saloons, dancehalls, and downtown theatres.[33] In her *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909) she reiterated the point, writing that those whose work demands neither "mental effort, or even muscular skill" tend to seek nothing more than sensual pleasures "depending upon sight, sound, and taste."[34] By contrast, work that calls upon the mental or physical capacities of workers develops individuals whose pleasure seeking rises above the base and appetitive. Addams contended that this kind of work would lead to what she called "a life of upright purpose," encouraging "those more engaging qualities which in the experience of the neighborhood are too often connected with dubious aims."[35] In her view, "a long-established occupation" could "form the very foundations of the moral life."[36]

At the same time, work gave one a sense of place in society, strengthening social bonds and social relations. Addams believed that every person, regardless of occupation, made a useful and unique contribution to society through their labor. As destructive as were low wages, the failure to recognize that every person has "a function to perform which can be fulfilled by no one else" impoverishes the whole society.[37] Work should make people feel useful and provide them an opportunity to recognize their social contribution. Addams compares the industrial economy to a game of baseball, writing that it was quite impossible to imagine a successful game in which each player "should be drilled only in his own part, and should know nothing of the relation of that part to the whole

popular press on the subject. However, Patten's arguments were rooted in economics rather than politics. As he saw it, industrialization had made domestic occupations inefficient and unproductive, effectively rendering them less valuable to the family. Despite the fact that mass production had lowered the cost of basic necessities, women who remained in the home decreased the family's income. See Simon Patten, "Young Wives in Industry," *The Independent*, December 1, 1904, 1244–49; "New Adjustments for Women," *The Independent*, September 20, 1906, 674–81; "The Crisis in American Home Life," *The Independent*, February 17, 1910, 342–46.

[33]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 189.

[34]Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, 54.

[35]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 448.

[36]Ibid., 247.

[37]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 178.

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game."[38] In the same way, workers were encouraged to develop an enlarged understanding of the place of their work in society, as well as their individual place in the industrial organization. Writing specifically of women's labor, she notes that an expanded view of work could give each woman a sense of how her life fit into the wider social experience. In her poignant reflection on the women of her neighborhood and their stories, *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* (1916), she suggests that the power of work to "integrate the individual experience into a sense of relation" with a larger social fabric was one of its most significant attributes.[39] Work would help people not only understand themselves as individuals, but also make visible, however briefly, "the subtle and impalpable filaments that secretly bind" the experiences of human beings together, expanding a sense of their relationship to others around them.[40] In short, work would make sense of society and of one's place in it.[41]

Work could also give individual workers an understanding of their place in history. One of the most successful educational experiments at Hull-House was the Labor Museum, a working demonstration that traced the development from individual workshops to industrial machines, while also noting the contributions of various cultures to the production process. However important or transformative the other benefits of Hull-House to its neighborhood, to Addams's mind the Labor Museum was its centerpiece.[42] In it, human history was reconstructed as the history of work. Through its demonstrations and exhibitions, Addams hoped the worker would gain a "conception of historic continuity" which would reveal "the purpose and utility of his work," while providing a feeling of connection not only to present society, but also to past and future ones.[43] Thus this living museum stressed historical and cultural continuity in the practices of work in an attempt to demonstrate what was obvious to her that "industry develops similarly

[38]Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, 127.

[39]Jane Addams, *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 85.

[40]Ibid., 112.

[41]In her concern with the type of social and economic consciousness produced by work, Addams's views were directly parallel to John Dewey's. However, Dewey emphasized the role of a reorganized curriculum and pedagogical practices of the public schools in bringing about this view of work. See John Dewey, *The School and Society: Being Three Lectures by John Dewey, Supplemented by a Statement of the University Elementary School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915); John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

[42]Although the term "museum" was conscientiously chosen, it can mislead today's readers. The Labor Museum was both an active workshop and a teaching center, educating students across class, generation, and ethnicity in traditional crafts and industrial arts. For a description of the Labor Museum, see Marion Foster Washburne, "A Labor Museum," in *Eighty Years at Hull-House*, ed. Allen F. Davis and Mary Lynn McCree (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 77–82.

[43]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 206.

