



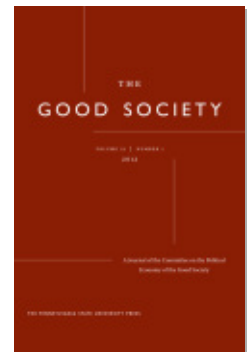
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A Different Kind of Politics: John Dewey and the Meaning of Citizenship in the 21st Century

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A Different Kind of Politics¹

John Dewey and the Meaning of Citizenship in the 21st Century²

Harry C. Boyte

We need a wide-ranging debate about the question, "what does citizenship mean in the 21st century?" I am convinced that we need bold, savvy, and above all *political* citizens and civic institutions if we are to tame a technological, manipulative state, to transform an increasingly materialistic and competitive culture, and to address effectively the mounting practical challenges of a turbulent and interconnected world. Political citizens require, in turn, a politics that is based on the assumption of plurality, widely owned by citizens, and productive. Such a politics, drawing simultaneously on older conceptions of politics and also adapting politics to the rapidly changing contours of an information age, is different than the conventional, state-centered, distributive politics of left and right. The work of John Dewey, a pioneering theorist of knowledge and democracy, is useful as a takeoff point for thinking about citizenship and politics, both for its strengths and for its limits.

Dewey sought to extend the democratic project as America changed from a society of small towns and rural life to a technological, urban, professionalized nation. He made several major contributions that point toward a different view of citizenship and, implicitly, a different politics. Dewey had a deep respect for ordinary citizens that is sorely needed today among intellectual and professional groups. He advanced conceptions of situated inquiry and the social nature of knowledge that challenge contemporary academic detachment. He held a view of knowledge production as a democratic power resource that suggested a democracy of abundance, not of scarcity, different than zero-sum distributive power or the competitive, consumer culture. Here, he anticipates both the power dynamics of the information age

and the need to break the stranglehold over our political imaginations produced by marketplace ways of thinking. Finally, Dewey had an understanding of education as a vital process of work and engagement, connecting students with the world, creating public spaces for democracy.

Dewey's views are by no means unproblematic. He acquiesced in understandings of civil society that removed it from "politics," if he did not invent them. As a result, his conceptions of citizenship, community, and democracy often have an abstracted and idealized quality. I will argue that to renew and extend Dewey's vision, we need politics.

Politics in 2002: The view from South Africa

Today, politics in America has become like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, disappearing until only a grimace

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remains. As E.J. Dionne observed with prescience some years ago in *Why Americans Hate Politics*, people are willing to tolerate a great deal of *unpleasantness* in politics if they see politics as *productive*. But increasingly, politics has seen its productive side virtually collapse. Today's problems—whether corporate scandals or global warming or the growing numbers of Americans lacking health coverage or living in poverty—quickly become yesterday's forgotten headlines. In the 2002 election, the accusation of “being political” was hurled back and forth by both Democrats and Republicans.

The world looks different from South Africa where I spent last summer as a visiting scholar with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, a remarkable organization which played a key role in the struggle against apartheid and now has projects across the continent. South Africa proclaims politics from telephone poles. Banner newspaper headlines, used as ads, detail political developments like sports coverage in the US. South Africa reminds the visitor that politics at its best is not only productive and visionary. It can also be fun and full of life.

The trip also dramatized, as the anniversary of the attacks on September 11th drew near, how America's professions of innocence in the world are not innocent. They are products of careful political calculation backed up by the technologies and techniques of modern public relations and marketing. From South Africa, the neat parsing of humanity into an American-centered alliance of altruistic good guys versus an axis of terrorist evil seems unreal. Even conservatives in South Africa were alarmed by the Bush administration's war talk. President Thabo Mbeki, a moderate among Third World leaders, was furious that the US downplayed the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. George Bush vacationed and raised money while 40,000 world leaders and activists discussed such problems as the 1.1 billion people who lack clean drinking water or the 2.2 billion who lack adequate sanitation.

The point here is not to construct a moralized division of the world with America as the evil empire. Rather it is to suggest that from abroad it seems surreal to profess that global problems can be reduced to an almost singular focus on “terrorism” disconnected from other problems such as poverty, sectarian violence, environmental degradation, disease, corrupt governments, or crime cartels. The decontextualization of terrorism seems an egregious example of an expert approach which disaggregates complex problems into isolated elements and treats those with one-dimensional interventions—in this case military action.

That fact points to other dynamics, especially the ways in

which politics has become structured by a thin, even sickly conception of citizenship, the citizen as apolitical volunteer engaged in service. In this civic landscape, it is the policy maker as expert who purportedly “knows best” (and often tries to keep information secret) about the tough, difficult decisions that must be made and the problems that must be tackled. A sentimentalized and purified version of citizenship has become a resource for a dangerously unilateralist foreign policy specifically, but it is also tied to the loss of productive approaches to public problem solving generally.

President Bush has used the idea of the citizen as apolitical volunteer since he began his run for the presidency. In his campaign announcement, Bush articulated “the noble calling of a nation where the strong are just and the weak are valued.” He used citizen-service as the center of his Inaugural Address. “I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort,” Bush proclaimed, “to be citizens, not spectators, to serve your nation, beginning with your neighborhood.” And he explicitly separated, indeed contrasted, such citizenship from politics. “My opponent is being political” was a stock accusation.

Since the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration has continually stressed the need for a patriotic spirit in which voluntarism and service are central. On November 8th, 2001, outlining the nation's course in facing the “terrorist threat,” Bush used the concept of “a nation awakened to service and citizenship and compassion” to define “American civilization” itself, at war with a ruthless enemy. “We value life,” Bush declared. “The terrorists ruthlessly destroy it.” To enlist Americans in the fight, he called for “all of us [to] become a September 11th volunteer, by making a commitment to service in our communities.”³

President Bush is not alone in this pattern. American politics is now framed in Manichean terms associated with the mobilization of “innocents” against “evil doers” across the spectrum. Citizen groups on the left, like those on the right, demonize their opponents and proclaim their own virtues and blamelessness for society's troubles. What is left out of citizenship both left and right is the concept of the citizen as a creative, intelligent, and, above all, “political” agent in the deepest meaning of the word, political—someone able to negotiate diverse views and interests for the sake of accomplishing some public task.

