# Dewey, Women, and Weirdoes: or, the Potential Rewards for Scholars who Dialogue across Difference

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# Abstract

This symposium provides five case studies of the ways that John Dewey's philosophy and practice were influenced by women or "weirdoes" (our choices include F. M. Alexander, Albert Barnes, Helen Bradford Thompson, Elsie Ripley Clapp, and Jane Addams) and presents some conclusions about the value of dialoging across difference for philosophers and other scholars.

# Introduction

In *The Education of John Dewey*, Jay Martin (2003) suggests, "It was and remained a characteristic of Dewey that he was always receptive to alternative ideas. With professional philosophers, he generally held to his own positions, but with intelligent women, non-philosophers, odd thinkers, and ordinary folk, he was a student again" (167). Martin's insight is the basis for a hypothesis that seems worth exploring: that John Dewey is able to speak eloquently to us today—as much as a century after he formulated his ideas—precisely because of his willingness to listen, to closely attend to those we might categorize as women and weirdoes.

We use the provocative expression, "women and weirdoes," to acknowledge

that John Dewey took seriously persons who often were not given credence in philosophical circles. During Dewey's scholarly career, women constituted minor voices at best in philosophical discourse; in addition, philosophy had come to be professionalized in Dewey's time in a way that excluded those without philosophical credentials. However, Dewey came to understand (and with Emerson, to proclaim) that philosophy and life were not separable domains. And Dewey's biographers note the significant role played in his life by such women as Alice Dewey, Jane Addams, Ella Flagg Young, numerous graduate students, the Camp sisters, Anzia Yezierska, and by such "odd ducks" and nonphilosophers as Scudder Klyce, F. Matthias Alexander, Franklin Ford, and Albert Barnes. While these sources of inspiration we seek to study may be classified as "odd" or "socially subordinate" in the realm of professional philosophy, it is also true that each of the persons we identify were intelligent in Dewey's sense of a mind in use—often in unusual ways. We maintain that the interaction between Dewey's lived experience and the shaping of his philosophical inquiry warrants greater scholarly attention.

Our perspective is partly historical and partly philosophical. Dewey's relationships have, for the most part, been documented. A variety of well-researched biographies, the *Collected Works* and now the *Collected Papers*, lay out the basic historical narrative. However, some relationships have been mined extensively and others less well considered. And what has not been done in a systematic way is the kind of analysis that looks closely at Dewey's thinking in juxtaposition with the thinking of nonphilosopher others in the context of those particular relationships. The work offered here is a first step that lays out some useful paths for more extensive historical inquiry and offers some preliminary examples of the kind of textual analysis that can prove our thesis.

We are not suggesting that Dewey didn't listen to or attend to other professional philosophers. Obviously he did. Those influences are well documented in the Rockefeller (1991) and Ryan (1995) biographies, among others. Here we begin to explore the "value added" by Dewey's willingness to take seriously—for philosophical purposes—those who moved outside the bounds of professional philosophy, and even, in some cases, outside of accepted social circles. We are particularly interested in the ways in which Dewey's works seem remarkably contemporary, as if they were written to address present issues in education, the arts and public life. Is it possible that the contemporary power of Dewey's thought rests, at least in part, in just his willingness to cultivate, appreciate and appropriate the thinking of interesting women and odd ducks?

Two essential questions guided our inquiry: First, were Dewey's theories in fact significantly influenced by women and those professionally excluded eccentric voices we are calling weirdoes? How was this influence transacted? Second, if such influence did impact Dewey's own thinking, so what? What should we think, say, or do as a result of establishing Dewey's philosophically significant interaction with women and weirdoes, and their influence on him?

As we pursued this work, it became clear that our initial questions would not

be easily answered—and would not be answered at all until we raised a range of other questions. Why was Dewey drawn to those we studied? What was the nature of his relationships with them? What kind of a teacher—and learner—was Dewey? What qualities of personal responsiveness permeated his teaching and his theorizing? How did Dewey go about developing insights and theories? How did he share those insights and theories with the broader public?

What emerges is a picture of the philosopher as "man thinking" (to use Emerson's idiom). Of course, for Dewey, thinking done well is an interactive process into real puzzles for actual human persons and marked by open-mindedness and responsiveness. These are elements that we find in each of the case studies described below. These qualities of thinking are the elements that opened Dewey to the influences of all those with whom he came and remained in contact. Because we examined only a few candidates, and because the constraints of time and space prohibited us from completing a thorough examination of even these initial examples, we see our work here as preliminary, as more of a pilot study than a comprehensive one. Our hope is that these beginnings may inspire others to conduct similar studies, either by joining with us in a longer-term project, or by working on their own to address similar questions.

Included here are five case studies taken from Dewey's biography. Among the many women and weirdoes we could have selected, we chose Jane Addams, Helen Bradford Thompson, Elsie Ripley Clapp (as an exemplar of Dewey's interaction with female graduate students at Teachers College), F. M. Alexander and Albert Barnes. We suggest that Dewey was influenced intellectually in these instances where he experienced dialogue across difference, and that these relationships are not anomalies, but critical tokens in understanding the quality of Dewey's thinking.

Dewey's thinking is enriched when he is a "learner," undergoing the kind of questioning in the face of trouble or doubt or desire that he himself so famously claims is the starting point of thinking. We offer here sketches of Dewey not as eminent philosopher but as a thinker learning from different others

# Dewey's Pragmatic Poet: Reconstructing Jane Addams's Philosophical Impact

### Barbara Stengel

John Dewey calls Ralph Waldo Emerson "The Philosopher of Democracy" in an essay of the same title (1903/1977). In making his case that Emerson *is* a philosopher, Dewey acknowledges that some (including Emerson himself) might be inclined to see him as a poet rather than a philosopher. Dewey goes on to discuss the difference between the poet and the philosopher. The poet is maker rather than reflector. The poet discerns and uncovers rather than analyzes and classifies. The poet evidences a "natural attitude" where the philosopher relies on reasons for believing. However, the distinction is not hard and fast; in Emerson's case at least, one can be

both poet and philosopher.

Dewey's description of Emerson as poet and philosopher of democracy holds, I suggest, for Jane Addams as well, but it is, perhaps ironically, as *poet* that Addams impacted the philosophy of John Dewey. Addams is unquestionably a maker of democratic community and pragmatic education; Dewey is just as unquestionably a reflector. Through her work at Hull House, Addams discerned the shape of democracy as a mode of associated living and uncovered the outlines of an experimental approach to knowledge and understanding; Dewey analyzed and classified the social, psychological and educational processes Addams lived. As I will demonstrate below, Addams's "natural attitude" brought Dewey up short in a situation in which he could, by his own admission, only rely on reason.

In this essay, I claim that Dewey *became* Dewey in the last decade of the nineteenth century and that Jane Addams was present as poet to his philosopher. When I say that Dewey became Dewey, I mean that he let go of religious practice and theological language, focused a conception of democracy as a mode of associated living, shifted from Hegelian dialectic to pragmatic experimentalism, acknowledged the relational nature of the self and found a way to think about thinking rooted in human action, thus acknowledging the unity of human experience. Dewey's interaction with Addams, again by his own admission, forced a reconsideration of his thinking, a reconstruction that led to the very elements (noted above) that have rendered Deweyan thought useful to us in the early twenty-first century. I make my case by focusing here on just one significant instance documented in Dewey's correspondence and described—in various ways—in contemporary Dewey biographies.

Jane Addams was not, of course, the only one who shaped Dewey's thinking in this period. His wife Alice, his colleague George Herbert Mead, the idealist T. H. Green, the antidemocratic political theorist Sir Henry Maines, and "weirdo" Franklin Ford headline a list of others whose relations with Dewey were influential, positively or negatively. What seems clear to me, however, is that Dewey was searching for a way to instantiate his thinking about democracy, about Christianity and about experimentalism. His involvement in the ill-advised Thought News episode can be read as part of this search. But it was at Hull House in the company of Jane Addams that Dewey found what he was looking for.

My "text" for this essay comes from two letters John Dewey sent to his wife Alice in October, 1894 describing a conversation he had with Jane Addams after she participated in a program at the University of Chicago regarding the proposed University Settlement House. In what follows, I offer a detailed rendering of that correspondence, analyze the way this incident is represented in the biographies penned by Robert Westbrook (1991), Steven Rockefeller (1991), Alan Ryan (1995) and Jay Martin (2003), and then claim a "poetic" role for Jane Addams in influencing Dewey's philosophy.

On Sunday, October 7, 1894, a meeting was held at the University of Chicago to promote the University Settlement House. Jane Addams spoke regarding the point of

philanthropy as practiced in the settlement house. John Dewey was present (Levine 2005). On Tuesday, October 9, 1894, Dewey noted in a letter to wife Alice that he had just finished preparing a talk on Epictetus to be delivered at Hull House that evening. He went on to describe the meeting at the University two days prior:

I came near forgetting the chief thing that's happened since I wrote last— The Sunday evening meeting on the Univ. Settlement. Miss McDowell spoke on that settlement; Miss Addams on settlements in general—their aim, she said she had been asked to speak on. Well, she said what you might expect— She understands herself & the work better, of course, than in ^her^ [w. caret] Ann Arbor talk so far as formulating it, but the same absolute organic directness & sincerity— There was no special aim, because it wasn't a thing but a way of living—hence had the same aims as life itself. If given a special aim, it was the unification ^of the city's life^ [caret sic], or the realizing of the city's aim unity. It was a way of living in wh. there was ^was^ [sic] more to be got than to be given [ov. illegible] given—for example, the great awakening of social [illegible] consciousness in the labor movement was one of the most deeply religious things in modern times—if not the most so. To come in contact with that alone meant an awakening into a new life .... (Hickman 2001)<sup>1</sup>

On Wednesday, October 10, 1894, Dewey continued his discussion of the University of Chicago meeting and Jane Addams's response to it in a new letter to Alice. He noted that, on the previous evening, Jane Addams seemed quite discouraged about what she understood as a corruption of the point of the settlement house philosophy; Ellen Starr Gates was downright angry.

