

**Ethereal Identities and Ethereal Subjectivity: An American Pragmatist
Appreciation of María Lugones' Theory of Oppression and Resistance**

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English Abstract

María Lugones' concept of oppression and resistance, while being consonant with the American Pragmatist tradition, also furthers this tradition in important ways. Specifically, Lugones' theory adds to our understanding of what it means to be oppressed as a necessarily transactional being by clarifying how oppression is woven (or "spatially mapped") into our lived existence. In addition, her work offers an enhanced and more nuanced, interpersonal account of how, even in significantly oppressive situations, resistance is possible in and through the creation of "active subjectivity," or what John Dewey might call "ethereal identities." With active subjectivity, individuals mapped into otherwise oppressive locations are able to create "relational identities that did not precede the encounter," doing so in the "in-between spaces" of our mapped existence, allowing for liberating resistance and coalitions that would not otherwise be possible.

Resumen en español

Los conceptos de opresión y resistencia que postula María Lugones, además de estar en consonancia con la tradición pragmatista de los Estados Unidos, extienden el alcance de dicha tradición en formas importantes. Específicamente, la teoría de Lugones contribuye a nuestra manera de entender qué significa ser oprimido como un ser transaccional, al clarificar cómo la opresión se entreteje (o está espacialmente delineada) en nuestra existencia vivida. Su trabajo ofrece, además, una descripción interpersonal más detallada de cómo, incluso en situaciones significativamente opresivas, es posible resistir a través de la creación de una "subjetividad activa", o lo que John Dewey llamaría "identidad etérea". Mediante esta subjetividad activa, individuos situados normalmente en espacios opresivos son capaces de crear "identidades relacionales que no precedían el encuentro" en los espacios ubicados entre los márgenes de su existencia, haciendo posible una resistencia liberadora y el establecimiento de coaliciones que no serían posibles de otra manera.

Resumo em português

Os conceitos de opressão e resistência propostos por María Lugones, além de estar em consonância com a tradição pragmatista norteamericana, também estendem essa tradição em várias maneiras importantes. Em particular, a teoria de Lugones contribui a nosso entendimento do que significa ser oprimido como um ser necessariamente transaccional, em quanto clarifica como a opressão se entrelaça (ou está espacialmente mapeada) em nossa existência vivida. Seu trabalho também oferece uma descrição interpessoal mais rigorosa e detalhada de como, incluso em situações

significativamente opressivas, é possível resistir através da criação de uma “subjetividade ativa,” o que John Dewey talvez chamaria “identidade etérea.” Mediante essa subjetividade ativa, indivíduos mapeados em lugares usualmente opressivos são capazes de criar “identidades relacionais que não precediam o encontro,” dentro dos “espaços entrepostos” da nossa existência mapeada, assim fazendo possível uma resistência libertadora e a construção de alianças que de outra maneira não seriam possíveis.

María Lugones' conceptualization of oppression as offered in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (2003) and, more recently, in “On Complex Communication” (2006) is consonant with the American Pragmatist tradition. Like Pragmatism, she insists that we must begin and end theorizing with experience, “in the midst” of people, with a “pedestrian view” and, as John Dewey insists, with “the problems of men [and women].”[1] In addition, also like Pragmatism, she embraces a social conception of the self, believing that the self comes to be, and continues to be, in the context of relations with other individuals, institutions, and the environment.[2]

Beyond what her theory shares with Pragmatism, Lugones also furthers Pragmatism, adding depth and nuance in two ways. First, she adds to our understanding of what it means to be oppressed as a necessarily transactional being, by clarifying how oppression is woven (i.e., “spatially mapped”) into our lived experiences and institutions of our lived experiences, indicating to us where we “may, must, or cannot live or move” (8).[3] Second, Lugones offers an account of how, even in oppressive situations, resistance is possible and how, in and through this resistance, even an oppressed individual may participate in the creation of what John Dewey called “ethereal things,” things or conditions of society that are “remarkably original” and, at least potentially, ameliorative in nature. Understanding Lugones' contributions to the Pragmatist tradition requires an explication of Dewey's notion of “ethereal things.”