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and peacefully year by year among the workers of each nation."[44] Similarly, in the craft shop and other educational initiatives at Hull-House, Addams hoped to instill pride in the skills of preindustrial labor, along with an understanding of the relation of these craft traditions to industrial work. By presenting industrial labor in this way, she believed that working people might be able to view their own labor as part of a larger story of progress. All of the education offered at Hull-House was intended, she wrote, to give the worker a "chance to realize life through his vocation" by giving him "a sense of his individual relation" to the very progress of human society.[45]

The ability of work to give meaning to life applied not only to industrial workers but also to the privileged and educated classes. If work could uplift the inhabitants of the city's working neighborhoods, so too would it cultivate virtue among those members of society for whom there were no obligations of daily labor. In Addams's view, the primary problem for those such as herself was not their separation from older craft traditions, as Starr had argued, but rather the lack of work that joined the high-minded ideals instilled by a liberal education to some useful social practice. For Addams, a surfeit of education had tragically isolated her and her peers from "the stream of laboring people," those "hard workingmen lifting great burdens" and "the great mother breasts of our common humanity, with its labor and suffering."[46] In the same way, the lack of socially conscious work for the privileged left them as unable to share in the life of the whole society as the industrial working class, their lives as "pitiful as the other great mass of destitute lives."[47] Addams knew from her own personal (and often bedridden) vocational struggle that a life without occupation made one "suffer and grow sensibly lowered in vitality." A luxurious life without work was no less threatening to one's moral health than industrial drudgery. To have no work was to make of oneself an "apparent waste."[48]

Finally, transforming the drudgery of labor into the conscious activity of work would construct a common civic identity, encompassing both the workers and the educated classes. For the working class, Addams had both sympathy and admonition. She admired the heroism of the masses of untrained women who labored tirelessly in sweatshops to provide for their families, but insisted at the same time that "the maternal instinct and family affection" must be supplemented with a view that encompassed more than the home, the neighborhood, or even the sewing trade, but the society as a whole, what she called "a social and industrial conscience."[49]

[44]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 237.
[45]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 209, 213.
[46]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 117.
[47]Ibid., 121.
[48]Ibid., 118.
[49]Jane Addams, "The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement," in *Hull-House Maps and Papers, by Residents of Hull-House* (Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1895), 186–87.

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Commercial occupations fared no better as vehicles for a social conscience or civic identity. Businessmen had failed to see their work in connection with their civic duties, leading many to tax evasion and graft, which she called the "social disorders arising from conscienceless citizenship."[50] Thus it was not particular occupations or social classes that were barriers to a more productive civic life, but the attitude, understanding, and interest of workers, rich and poor alike. As workers continued to see their labor only in terms of their own interest, Addams argued, they failed to see its impact on the progress of the entire community, becoming "correspondingly decivilized and crippled."[51] Put simply, citizens would only come to see themselves as sharing a community of interest through a renewed interest in work and an understanding of its relationship to social and civic life. It was in a common conception of work, Addams argued, that the barriers of language, culture, and class could be broken down, as individuals were united by "mutual and sustained effort" in "civic cooperation."[52]

In short, Addams viewed work as the foundation of a common political identity that transcended ethnicity and class. Her primary concern was neither the moral reform emphasized by the standard accounts of Farrell and Davis nor the assimilation of immigrants to middle-class norms derided by Lears and Rodgers and more recently celebrated by Elshtain. Instead, Addams sought to reform work into an experience that could create a society in which all citizens would be provided an opportunity for self-discovery and self-expression, forming identities rooted in their work rather than in ethnic or class categories. By seeing themselves as working together, the native-born reformer and the immigrant worker would construct a common American identity.

Constructing Community through Work

One area on which all interpreters of Addams can agree is her insistence that democratic life could not be sustained without structures of community that encouraged people to consider the needs of others. Yet scholars disagree on the mechanisms by which community would be constructed and where. In accounts of Addams by students of American thought like Mina Carson, community life would be enhanced primarily by exposure to more wholesome forms of culture, especially in settings that emphasized the role of the "performing arts" in "fusing individuals to the continuing life of society."[53] In this view, neighborhood art classes, theater troupes, and reading groups

[50]Jane Addams, "A Function of the Social Settlement," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 13 (May 1899): 54.

[51]Addams, *The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement*, 203.

[52]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 206.

[53]Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 115.

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were the means to establishing wholesome community life. Along the same lines, Bob Pepperman Taylor argues that Addams's efforts to strengthen communities were aimed mostly at the social life of her neighbors. For Taylor, Addams emphasized the role of civic-minded social groups like the social science and citizenship clubs, where citizens would "recognize and resist their own selfishness and self-satisfaction" and develop a "healthier civic life."[54] Thus for these students of Addams, her conception of community was associated primarily with the private, even domestic, life of the neighborhood. On the other hand, Maurice Hamington has acknowledged Addams's concern with community in the workplace, suggesting that it was primarily the "superficial and truncated" relationships between workers that would be enhanced by "worker associations or labor unions."[55] In Hamington's view community consisted of building a sense of class consciousness and solidarity. Yet for Addams the workplace was the most important site of community development because, unlike neighborhood performances, civic clubs, or even labor unions, communities that were based in the workplace were not simply venues of local or class consciousness, but were instead the means of creating an egalitarian ethic and building solidarity across class lines.