Miss A. also said that she had rebuk just received the first personal flaggellation she had ever rec'd- She had just been to a Mr. Ayers who had given money rather freely, not to Hull House, ^but^ [w. caret] for their relief work, & asked him for more money for this winter's relief. He turned on her, & told her that she had a great thing & now she had thrown it away; that she was ^had been^ [w. caret] trusteee for the prob interests of the poor, & had betrayed it-that like an idiot she had mixed herself in something which was none of her business & about which she knew || nothing, the labor movement & especially Pullman, & had thrown down her own work etc. etc. And then she went on to say that she had always believed & still believed that antagonism was not only husef [u ov. h] ules useless and harmful, but entirely unnecessary; that it lay never in the objective differences, which would always grow into unity if left alone, but from a person's mixing in his own personal reactions-the extra emphasis he gave the truth, the enjoyment he took in doing a thing because it was unpalatable to others, or the feeling that one must show his own colors, not be a moral coward, &or any no. of other ways, That historically ^also^ [w. caret] only evil had come from antagonisms-she kept asking me what I tho't, & I agreed up to this point, but then ^as to past history, ^ [w. caret] after the manner of

fools, I dissented; then she went \went [w. caret] on, that if Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple that accounted for the apparent difference between the latest years of his A[cancelled illegible letters] ministry & the earlier, & for much of the falsity in Xnty {Christianity] since; if he did it, he lost his faith & reacted; ... I asked her if she didn't think that besides the personal || antagonisms, there was that of ideas & institutions, as Xnty & Judaism, & Labor & Capital, the Church & Democracy now & that a realization of that antagonism was necessary to an appreciation of the truth, & to a consciousness of growth, & she said no. The antagonism of institutions was always unreal; it ^was^ [w. caret] simply due to the injection of the personal attitude & reaction; & then instead of adding to the recognition of meaning, it delayed & distorted it. If I could tell you the absolutely commonplace & unemotional way in which she said all these things, it would give some better idea of the most magnificent exhibition of intellectual & moral faith I ever saw. She converted me internally, but not really, I fear. At least I can't see what all this conflict & warring of history means if it's perfectly meaningless; my pride of intellect, I suppose it is, revolts at thinking its all merely negatively, & has no functional value. But I can also see, or rather dream, that ^maybe^ [w. caret] its a mere illusion because we put ourselves in a wrong position & thus introduce antagonism where its all one; & that its sole function is to warn out us never to think division. But when you think that Miss Addams does not think this as a philosophy, but believes it in all her senses & muscles—great God.

Wednesday [sic]—A. M. I guess I'll have to give it all up & start over again. I suppose that's the subjective nature of sin; the only reality is unity, but we assume ^there is^ [w. caret] antagonism & then it all goes wrong. I can see that I have always been interpreting the Hegelian dialectic wrong end up-the unity as the reconciliation of opposites, instead of the opposites as the unity in its growth, and thus translated physical tension into ^a^ moral thing— As a sample of Miss Addams' intellect, when I spoke of the place tension held in the all natural forces & in growth, she said 'Of course, there's the stress of action, but that's an entirely different thing. 'I don't know as I give her the reality of this at all-it seems so natural & commonplace now, but I never had anything take hold of me so; & the at the time it didn't impress me as anything wonderful; it was only the next day it began to dawn on me. Her father was a Quaker; she referred that evening to his teaching. I don't know whether I told you some time about Miss Starr's account of what they went thro' with at the outset-the hootings, the throwing of stones in at the window & all the other outbreaks, & how Miss A. said she would give the whole thing before she would ask for a policeman; one day a negro spat straight in her face in the street, & she simply wiped it off, & went on talking without noticing it. (Hickman 2001; emphasis added)

On Friday, October 12, 1894, Dewey wrote the following to Jane Addams:

Dear Miss Addams-

I wish to take back what I said the other night. Not only is actual antagonizing bad, but the assumption that there is or may be antagonism is bad —the in fact, the real first antagonism always come back to the assumption.

I'm glad I found this out before I began to talk on social psychology [scheduled for 10/13/94] as otherwise I fear I should have made a mess of it.

This is rather a suspiciously sudden conversion, but then it's only a beginning

Gratefully yours,

John Dewey (Hickman 2001)

I quote this exchange in its near entirety because of the varying ways that Dewey's biographers have represented it.

Robert Westbrook (1991), notes that the exchange took place (mistakenly placing it after a Dewey talk on social psychology at Hull House) and includes the description of what Addams said regarding antagonism, and then quotes the passage: "Addams converted me internally, but not really, I fear. . . . [M]y pride of intellect, I suppose it is, revolts at thinking it's all merely negative, and has no functional value." He goes on to note, in a footnote, that this is likely the root of their later opposed positions with regard to World War I (Westbrook 1991, 81). He does not include any of the expressions that suggest Addams's real and apparently lasting impact on Dewey's thought.

Specifically, he omits Dewey's immediate concession ("we put ourselves in a wrong position & thus introduce antagonism where it's all one; & that its sole function is to warn out us never to think division"); Dewey's reflection the next morning ("I guess I'll have to give it all up & start over again . . . . I can see that I have always been interpreting the Hegelian dialectic wrong end up—the unity as the reconciliation of opposites, instead of the opposites as the unity in its growth, and thus translated physical tension into  $^a$  moral thing); and Dewey's capitulation to Miss Addams before his social psychology talk ("I wish to take back what I said the other night. Not only is actual antagonizing bad, but the assumption that there is or may be antagonism is bad—the in fact, the real first antagonism always come back to the assumption. I'm glad I found this out before I began to talk on social psychology as otherwise I fear I should have made a mess of it.")

In John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism (1991), Steven Rockefeller refers to the October 10 letter to demonstrate Dewey's interest in the "deeply religious" nature of social consciousness in the labor movement and to note that Addams impressed Dewey with her "intellect and moral faith." He concludes his discussion, "In Jane Addams, Dewey found a kindred spirit. During the Chi-

cago years he became actively involved at Hull House, gaining fresh insight into America's social ills and their remedy." Rockefeller seems to suggest that Addams's role in Dewey's growth was both personal and practical—providing confirmation of belief and attitude and offering insight into concrete social problems—but *not* intellectual. Just one paragraph earlier, Rockefeller states that Addams "may have drawn on Dewey's thinking in 'Christianity and Democracy,' for she argues that Christianity is to be identified with the ongoing process of revelation of truth, and she concludes that the new Christianity shall seek a simple and natural expression in the social organism. Addams shared Dewey's belief that practical religion and the democratic life are synonymous" (208).

It is possible that Addams drew on Dewey's talk-given at the Students' Christian Association at the University of Michigan in March, 1892 (Levine 2005), and published the following year-in formulating the thinking expressed in "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," an essay composed originally in 1892 and expressing sentiments reiterated that night in October of 1894. However, it may be even more plausible to suggest that Dewey's thinking in "Christianity and Democracy" (1893) was seeded by an encounter with Addams at Hull House in January, 1892 (Levine 2005), and that his talk and later essay drew as much or more from Addams's "natural attitude" as she drew from him. Addams spoke at the School of Applied Ethics early in 1892 and published that talk later the same year. Moreover, she had been living the connection between Christianity and democracy for several years. Prior to her start at Hull House, she expressed a hope that Hull House would be "more distinctively Christian and less Social Science" (quoted in Lagemann 1985, 19)-differentiated from College Settlement Association houses. While Florence Kelley (and later Richard Ely) insured that Hull House would develop its social science experimentalism, the sense of the Social Gospel and Christian charity was never abandoned. After his initial visit to Hull House, Dewey wrote to Addams to say that she had "taken the right way" (quoted in Lagemann 1985, 29).

Rockefeller's interest in Addams is focused and flavored by his thesis that religious faith and democratic humanism are intertwined. Given that thesis, it is odd that Addams's relationship with Dewey is so little a part of Rockefeller's work. Rockefeller makes much of Fred Newton Scott's talk regarding "Christianity and the Newspaper" (also to the Students' Christian Association) and a great deal of Dewey's aborted involvement with the publication of Thought News. He is right that Dewey was looking for a way to link a Christian ethos and democratic function, and that Dewey's various "extracurricular activities" were experiments in that direction. What he doesn't state clearly is that Dewey's search found fruition at Hull House. Jane Addams's work gave substance to Dewey's embryonic thinking. He said so in the letter of October 10 and elsewhere.