This pattern has a common conceptual root across ideological divides in the assumption that political action is almost entirely about distributive questions—who gets what, when, how? And it has a common social origin in the replacement of the productive political dimensions of mediating institutions, from polit-

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ical parties and settlement houses to unions and universities, with an anti-political language of service. Mediating institutions once furnished spaces for everyday practical problem solving and the creation of public goods. They also taught everyday skills of dealing with others with whom we may have sharp disagreements. They generated a sense of citizens' power in the larger world. Today, educational institutions which will be crucial for the reconstruction of politics in productive terms and for the education of citizens in the skills and habits of dealing with a world roiling with diversity are largely removed from the fray. The predominant language of civic engagement itself is service, not politics.

Dewey's conceptual legacy can contribute to moving beyond distributive and Manichean politics and the culture of innocence.

It can help us to re-engage our scholarship and teaching with the world. In the largest terms, it can help provide a democratic vision of the meaning of democracy and abundance, different than a culture dominated by values of savage competition, consumerism, and "get rich quick" which have come to predominate in the last generation. To reconstruct politics in productive terms both for immediate challenges and for the largest shape of our civilization requires a fresh and deep look at civic agency. Who does the work of democracy in the information age? What is that work? Where does it take place? In addressing such questions, John Dewey has much to say.

Information Age Populist— Before the Information Age

"Democracy must be reborn in each generation.
Education is the midwife."

John Dewey

As James Farr has recently demonstrated, John Dewey was arguably the most important architect of the concept of "social capital," perhaps the leading concept in the broad camp of communitarianism, a branch of political theory espoused by both Bill Clinton and George Bush. But for Dewey, social capital had a critical and feisty edge largely lacking in current usage. Dewey's deployment of the term was associated with his challenges to racism, poverty, rural backwardness, and his advocacy of radical changes in education. Perhaps most dramatic in contrast with current uses, Dewey drew on a long line of economic reformers and radicals, from Karl Marx to Edward Bellamy, to challenge the logic and dynamic of private capital and the deification of the marketplace. As Farr summarizes, "the political economists of the nineteenth century" on which Dewey drew for his critical

stance, "took capital—and its associations—from the social point of view. It might be said that today's social capitalists take 'the social'—and its associations—from capital's point of view."⁴

Populism as a broad political approach is focused on developing the power of the people ("return of power to the people"). As such, as Saul Alinsky once put it, it furnishes a distinctive democratic *alternative* to conventional politics of left and right by emphasizing development of civic capacities and civic muscle. The salience of particular programs, blueprints, and policy plans are judged against the question, what do they contribute to civic power and learning?⁵

What made Dewey's populism prophetic is that he understood, far better than most of his contemporaries, key dynamics of power in an information society, where power is not simply a

scarce good that requires a bitter struggle in which gains are matched by losses on the other side. Rather, knowledge power is increased through sharing transactions. Dewey believed, in particular, in what he called "the social" quality of knowledge production and dissemination through education. He argued that recognition and development of knowledge's social quality was key to the future of democracy itself.

This passion for the relevance of ideas, for intellectual work that actually makes a difference in the real world, was a constant theme for Dewey. "The work of history," he argued, "was to free the truth—to break down the walls of isolation and of class interest which hold it in and under." But truth only becomes free, he added, when it "distributes itself to all so that it becomes the Commonwealth."⁶

Such a perspective on "truth" and "knowledge" made Dewey a sharp critic of knowledge "for its own sake," removed from consideration of human ends and human effects. Thus, he compared religious evangelists (whom he did not hold in high regard, perhaps due to his mother's "parochial" evangelism about which he complained all his life) to detached scientists,

The evangelist, ignorant though he is, who is in constant contact with the needs, the sins, the desires, and the aspirations of actual human nature is a better judge of religious truth than the man of science, if a truly speculative life has shut him off from sympathy and living intimacy with the fundamental truths of the common nature of man.⁷

There was also, throughout Dewey's career, a democratic respect for ordinary people's values, their activities, and their intelligence. Dewey expressed a Jeffersonian faith in ordinary people as the "only safe repository of the powers of the society,"

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whose judgments, however flawed they may be, were likely to be sounder than those of any elite. Thus, in his introduction to a collection on *The Living Thoughts of Thomas Jefferson*, Dewey extolled Jefferson on the ground that “His faith in the right of the people to govern themselves in their own way and in their ability to exercise the right wisely, provided they were enlightened by education and by free discussion, was stronger than his faith in any article of his own political creed—except this one.” He praised Jefferson’s plans for daily self-government, such as his concept of local ward government where people were to exercise power with respect to their own affairs (such as care of the poor, roads, police and the like) on the grounds, as he paraphrased Jefferson, that “every man would then share in the government of affairs not merely on election day but every day.”⁸

Dewey’s democratic faith was a matter of his conviction that ordinary citizens have an elemental humanity often missing in more educated or affluent groups. As he put it in a tribute to Jane Addams, co-founder of Hull House, her belief in democracy derived from her “deep feeling that the simple, the ‘humble’ peoples of the earth are those in whom primitive impulses of friendly affection are the least spoiled, the most spontaneous.”⁹

Dewey also sought to ground intellectual life in the activities and work of common people. In his view, the entire tradition of philosophy had made an invidious—and invalid—distinction between thought and action, intellect and work. “The depreciation of action, of doing and making, has been cultivated by philosophers,” Dewey wrote in *The Quest for Certainty*, his attack on the idea that inquiry can be separated from the social context in which it functions.

After a distinctively intellectual class had arisen, a class having leisure and in a large degree protected against the more serious perils which afflict the mass of humanity, its members proceeded to glorify their own office. Since no amount of pains and care in action can ensure complete certainty, certainty in knowledge was worshipped as a substitute . . . the ideal of a cognitive certainty and truth having no connection with practice, and [even] prized because of its lack of connection, developed.

Dewey was aware of power dimensions of knowledge, especially the aura of infallibility which those armed with “science” or “expertise” could assume. “The dogma worked out practically so as to strengthen dependence upon authority,” he wrote. “Just as belief that a magical ceremony will regulate the growth of

seeds to full harvest stifles the tendency to investigate . . . so acceptance of dogmatic rules as bases of conduct in education, morals, and social matters lessens the impetus to find out about the conditions which are involved in forming intelligent plans.”¹⁰

Dewey’s basic argument, profoundly democratic in its implications, is that all knowledge—“academic” no less than “practical”—is social knowledge, the product of an interplay of experience, testing and experiment, observation, reflection, and conversation. All have the capacity and right to participate in knowledge-creation. Recognizing the social nature of knowledge is essential to an accurate account. “Consider the development of the power of guiding ships across trackless wastes from the day when they hugged the shore,” wrote Dewey.