For Addams, individual identity was dependent upon transforming work into a cooperative community effort. She believed that one of the primary problems of industrial life was isolation within the workplace. For most workers, the crowded industrial factory or urban sweatshop ironically provided no sense of fellowship or sociality. When workers are required to stand in place all day, "steadily bending their energies to loveless and mechanical labor," they do not receive the "direct and personal renewal" that comes from the company of others.[56] To Addams it was sadly ironic that so many of her neighbors were starved for genuine social contact and simple human friendship despite living and working in overcrowded conditions. Such isolation "deadens the sympathies and shrivels the power of enjoyment," not just among the working classes but across all classes. Widespread isolation in turn created a fractured society, consigning all members to "live out but half the humanity to which we have been born heir."[57] The threat of isolation was particularly acute for women who were employed as domestic help. Addams found domestic labor isolating because household employees have no regular opportunity for meeting or socializing with other workers in the same trade, thus precluding the opportunity "of attaining with them the dignity of a corporate body."[58] Even the worthy intentions of employers who attempted to share some social life with their domestic employees

[54]Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Citizenship and Democratic Doubt: The Legacy of Progressive Thought* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 71.
[55]Hamington, *The Social Philosophy of Jane Addams*, 131.
[56]Addams, *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*, 97.
[57]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 117.
[58]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 116.

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ended up with merely "a simulacrum of companionship."[59] When a housekeeper quits, Addams noted, the employer often feels resentful and condescending, assuming the girl "wishes to get away from the work and back to her dances and giddy life." Yet after a day of invisible servitude it should not have been surprising that housekeepers desire an opportunity to see and be seen by their peers, even in the saloon dances that were for them "the only organized form of social life."[60]

Addams argued that the workplace should be reconstituted as a social space. Along with socialists like Debs, she argued that rather than being isolated in their labor, workers should be able to experience community and fellowship in their work. "The individual from whom the industrial order demands ever larger drafts of time and energy," she wrote, "should be nourished and enriched from social sources, in proportion as he is drained."[61] Nevertheless, she sought forms of community that brought together all of those in the workplace, mitigating class consciousness. Addams was not opposed to innovations like the model factory of the National Cash Register Company of Dayton, Ohio, where factory workers, salesmen, and company officers came together to listen to lectures on the state of the company and its product. Even so, she saw this kind of reform as at best "a crude example of what might be done."[62] Instead, she envisioned a workplace that offset industrial atomization and overspecialization in a more systematic manner than an annual company picnic. A spirit of collectivity and cooperation should pervade daily practices of labor, whereby all tasks are given "the solace of collective art."[63] To take one example, Addams believed that with the proper education and preparation, working on one wheel of a watch, when part of a truly communal process, could give the modern worker's life more meaning than "the old watchmaker who made a watch from beginning to end."[64]

Addams believed that genuine community required that manual labor be lifted from its low social status. Indeed, efforts to recuperate the dignity of manual labor formed the foundation of her community-building activity. Her conception of cooperative work was premised on her belief that all work is noble, however seemingly humble the task. Addams believed, moreover, not only in the usefulness and necessity of all work, but in the equality of it, reserving a central status for hand labor. She reflected at some length on the significance of the hand, calling it the "oldest tool with which man has dug his way from savagery, and with which he is constantly groping

[59]Ibid., 121.
[60]Ibid., 128.
[61]Ibid., 205–6.
[62]Ibid., 218. For a more complete description of this practice, see Rodgers, *The Work Ethic*, 87–88.
[63]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 219.
[64]Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, 126–27.

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forward."[65] Moreover, the hand provided a metaphor for social unity. Each hand forms part of a great, collective labor, just as each voice in a chorus forms part of the whole. "The treble clapping of delicate hands" and "the bass notes from toughened palms" sound together to create the whole of a vast ovation, she wrote, just as each person contributes to the great composite labor of the whole. At Hull-House, other middle-class settlement workers reached out their delicate hands to grasp the neighborhood's thicker palms, and with them became "lost in the unity of purpose."[66] A recovery of the dignity of those "toughened palms," Addams wrote, was a crucial first step in building community across social barriers.

The low status of manual labor created barriers to realizing a sense of community across classes. For Addams the division of labor formed the central fault line in society. Thus, she lamented the social tendency to "divide up into people who work with their hands and those who do not."[67] This tendency, she believed, had deep historical roots: "apparently we have not yet recovered manual labor from the deep distrust which centuries of slavery and the feudal system have cast upon it."[68] Despite having progressed from slavery and feudalism, social habits and customs continued to make for clear distinctions between those whose hands were dirtied by labor and those whose leisured hands remained clean. The treatment of household employees dramatically illustrated the suspicion of hand labor. For some of those in the leisured class, even having servants with calloused or dirty hands was somehow too close to actually performing labor with one's own hands. Recalling a passage from Tolstoy, she wrote how "a serving man, in order that his hands may be immaculately clean, is kept from performing the heavier work of the household," and is taught to carry a tray so that "even his clean hands" would not touch the employer's teapot. Furthermore "his clean hands are covered with a pair of clean white gloves, which hold the tray."[69] The disdain heaped upon laboring hands insidiously divided society into two classes: those who perform physical labor and those who do not.