Like Rockefeller, Alan Ryan seems to assume that Addams was appropriating and applying Dewey's ideas. He does so despite what is known about Addams's work and thinking prior to encountering Dewey, and despite everything that Dewey later says about Addams's influence (1995, 152). It's not that he doesn't see value in Addams's work and in Dewey's relationship with Addams. He says explicitly that "one of the greatest bonuses of life in Chicago for Dewey was his friendship with Jane Addams, and the chance to see Hull House in action" (122). He later calls Addams a "radicalizing influence" on Dewey (149). Nonetheless, there is something intellectually dismissive in what he chooses to include and leave out about the Dewey-Addams interactions. She is his "friend," not the intellectual influence George Herbert Mead was (123). Hull House in action simply offered practical examples of the phenomena Dewey sought to theorize; Rockefeller does not recognize it as the laboratory where experimental results informed theory (about democracy, about Christianity, about education, and about experimentalism itself) in development. For Ryan, her radicalizing influence affects Dewey's politics, not his thought.

Ryan sells Addams short in other ways. He argues that "Dewey did two things that nobody else tried to do in quite the same way: he defended modernity against its detractors and he defended democracy as the modern, secular realization of the Kingdom of God on earth" (86). Ryan might be better off qualifying that claim by saying that no other male theorist has done so. One could argue that Addams did exactly that in her first published explanation of the Hull House philosophy (Addams 1892/1985, 49-63). When Ryan discusses Addams, there is no mention of the Christianity-democracy connection theorized or enacted in Addams's work, either early in her career or later in, for instance, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902/1967).

In a five-page section devoted to Dewey and Jane Addams, Ryan (1995, 149-153) too reports the conversation about the "wickedness of conflict" (more briefly than any of the other biographers considered here and placing it in the wrong time and place), but presents this as evidence of Dewey's "capacity for occupying the middle of the road." He notes that Addams convinced Dewey that antagonism was unnecessary while talking with him, but that "on reflection," he no longer accepted her argument. Ryan sees this as an indication that Dewey was "less ready than Miss Addams to serve people as he found them" (153). He does not hint at Dewey's later concession that Addams's comments stayed with him, forcing a reconsideration of the larger question of unity in experience and the narrower question of antagonism and conflict. Ryan's blind spot here may be caused partly by his reliance on Westbrook for the text of the letter in question. Westbrook's abbreviated text admittedly allows the interpretation Ryan finds in the remaining text.

Unlike the others, Jay Martin (2003) refers to the correspondence in question by highlighting those sections that confirm Dewey's debt to Addams and support our broad thesis here. He represents in dialogue form the part of the letter Westbrook quotes and then goes further:

Dewey tried to counter her argument with one of his pet idealist ideas. "Tension itself is central in life; it exists in all natural forces and in growth."

"Of course," she acknowledged, but then she made a nice philosophi-

cal distinction that the philosopher himself had missed. "There's stress in action, but mere choosing is an entirely different thing from the unity of reality." [Dewey called this] . . . "the most magnificent exhibition of intellectual and moral faith I ever saw." . . . [He wrote to Alice that] "I guess I'll have to give it all up & start over again. I suppose that . . . the only reality"—he started to write ideal but caught himself—"is unity, but we assume there is antagonism & and then it goes wrong. I can see that I have always been interpreting the Hegelian—crossed out—dialectic wrong end up—the unity as the reconciliation of opposites, instead of the opposites as the unity in its growth, and thus translated physical tension into a moral thing." (167)

#### It is at this point that Martin notes:

It was, and remained, a characteristic of Dewey that he was always receptive to alternative ideas. With professional philosophers he generally held to his own position, but with intelligent women, nonphilosophers, odd thinkers, and ordinary folk, he was a student again. On that October night in 1894, the lecturer got a good lecture, and it stuck. (167-168)

Each of these biographers uses the same event to make a point congruent with his own perspective or thesis. Each is selective about documentary evidence. It is worth noting that none of them includes the context of Addams's remarks in the Chicago talk and her discussion with Dewey, an omission that lessens the impact of Addams's position. Nor do any include Dewey's later, apparently unprompted letter to Addams acknowledging that after several days, he recognized the truth of her claim and that this insight would affect what he might say on the subject of social psychology.

I submit that a complete reading of this text, incorporating Addams's experience as well as Dewey's, makes clear the quality and impact of Addams's influence on Dewey and demonstrates the sense in which she played poet to his philosopher. Dewey's own words suggest that this experience (action *and* reflection) brought Dewey up short in a way that contributed to his formulating the mode of thought that characterizes his entire opus, a stance first clearly signaled in "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (1896); and influenced substantively the way that Dewey understood conflict.

Consider several phrases in Dewey's correspondence:

Describing his conversation with Addams: She "had always believed & still believed that *antagonism* was not only husef [u ov. h] ules [itself?] useless and harmful, but entirely unnecessary; that it *lay never in the objective differences*, which would always grow into unity if left alone, but from a person's mixing in his own personal reactions."

Dewey reflecting: "I guess I'll have to give it all up & start over again. I suppose that's the subjective nature of sin; the only reality is unity, but we as-

sume ^there is^ antagonism & then it all goes wrong. I can see that I have always been *interpreting the Hegelian dialectic wrong end up*—the unity as the reconciliation of opposites, instead of the *opposites as the unity in its* growth, and thus translated physical tension into ^a^ moral thing—"

Dewey "confessing" to Addams: "I'm glad I found this out before I began to talk on social psychology as otherwise I fear I should have made a mess of it. This is rather a suspiciously sudden conversion, but then it's only a beginning."

Two years later, Dewey would publish "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," a piece that marks his empirical and naturalistic transformation of Hegelianism by turning it on its head and seeing opposites as unity in its growth rather than unity as the reconciliation of opposites. In that 1896 essay, Dewey constructs the device (a reflex circuit or coordination, not an arc) that will undergird most of his theorizing in areas as various as art, education, logic and public life. Dewey rejects a "reflex arc," that is, the analysis of a sensory experience that stimulates a motor response in favor of a sensory-motor circuit. Stimulus can only be identified as stimulus when understood as part of a whole circuit of meaningful action, replacing an older dualism of sensation and idea. In Dewey's terms, ". . . sensory stimulus and central connections and motor response are divisions of labor, function factors, within a single concrete whole designated reflex arc. The "commonly employed" formulation of the reflex arc

is defective in that it assumes sensory stimulus and motor response as distinct psychical existences, while in reality they are always inside a coordination and have their significance purely from the part played in maintaining or reconstituting the co-ordination; and (secondly) in assuming that the quale of experience which precedes the "motor" phase and that which succeeds it are two different states, instead of the last being always the first reconstituted, the more phase coming in only for the sake of such mediation. (99)

In Dewey's reflex circuit, coordination is the critical entity. Both sensation and movement lie inside, not outside the act.

Thus Dewey turns traditional psychological structure on its head and argues for human action in relation as unit of analysis. The point is simple if difficult to see in an analytic frame of mind: there is wholeness (embodied, eristic, spiritual, emotional, moral and aesthetic) in experience if we but see it. In fact, perceiving it is the challenge. It was Addams, the "poet," who led Dewey to the perception that would reshape his analysis.

Dewey's own admission that he must "start over" after his conversation with Addams points to the role she played in providing Dewey with the key to solving an analytic problem he encountered at the confluence of his idealist training and his empiricist inclination. It was not only what Addams said but what she perceived

and enacted—an "intellect and moral faith" that she believed "in her very being" that made the difference for Dewey. Her praxis, her poetic sensibility, contributes to his becoming the most thoroughgoing (and widely known) of the pragmatist theorists. Most (male) biographers of Dewey trace his "lineage" through philosophical "fathers" (Seigfried 1996, 73). This experience suggests that Dewey's abiding value may be interpreted through pragmatic "mothers" as well.

What of Addams's specific point regarding antagonism? How is this insight reflected in Dewey's work in a way that is revealed in contemporary thinking and generative of future possibility? Dewey answers clearly:

I have learned many things from Jane Addams. I notice that with her usual modesty she attributed to me some of the things in Chicago which she and her colleagues in Hull House did. One of the things that I have learned from her is the enormous value of *mental non-resistance*, of tearing away the armor-plate of prejudice, of convention, isolation that keeps one from sharing to the full in the larger and even the more unfamiliar and alien ranges of the possibilities of human life and experience. (1930/1984, 421; emphasis added)

Addams differentiates between the constructive conflict that marks the fact of democratic diversity and the antagonism (including mental resistance) that we bring to the conflict as a result of unexamined emotion. Diversity, for Addams, is morally and cognitively significant. We do not grow, we do not become better persons, without confronting other perspectives. Conflict is useful for learning; antagonism inhibits it.

It is precisely this view that Dewey later develops in naturalistic explorations of human thinking, education and public life. A problem (a conflict of perspectives, properties or persons) stimulates thought. The "method of intelligence" yields deeper understanding, new learning and responsible action. But intelligence is stymied by antagonism, by mental resistance. Dewey adopts what Seigfried calls "the principled pluralism of pragmatist theory" (1993, 2). Addams personified it for him.

Naturally, there are other issues to be explored if we are to fully understand how Addams played "poet" to Dewey's "philosopher": Democracy as a mode of associated living and a moral ideal, the educational requirements of democracy, the curricular value of occupations, the ways in which the language of action holds the cognitive and the moral together, the value of collaborative experience in constituting a community of knowers, responsiveness and responsibility, the role of emotion and intelligent sympathy in moral life, the link between inquiry and action and the theoretical press of concrete experience. Across this range of issues, one's thinking and action likely "cross-pollinated" the other's.