The record would be an account of a vast multitude of cooperative efforts, in which one individual uses the results provided for him by a countless number of other individuals .

. . . so as to add to the common and public store. A survey of such facts brings home the actual social character of intelligence as it actually develops and makes its way.

Dewey’s view of knowledge as a “public and common store” shaped his view of democracy. Dewey is sometimes charged with a naïve or idealistic view of democracy. Yet he did not ignore coercion or violence in public life. His creed was based on the urgency of challenging coercion with what he

called “social intelligence” as an alternative. In his political manifesto, “Renascent Liberalism,” he contrasts the two. “It is not pleasant to face the extent to which, as matter of fact, coercive and violent force is relied upon in the present social system,” he wrote. “But unless the fact is acknowledged as a fact in its full depth and breadth, the meaning of dependence upon intelligence as an alternative method of social direction will not be grasped.” Dewey argued that liberals see intelligence “as an individual possession and its exercise as an individual right.” In fact, he proposes,

It is false that freedom of inquiry and of expression are not modes of [collective] action. They are exceedingly potent modes of action. The reactionary grasps this fact, in practice if not in express idea, more quickly than the liberal, who is too much given to holding that this freedom is innocent of consequences, as well as being a merely individual right. The result is that this liberty is tolerated as long as it does not seem to menace in any way the *status quo*. When it does, every effort is put forth to identify the established order with the public good.

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In Dewey's view, liberals must recognize the social power of knowledge. They must "assume the responsibility for making it clear that intelligence is a social asset and is clothed with a function as public as is its origin in the concrete, in social cooperation."¹¹

Building on these premises about the social and practical nature of knowledge, or "social intelligence," as well as his democratic faith in the values and capacities of ordinary people, Dewey developed a rich and dynamic vision of democracy as built on abundance, not scarcity. Democracy was "a way of life" (using a formulation by T.V. Smith), not simply a form of government or a distributive mechanism, about which he spoke with passion.

In Dewey's view, a commonwealth or socialism of knowledge comes into being when all work is understood in terms of its educative capacities and human and social properties. It is, in short, a mistake to separate "work" from "education." "In the democracy of the future, goods will be made not primarily as a means to private profit, but because of their service to enriched living . . . Not only the value of the product for those who use it, but the process of production itself will be appraised in terms of its contribution to human welfare." Challenging those who focused simply on reducing the work week, Dewey argued in his essay, "A Free Teacher in a Free Society," that "the quality of the work experience" rather than the number of hours worked was the key question. "If work were made a more effective part of the democratic social life . . . the demand for shorter hours would be far less insistent."¹²

Dewey stressed the educative dimensions "of all callings [and] occupations." Thus, professionals, he said, needed to become more conscious of their educative roles and responsibilities. "The professions . . . not merely require education in those who practise them but help to form the attitudes and understanding of those who consult their practitioners," Dewey wrote. "As far as science is humanized, it educates all the laymen. Artists, painters, musicians, architects, and writers are also an immense educative force," in potential, though "at the present time . . . this educative function is hampered and distorted."¹³

Education should be seen and practiced as a transformative process, a dynamic engagement with the world, its problems, and its work. Education for democracy—education's highest and most important goal—had self-consciously to cultivate the habits that once were generated through young people's involvement

in the life and work of families and communities. "There was always something which really needed to be done, and a real necessity that each member of the household should do his own part faithfully in co-operation with others," Dewey argued in *School and Society*. Everyday productive work taught habits of cooperation, responsibility, productive outlook. It also meant a deep connection with the world. "We cannot overlook the importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got with nature at first hand," Dewey argued. Everyday work had once connected young people

. . . with real things and materials, with the actual processes of their manipulation and the knowledge of their social necessities and uses. In all this there was continual training of observation, of ingenuity, constructive imagination, of logical thought, and of the sense of reality acquired through first-hand contact with actualities.¹⁴

Far from being outmoded, these views have nourished the most innovative experiments with contemporary education for democracy in recent years, such as the pioneering work of Deborah Meier and her associates in Central Park East schools and the Coalition for Essential Schools.

Finally, Dewey saw higher education institutions as playing a central role in democracy. Indeed, their public function was their essential justification. In response to an editorial in *The New York Times* which argued the University of Pennsylvania's right to fire the economic reformer Scott Nearing because the trustees disagreed with his views, he argued in a letter,

You apparently take the ground that a modern university is a personally conducted institution like a factory and that if for any reason the utterances of any teacher, within or without the university walls, are objectionable to the Trustees there is nothing more to be said . . . [But] the modern university is in every respect, save its legal management, a public institution with public responsibilities. [Professors] have been trained to think of the pursuit and expression of truth as a public function to be exercised on behalf of the interests of their moral employer—society as a whole.

For Dewey, professors' public function was the justification for tenure and the rationale for the founding of the AAUP, which he helped to organize.

I believe Dewey was right: higher education does have enormous power, but it is largely invisible. Yet Dewey was much too

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sanguine about professors being trained “to think in terms of their public function.” His lapse is part of a wider problem in the way he conceived of change. While Dewey’s theory of knowledge creation and learning adds to our conception of democracy, he focused on knowledge in too singular a fashion, in ways that dropped out the gritty political dynamics—full of diverse interests, conflicts, complex relations of power—that are essential to realize a broad vision of democratic flourishing. In a world of growing inequalities, bitter sectarian conflicts, rampant consumerism, and widespread feelings of powerlessness—a world where the political culture is organized around an assumption of scarcity, not abundance—it is easy to dismiss Dewey’s vision as simply naïve.

Dewey was part of a generation of progressive intellectuals who narrowed the orbit of politics, removing it from “civil society,” the realm Dewey called “community.”

To realize the democratic possibilities Dewey envisioned for education or the world requires a look at how politics disappeared, and what can be done to put politics back in to everyday life.

Disappearing Politics

Would it be dangerous to conclude that the corrupt politician himself, because he is democratic in method, is on a more ethical line of social development than the reformer who believes that the people must be made over by ‘good citizens’ and governed by ‘experts’? The former at least are engaged in that great moral effort of getting the mass to express itself, and of adding this mass energy and wisdom to the community as a whole.