Addams believed that the lack of community generated much of the labor conflict of the period. But unlike many union activists, she argued against the destructive consequences of class consciousness. She developed this viewpoint through her own experience with the 1894 Pullman Strike. While feeling a tremendous amount of sympathy for the striking workers and their cause, she also believed that the fundamental problem at the root of the conflict was a failure of both workers and management to understand

[65]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 68.
[66]Ibid., 125.
[67]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 18.
[68]Ibid., 195.
[69]Ibid., 115–16.

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their common social purpose.[70] For her, the events of 1894 illustrated the inevitable conflict that attends managing an industrial enterprise without the cooperation of the workers, "solely by the dictation of the individual owning the capital."[71] In her essay "A Modern Lear," written in response to the strike, Addams worried that workers were also susceptible to ignoring the larger community interest by preaching a "doctrine of emancipation" to "the wage-workers alone."[72] In her understanding, Pullman was Lear, generous but paternalistic, bullying and easily offended, ultimately representing a generation whose time has passed him by; the strikers were Cordelia, insouciant, stubborn, and unwilling to compromise in the face of escalating violence. Just as Lear was unable to comprehend Cordelia's rebellion, so Pullman and others like him misunderstood the labor movement, maintaining the mistaken belief that because of the kindness shown by employer to employees "there should be no strikes in the factory, no revolt against the will of the employer because the employees were filled with loyalty."[73] As Addams saw it, the problem was that the employer too often assumed a philanthropic relationship to his workers rather than believing himself a member of the same community with them. Just as frequently, she believed, the labor movement failed to live up to its democratic potential. Many unions, she believed, were too focused on the narrow interests of their workers, concentrating exclusively on the resources and power that they could extract from management. Working people were no more inclined to judge industrial conflict in terms of community interest than were the individual owners who thought only of their personal interest and control. Conflict arose, Addams averred, when neither management nor labor was willing to look for a common ground rooted in the needs of the whole community.[74]

Workplace democracy, the most important reform of work, aimed to refashion the workplace as a community rather than a staging ground for two opposing groups. In contrast to theorists of scientific management like Frederick W. Taylor or Herbert Croly who favored the centralized authority

[70]The Pullman Strike remains a contentious subject for social scientists and historians. For more recent interpretations, see Richard Schneirov, Shelton Stromquist, and Nick Salvatore, eds., *The Pullman Strike and the Crisis of the 1890s: Essays on Labor and Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999) and Susan E. Hirsch, *After the Strike: A Century of Labor Struggle at Pullman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

[71]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 143.

[72]Jane Addams, "A Modern Lear," in *The Social Thought of Jane Addams*, ed. Christopher Lasch (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 121. Although "A Modern Lear" was written in 1894 in the immediate aftermath of the strike, it languished unpublished until 1912 when the controversy over the strike had faded.

[73]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 156.

[74]For an early statement of this idea, see Addams, *The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement*.

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of managers, Addams argued that such arrangements were undemocratic, arrogating an undue amount of power to employers and preventing workers from seeing their stake in their own industry. "If a number of people decide to build a road," Addams writes, "they are quite inevitably united by their interest in the road."[75] The division of labor had not only increased workers' interdependence within the workplace, but also given them a common purpose with others outside it. The entire community, from worker and employer to the eventual traveler on the road, has a stake in the road's completion. That said, workers can be genuinely included in this community only if "they know where the road is going," "have some curiosity and interest about it," and "perhaps a chance to travel upon it."[76] The transformation of these varied interests into a genuine community required both increasing the standard of living for wage earners (a chance to travel upon the road), and including them in the operation and management of work (a chance to determine the direction of the road). As in "A Modern Lear," neither the employers' successes in creating agreeable working conditions nor their generosity in compensating their employees was sufficient if those ideals are "unconnected with the consent of their fellow men." Thus for Addams, unions were useful institutions that could guarantee the consent of workers, even where their goals were narrow. Otherwise they were forceful reminders that the workplace itself was a community whose purpose was not satisfied by the employer's "personal ambition" or the workers' "narrow conception of emancipation."[77]

Despite her criticism of labor unions, Addams regarded them as crucial instruments in building a more democratic community. Taking women's garment workers as her model, she argued that labor unions were most successful when they appealed beyond their own ranks to the most complacent citizens, forming a community that recognizes that moral striving is the foundation of democratic governance.[78] Seeking public solutions to economic problems, labor unions asserted that the problems of industrial work were social rather than individual ones, of interest to a community that did not always recognize itself as a stakeholder. Thus Addams saw labor conflict not only as an economic dispute over the fruits of industrial organization but also as

[75]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 210.

