Wynne Walker Moskop

Jane Addams on Inequality and Political Friendship

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Reviewed by Mary Briody Mahowald, 2020

Mary Briody Mahowald is Professor Emerita at the University of Chicago. She is the 2013 recipient of the Herbert Schneider award from the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy. Her books include *Philosophy of Woman* (Hackett), *Women and Children in Health Care* (Oxford), *Genes, Women, Equality* (Oxford), *Bioethics and Women* (Oxford), and with coauthors Anita Silvers and David Wasserman, *Disability, Difference, Discrimination* (Rowman and Littlefield).

Quote:

"In *Jane Addams on Inequality and Political Friendship,* Wynne Walker Moskop, a political scientist at St. Louis University, joins the list of feminist scholars who focus on material generally neglected by their peers. Her challenging and illuminating volume's key point is as important and relevant today as it was in Addams's own time: the mutuality of gaps and benefits to those on both sides of unequal relationships."

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Until the late 1980s, the corpus of "classic American philosophers" included white men only, all

of European ancestry.<1> At that point, feminist philosophers took note of the gap and initiated research into "feminine and feminist elements in American philosophy" (Mahowald 1986-87, 410). Jane Addams topped the list of those we championed as having been ignored by their white male peers.

Few biographical sketches of Addams refer to her as a philosopher, let alone an intellectual or academic; instead, she is generally listed as a social activist and reformer, without crediting her work for its philosophical and academic import. The remedial task of restoring Addams to her rightful place among American philosophers has thus fallen to feminist scholars who articulate and champion the philosophical groundwork Addams laid for her recommended reforms--precisely in the pragmatic style that joins theory with practice (Seigfried 1999; Fischer, Nackenoff, and Chmielewsky 2009). Through the wedding of the two, Addams may be credited with offering a more pragmatic version of American philosophy than what most of the classic American philosophers present.

In *Jane Addams on Inequality and Political Friendship,* Wynne Walker Moskop, a political scientist at St. Louis University, joins the list of feminist scholars who focus on material generally neglected by their peers. Her challenging and illuminating volume's key point is as important and relevant today as it was in Addams's own time: the mutuality of gaps and benefits to those on both sides of unequal relationships.

Although Addams does not use the term *political friendship,* it is key to Moskop's interpretation of her approach to parties who are economically unequal. Unlike personal friendship, which is

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based generally on affective ties, political friendship is based on pragmatic bonds between or among the relevant parties. Thus, the "political friendship" that Moskop imputes to Addams is defined as "an association that is just because the parties make reciprocal contributions to a mutual utilitarian purpose" (2). This interpretation is consistent with the focus on empirical results that classical pragmatism emphasizes.

While affirming some affinity between Addams's thought and that of Kant and Rawls, Moskop views more affinity between Addams's thought and that of Aristotle (129). The latter affinity, she claims, is based mainly on Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics,* which directs attention to "relational context and interdependence as a common human condition" (129). Moskop believes Aristotle is different from modern democratic thinkers in that he specifically theorizes about "friendship among unequal parties," and "explains that justice requires unequal parties to contribute . . . to the common goal of their friendship" (128-29; cf. Aristotle 1999, 11-14). Reciprocity is thus key to the relationship between unequal parties that Moskop attributes to Addams's thought and example. It is crucial to her understanding of political friendship as "proportional rather than equal" because it is based on the parties' different roles in achieving the common purpose that defines the friendship" (130).

Not surprisingly, Moskop identifies Hull House as the beginning point of Addams's practical illustration of her argument--that is, a situation in which well-off women lived in the inner city of Chicago, in the midst of their poor neighbors, most of whom were immigrants. Addams herself, and her friend, Ellen Gates Starr, initiated this venture. The paradigm Addams criticized through this radical lifestyle is illustrated by way of contrast with the role of the charity visitor vs. those she visits (21-26; Addams 1907).

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Traditional understandings of charity, for Moskop as for Addams, miss the real deficits that the "philanthropist" experiences but fails to recognize. In contrast, the beneficiary tends to miss what she can and does bring to the encounter. Tellingly, the generic charity visitor as well as the generic "beneficiary" of charity tend to be women, and the women who tend to be beneficiaries, then as now, tend to be recipients of benefits for the sake of others as well as themselves.