Jane Addams, “On Political Reform,” 1902¹⁵

Jane Addams, in her essay published the same year as Dewey’s Social Centre speech, voiced another prophecy. She warned about the emergence of a class of professionals, or “experts” as she described them, who saw themselves outside the life of the people. Her warnings directly challenge the politics of innocence, a division of the world into innocents and evil doers. “We are all involved in this political corruption,” she argued. “None of us can stand aside; our feet are mired in the same soil, and our lungs breathe the same air.”¹⁶

Addams’ warnings about outside experts bore an interesting resemblance to Dewey’s earlier comparison between evangelist and detached scientist. Yet the irony is that Dewey himself was to suffer some similar degree of detachment when he left Chicago, went to Columbia Teacher’s College and helped establish *The New Republic* magazine. Dewey became one of the intel-

lectual architects during and after World War I of a new way of seeing the world. In the pages of the magazine and beyond, “politics” was replaced with scientific administration of the state. Academics came to write “about” politics, far more than they practiced it, at least in democratic terms, in their own environments.

The New Republic was a forum for a stunning array of literary, political, and intellectual leaders—within the first year, H.G. Wells, Theodore Dreiser, Conrad Aiken, Harold Laski, Lewis Mumford and a host of others. However distinguished, the magazine also played a significant role in marginalizing “amateurs” involvement in public affairs.

“We all have to follow the lead of specialists,” wrote Walter Lippmann, who set much of the intellectual course for the publication. In his view, a growing body of opinion “looks to the infusion of scientific method, the careful application of administrative technique.” In the modern world, science was the model for modern liberal thinking, and “only those will conquer who can understand.” The magazine touted the outlook of engineering and the image of the state as a “machine,”

whose workings were best understood by the application of technique. This technical outlook gained considerable impetus from America’s involvement in World War I, which the magazine enthusiastically supported.

The enemy of the war effort, in the editors’ views, was inefficiency. By 1918, mobilization had made the piles of undistributed anthracite coal disappear. “It is a triumph of organized units over unorganized individuals,” wrote one regular writer. An editorial elaborated, “In the last analysis, a strong, scientific organization of the sources of material and access to them is the means to the achievement of the only purposes by which this war can be justified.” By the war’s end, *The New Republic* was suffused with scientific triumphalism. The war had taught us, it argued “to meet the threatened class conflict by placing scientific research at the disposal of a conscious purpose.” One unsigned editorial argued the consensus: “the business of politics has become too complex to be left to the pretentious misunderstandings of the benevolent amateur.”¹⁷

Dewey dissented from the elitist sentiments of his fellow editorial writers, most notably in his book, *The Public and Its Problems*, written in response to Lippmann’s attack on the very idea of “public.” For Dewey, ordinary men and women—not simply credentialed experts—had a role to play in the creation of what he called “social [or scientific] intelligence.” But Dewey also often imagined the future in terms of engineering and

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mechanical metaphors. “The more one loves peace . . . the more one is bound to ask himself how the machinery, the specific, concrete arrangements, *exactly comparable to physical engineering devices*, for maintaining peace are to be brought about.” The problem with such logic, as John Jordan has observed, is that mechanical “modes of reason, no matter how democratically or generously applied, are inescapably hierarchical.” This is, in part, because this way of talk privileges one discourse—technical and scientific—above other ways of talking and thinking, such as narrative voice, or the wisdom gained from daily experience and “common sense.” It is also “because of the hubris that held there could be only one correct logic.” As Jordan summarizes, “Although Dewey did not fall into the simplistic positivism of some Taylorites, his philosophic subtleties did not significantly rock the boat in which *The New Republic* progressives sailed confidently into the future.”¹⁸

Engineering and scientific modes of thought as conventionally understood are, most particularly, different than politics. Politics involves a constant interplay and negotiation among distinctive interests, values, and ways of looking at the world. There is no “one” precise and efficient answer. Dewey sought to resist the elite nature of American decision making. But since conceptual maps make a difference, narrow definitions of politics took a toll. Dewey did not have a sufficiently political understanding of “community” or “society” to resist long-term trends which were marginalizing the role of citizens in public affairs. He proposed that citizenship needed to be defined more broadly, “to mean all the relationships of all sorts that are involved in membership in a community,” and that the range of school activities related to citizenship education was wide. But his definition took the political edge off of citizenship. Without politics, any changes of the wide-ranging and profound qualities which he called for are simply pipe dreams.

I believe it is crucial to bring politics back into the democratic discussion, if citizens are to gain standing as co-creators of the public world.

Putting Politics Back In

Politics is best understood as the interplay of distinctive, unique interests and perspectives to accomplish public purposes. In this deepest sense of politics, it is everywhere.

Sometimes there is an intractable clash of interests and power relations—a dynamic Dewey neglected with too singular a focus on “social intelligence” as a power resource that could replace “coercion.” Yet sometimes, especially with vision, skill, and determination, politics can negotiate clashing interests for the sake

of solving public problems and creating public things. This is “a different kind of politics,” a view of politics as productive and generative, not simply a bitter distributive struggle over scarce resources. Politics is the way people with widely divergent values and from very different backgrounds can work together to build the commonwealth.

This broader sense of politics can only be sustained if it is widely dispersed—not the property of the professional political class or the state. Today in practical terms, there is urgent need to spread back out the ownership of politics if we are to have any hope of reversing the enormous momentum of the marketplace and technology, and their anti-political ways of thinking. It is in the short term but overwhelming interest of political leaders to

over-promise or declare themselves “in charge,” patterns which increasingly alienate the citizenry. Further, politics defined by elections necessarily emphasizes partisanship. It thus eclipses the interplay of diverse interests—and the development of skills essential to negotiate such interplay—that is at the heart of politics in the richest understanding of the term.