[76]Ibid., 210–11.

[77]Addams, "A Modern Lear," 120–22.

[78]For Addams's most direct statement on unionism, which focuses primarily on garment workers, see Jane Addams, "Trades Unions and Public Duty," *American Journal of Sociology* 4 (January 1899): 448–62. For more on Addams's practical political involvement with garment workers, see Karen Pastorello, "'The Transfigured Few': Jane Addams, Bessie Abramowitz Hillman, and Immigrant Women Workers in Chicago, 1905–15," in *Jane Addams and the Practice of Democracy*, ed. Wendy E. Chmielewski, Marilyn Fischer, and Carol Nackenoff (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 98–118.

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a political conflict between "the democratic ideal," which demanded the representation of wider community interests in the administration of industry, and the individualistic norm that the owner of the capital is the one who takes the risks and therefore has the exclusive right of management.[79] For her, the workplace was not another possession of the owner of the factory, but belonged instead to the community of people whose daily lives were affected—not only the workers, but the neighborhood, the city, and perhaps the nation itself. Of course, unions were susceptible to forgetting the wider community interests at stake in questions of workplace policy. Addams delivered her strongest judgment of them in her *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907), in which she criticized many unions for being provincial and clannish, "loyal only towards those whom their imagination included as belonging" to their group.[80] What she found admirable in a labor union was not its capacity to build class consciousness, but its insight that the means of production were not the property of the management, but "in some sense social possessions." For Addams, unions would refashion the purpose of work as a common social goal, ameliorating the problems of industry, she wrote, "in the interest of society itself."[81]

Although the interpretations of scholars like Carson, Taylor, and Hamington rightly point to structures of community as central to Addams's thought, they have each overlooked what Addams saw as the primary community: the workplace. It was there that workers were brought into contact with a diverse community, working to break down the insularity that separated society by class and ethnicity. It was in the workplace that citizens cultivated the daily habits of solidarity, working together toward a common purpose. And it was in the shared experience of the workplace that both employers and labor unions would come to understand the interest of the whole community rather than their own narrow part of it.

Inclusion and Work

Although most Addams scholars agree that Addams was committed to a more inclusive society, there is vehement disagreement among them over the mechanisms with which this society would be constructed. Yet despite their apparent disagreement, each of their interpretations shares an emphasis on domestic relationships. Students of Addams like Christopher Lasch see her political engagement as a byproduct of a more prominent concern with "the gap between the generations" and the "breakdown of immigrant families."[82]

[79]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 139.
[80]Jane Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 129.
[81]Ibid., 149.
[82]Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889–1963: The Intellectual as Social Type* (New York: Norton, 1965), 37.

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For Lasch, the wider role for women in public life that Addams imagined was actually aimed at conserving the values associated with traditional domesticity. By contrast, writing from the perspective of feminist and queer theory, Shannon Jackson views Addams as much more radical, reconstructing domesticity to make private relationships more inclusive through "new social rituals" that facilitate a "public household."[83] Scholars like Wendy Sarvasy expand the domestic domain, seeing Addams as more concerned with enhancing civil society, an inclusive intermediary sphere that Sarvasy refers to as "the medium of the social," from which Addams "reconfigured the relationship between the family and the state."[84] Yet while each of these interpretations acknowledges the expanded role for excluded groups in public life, none reaches beyond the family to the workplace, which Addams saw as the primary site for civic education and engagement, bringing the occupations of women and immigrants into the ambit of politics, while also building a more inclusive society.

Addams argued that work could transform political life by fostering a habitual encounter with difference, which she viewed as the foundation of political inclusion. The crowded factories and neighborhoods of the urban working class constantly brought people together from diverse ethnicities, religions, genders, and beliefs—all united by common experience and common purpose at work. In a diverse community such as hers, Addams argued that the common ground shared by all were the human needs for "labor and the nourishing of human life," and that political activity and institutions should answer these needs.[85] It was the practice of shared labor (including her own at Hull-House) that encouraged this view of democratic politics, bringing individuals into "daily contact with those who are unlike each other in all save the universal characteristics."[86] For Addams, the most significant barrier to the progress of democracy was the isolation of the middle class from the working class, and at times from the experience of labor itself. If the middle class shared the labor with the poor, their educational and political advantages would allow them "to see the needs of their neighborhood as a whole, to furnish data for legislation, and to use their influence to secure it."[87] The necessities of life and the work that fulfilled these needs were shared in common, and the differences between the classes and cultures that jostled together in the industrial city were subtle when

[83]Shannon Jackson, "Toward a Queer Welfare Studies: Unsettling Jane Addams," in *Jane Addams and the Practice of Democracy*, 143–62.