Does it matter if we fail to recognize Addams's role in Dewey's development—or Dewey's role in Addams's growth? I believe it matters on Dewey's own (philosophical) terms as much as it is a matter of historical accuracy. If we miss the influence of philosophical outsiders on the quality of Dewey's thought, we miss as well the centrality of "democratic dialogue across difference" that is the hallmark of Dewey's philosophical process and its products. The phrase above is one often used by Dewey scholar Jim Garrison to capture what Dewey was about in his life relations, political action and philosophical expression. Jane Addams was just one of the others with whom Dewey conducted an extensive dialogue.

Moreover, some features of Dewey's pragmatic thought that seem especially useful to us today can be linked in at least a prima facie way to his interaction with Addams, among others. These include compatibility with the both/and, contextualized thinking that marks contemporary feminism (Seigfried 1993, 1996) and his ability to offer "a robust philosophy of everyday living" (Garrison 1997, 28). And of course, we must acknowledge his recognition that conflict (as distinct from antagonism) is not a problem but an opportunity for growth.

In the end of his consideration of Emerson as the philosopher of democracy, Dewey of course dissolves the dichotomy between poet and philosopher. He concedes the point that Emerson is well considered a poet, but he is no less a philosopher for that. In fact, he must be both. "It is no more possible to eliminate love and generation from the definition of the thinker than it is thought and limits from the conception of the artist. It is interest, concern, caring which makes the one as it makes the other" (1903b/1977, 186). Jane Addams *is* poet (love and generation) to Dewey's philosopher (thought and limits), and, one might argue, he poet to her philosopher as well. Neither would have their significant impact without *both* discernment and logic.

# The Preposterous Theory of Helen Bradford Thompson: Men's and Women's Intelligence is Similar in Quantity and Quality

# Jane Fowler Morse

Pragmatism was born during the philosopher John Dewey's ten years at Chicago, 1894 to 1904 (Dykhuizen 1973). In part, it grew out of the people with whom he associated. Among them was his student, Helen Bradford Thompson, a woman whose contribution to psychology and philosophy has gone largely unrecognized. While it seems likely that Dewey influenced Thompson, we might also ask how this apt pupil influenced her teacher and colleague. Thompson's 1900 dissertation exemplified the new empirical psychology. Her research illustrated the newly emerging pragmatic theory that the thinker's interaction with the world is the focus of meaning, rather than relying on the idealist notion that the thinker somehow confirms a match between the ideas in his or her head and "the real world" out there (an entity whose existence is assumed). After coming to Chicago, Dewey began to question the idealism that he had supported earlier in his career. Thompson was one of his interlocutors. The logic required for the new philosophy was presented in the seminal 1903 volume, *Studies in Logical Theory*. Thompson was the only

woman contributor.

Thompson graduated summa cum laude in philosophy from Chicago in 1897. Awarded a fellowship for graduate work, she chose psychology as her major. She studied in Germany, perhaps with Wilhelm Wundt, against whose reflex arc theory Dewey argues in his famous 1896 essay. After graduation, Thompson taught at Mount Holyoke College, married in 1906, taught philosophy at the University of Cincinnati, and served as school psychologist for the Cincinnati Public Schools before moving to Detroit where she became codirector of the Merrill Palmer Institute for Child Study. Dewey and Thompson, now Woolley, met again at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1927, when she became director of the Institute for Child Research. During her career, Woolley published three books and over 50 articles.<sup>2</sup> Like Dewey, she was interested in social justice, contributing to the movements for women's suffrage, child study, the abolition of child labor, nursery school and vocational guidance.

From her article in *Studies in Logical Theory* (1903) and her 1900 dissertation, it is clear that Thompson agreed with Dewey's critique of idealism. Her dissertation, *Psychological Norms in Men and Women*, used psychometrics to show that differences in men's and women's intelligence were slight. The tests she used revealed a conception of functional, physiological psychology that challenged previous models of psychology.

Thompson's contribution to Dewey's edited collection, *Studies in Logical Theory*, argued against Bosanquet's 1888 idealist theory of judgment, which proposed a dualistic epistemology in which judgment consists of finding a match between ideas and some preexisting reality. After disposing of this theory in the first part of her essay, Thompson proposed that judgment is an activity on the part of the perceiver, which does not attempt to match up perceptions with some kind of independent reality, but rather arises from the construction of reality by the perceiver. Her article provided the theoretical formulation of her earlier research on the mental functioning of men and women.

In her dissertation, Thompson tested judgments about perceptions in a group of 25 men and 25 women between the ages of 19 and 25 years. She checked motor ability, skin and muscle senses, taste, smell, hearing, vision, intellectual faculties and affective processes. In most of the tests, the subjects were compared in their ability to make judgments discriminating some features of the stimuli. For instance, the test for perception of temperature, suggested by William James's *Psychology*, asks the subject to determine which container of water is colder after dipping his or her fingers into two containers. The "threshold" at which the subject can make 75% accurate discriminations between stimuli was taken by Thompson to represent the degree of mental functioning by the subject. In these tests, Thompson required the subject to make a judgment that depended upon the perceptive abilities in question.

In all her tests, Thompson constantly returned to the topic of judgment. For instance, in a test of memory, subjects were required to memorize a series of non-

sense syllables, describe the type of imagery that each used in memorizing, tell whether or not each had learned the series by means of associations, and report any tendency to group the syllables in learning them (Thompson 1903, 94). Not content merely to count how many syllables a person could memorize, Thompson asked subjects to comment on the process by which they completed the task. This critical distance is indeed the judgment that *Studies in Logical Theory* introduced to the philosophical world. In Thompson's research design, subjects encountered the world by a certain mode of perceiving on which they were asked to reflect in the context of the encounter. They were not asked to search for a match to a preconceived reality, as the idealist theory claimed.

When testing affective processes, Thompson (1903) both measured physiological changes and asked subjects to talk about their feelings. She reported:

The most striking thing revealed by the . . . questions on personality is their close coincidence in both sexes. The realm of feeling is one of those upon which stress is laid by those who believe that there are important psychological differences of sex, and yet we find a series of men and a series of women reacting toward questions about the life of feeling in wonderfully similar ways. (166)

Thompson linked some of these differences to sex role stereotyping, as it later came to be called. The upshot of her tests was that men's and women's abilities in many areas were more similar than was believed by previous, nonempirical theories. The "new psychology" rested on an empirical basis. At the end of her dissertation Thompson, with characteristic caution, pronounced that "The biological theory of psychological differences of sex is not in a condition to compel assent" (1903, 176). Hers was the first clear formulation of sex role stereotyping. She suggested that there are better ways of explaining the minor differences in the psychological functioning of men and women that she did find than biological destiny.

The suggestion that the observed psychological differences of sex may be due to differences in environment has often been met with derision, but it seems at least worthy of unbiased consideration. The fact that very genuine and important differences of environment do exist can be denied only by the most superficial observer. Even in our own country, where boys and girls are allowed to go to the same schools and to play together to some extent, the social atmosphere is different, from the cradle. Different toys are given them, different occupations and games are taught them, different ideals of conduct are held up before them. The question for the moment is not at all whether or not these differences in education are right and proper and necessary, but merely whether or not, as a matter of fact, they exist, and, if so, what effect they have on the individuals who are subjected to them. (1903, 177)

In her final paragraph, Thompson announces

There are, as everyone must recognize, signs of a radical change in the so-

cial ideals of sex. The point to be emphasized as the outcome of this study is that, according to our present light, the psychological differences of sex seemed to be largely due, not to difference of average capacity, nor to difference in type of mental activity, but to differences in the social influences brought to bear on the developing individual from early infancy to adult years. The question of the future development of the intellectual life of women is one of social necessities and ideals, rather than of the inborn, psychological characteristics of sex. (1903, 182)

The new model of philosophy to which Dewey aspired is evident in Thompson's work—philosophy should deal with the social problems that hinder people from making the most of their lives. That she was drawn to the new perspective Dewey and others were working out seems clear. What is not as clear is how her empirical explorations grounded in this perspective may have strengthened Dewey's understanding—about pragmatism generally or about the education of women specifically.

Helen Thompson's early work attempted to settle a longstanding problem for women, the belief that they were not capable of receiving a higher education, that education would be injurious to their health, and that their biology was responsible for their inferior social position. Instead of assuming that women's psychology depends on an ideally predetermined role, Thompson investigated how women really do function psychologically. Her findings ruled out the idea that women were biologically destined to belong to a separate sphere. Her idea of the influence of nurture on the developing individual grew out of her desire to apply the results of her study to some practical purpose. This application of the new psychology to social problems evokes Dewey's work. Her belief that a scientific study could dispel old prejudices against women, allowing them entry to higher education and the professions, is in keeping with Dewey's application of philosophy to education. Moreover, it is congruent with and predates Dewey's public statements in favor of coeducation (cf. Dewey 1902/1977, 1911/1977). Clearly, Dewey-who was open to including a woman psychologist in his working group-was also open to the idea that what was called "intelligence" arises in the sexes in the same manner-through interaction with the world.

Helen Bradford Thompson's work exemplifies the new logic whereby human beings construct the reality of which they are a part. Dewey benefited by his connection with women like her who undertook to apply pragmatism to pressing social and political problems such as the admission of women to the previously all-male networks of the academic, the profession and politics. Helen Thompson Wooley was one of these, a rare bird in those days, a woman Ph.D. who undertook to end the prejudice against women and working class people. Her inclusion in Dewey's 1903 volume shows his willingness to work out his ideas in the presence of others and demonstrates the interactive nature of his epistemology.