The British theorist Bernard Crick, in his great 1962 dissenting work against the vein, *In Defense of Politics*, stressed politics as “a great and civilizing activity.” He emphasized politics as negotiation of diverse views and interests. Drawing on Aristotle’s *The Politics*, Crick argued that politics is about plurality, not similarity. Aristotle had proposed that an emphasis on the “unity” of the political community destroyed its defining quality. He contrasted politics with military alliance, based on “similarity” of aim. In this vein, Crick defended politics against a list of forces which he saw as obliterating recognition of plurality. Its “enemies” included nationalism, technology, and mass democracy, as well as partisans of conservative, liberal, and socialist ideologies.¹⁹

In the fifties and beyond, the professionalization of mediating institutions such as political parties, unions, schools, and universities eroded the everyday experiences of politics through which people learned skills of dealing with others unlike themselves, and developed some sense of their productive contribution to the larger democracy. It replaced a horizontal relationship among citizens as a wide experience of politics with an increasingly vertical political relationship of the citizen in relation to the state, as Addams had foreseen in 1902. Across many institutions, people increasingly became defined as “clients” served by professionals who understood themselves to be “experts.” Meanwhile, the rise of the consumer culture created different visions of the “good life” as about consumption, not production. These are themes I have elsewhere treated in some detail. Here,

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I want to emphasize their conceptual counterpart, the way current civic theory has lost the Deweyian insight that citizens make democracy.²⁰

The de-politicization of most social life is illustrated by comparing the views of “communitarians” with those of “liberals,” the leading schools of political theory. Despite differences, both remove citizens from politics, except on the (relatively rare) occasions when citizens vote, protest, or otherwise interact with their government and elected officials.

Today current communitarian theory is a resource in America’s anti-politics politics, a politics of innocence in which almost everyone eschews responsibility for addressing the troubles of our time. Communitarian theorists have made helpful criticisms of a view of the citizen as simply an individual bearer of rights. Yet their positive concept of citizenship has created a moral repertoire easily mobilized in a Manichean world view. Communitarian theory is advanced by, among others, *Bowling Alone* author Robert Putnam, Amitai Etzioni, founder of the Communitarian Caucus, and Bush advisor Don Eberly. Communitarians stress what Etzioni calls “the social dimension of human existence.” They express alarm about the fraying of what they see as the underlying moral fabric of the nation that is essential to a well-functioning democracy. They argue that America suffers from excessive individualism, an overemphasis on rights and an under-emphasis on responsibilities, and an increasingly litigious culture where citizens seek resolution of conflicts through the courts.

In communitarianism, the citizen is defined as a member of the community who expresses his or her citizenship through acts of volunteering and service. Communitarians strike a chord by decrying a decline in America’s community involvement and voluntary spirit in a world that seems increasing depersonalized and fragmented. Yet calls for compassionate, community-minded volunteers do not convey boldness, intelligence, gritty determination in the face of adversity, courage in fighting injustice, or capacities for sustained work with others outside our “community” with whom we may have sharp disagreements.

An etymology of service, a concept at the heart of communitarianism, illustrates the problem. Service is from the Latin root, *servus*, meaning slave. The history of the word is associated with terms such as “servile,” “serf,” and “servant.” Service does not necessarily imply servitude. In one of its meanings, performing the duties connected with a position, service and derivatives such as public service, community service, and service learning have been useful bridges for public institutions to

connect with the world. In this meaning, service sometimes provides a starting point for political involvement. Yet in all meanings service is associated with other-directedness. The service giver, in focusing on the needs and interests and desires of those being served, adopts a stance of altruism or selflessness. Whether motivated by desire for concealment or by self-abnegation, this submerges the interests and identity of the server.

The view of citizenship as voluntarism and service has been hotly debated during recent years. There continue to be voices arguing for “political” citizenship. Liberal theorists such as Michael Schudson, Theda Skocpol, Ziad Munson and Marshall Gans challenge communitarians on just these grounds. Such scholars draw on social movements whose theme was the struggle

for distributive justice. Yet while the struggle for justice remains crucial, a singular focus on justice narrows the range of politics and people’s political interests dramatically, while liberalism’s state-centered quality emphasizes a vertical, not a horizontal, understanding of political relations.

For all the radical differences between a focus on “service” or “justice,” or between communitarian and liberal views of citizenship broadly, there are also similarities in the ways both camps think about democracy and

civic agency. At bottom, both define politics, as citizens practice it, as a distributive activity associated with government—a fight over who gets what. Because public action necessarily involves productive and generative dimensions—in the global context, for instance, it involves creating the conditions for security and survival itself—this view marginalizes the amateur, and identifies democracy, in turn, with elections. It cedes to elected officials the mandate to take up the generative and productive tasks of politics. As a result, political discourse takes on an increasingly bitter and competitive quality at home, while abroad America’s stance in the world is increasingly protective, unilateralist, and bellicose. Only a different politics, built around abundance and citizen agency, can transform the equation.²¹

The limits of American (and European) conceptions of civil society which confine productive political activity to the political class are emphasized by a number of theorists in South Africa. There, as Krista Johnson has observed, the freedom movement generated politics with broad popular ownership. Democratic theory out of this tradition challenges views which “ascribe to the state the role of knowledge producer, able to develop policy and set the agenda for social transformation” in the name of politics. Popular democrats see de-politicized versions of civil society as using a language of “citizen participation” and

The de-politicization of most social life is illustrated by comparing the views of “communitarians” with those of “liberals,” the leading schools of political theory. Despite differences, both remove citizens from politics, except on the (relatively rare) occasions when citizens vote, protest, or otherwise interact with their government and elected officials.

“people—driven development” to limit and constrain citizens. “The role of civil society organizations [is restricted] to that of mobilization and the implementation of directives from above . . . based on a clear distinction between government or party experts who ‘know’ and the mass of the people who are supposed to apply this knowledge, leaving out of the equation the capacity of the average citizen to act and form his or her own opinion.” In contrast, “scholars [like Neocosmos, Mamdani, herself, and others] working within the popular-democratic paradigm suggest that what is required is a redefinition of the relationship between ruler and ruled whereby the practices of government are no longer considered to be the privilege of the few, and the majority of citizens are not excluded from the public realm.” Omano Edigheji, a social theorist at the University of the Witwatersrand writing in this vein, adds marketplace thinking to Crick’s list of politics’ enemies. Marketplace thinking, he argues, results in “the individualisation and monetisation of life.” Edigheji emphasizes “a different kind of politics” to counter the “false god of the market.”²²

American democrats, in theory and practice, have much to learn from such arguments and from the political traditions which feed them. Theory and practice from our experiences have things to contribute, as well. For instance, “public work politics,” a concept developed by the Center for Democracy and Citizenship and its colleagues over the last 14 years of action research projects, gets at what is *different* about constructive and useful politics. Public work can be understood as sustained effort to create a civic outcome by a mix of citizens. It adds an emphasis on the productive, generative dimensions of political action, as well as the cumulative civic learning process of organizations and individuals. It highlights the ways in which politics is not simply about distributive struggles but also solves public problems and creates public things, involving negotiation among diverse interests to create outcomes of broad public benefit.