[84]Wendy Sarvasy, "Engendering Democracy by Socializing It: Jane Addams's Contribution to Feminist Political Theorizing," in *Feminist Interpretations of Jane Addams*, ed. Maurice Hamington (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 293–310.

[85]Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace*, 24.

[86]Ibid., 14.

[87]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 126.

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compared with that shared experience. It was the daily experience of the shared purpose of work that permitted an empathetic recognition of the needs of others, and that sustained the resolve to see those needs met.

Workers' organizations provided examples of solidarity and diversity. Although she recognized that labor unions struggled against the corrosive effects of racism in their own ranks, Addams argued that labor unions were models of inclusion. Unions brought to public attention inequalities and social grievances, even when their aggressive tactics were all too often those of "a small group blindly attempting to defend what they consider their only chance to work."[88] It was the task of the public to respond to those grievances with a democratic spirit rather than their own narrow class loyalties. For Addams, the dominant culture continued to illustrate the embarrassing fact that the national community had not admitted ethnic immigrants into "real political fellowship."[89] Rather than forcing foreign-born workers to assimilate, unions included immigrants as equals, recognizing what still eluded the national consciousness, that the experience of work is universal, uniting people of diverse ethnic backgrounds.[90] In unionism, the multiethnic coalitions of workers governed themselves with institutions of democratic autonomy, organizing sophisticated representative bodies, referendum procedures, and other "paraphernalia and machinery which have hitherto associated themselves only with governmental life and control."[91] Even so, Addams argued that unions could do a better job of recognizing common ground across differences of class if they resisted the urge to "respond first to a sense of loyalty to each other as against their employers."[92] In turn, contract negotiations between unions and employers would mitigate much of the period's class conflict. If collective bargaining could supplant industrial warfare, both classes would come to depend for their interests on "a more democratic and a more reasonable type of man."[93] And if the public could put aside its suspicion of unions, it might incorporate some of its best features into the common life.

Addams thought that the purpose of public life was the protection and support of society's most vulnerable members, not by transmitting cultural values and financial resources from the middle to the lower classes, but by incorporating the most useful values and practices of marginal groups. Unlike progressive theorists such as John Dewey who put their faith in expert administrators and professional educators, she believed that the

[88]Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace*, 148.

[89]Ibid., 39.

[90]Addams did not hesitate to castigate labor unions for their racism, observing that "the trades union record on Chinese exclusion and negro discrimination has been damaging" (ibid., 95).

[91]Ibid., 94.

[92]Ibid., 130.

[93]Ibid., 145.

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simple practices of work from different cultures would substantively enrich democratic experience. Alternative forms of land and labor had never developed in the United States because any form of communal land ownership rooted in other cultures' traditional occupational life was invariably met with reflexive assertions of individual rights and an arrogant "Anglo-Saxon distrust."[94] Addams pointed, for example, to the way in which unwillingness to recognize the centuries of agricultural knowledge of Italian immigrants failed both native and foreign born. Recently arrived Italian peasants with centuries of knowledge of "that painstaking method of cultivating the soil which American farmers despise" remained in industrial neighborhoods, where the "cunning in regard to silk worms and olive trees" was forgotten, and the "old social habits" from these agricultural communities could not find an outlet in the crowded tenements. If the potential contributions of these immigrants were recognized, the entire community would benefit from their occupational knowledge and methods, as well as from the vision of community life elaborated around their practices of work. The "primitive habits" of the German potter or the Polish seamstress might point the way toward curing many of the social ills of industrial life, if only the polity would "give them their significance and place."[95] Immigrants had much to contribute when recognized by the dominant community. Without such recognition, democratic progress would be stalled.

According to Addams, a model of citizenship that emphasized labor would help to build a more inclusive society. In *Newer Ideals of Peace*, she criticized the existing process of naturalization for beginning and ending with the abstract doctrines found in the United States Constitution rather than with the everyday conditions of the lives of recent immigrants. Citizenship education, she complained, was rooted in a refusal "to consider matters of industry and commerce as germane to government." To make this education meaningful to the laboring immigrant, it would have to begin with "that most natural and inevitable of all foundations, their industrial needs."[96] The connection between a variety of occupations and governmental responsibilities ought to form the basis of this political education. More specifically, she argued that the political community ought to make clear the way in which the simple occupations of the recent immigrant—"the street-cleaning and sewer-digging in which he first engages"—are an integral part of self-government, thereby developing "an understanding of the relations of these simple offices to city government."[97] Far from being a method of reconciling immigrants to such menial labor, Addams believed that civic education should make clear the obligations of the municipal administration to all

[94]Ibid., 67.
[95]Ibid., 64.
[96]Ibid., 112.
[97]Ibid., 72.