Unlike Dewey, Woolley never held a tenure-track position. A lone woman in a vulnerable position, Woolley nevertheless refused to be intimidated in her work, which was forgotten and ignored in the second half of the twentieth century. Overcome by the kind of departmental politics that Dewey could afford to scorn at Chicago, she died in obscurity. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, she interacted with Dewey on the cutting edge of what came to be known as Pragmatism.

# *New Directions in Old Places: Dewey's Collaborative Relationships with Women Graduate Students at Columbia University, 1905-1930*

# Terri S. Wilson

#### Old Places

This essay began as an exploration of—and interest in—the work of Elsie Ripley Clapp, a student, graduate assistant and long-standing colleague of John Dewey. In considering the questions that prompted this group of essays, I found myself remembering Clapp's account of her graduate studies at Columbia University and the warmth, generosity and encouragement that John Dewey gave her work. Clapp, in her memoirs, contrasts his responsiveness with her work with other Columbia faculty and her struggles to complete her graduate degree (Sandovnik and Semel 2002; Stack 2003). Given Clapp's account, I found myself wondering if Dewey was more receptive to women graduate students than were other members of the Columbia University faculty. This paper explores Dewey's relationships with women graduate students in the context of the general struggles for women at Columbia. Drawing from Clapp and others, it is evident that Dewey formed collaborative relationships with women graduate students, treating them seriously as philosophers and educators. This raises a series of interesting questions: Given these collaborative relationships, why did his women graduate students still struggle to succeed academically and professionally? Why, even today, are his students read primarily as reformers and educators, not as philosophers? And finally, what do these relationships reveal about Dewey's commitments as a teacher, mentor and reformer-as well as philosopher?

This essay is organized as follows. In order to provide the context for Dewey's relationships with and work on behalf of women graduate students, I first trace the history of women at Columbia, highlighting Dewey's practical work for their inclusion. The next section considers Dewey's relationship with women graduate students, highlighting Clapp as an exemplar. In the final section I discuss the implications and point towards some new directions for research.

## The Struggles for Inclusion at Columbia

Women wishing to attend Columbia University during the first decades of the twentieth century faced an uphill battle. Unlike other institutions, which began with—or quickly embraced—coeducation, Columbia University fought women's

admission for decades (Rosenberg 2004, 3; Solomon 1985). While women were allowed to enroll in a separate and limited undergraduate "Collegiate Course" starting in 1883, graduate coursework remained firmly off-limits. A few professors crossed over the lines by admitting certain high-achieving women as informal graduate students. In 1886, Columbia gave its first Ph.D. degree to Winifred Edgerton, a student admitted in "special standing" to the astronomy department (Rosenberg 2004, 45-46). In December of 1891, under increasing pressure from Barnard College, the trustees finally agreed to open classes in the graduate faculties to women (74-75). While classes were technically open to women, individual instructors still retained the right to refuse any woman admittance to their course (80-81). So while women were formally admitted to graduate study, their participation remained functionally segregated by the resistance posed—or encouragement offered—by particular faculty members and departments.

Rosenberg cites Dewey as one member of an encouraging group of Columbia scholars "engaged in vigorous 'trespass' on the accepted forms of scholarly specialization" (111). In addition to Dewey, this group included James Harvey Robinson in history, Franz Boas in anthropology, Franklin Giddings in sociology, Vladimir Simkhovitch in economics, and Harry Hollingworth and Edward L. Thorndike in psychology. In addition to all having taught at Barnard or Teachers College, these scholars were noted for their commitment to the interdisciplinary study of social problems, movements for social reform and engagement with the settlement movement (111). In contrast to the developing concept of the university as a distributor of specialized, professional knowledge, Dewey and his fellow scholars "viewed the university as part of the urban laboratory," a place where "ideas should be tested and revised in light of the shifting experience" (112). Given this concept of the university, these scholars saw women as an essential and organizing force in the drive for social reform and were, as Rosenberg notes, "generally supportive of their efforts" (112).

Under the guidance of Virginia Gildersleeve, Dean of Barnard College, a formal group was created to advocate for women's interests at Columbia. The Committee on Women Graduate Students lobbied to protect women's interests in the graduate school and open the professional schools to women (124). Even though this committee contained prominent male faculty members such as Barnard professor Ida Ogilvie, James Harvey Robinson and John Dewey, these efforts were part of a strategic, savvy, decades-long and largely woman-led campaign to open Columbia University to women. Rosenberg makes the argument that Columbia's policy of "containing" women students in separate, coordinate schools (such as Barnard and Teachers College) actually served to strengthen women's overall position. These adjacent institutions served as "beachheads," continuing "bases of protest and critical thinking from the 1890s forward. They encouraged students to claim the right to further training and provided jobs for talented graduates, at a time when academic employment was largely closed to women" (3).

Teachers College provided an increasingly popular means for women to ac-

cess the graduate faculties of Columbia University. While only seven doctorates were granted to women before 1900, by the time Dewey arrived on campus in 1905, increasing numbers of women—indeed, increasing numbers of all students—were enrolled in graduate work (Rossiter 1982). In 1905, 403 graduate students were registered at either the masters or the doctoral level. An increasing number of these graduate students—103 of the 403, many of them women—came from Teachers College. In fact, of the 19 Ph.D.s granted in 1905, 10 were in education (Randall 1975, 19-20). The increasing number of doctorates granted in education stood in contrast to other disciplines, which remained more firmly closed to women.

# Philosophy, Women and Dewey

In my research of women graduate students in the Philosophy Department at Columbia, what stands out most clearly is their absence. Charlene Haddock Seigfried points to a similar, and pervasive, pattern of omission in her valuable study Pragmatism and Feminism. When looking for examples of women pragmatist philosophers who might have studied with James, Dewey, Peirce and Mead, she found next to none (1996, 17-39). On one level, very few women at the turn of the century—indeed, very few students in general—pursued full time graduate study. But even as the numbers of overall graduate students increased, and the proportion of women in their ranks grew, philosophy remained mostly closed to women graduate students (Seigfried 1996; Rosenberg 2004, 305-306). While we find a few women pursuing graduate study in philosophy, it seems like most disappeared without leaving any scholarly record after leaving school. As Seigfried notes, if they do appear, it is as reformers, social workers of educators, not as philosophers. However, as she importantly reminds us, this absence reflects our definition of a philosopher-as someone with a university position-as much as it does the absence of women doing philosophic work.

The record shows that Dewey had a variety of women students, although few women he mentored went on to find academic appointments in philosophy. In fact, only two specific students appear to have completed the Ph.D. in philosophy and progressed through the ranks to find academic appointments: Savilla Alice Elkus, who defended her dissertation, "The Concept of Control," in 1907 and Willystine Goodsell, who defended her dissertation, "The Conflict of Naturalism and Humanism," in 1910. Elkus went on to teach philosophy at Vassar and Smith; Goodsell taught at Teachers College, and shifted her research from philosophy to the study of women and the family, publishing her most recognized work, *A History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution*, in 1915 (Schwartz-Seller 1994, 227-231). While these two students are notable examples, they are by no means alone: many more women students took masters degrees or minor doctoral concentrations in philosophy.

Rosenberg notes that Dewey and other key faculty members served as mediating advocates for women graduate students, working behind the scenes to advance the role that women played in the university. While few women were admitted to the Department of Philosophy, many women—often those with major concentrations

in education—took a minor concentration in philosophy (Rosenberg 2004, 156, 161). These women's reasons for studying philosophy varied: some appear to have been educators, drawn to Dewey's work (Green 2004). Others appear, like Clapp, to have been students of philosophy—and therefore, to some extent, philosophers by discipline and disposition, if not position. Because of the limited range of academic professional opportunities available for women at that time, these two categories often—and importantly—overlapped.

Elsie Ripley Clapp is an important example of this overlapping kind of student. Clapp completed her graduate coursework in philosophy (and English) at Columbia, taking no less than 14 courses from Dewey and serving as his graduate assistant in another 12 courses. It is in this role where we see the collaborative relationship between Clapp and Dewey. She assisted Dewey with the content, approach and pedagogy of his courses. She often prepared detailed notes of these courses, and engaged in lively, intellectual conversations about the content of these courses (Seigfried 1996; Stack 2003). As J. J. Chambliss develops in his analysis of their 1911 correspondence, this conversation ranged from the contrast between the desirable and the actual, an emerging synthesis between mind and nature and the identification of thinking and acting (Chambliss 1991). Her contributions were so significant that Dewey explicitly acknowledged Clapp in his preface for her contributions to Democracy and Education. Four years earlier, in a letter to Clapp dated September 2, 1911, Dewey recognized the significant, possibly too significant influence of her ideas in this manuscript. He writes, "So great is my indebtedness, that it makes me apprehensive-not, I hope, that I am so mean as to be reluctant to be under obligation, but that such a generous exploitation of your ideas as is likely to result if and when I publish the outcome, seems to go beyond the limit" (quoted in Seigfried 1996, 50).

Despite their extensive collaboration on philosophical ideas and courses-and Clapp's occasional contributions to philosophic journals (1909, 1912, 1911)—she is best known as a progressive educator. Recognized as a leader in the progressive education movement, Clapp taught at a number of schools before leading two rural education experiments at the Roger Clark Ballard Memorial School in Jefferson County, Kentucky (1929-1934) and the Arthurdale School in Arthurdale, West Virginia (1934-1936) (see Clapp 1939, 1952; Perlstein 1996; Patterson 2002). In fact, the very fact that we acknowledge her work as educational reform reflects some of the opportunities and limitations for women's professional advancement at the time. While an educational leader with a clear mastery of theoretical issues, Clapp found an academic path closed to her. Clapp—while she was teaching secondary school in New York—was also assisting Dewey with his courses at Teachers College when he retired from active teaching in 1927. She wrote in her private notes, "The greatest honor of my life was the fact that, on his retirement, Dr. Dewey named me as his successor for the courses in Education he had been giving at Teachers College. I was not appointed" (quoted in Seigfried 1996, 52).