For its civic potential to be realized, public work needs to include a civic learning process which makes explicit the political dimensions of civic action with its diverse interests and power dynamics. Political action in this vein is full of conflict, turbulence, and challenges; it is messy and often difficult. It can reconfigure power relationships in more democratic terms, in ways that are unsettling. But it can also unleash tremendous political energy and creativity through the sense of getting somewhere of public benefit. This, I believe, is what Jane Addams was getting at when she talked about the educator freeing the powers of everyone.²³

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“Public work politics” is also a way to name elements of successful citizen efforts around the world. Highly moralized politics based on a Manichean approach to the world’s problems cannot adequately address most collective problems of the 21st century, whatever the calculus of “good and evil.” The complex, interconnected nature of the world’s problems was dramatized by a report, *Global Trends 2015*, released months before 9/11. The report warned of terrorist attacks, but it connected them to poverty, illicit weapons, AIDS, famine, sectarian warfare, three billion people short of water, and slave labor. It concluded, “governments will have less and less control” over such problems. The bright spots were citizen initiatives addressing them.

The spotlight on citizen initiatives and the interconnected nature of problems has been paralleled by others. For instance, as David Bornstein observed in *The New York Times* in 1999, citizen movements and initiatives have been growing at remarkable rates, with large impacts—the defeat of apartheid, the fall of communism, the overthrow of right wing dictators in Chile and the Phillipines, the establishment of an international criminal court, the raising of village income, educational and health levels for millions of peasants by groups like the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.

These civic initiatives and movements have had strong moral dimensions, but they have also demonstrated political savvy and the capacity to enlist people from widely different points of the political spectrum—an organizing capacity much more developed and sustained than current anti-globalization protests, for instance. Even the most morally clear-cut of citizen efforts, such as the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, have evidenced such qualities.²⁴ In the early 21st century, as civic initiatives have moved from the relatively clear cut issues of opposition to dictatorial political regimes to the far more complex tasks of development and the construction of flourishing democracies, practical, multi-dimensional approaches to problem solving—the capacity to bring together people with different conceptions of right and wrong and definitions of what the problem is—are all the more important.

Democratizing Education

John Dewey believed fervently in what Sara Evans and I have called free public spaces to democratic civilization. “If public questions were frequently being discussed by a local community forum with widespread democratic participation by adults and youth,” he said in his essay, “A Free Teacher in a Free Society,” then a good share of citizenship education could be brought about

by participation in those councils.”²⁵

In his proposal for the “school as a social centre,” he added to the idea of school as a place for dialogue three other elements. He saw the school as a place for “moralizing mankind,” teaching norms and patterns of respectful behavior in a society where traditional bonds were rapidly losing their force. He believed schools, when connected to the life of communities and occupations outside the school walls, would make learning come alive while simultaneously helping to illumine the meaning and significance of activities in which people are engaged. “Most people are doing particular things of whose exact reasons and relationships they are only dimly aware,” Dewey said. The whole is so vast, so complicated and so technical that it is next to out of the question to get any direct acquaintanceship with it. Hence we must rely upon . . . interpretations that come to us through conscious channels.” This, he argued, was the source of the university-extension movement, to give “social bearings” to activities. Finally, schools needed to be centers for continuing education in occupations that need updated learning.²⁶

As the idea took shape in a broad movement, launched formally in Rochester in 1907 and spreading rapidly, it spawned a Social Center Association of America, and allied itself with other forces, such as the “community civics” movement in which young citizens were to investigate and help solve social problems, and adult education. Woodrow Wilson, among many other luminaries, became a champion, arguing that “What is going to be produced by this movement [is] a release of common forces . . . now somewhere banked up.” Further, the idea of school as social center, originally inspired by Jane Addams’ Hull House, became closely associated with other educational efforts, such as cooperative extension. L.J. Hanifan, superintendent of rural schools in West Virginia, detailed activities involving schools as social centers, beginning with picnics and other “sociables,” realized in the work of “surveys, meetings, discussions, debates, reading circles, exhibits, lectures, libraries, evening classes, community histories, and electoral participation in matters of community improvements, especially for good roads.”²⁷

However robust the movement once was, it faded over the decades. Schools, rural and urban, increasingly became detached from the life of community. Parents (especially from lower income or minority cultural backgrounds) expressed feelings of powerlessness and detachment. Hours became more rigid. Doors shut after the school day ended. Allied efforts like cooperative extension, or even settlements, became one-way service delivery operations.

Yet the creation of public spaces can be a seedbed for productive, pluralist, citizen-owned politics in an age of gated communities and privatized resources. We need to change the now dominant view of civic learning as community service or service learning, if we are to develop the political sensibilities of our students. Organizing involves understanding education as about transformation, the “reworking” of ourselves and our contexts. An organizing approach is what we need to develop, if we are to think and act politically.²⁸

Beyond Innocence

In an information age, people feel powerless to cope with the avalanche of information shaping their worlds and lives, from global financial systems to parent education. Moreover, the institutional fabric seems static, beyond human control, even as it undergoes turbulent change. Higher education, whose theories of knowledge and practice of pedagogy bear some share of responsibility for this phenomenology of powerlessness, has a particular leadership role to take in changing it.

There is a growing ferment about civic engagement in higher education that now includes a number of institu-

tion-wide efforts at the University of Pennsylvania, UC San Diego, Illinois, among others, as well as at Michigan and Minnesota. Today, much of our research culture is detached from the problems and currents of the larger society. Much educational experience of our students teaches a narrow view of problems as discrete and disconnected. Service or even service learning does not necessarily address this problem at all. More generally, we also often teach the kind of innocence and irresponsibility that grows from cultivating the stance of outside critics, not engaged actors. As Julie Ellison has described, we teach our students how to be critics of everything, but proponents of very little. As a result of these dynamics, public universities have experienced a radical fraying of the relationships with citizens.

Democratizing education—in the sense of its reconnection with the political life of communities, and in the sense of educational and learning activities as sites for democratizing the larger society—is key to changing this phenomenology of powerlessness and innocence.

To the extent that education becomes a medium for developing bolder, more confident, and more political citizens, it will take leadership in addressing the largest challenges and crises of our time. This means schools, universities, and other educational sites becoming public and political spaces, as well as John Dewey’s social ones.