Despite her insistence on inequality as continuing in the midst of political friendship, the inequality to which Moskop refers is economic, not moral. The charity worker and her beneficiary are moral equals, despite their economic inequality, and it is the economic inequality between them that accounts for the fact that each has something quite different to contribute to the other. Their different contributions are based on a feature that Nancy Hartsock develops as critical to "standpoint theory," that is, the fact that each group and each person sees and judges from a different perspective, such that the inevitable limitations of their visions can only be reduced by listening to what others see from their different experiences or perspectives (Hartsock 1983). Addams, for Moskop, might even be interpreted as attributing privilege to the perspective of women and those who occupy less economically privileged or nondominant positions in the world. As in Hartsock's account, the attribution should be privileged because of its remedial nature.<2>

Moskop next tracks this early view of Addams through the latter's evolution into the wider community of Chicago, where she became practically involved not only with economic differences that affect the lives of individuals, but also with differences that occur between

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groups such as workers and their bosses. Through her writings as well as her experience, Addams, for Moskop, testifies to the one-sidedness of the philanthropist's individual ethical code, whether the setting is relations between parents and children, household employers and live-in domestic workers, company presidents and employees, or hierarchical relations embedded in educational methods and approaches to political reform. Addams thus identifies what tends to be missed in all of these relationships: invoking through words and example a model of friendship that recognizes the reciprocity of needs and benefit of the unequal parties who are mutually involved in life's transactions.

When Addams moved on to the international scene, her travels brought her close to the greater complexity of the issues, albeit not as close as she was at Hull House and Chicago. As in our own day, international conflicts involving immigrants rendered impossible the full reciprocity that her account invoked. To avoid or at least reduce such conflicts, she drew on the stereotypically feminine model of "building up" rather than "breaking down": bread-making. As Moskop recounts it, Addams's *Peace and Bread in Time of War* draws on this feminine model of feeding the hungry as that of providing "bread" to those who are "hungry" throughout the world--by promoting peace as the only acceptable alternative to war (Addams 1945).

In her final chapter, Moskop relates Addams's rationale of bread-making or peace-promoting to the care model of contemporary feminists such as Virginia Held and Joan Tronto (Held 2006; Tronto 2013). She and other feminist scholars have not been the only admirers of this approach, as even in her own day Addams was awarded a Nobel prize for championing the ideal of peace in a war-mongering (male) world.

Although Moskop persistently uses the term *pragmatism* to refer to Addams's political view of the world at the local as well as national and international levels, she nowhere defines or even describes what is meant by the term. Among others who have attempted to define pragmatism (including Charles Peirce, who first coined the term), John Dewey's definition may be the most useful: pragmatism, he wrote, is "an extension of historical empiricism" (Dewey 1931, 24; Peirce 1965, 276). Pragmatism thus calls for evaluation of our present thoughts or ideas on grounds of their effect on future experience. As a friend and colleague of Dewey, Addams might be satisfied with this definition. His definition also seems to satisfy the commonplace notion that pragmatism refers to what is practical because it "works" in our experience. However, the criteria for "workin" still need to be delineated.

Clearly, as Moskop and other feminists have noted, Addams goes further than Dewey in delineating the range of experiences to be considered in any adequate pragmatic account (38). She does this by including in her account the experiences of working women from different classes and races, poor women, and immigrants (Seigfried 1996, 221-22). This makes her pragmatic view more adequate (or at least less inadequate) than that of Dewey.

Even to scholars who do not consider themselves feminists, the fact that Hull House was founded by women and populated mainly by women suggests that women are more likely than men to seek peaceful relationships and models instead of warring ones. Although Addams did not explicitly use the term *feminism*, she practiced it through her championship of the specific contributions that women as women make to the world. On Moskop's compelling interpretation, Addams's accounts in *Newer Ideals of Peace* and *Peace and Bread in Time of War* posit the possibility that Addams's own pacifism attributes to the natural propensity of women (Addams

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1907; 1945).

Feminist critics of Moskop's view of political friendship, whether attributed to Aristotle or Addams, might point to a problem raised by the notion of reciprocity that is basic to her account: it fails to address the injustice of economic inequality. Nonetheless, both Moskop and Addams seem to view economic disparities as present throughout history, and likely to continue--regardless of whether others attempt to reduce them. In contrast, the epistemological gap between classes has rarely been noted, and was in fact reduced for Addams and others through their lifestyle at Hull House and beyond. The main merit of Moskop's book, therefore, is its focus on the slimly appreciated but reducible epistemological gap between rich and poor. The latter, after all, are mainly women and their children (Mahowald 1993, 217-20).

Moskop's focus on political friendship is a unique interpretation of Addams's thought and practice because it identifies the failure of many of us "dogooders" who think we do good without receiving in return. Her book thus deserves an appreciative reading not only by philosophers, political scientists, and other feminists, but also by those who tend to see their giving as a one-way street.

Notes

1. The "classic period" of American philosophy began just after the Civil War and continued to the eve of the Second World War. Max Fisch lists the major figures of the period as Charles Sanders Peirce, Josiah Royce, William James, John Dewey, George Santayana, and Alexander

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North Whiteheaad (Fisch 1931). In addition to Peirce, James, and Dewey, H. S. Thayer identifies C. I. Lewis and George Herbert Mead as American pragmatists (Thayer 1968).

2. Unlike Hartsock, however, Moskop does not address the issue of economic inequality.

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