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residents, along with the rights of the newly arrived to assert themselves when these obligations were not fulfilled. Education rooted in the experience of work created not only a more inclusive model of citizenship, but also a more informed and engaged citizenry, one that recognized the "connection between their desire to earn their daily bread and their citizenship."[98]

Addams's views on work were an important foundation of her arguments for an expanded role in public life for women. Women's inclusion in the political sphere would mitigate their vulnerability as industrial workers, specifically protecting their domestic occupations from the encroachments of industry. One of the more injurious consequences of industrialization was women's loss of control over their traditional activities, stunting the development of the skills and dispositions that were their main contribution to economic life. While those like Gilman celebrated new forms of work that would unburden women from their domestic occupations, Addams lamented the mechanization and industrialization of sewing and bread making that removed these occupations from the household, denying women "the privilege of regulating the conditions" in which they worked.[99] By the same token, industrial production had also penetrated the domestic sphere, fusing the home and the workplace for many women.[100] Thus whether tending looms in a factory or sewing piecework in the home, the burden of industrial labor overtook important household responsibilities. Other women worked as domestic servants, cooking for, cleaning up after, or rearing a family that was not their own. Addams felt a keen sympathy for women forced into back-breaking labor by poverty, regularly describing them as "overworked," "overburdened," or "workworn." The long hours of factory work and the ubiquity of home workshops left little time for the care of young children, one of society's most important occupations. She relates with particular alarm an encounter with a woman from her neighborhood working late scrubbing the floors of a downtown Chicago office building. In response to Addams's query about her drenched clothes, the washerwoman reported that "she left home at five o'clock every night and had no opportunity for six hours to nurse her baby" and that as a result her "mother's milk mingled with the very water with which she scrubbed the floors."[101] To Addams, this disquieting scene suggested the folly of misdirecting motherly energies into wage labor. Moreover, it symbolized the necessity of political reform, as Hull-House served as a center of organization for antisweatshop legislation and tougher factory regulations that specifically protected both

[98]Ibid., 71.

[99]Ibid., 189.

[100]See Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[101]Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 174.

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women and children.[102] The inclusion of women in political activity, as both voters and administrators, Addams concluded, would be the surest way to create political institutions that protected mothers from the too-frequent condition that they must "neglect their young in order to feed them."[103]

Despite her belief in the value of mothering and domestic occupations, Addams was a fierce advocate for enlarging the role of women in politics. Indeed, she argued that it was women's industrial experience that had prepared them to exercise the important responsibility of voting. Women were keenly aware of the dangerous conditions in most factories, being themselves factory workers who were "responsible for the advance of industry during these later centuries."[104] Women's electoral participation would be particularly valuable for building political institutions that regulated the industrial sphere. While women's clubs and consumer organizations were sources of political power, it was only suffrage that would allow them to have a say in changing the harmful effects resulting from "men whose minds are fixed upon factory management from the point of view of profits."[105] Moreover, domestic occupations in industrial cities gave women particular insight into the need for public solutions to urban problems, making them painfully aware of the innumerable ways in which "their duties to their own household" made them "utterly dependent upon the city administration."[106] In short, Addams argued that a state committed to solving the problems of industry was only possible if women exercised the fundamental duties of citizenship, expanding democracy with their experience as workers both inside and outside the home.

Yet Addams argued for a wider role than voting for women in public life, calling on them to apply their knowledge as public servants and administrative officials. Expertise developed through centuries of women's traditional labor made them particularly suited to the challenges facing industrial society. For example, Addams observed that most of the responsibilities of a city government "can be traced to woman's traditional activity."[107] Arguing that the analogy between municipal administration and corporate management was too narrow, she contended that city government required skills more commensurate with "enlarged

[102]See Boris, *Home to Work*, 77, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 206–36.

[103]Jane Addams, "The Larger Aspects of the Women's Movement," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 56 (November 1914): 6.

[104]Jane Addams, "If Men Were Seeking the Franchise," in *The Jane Addams Reader*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 230.

[105]Addams, "The Larger Aspects of the Women's Movement," 6.

[106]Jane Addams, "Why Women Should Vote," in *The Social Thought of Jane Addams*, 144.

[107]Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace*, 185.

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housekeeping."[108] The modern city, with its problems of sewers, garbage, infrastructure maintenance, and the provision of parks, required the expertise developed by women in centuries of domestic work. Moreover, the intricate complexity of a city's executive management called for skills developed specifically by women who, in the daily maintenance of a household and child rearing, are "accustomed to detail and variety of work."[109] In short, to Addams, the work of governance was women's work. By denying women an opportunity to practice their expertise, industrial cities had neglected to ameliorate the problems of poverty and inequality. "The men of the city," she wrote, "have been carelessly indifferent to much of this civic housekeeping, as they have always been indifferent to the details of the household."[110] Women's role in civic administration—as, in effect, civic housekeepers—would correct this carelessness. In particular, women in city government would provide stronger protection for workers. As Addams writes, "a certain healing and correction would doubtless ensue" if women were given responsibility for workers' "nurture of health and morals," skills "which women have so long reserved for their own families."[111] The inclusion of women in democracy would not only utilize the expertise developed through centuries of women's work, it would also play a vital role in the reformation of democratic governance itself.