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As we change our institutions, we also help to create a deeper understanding of politics—an understanding of politics which simultaneously retrieves its historic legacy and adapts it for the radically changing world of the new century. We need a politics that is the productive, pluralist, public activity through which we create and sustain our common world.

Endnotes

1. I first heard the phrase, “a different kind of politics,” from Susan Gust, a community leader in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis who has been an architect of a multi-year collaboration with the University of Minnesota on health issues. See the interview with Susan Gust, on the CDC web site at www.publicwork.org under “intellectual workbench.” Omano Edigheji, a social theorist at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, uses it in the radically different context of South Africa and African democracy-building, but with some interesting parallels in meaning. See footnote 34. “A different kind of politics” bears resemblance to the “citizen politics” framework with which we began the democracy work at the Humphrey Institute in 1987.

2. Dewey Lecture, University of Michigan, November 1, 2002. Thanks for feedback to Marie-Louise Ström, Edwin Fogelman, Lary May, Elizabeth Beaumont, Nan Skelton, Sallye McKee, Bill Doherty, Carmen Sirianni, William Galston, Malaika McKee, Stephen Culpepper, John Dedrick, Michael Delli Carpini, Julie Ellison, Paul Graham, Roudy Hildreth, Omano Edigheji, Nan Kari, Steve Elkin, Peter Levine, Steve Rosenstone, Sharon Singleton, Josh Sterns, Shigeo Kodama, John Saltmarsh, Marshall Ganz, Mark Langseth, Richard Simpson, Bill Schambra, Alan Knox, E.J. Dionne, Ira Harkavy, and Cynthia Estlund; to Barry Checkoway for providing materials on Dewey at Michigan; to Ron Amit and the graduate students at the University of Minnesota’s political science department for organizing a Political Theory Colloquium on October 11, 2002, on this paper; to Gregory Markus, Sylvia Hurtado, and David Scobey for thoughtful commentaries on the lecture on November 1; and to Lorraine Gutiérrez for her splendid organization of the lecture itself.

3. Used originally in his speech to the nation outlining our future course on November 9, 2001, this has become a stock formulation. Thus, for instance, in his forward to the *Life Magazine* special issue, “The American Spirit: Meeting the Challenge of September 11th,” President Bush poses the rhetorical question, “What can I do to help in our fight?” and declared, “The answer is simple. All of us can become a September 11 volunteer.” For an excellent treatment of the public relations technologies and corporate mindset of the Bush administration, see Frank Rich, “Never Forget What?,” *New York Times*, September 14, 2002.

4. James Farr, “The Secret History of Social Capital,” paper presented in the Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, April, 2002, p. 36.

5. Alinsky makes this point about “democracy” in *Reveille for Radicals*, but elsewhere identifies his “only ideology” as populist.

6. These accounts of Michigan, including the Dewey quotes, are from Feuer, *Ibid.*, pp. 550–53.

7. Dewey, “The Obligation to Knowledge of God,” *Monthly Bulletin Student Christian Association*, VI (University of Michigan,

November 1884), p. 24. I am indebted to the work of Ira Harkavy and Lee Benson, in numerous essays, for deepening my understanding of the democratic and communal content of Dewey’s writings.

8. Dewey, Introduction, *The Living Thoughts of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., pp. 20, 22)

9. Feuer, *Op. cit.* p. 556.

10. *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, Edited by John McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 357, 382.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 651, 649–50.

12. Dewey, *The Teacher and Society* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1937), p. 335.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 336, 334.

14. *Philosophy of John Dewey*, p. 457.

15. Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. 270.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 256

17. Lippman and others, quoted from John Jordan, *Machine-Age Ideology: Social Engineering and American Liberalism, 1911–1939* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1994), pp. 75, 76, 77, 78.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

19. Sheldon S. Wolin, *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1989), pp. 139, 150. Bernard Crick, *In Defense of Politics* (London and New York: Continuum, 1962), p. 15. Crick, drawing on Aristotle, stresses the irreducible *plurality* of politics as negotiation of diverse and particular interests. As Aristotle had put it in his second book of *The Politics*: “The nature of the *polis* is to be a plurality. A *polis* is not made up only of so many men but of different kinds of men; for similars do not constitute a *polis*. It is not like a military alliance.” From Stephen Everson, Editor, *Aristotle: The Politics and the Constitution of Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 31. It is telling that Everson intentionally mistranslates *polis* as “state,” in order, as he puts it, that Aristotle’s writings not suffer from historical constraint. The problem here is obvious, though—Everson overlooks what “history” has done to politics. For a treatment of how a diversity-oriented approach to “democracy” powerfully informs current policy debates (and court battles) on affirmative action in higher education, see Patricia Gurin, Eric Dey, Sylvia Hurtado, and Gerald Gurin, “Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes,” *Harvard Educational Review* Vol. 72, No. 3 (Fall, 2002), on the web at www.edreview.org/harvard. The authors draw especially on Arlene Saxonhouse’s treatment of Aristotle, in *Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Giovanni Sartori, in his history of the word, “What is Politics,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1973), pp. 1–36, details the horizontal relationships of equal citizens at the heart of the language of politics and associated ideas. Not until the 19th century did “politics” acquire its associations of “verticality,” or relations to the state.

20. For extended discussion of the professionalization of mediating institutions and the growth of a consumer culture which transformed “producers” into “consumers,” see *CommonWealth: A Return to Citizen Politics* and also *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work*, with Nan Kari.

21. To illustrate the point of commonality, it is useful to compare the question “who is a citizen” with the issue of “what does a

citizen do?" American history can be told, along one axis, as a story of the struggles of its denizens for inclusion: it is a narrative about conflict over *who* should be included as first class citizens. This tumultuous tale has as its actors colonists, workingmen, African Americans after emancipation, women, and diverse groups of immigrants. Today, this drama of membership and inclusion can be seen in the acrimonious debates over immigration or over multiculturalism. In theoretical terms, this question informs a rich and varied liberal tradition which has challenged various exclusions and inequalities. In his new work *Civic Ideals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), Rogers M. Smith calls for an unromantic liberalism fully attentive to the political saliency and appeal of particularist identities that have justified such exclusions: "we need an . . . account that gives full weight to America's pervasive ideologies of ascriptive inequality (p.30)."