#### New Directions

I believe that Clapp provides an instructive example for investigating other collaborative, intellectual relationships that Dewey had with his women graduate students. Some of these students are familiar to us: Ella Flagg Young, Frances Perkins and Lucy Sprague Mitchell, for example. Many others, though, are less known: Frances Bradshaw, Myrtle McGraw, Louise Rosenblatt, Savilla Elkus, Willystine Goodsell, Corrine Chisholm Frost, Alice P. Barrows, Margaret Haley, Pearl Hunter Weber and countless others who have faded farther from view. Clapp is an example of relationships that Dewey had with strong, intellectual women of his time, from Jane Addams to Ella Flagg Young. These relationships helped to shape and reconstruct Dewey's philosophy, literally working out his ideas through practice and conversation (see, for instance, Stengel, this issue; Siegfried 1996).

More specifically though, I think Clapp provides an instructive example of both where we might look for evidence of these collaborative relationships, as well as why we should. Dewey's relationship with Clapp points us toward some possible places to learn about his collaboration with other students. One source of evidence might include student remembrances and accounts of Dewey. These interviews, memoirs and oral histories provide a glimpse into both Dewey's thought and his practice as a teacher. In contrast with accounts that often emphasize Dewey as lost in his own thoughts in the classroom, his women students present a richer portrait. One example of this is Pearl Hunter Weber's remembrances of Dewey in the classroom. She recalls, "When a student posed a question or made a comment, Dewey came to attention . . . he would draw out of him and his innocent question intellectual wonders. This drawing out was never better done because in Dewey's active deference he gave unqualified attention to anybody" (quoted in Martin 2003, 261). Weber's account is particularly interesting in that it emphasizes the "active" listening that Dewey practiced as well as his profound respect for every individual student (Martin 2003; Jackson 1998).

In addition to where we might look, the example of Elsie Ripley Clapp might help us think through some of the reasons why we should. One possible reason to reexamine these women graduate students is for what they said. In particular, I argue that what these women have written—in articles and books about whatever work they were engaged in, as well as in less formal sources like letters and correspondence—might be deeply philosophic texts, or at least texts that deserve philosophic attention and inquiry. For example, Louise Rosenblatt, one of Dewey's graduate students, is recognized chiefly as a teacher educator and authority on literacy. In her pioneering work on how children learn how to read, she advances a "transactional" theory of literacy. This theory might be examined for its philosophic significance and theoretical depth, as well as for its educational application (Seigfried 1996, 30-31). As Mary Ellen Waithe commented, these women might be, "not women on the fringes of philosophy, but philosophers on the fringes of history" (quoted in Witt 1996).

In treating these women as philosophers, they provide us with examples—

and perhaps are themselves exemplars—of taking the interrelationship between philosophy and education seriously. As such, their work in interesting not just for what it says, but also for how it says it. In particular, the body of this work, especially for the field and study of philosophy and education, might be interesting for its methodological approach. Many of these women are powerful examples of engaged scholars who explored the interplay between philosophy and education with precision and commitment. As calls for action research, engaged scholarship and school-university partnerships continue to proliferate within a variety of academic disciplines, this methodology seems more resonant than ever.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this group of essays, I believe the lives and work of these women provide some powerful insights into the life and work of John Dewey. Jay Martin writes that those who came under Dewey's influence were attracted by his quality of warmth (2003, 246). I believe that Dewey's relationships with his students allow us to see this sense of warmth, responsiveness and openness to the world in a new and important light. These relationships also push us to see that this quality of response might be more than just a personality trait. Instead, this quality of response might both reflect—and pervade—Dewey's philosophical method, democratic conviction and moral commitment. In a sense, Dewey's moral responsiveness to his students might have been part of taking his last sentence in *Democracy and Education* very much to heart: that "interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest" (1916, 370).

# Shared Explorations of Body-Mind: The Reciprocal Influences of Dewey and F. M. Alexander

# Craig A. Cunningham

John Dewey's relationship with F. Matthias Alexander has presented his biographers with a challenge: how to explain a thoughtful scholar's fascination with an apparent "quack," a practitioner of an art with questionable scientific and intellectual foundations? But there is no getting around the fact that Dewey took Alexander quite seriously—as a healer and a thinker.

# How "Weird" was F. M. Alexander?

The American Heritage Dictionary (2000) defines "weirdo" as:

- 1. A person regarded as being very strange or eccentric.
- 2. A deranged, potentially dangerous person.

Few would argue that Alexander was deranged, but there is no question that he was an unusual person whose work, life and story display interesting and even eccentric characteristics. He was born and raised in Tasmania, an island off the coast of Australia that was populated primarily by exiled criminals from England, Scotland and Ireland. All four of Alexander's grandparents were criminals, either exiled for petty theft or for participating in agrarian civil disobedience against the threatening machinery of capitalist hegemony. Alexander felt ashamed of his ancestry and he lied about it and maintained a deep sense of distrust towards others his entire life. Originally slated to become a schoolteacher, Alexander was forced to assume financial responsibility for his family when he was 16, and worked in a variety of jobs in tin mining and mechanizing during the next ten years, while he built a career as an accomplished elocutionist and actor. In those days (unlike now, of course), actors and entertainers were treated somewhat with suspicion as oddballs. There is evidence that Alexander was actively homosexual or at least bisexual and he was described as having an "affected" air that contributed to his eccentric reputation.

In the early stages of his career as an elocutionist, Alexander would often lose his voice during performances, a tendency which, needless to say, caused him some consternation. In trying to figure out what caused him to lose his voice, Alexander spent some time watching himself speak in a mirror, and he discovered that he was habitually tensing his neck and jaw when he began to speak, which was causing him to strain his vocal chords. Over time, Alexander developed a technique for helping himself and others to maintain proper breathing and posture while speaking or acting. The technique involved noticing bad habits, deciding not to do them, and allowing new more effective habits to emerge. In selling his technique to actors and, later to doctors to recommend to their patients, Alexander engaged in what can only be described as hucksterism and exaggeration, tendencies which causes some in the medical profession and others to think of him as a quack selling nothing but hype. This was exacerbated by Alexander's infamous tendency towards a lack of tact in interpersonal relationships, and his renowned temper, which would greatly intimidate employees, associates and even patients. He also had some unusual personal notions and habits revolving around gambling, dining habits and money. To many of his contemporaries, Alexander might have been described as an archetypal eccentric. Further, in his writings, Alexander went so far as to claim that his method would not only cure bad posture and other habits, but would also eventually lead to "universal salvation." Despite all this strangeness and eccentricity, Alexander became very successful, building primarily on the testimony of the many individuals who found his technique useful in developing large clienteles in London and New York-including, from 1916 onwards, John Dewey.

Before I go into his relationship to Dewey, let me answer the question: Was Alexander a weirdo? Any attempt to decide whether a person is a weirdo must consider the context in which the question is asked. Here we are talking about someone who has been thought to have a significant impact on Dewey's philosophy of habit and the relationship between the mind and the body. There is no question that Alexander would seem an unlikely person to deeply affect the thinking of an influential philosopher, given that he had no philosophical training and infused his ideas with grandiose and unsupported claims and theories. So, both in the sense that he was considered strange and eccentric by many associates and in the sense that he was an unusual—even weird—candidate to have impacted a person such as Dewey, then yes, we are justified in calling Alexander a "weirdo."

## Was Dewey influenced by Alexander?

In 1916, Dewey was having some troubles with a tight neck, sore back, and eye strain. Upon the recommendation of Wendell Bush, a colleague at Columbia, Dewey's wife and children began seeing Alexander (Alice went for help with her depression; it is not clear for what the children were treated), and eventually Dewey himself had sessions with Alexander. Dewey found the sessions "a laboratory [in] experimental education" and felt he was "an inept, awkward, and slow pupil" (Dearborn 1988, 96). He described the early sessions as "the most humiliating experience of my life, intellectually speaking. For to find that one is unable to execute directions . . . in doing such a seemingly simply act as to sit down, when one is using all the mental capacity which one prides oneself upon possessing, is not an experience congenial to one's vanity" (96-97). Later, Dewey wrote: "I used to shuffle and sag. Now, I hold myself up" (97).

In addition, Dewey claimed, in several introductions he wrote to American editions of Alexander's books, that Alexander had deeply affected his understanding of habits in relation to what he began to call body-mind or mind-body.

My theories of mind-body, of the coordination of the active elements of the self and of the place of ideas in inhibition and control of overt action required contact with the work of F. M. Alexander and in later years his brother, A. R., to transform them into realities. (quoted in Jane Dewey 1939, 44-45)

Dewey's respect for Alexander was maintained even though some of Dewey's professional colleagues dismissed him. At one point, for example, he was so bothered by a dismissive review of one of Alexander's books written by Randolph Bourne that Dewey threatened never to contribute to the New Republic again if they accepted anything written by Bourne. In *Dialogue on John Dewey* (Lamont 1959), Alvin Johnson described Dewey as having been "enamored" of Alexander; a comment that caused Dewey's second wife Roberta to wage a concerted campaign to get the word stricken from subsequent editions for fear someone might conclude that Dewey's attractions to Alexander were more than intellectual.