In short, Jane Addams argued that political inclusion would follow from neither shoring up the feminine private sphere nor from radical new forms of public domesticity, as the competing interpretations of Lasch and Jackson suggest. Nor does Sarvasy's concept of "the social" adequately capture the object of Addams's democratic imagination. Rather the workplace was the centerpiece of a more inclusive society, and its reform would have an effect on both the public and private spheres. Specifically, Addams argued that a reformed workplace would reinforce a habitual encounter with difference, creating a rough cosmopolitanism that would be carried over into the private and public lives of workers. Knowledge gained from traditional occupations of immigrants and women would provide the foundation for their political inclusion, reforming public governance and providing previously marginalized citizens opportunities to exercise political authority. Through their labor, working people of all classes would progress toward this vision of an inclusive democracy, walking together along what Addams would call "the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens."[112]

[108]Ibid., 183. Others argue that the suffrage movement relied more on women's roles as consumers than as laborers; cf. Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[109]Addams, *Newer Ideals of Peace*, 184.

[110]Ibid., 183.

[111]Ibid., 197.

[112]Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, 6.

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Conclusion

Because Jane Addams's views on work have never received proper attention, her major contribution to democratic thought has yet to be fully appreciated. Not simply a bourgeois teetotaler concerned with moral order in the industrial city, Addams believed that work was important not because idle hands are the devil's playthings, but because it could liberate the political potential of human beings, becoming the means for individuals to discover a public identity and purpose. More important, she saw work was the primary structure of community, uniting people from different backgrounds in a common undertaking. In fact, it was not the spheres of the public, the private, or the nebulous social that occupied her political imagination, but that of work, the only site in which habits of recognition and inclusion could be adequately cultivated, bringing the privileged into daily contact with the poor and building with them a shared political interest. Uniting people from different backgrounds as equals in a common undertaking, work could form in all citizens a cosmopolitan sensibility and "identification with the common lot," which was, for Addams, "the essential idea of Democracy."[113]

So what would Jane Addams say to the contemporary student of democracy? Despite changes in practices of labor which might have been unthinkable to Addams, work that sustains identity, community, and democratic politics is as vital today as ever. In the United States, the industrial factory that served as the model of community life for Addams is an increasingly rare workplace. In the so-called postindustrial era, it is in the service sector that jobs await those workers displaced by factory closings—when there are any jobs at all. The rise of temporary, contract, and freelance work further highlights the distance between Addams's vision of the ideal workplace as a vibrant multicultural community and its often lonely reality. In the absence of any political institutions to provide stability and security at work, employment is too precarious to develop a stable identity, lasting relationships with coworkers, or a sense of common purpose at work.[114] In short, Addams's views comprise as much of a challenge to today's political atmosphere as they did to that of her own time, reminding us that a democracy worthy of the name depends upon the availability of labor that provides for a stable sense of identity, integrates people into a community, and fosters

[113]Ibid., 11.

[114]Indeed, recent cultural critics like Richard Sennett have raised concerns about the increasing flexibility demanded of workers and its effects on identity in the workplace. See Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1998) and Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

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political institutions that support the freedom and equality that democracies require to survive and thrive.[115]

As it was in Addams's time, work is still at the heart of politics in the United States. Public conversations about many of our most important policy issues are often as much about the nature and meaning of work as they are about the policy in question. The terms of debate about immigration reform concern whether or not to create a "guest-worker" path to citizenship, how much responsibility employers have in policing the legal status of their workers, and the consequences of unrestricted immigration on employment opportunities for workers who are citizens. In the arena of health care, one's status as a worker is a prerequisite for insurance coverage, and questions of health-care reform inevitably raise questions about what employers owe their workers, or what nonworking members of society justly deserve. The specter of the loafing welfare recipient lurks in the background when discussing almost any state provision of social services. Yet rarely does the implicit conversation about the meaning of work and its place in a democratic community become as explicit as it was for Addams. Rarer still is any articulate statement of the promise and potential of work for democracy, a promise so powerfully evoked in her vision of the thronged and common road, and of the meaningful work that awaits at the wells of human experience.

[115]One can note similarities here to recent Catholic social thought, prompted, in part, by Pope John Paul II's 1981 encyclical *Laborem Excercens* on the meaning of work and its importance to human dignity. For commentary, exposition, and critique, see Gregory Baum, *The Priority of Labor: A Commentary on Laborem Exercens, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982); John W. Houck and Oliver E. Williams, eds., *Co-Creation and Capitalism: John Paul II's Laborem Exercens* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983); Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

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