The cacophony about "who" is a citizen in public forums often drowns out the issue of civic agency. Yet implicitly, liberalism has an answer: the citizen is one who individually or collectively demands a fair share of resources and rights. Indeed, this conception of agency structures conventional understandings of politics. Politics as normally conceived revolves around the state. And it is seen as a quintessentially distributive struggle. David Easton's classic definition captures both state-centered and distributive aspects of politics. Politics, said Easton, is the authoritative allocation of goods, services, and values. Behind this view of politics and agency is a view of citizens as largely powerless except when voting or in widespread mobilization. As Smith puts it, "political decision-making is in reality almost always more a matter of elite bargaining than popular deliberation (p. 36)." In practice, such conceptions structure technologies of today's mass policy issue mobilizations such as the door-to-door issue canvass, internet lobbying efforts, and direct mail. In a context of an expanding number of competitive claims to rights and victim status, they often lend a Manichean, inflamed quality to political discourse.

Communitarians, following especially Robert Putnam's path-breaking research on Italian regional governments, highlight another dimension of agency. They argue that a simple focus on distributive struggles eclipses the relational dimension of democracy that focuses on integration. Civic relationships, they say—"social capital" for Robert Putnam (in *Bowling Alone*) and others—furnish the context for democracy to work. Putnam defines social capital as "networks, norms, and trust . . . that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives." It is generated through participation in groups like religious congregations, voluntary associations, fraternal and professional groups, service and recreational organizations. Democracy's woes, in this account, stem from declining participation and social integration. Yet for all the differences, communitarians, like liberals, see citizens as largely removed from politics and power. For instance, in a recent article which can be considered at a pioneering edge of communitarian theory ("Working Together: The Workplace, Civil Society, and the Law," *The Georgetown Law Journal* Vol. 89:1 [2000], pp. 1–96) Cynthia Estlund challenges a simple "third sector" or voluntary associational view of where integration across differences might take place. Estlund argues that the workplace furnishes resources for integration of diverse racial, cultural, and ideological groups that have been

radically neglected by conventional civic theory. In an important and original contribution, she points to the regulatory features of the work place (which can be considered, in other terms, as introducing public elements into workplace space, for instance affirmative action stipulations) as creating a space for interaction. Yet Estlund herself saw little likelihood that workplaces might become sites of democratic power. The workplace, for Estlund, is *apolitical*. Indeed, few settings are political in her view. "Other than by voting, the ordinary citizen rarely attempts to influence the political process," she argues (p. 53). "She may write an occasional letter to the editor or participate in a political demonstration, or she may join—that is, in most cases, write a check to—an advocacy organization. But . . . as a descriptive matter, ordinary citizens are largely left out of the [political] picture." For all their differences, both liberals and communitarians place citizens in the roles of spectators to the operations of politics and power, outside the making of the common world.

This argument is developed in "Off the Playground of Civil Society," the lead article in Symposium on Commonwealth, Civil Society, and Democratic Renewal, *A PEGS Journal: The Good Society*, Winter, 1999–2000; and also "Reconstructing Democracy: The Citizen Politics of Public Work," on the web at www.ssc.wisc.edu/havenscenter/boyte.htm (delivered, UW-Madison, April 11, 2001).

In correspondence about the Dewey and Madison lectures, Estlund emphasized to me that she meant "politics" in its conventional meanings in her *Journal* essay. She stressed agreement with the idea of "public work politics," as well as the project of a larger reworking of the terms of discourse and action about American public life; she was not as fatalistic about the prospects for wideranging democratization, in other words, as I had imagined.

22. Krista Johnson, pp. 11, 5, 3, "The State and Civil Society in South Africa: Redefining the Rules of the Game," in Sean Jacobs and Richard Calland, Eds., *Thebo Mbeki's World: The Politics and Ideology of the South African President* (Pietermaritzburg, SA: University of Natal Press, 2002). Edigheji, "The Challenges of Globalisation on Cooperative Governance: State-Society Relations in Post-Apartheid South Africa," unpublished paper in author's possession. Peter Vale, a social theorist at the University of the Western Cape, made a compelling case that the African experience of self-affirmation in the course of overcoming the all encompassing colonial legacy position the continent for an African Renaissance, leadership against dominant constructions of power and wealth and human civilization in the global economy. The same could be said of civic theory and practice, a related point.

23. Harry Boyte and Nan Kari, *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* (Philadelphia: Temple, 1996); Boyte and James Farr, "The Work of Citizenship and the Problem of Service Learning," *Compact Reader*. For striking examples of putting politics in a public work sense back into professionalized and therapeutic settings where an anti-political vocabulary is highly entrenched see the interviews and essays of William Doherty and Nan Kari at Intellectual Workbench, www.publicwork.org. For the large potential political impacts, see the Families and Democracy movements spawned by Doherty's approach, at www.puttingfamily1st.org.

24. For instance, Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, is remarkable for its capacities to understand and at points respect some of the leaders in the apartheid government.

25. Dewey quoted from op. cit. p. 336. The founding ideas of the work at the Humphrey Institute included "free [public] space," developed by Sara Evans and myself from our analysis of what made for democratic, as opposed to authoritarian, movements (see Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America*, New York: Harper & Row, 1986; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and "citizen politics," which was a framework drawn from what I saw as the richest, most successful community organizing (*CommonWealth: A Return to Citizen Politics*, Free Press, 1989), which stressed the horizontal relations as the center of politics in the deepest sense. Out of our action research partnerships—whose formation as a partnership of mainly Minnesota-based institutions experimenting with "citizen politics" was suggested by E.J. Dionne—we developed the concepts and prac-

tices associated with "public work." Public work was a way to reintroduce the more visionary, civically integrative, expansive, and value-creating dimensions of politics, among other things. See also David Mathews, *More Public Space in Higher Education* (Washington: Council on Public Policy Education, 1999).

26. Op. cit. pp. 84–89.

27. This account is taken from Farr, "Secret History"; Wilson quoted p. 15; Halifan, p. 10. I am grateful to Alan Knox for pointing to the many ties between settlement houses and "schools as social centers" and adult education.

28. This builds on the contrast between "service" and "organizing" presented by Sister Judy Donovan of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation at the Kellogg Forum held at Rye River in Minnesota, June 3, 2002. For a useful discussion of the close parallels between teaching, on the one hand, and organizing, on the other, see Phillip H. Sandro, "An Organizing Approach to Teaching," *Higher Education Exchange 2002*, pp. 37–48.