There is no question that Dewey relied on his experiences with Alexander to ground his theory of human nature and conduct, and that he saw Alexander's approach to correcting posture as embodying the physiology of psychophysical experience that he theorized about in his later works. As Jo Ann Boydston (1986) has written:

In 1923, Dewey introduced Alexander's *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual.* In Dewey's most comprehensive philosophical statement, *Experience and Nature* (1925), often called his magnum opus, specific references to Alexander again appear. As major work followed major work from the late twenties to the late thirties, anyone knowledgeable about Alexander's thoughts and practice would find evidence of their impact in *Art as Experience, The Quest for Certainty,* the 1933 revised *How We Think, Experience and Education,* and finally in 1939, *The Theory of Valuation.* 

Dewey again endorsed the Alexander technique and praised Alexander for making "one of the most important discoveries that has been made in practical application of the unity of the mind-body principle" (Letter to Joseph Ratner, July 24, 1946; quoted in Boydston 1986). The key phrase here is "practical application." What this indicates to me is that Dewey had already formed a theory of mind-body by the time he met Alexander-taking part of it from William James and C. S. Peirce-and that Dewey's appreciation for Alexander wasn't so much in the theoretical realm as in the realm of practice. This is not to denigrate the benefit Dewey gained from his association with Alexander (to his posture as well as his thought), but to suggest that the primary benefit was giving Dewey experience that helped him to solidify, or ground, a viewpoint that had previously been predominantly intellectual. Dewey had always displayed an openness to experience as the crucial test of the value of ideas, and his experience of the Alexander technique certainly convinced him that mind and body were, in the end, a continuity more than a separation. Perhaps more importantly, Alexander helped Dewey to see how, by using the mind in a particular way, a habit of bad posture could gradually be corrected. This strongly suggests that "mind" is more of a process than an entity, and that "ends-in-view" are tools that enable the mind to continually create the self. This conception, of course, became the essence of Dewey's theory of human nature and conduct, and an important rationale for his metaphysical view that every existence is an event. But again, the theoretical bases for these ideas were already in place when Alexander gave Dewey a concrete experience of it.

# So What?

I must confess to being tempted, like some other Dewey commentators, to attribute great importance to the Alexander relationship, if only because such a position would help convince you that our focus here has legs. But I honestly cannot justify suggesting anything more than a marginal influence on Dewey's philosophy—more in the way of confirmation than causal influence. Yet there can be no doubt that Dewey, by his own admission, became a learner in Alexander's presence. I believe that Dewey's relationship with Alexander—which was clearly mutually beneficial says a lot about Dewey the man and a little about Dewey the philosopher that we should pay attention to. By allowing himself to consider the relationship between his ideas and the world of experience beyond the academy, by being a learner in the world, Dewey exemplifies for us the notion of philosophical engagement. And to this extent, I think, if not more, Dewey's relationship with Alexander ought to be taken as exemplifying something we all should seek.

# A "Scientific Aesthetic Method": John Dewey, Albert Barnes and the Question of Aesthetic Formalism

# David A. Granger

A native of Philadelphia, Albert Coombs Barnes was born a little over a decade after John Dewey in 1872. He is almost uniformly described as an oddball, an illtempered, messianic eccentric who blazed his own path through life while leaving his mark, for better and for worse, on everyone and everything he came into contact with, including Dewey. Yet he was also, by current standards, a veritable renaissance man—a trained physician with a knack for chemistry, a head for business, a fascination for psychology and philosophy, a passion for art and most importantly, a fervid belief in human perfectibility through education.

As a young man of thirty, Barnes assisted in creating the innovative silver compound marketed as Argyrol, a noncaustic antiseptic that proved very effective in treating certain viral infections. Upon setting up a business and amassing a substantial fortune selling Argyrol, Barnes began to collect and give serious, appreciative study to art. Under the tutelage of painter William Glackens's avantgarde sensibilities, and against the remonstrances of stiff-necked critics (at whom he openly voiced his contempt), Barnes acquired at comparably low cost impressionist and post-impressionist works by Renoir, Manet, Seurat, Gauguin, Cézanne, Degas, Matisse, Picasso, Van Gogh and many others. By the time of his death in 1951, Barnes's collection contained over one thousand pieces—including over one hundred Renoirs, as he once boasted to Dewey—with a current estimated value in excess of six billion dollars (Greenfeld 1987, 2-3; Anderson 2003, 5).

After becoming enamored in his spare time with the psychology and educational theory of Dewey and William James, Barnes began displaying some of his paintings around the Argyrol factory. With the aid of his staff, he then convened seminars on art, psychology and philosophy with his small but diverse cohort of employees (Schack 1960, 97-99). The challenging seminars were intended to help the employees reach their potentialities in both work and life, and entailed reading and discussion centered on the works of James, George Santayana, Bertrand Russell, and the formalist aesthetics of Roger Fry, along with Dewey's *How We Think* (1910/1977) and, eventually, *Democracy and Education* (1916/1977).

Wanting to meet the great educator in person, Barnes subsequently arranged to enroll in one of Dewey's philosophy seminars at Columbia University in 1917. Barnes liked Dewey from the beginning, both for his earnest character and his mind. Dewey, meanwhile, found Barnes to possess a prodigious intellect (though he apparently never spoke up in Dewey's class), so much so, in fact, that he came to view him as "almost unmatched for 'sheer brain power'" (Dykhuizen 1973, 221). The two quickly became fast friends, conversing about art and aesthetics together over dinner after class, with Dewey, who was not naturally an aesthete and who admitted to knowing little about the plastic arts, largely assuming the role of student. This was followed by many rewarding trips to museums, both in America and abroad, in addition to careful study of Barnes's growing collection. It also appears that Dewey learned early on to avoid confrontations with the highly irascible Barnes—yet, with the best of diplomacy, he did apparently let Barnes know when he was being short-sighted or overly quarrelsome—and to make certain concessions from time to time for the sake of their deep and loyal friendship. On the other hand, Dewey's former student and friend Sidney Hook, who disliked Barnes and his famously contentious demeanor with a passion, found in this "indulgent friendship" a rare, humanizing flaw in Dewey's otherwise unimpeachable character (quoted in Schack 1960, 241). All the same, Dewey's openly receptive and nonjudgmental attitude with all manner of people was, given the parochial exclusivity of academe, integral to his insatiable craving for new experiences and ideas. While it led at points to strange, even disreputable alliances (such as that with Barnes), this democratic habit also made it possible for him continually to renew himself personally as well as professionally.

By 1920, Barnes's lavish art collection had clearly outgrown both the factory and his otherwise ample Merion, Pennsylvania home. As an inventive solution to the problem, he formulated an ambitious plan to construct a new building on an adjacent tract of land and establish what came to be known as the Barnes Foundation. At the core of this plan was Barnes's vaulting aspiration to develop the means for, in his words, "an objective study of pictures." Such study would be based on an explicitly Deweyan model of perception and would culminate in a personally and culturally enriching "scientific aesthetic method" (Barnes and de Mazia 1935, xi). In addition, it was this particular method that selected participants would learn in the innovative education programs of the Barnes Foundation and its extraordinary gallery.

To my knowledge, Dewey himself never described his theorizing in terms of a "scientific aesthetic method," an appellation that sounds rather rigid and constraining. Yet Dewey openly endorsed both the intellectual means and experiential ends of the Barnes project for emphasizing the organic relationship between art and life, and with generous words of approbation and support. Indeed, for a short time after its opening in 1925, Dewey served (mostly informally) as the first "director of education" at the Barnes Foundation, and thereafter he remained a casual consultant, continuing to add "big name" prestige and legitimacy to the enterprise. Furthermore, Dewey exclaimed in 1935 that the Barnes Foundation is "the most thoroughgoing embodiment of what I have tried to say about education." In particular, he took "profound satisfaction" in it being "an educational institution that is concerned with art" which so "exemplifi[es] . . . what that theory means in practice" (Dewey 1935, 504-505).

Other apparent discontinuities soon emerge, however. For as numerous writers have pointed out, while Dewey's influence on the Barnes Foundation was by no means nonexistent, the general policies and education programs of the Foundation were in many ways conspicuously unDeweyan. To wit: The gallery maintained only

limited public hours (and this only after Barnes's death in 1951), restricting access for those persons not participating in the Foundation's necessarily limited education programs (Glass 1997, 96). It seems, too, that Barnes wished to prevent participants from "enjoying his collection in a way other than the one he prescribed" (100). This meant that lecturers at the Foundation must not veer even slightly from Barnes's "scientific aesthetic method." Such "ideological rigidity" suggested that Barnes's method be treated as an established truth, rather than, in Deweyan fashion, an ongoing experiment to be continually tested in the laboratory of lived experience (100; see also Constantino 2004). Furthermore, while the Foundation claimed to practice Dewey's notion of "shared activity" as the basis for its lectures, little (if any) of this occurred, nor were the meeting spaces very conducive to questioning and discussion (Gilmar 2004, 5).

Interestingly, Dewey's proponents among academic philosophers tend to downplay, ignore, or in a few cases openly lament his association with Barnes including the important question of the possible influence of Barnes's thinking on Dewey's aesthetics. On the other hand, writers working from the perspective of art and aesthetic education openly admit to this association, yet they are inclined to privilege Dewey's influence on Barnes and so become rather vexed at the unDeweyan elements of the Barnes Foundation education programs. (From the philosophical standpoint, see, for example, Alexander 1987; Shusterman 2000; Jackson 1998; Garrison 1997; Morris 1971; Dennis 1972. From the educational standpoint, see, for example, Glass 1997; Constantino 2004; Gilmar 2004.)

All of this readily evokes the following questions: What degree of influence, if any, did Barnes have on Dewey's thinking about art and aesthetics and, if such exists, what was the nature of this influence? Are there any significant differences between Barnes's and Dewey's aesthetics? And finally, what accounts for the seeming incompatibility of the Barnes Foundation education programs and Dewey's educational vision?

These are complicated questions, and any effort to answer them must necessarily involve some degree of conjecture. However, it is my belief, based on preliminary research, that Dewey was justified in dedicating his only major work on aesthetics, *Art as Experience*, to Barnes. (Barnes had previously dedicated his book *The Art in Painting* to Dewey.) Those parts of *Art as Experience* that develop themes introduced previously in *Experience and Nature* could likely have been written had Dewey never met Barnes. But the detailed commentary on the formal properties of the plastic arts and different art media, especially in relation to specific pieces of painting and sculpture, were very likely dependent on Barnes's expertise. On the reverse side, Barnes claims that Dewey helped him to see what is involved in "educating people to new ways of thinking" (Hart 1963, 16). This is something that Dewey freely acknowledged, both in print and in conversation among friends and colleagues, including two of Dewey's former students, Thomas Munro and Laurence Buermeyer, both of whom taught for a time at the Barnes Foundation (Dewey 1926, 104-110). In an essay entitled "Affective Thought in Logic and Painting," first published in *The Journal of the Barnes Foundation* in 1926, Dewey provides some idea of what he learned from Barnes and why he thought it appropriate to cast his lot with the Barnes Foundation:

In [his book] *The Art in Painting*, Mr. Barnes has shown that plastic form is the integration of all plastic means. In the case of paintings, these are color, line, light and space. By means of their relations to one another, design is affected: design, namely, in line patterns, in surface masses, in three-dimensional solids, and in spatial intervals—the "room" about objects whether up and down, side to side, front and back. And Mr. Barnes has shown that it is the kind and degree of integration of plastic means in achieving each of the elements of design taken by itself and also the integration of each with all the others, which constitutes the objective standard for value in painting. (1926, 108)

Interestingly, too, these are some of the same formalist ideas—part of Barnes's "scientific aesthetic method," where organic relationships between color, light, space and line are foregrounded and privileged intellectually in experience—for which *Art as Experience* is often reproved as "backsliding" into idealism.

Alternatively, the incompatibility in points of emphasis between Barnes's and Dewey's aesthetics—or at least those elements of Dewey's aesthetics that seem most consistent with the general contours of his later philosophy-is perhaps best seen with what Dewey calls "judicial" criticism. While joining Barnes in rejecting mere "impressionist" criticism and sloppy sentimentalism, Dewey also spurns criticism that uses fixed rules and principles to pass final judgment on individual pieces of art or art movements (Dewey 1934, 303-313). Barnes, however, frequently uses the "objective criteria of value" from his "scientific aesthetic method" to try and "tame art with science," thereby making judicial pronouncements on the ultimate worth of different pieces of art. Barnes's first published article was called, "How to Judge a Painting." Notably, too, Barnes's formalism led him to be very dismissive of abstract expressionism and its focus on "the subjective," whereas abstract expressionist artists often found considerable inspiration in Dewey's aesthetics (see Bérubé 1998, 211-227; Buettner 1975, 383-391). In addition, Dewey's more robust organicism led him to emphasize the thorough integration of form and content and the full play of subjectivity (or what he called "the human contribution") in maximizing the expressive possibilities of art and the aesthetic. One could say, then, that while Barnes grafts elements of expressionist theory onto his aesthetic formalism (via Dewey), Dewey grafts elements of aesthetic formalism onto his expressionism (via Barnes).

These and related contrasts, I have come to think, help to explain why the education programs at the Barnes Foundation appear so methodologically prescribed and unDeweyan in important ways: They were teaching an express aesthetic formalism that aspired to complete objectivity in experience and criticism. Such contrasts, along with other forms of evidence, suggest as well that Dewey at times made concessions to Barnes's aesthetics and educational endeavors out of a deep

sense of respect for his friend and their enduring, mutually beneficial relationship. For it seems clear that Dewey's forays into the territory of art and aesthetics, and his gradual "aesthetic turn," would not have subsumed the plastic arts with such alacrity and erudition were it not for his patient friendship with the infamous Albert Barnes.

# **Concluding Remarks**

Taken together, these essays support the hypothesis stated at the outset: Dewey's capacity to articulate prescient and revolutionary philosophical concepts was enhanced by his willingness to listen to and learn from women and weirdoes to an extent rarely displayed by other scholars. His students noted his active listening and profound respect for their questions and their ideas. He sought out female graduate students and respected them as colleagues. He readily assumed the role of student, for example, with Albert Barnes and F. M. Alexander. He respected the role of women like Jane Addams as an essential and organizing force in the drive for social reform—and recognized the power of both their actions and their thinking. Moreover, he was generous in his acknowledgment of others' influence.

These essays also support the observation that Dewey's biographers and interpreters have largely downplayed such influences. Why? Our essays suggest that this may be due to a limited conception of what constitutes an "influence," or, even more significantly, part of a resistance to certain manifestations of intelligence. Either limitation has both theoretical and practical implications.

It seems clear to us that Dewey was more open to listening to voices outside of the traditional categories of academia than were his contemporaries or many of today's academics. Dewey was, as Terri Wilson notes above, interested "in learning from all the contacts of life" and he viewed this as "the essential moral interest." This may be the key to understanding Dewey's openness and to appreciating the kind of influence others (specifically women and nonphilosophers) exerted on him. Dewey was a learner and his commitment to learning was moral as much as intellectual. This comes as no surprise to students of Dewey's educational philosophy. But there is a professional explanation for Dewey's interest as well.

Dewey's explicit goal in developing his theories was to develop conceptions and hypotheses that could be tested in the realm of experience and that could therefore have value in practical affairs such as schooling, politics, and community development. He did not just accept pragmatism as an intellectual method; he adopted it as a life philosophy. For Dewey, theorizing is not complete until ideas have been tested in the crucible of experience, and testing (experience) cannot be conceived of in the absence of ideas. There is a constant process of generating insight from problems of practice and then testing them systematically for confirmation (or warranted assertability), which then (potentially) translates into action. The persons whose work we explore here offered both experience and ideas that were congruent with Dewey's experience and ideas. He recognized the connections and borrowed (and shared) freely.

The case studies themselves explicitly address the first essential question of our study: Were Dewey's theories in fact significantly influenced by women and weirdoes? Several kinds and degrees of influence are documented. Given that, the papers also begin to answer our other motivating question: So what? Why does it matter if we fail to fully understand the sources of John Dewey's thinking?

The fact that scholars do not sufficiently attend to persons, perspectives and experiences that do not fit neatly into preconceived or traditional categories raises important questions of intellectual privilege and institutional power. The tendency of hegemonic groups to strive consciously and unconsciously to preserve power through (often) artificial barriers to participation is well known. But, as Dewey understood, the resulting exclusion is not only politically unfair; it is also intellectually limiting, even dangerous.

As we suggested at the outset, what emerges from our explorations of Dewey's odd influences is a picture of the philosopher as "man thinking." In each of the case studies described above, we find an interactive process requiring puzzlement about real problems for actual human persons, marked by open-mindedness and responsiveness. These are the elements that mark Dewey's conception of thinking well. These are also the elements that suggest this inquiry is worth pursuing.

Further, it seems reasonable to propose that theoreticians who pay attention to ideas that come from people or experiences outside of normally privileged categories may be more likely than their peers to form theories that push beyond the received beliefs of an era and open doors for those creating the theories of the next generation. In other words, theoreticians who pay attention to events ignored by their academic contemporaries may be the ones who create new paradigms and push theory beyond the normal to the revolutionary (Kuhn 1962). Dewey's ongoing influence justifies the claim that he was one of those unusually eclectic scholars.

The practical implications of limiting this broad consideration of the sources of thought are perhaps even more profound. Dewey famously urged his colleagues to focus less on the "problems of philosophers" and more on the "problems of men" (and, he must have intended, of women). Academics remain, in our day, notoriously disconnected from the problems of practitioners in all fields. Dewey's example, revealed in these brief portraits, demonstrates the potentially fertile interaction of theory and practice.

Despite Dewey's own exemplification of "principled pluralism" in his work, many of Dewey's students and followers act in ways that constrain "democratic dialogue across difference" and limit wide interaction with diverse and unusual voices. The temptation to bracket the personal from the professional, as well as the pressure to limit thoughtful attention to academically approved topics and problems in the service of academic "success," can be overwhelming. Nonetheless, we suggest that the truly great contributors to theory, and perhaps the most significant influences on nonacademic practices and everyday life, will be those who, whether because they have pains in their necks or because they wish to understand events

beyond their own experience, remain open to learning from the unlearned, fraternizing with the oddballs, and perhaps even taking seriously the strange ideas of their students.

# Notes

1. The text for this and the following three block quotes is taken directly from the source (Hickman 2001) and retains the bracketed editorial comments.

2. For a fuller account of Thompson's (Woolley) life and work, see articles by Katharine Milar and Jane Fowler Morse.

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