Dewey on the Creation of Ethereal Things: An Appreciative Critique

For Dewey, part of becoming a moral individual requires transacting imaginatively and aesthetically with our surroundings, creating previously unimagined alternatives (“ethereal things”) to present conditions. According to Dewey, the individual is only able to create these ethereal things when he or she is also able to “imagine alternative esthetic possibilities to an actual state of affairs” (LW 10:38).[4] As Gregory Pappas highlights in his recent work *John Dewey's Ethics* (2008), for Dewey “the function of imagination is to amplify perception, to open up the situation in ways that could assist us

in coming to a judgment.”[5] Consistent with this amplification of perception is Dewey's notion of the creation of ethereal things that helps us find resolutions to problems, often by bringing into existence possibilities that were not originally there. With the creation of ethereal things, we imagine solutions that arise out of and in transaction with particularized contexts but, nevertheless, offer new and creative solutions and/or alternatives to present problematic situations. Rather than a re-creation of that which has come before or an affirmation of that which is, the imaginative, esthetic solution is forward-looking, with amelioration in the present as the immediate goal.

The concept of ethereal things is important to the Pragmatist moral theorist because without this concept it is hard to account for how a transactional, socially constructed individual can offer new possibilities to present social situations. Dewey's notion of ethereal things shows how, despite the socially constructed nature of the self, ameliorative change and growth is possible and is in fact made possible *because* of our social nature, not despite it. However, even this assumes that the social context provides the individual expansive possibilities for growth, welcoming the individual into the fold of the social and allowing for freedom of movement and influence over the practices of local institutions and contextualized relationships. This assumes that, even if controversial, unpopular, or threatening to the status quo, all voices are heard. However, part of what Dewey and other Pragmatists miss and fail to account for adequately is that not all are welcomed into or permitted free movement or voice within their necessarily transactional existences. Dewey acknowledges that not all individuals are equally situated but fails to fully realize the pervasive nature of this inequality and its effects.[6]

María Lugones' work can help us see how though unavoidable, our necessarily transactional existence is not always a position poised for transactional growth. Growth and amelioration, though possible, is much more difficult for some and, for those for whom it is more difficult, is achieved through and in resistance to the transactional operations of the dominating “game.”[7] Liberating work for these individuals requires playing at the game, assuming roles within the institutionalized game in order to effectively negotiate the transactional situation. However, to be liberating the actions of these individuals must involve giving of themselves to the roles but not completely; it requires knowing what giving of themselves completely would require, how it would feel, and what it would mean but, in the end, not doing so. Lugones' insights into how oppression is spatially mapped into our transactional existences and how resistance is “intermeshed” within this map helps to address this weakness in Dewey's philosophy and in Pragmatism in general.

Lugones on Oppression and Resistance

Similar to Dewey's understanding of the self as necessarily social and Mead's notion of the self as constituted within the context and in communication with the

surrounding generalized other, Lugones believes that our existence is necessarily interconnected with other selves and institutions and that these connections are inescapable. This is paired with her insistence that all spaces are "mapped" in the sense that "all roads are marked as places you may, must or cannot occupy. Your life is spatially mapped by power. Your spot lies in the intersection of all spatial venues where you may, must, or cannot live or move" (*Pilgrimages* 8). Thus, like our social or, in other words, our transactional nature, the fact of oppression for some is largely inescapable. In this way full assimilation into the social context, while necessary for existence and even for psychological tranquility (we long to be connected with others), is not always or at least not only a positive thing. The options are sometimes a matter of choosing between bad and worse; each leaves one spatially mapped in an oppressive way but one, the better of the two, offers the possibility of resistance to the oppression, even if the resistance has no immediate effect on the overarching controlling map. We see this approach resonating in Lugones' own words from "On Complex Communication" (2006): "We must develop a double vision arrived at through 'world'-travel or else we will be zombified by the oppressor's imaginative construction of us.... [Double vision] gives us a way of rejecting the reality of the oppressor as true even when we recognize that it rules our lives, even from the inside. To reject it is not to diminish one's sense of its power, but it is a call not to be consumed by it. It is also a call that many hear as a revolutionary call, a call to dismantle oppressive reality" (79). For Lugones this "call to dismantle oppressive reality" is a call to resist through trespassing. As Lugones explicates in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, resistance often takes the form of "trespassing," where the resister pushes against the grain of the map, following the paths offered but pushing at the sides of the path along the way (8-12). By doing this, the resister may find spaces and moments where small, even minute, deviations from the expected and acceptable can be executed and, at least potentially, the resister can begin to redraw the map.

Failing to meet expectations or inadequately performing one's expected role within an oppressive map can be a form of resistance against the oppression, even while it is labeled as incompetence by those whose interest it is to maintain the map. Thus, to highlight a mundane but, for many, a ubiquitous type of transaction from the everyday work experience, an administrative assistant (or the house help, or the gardener, or a student, or a spouse) of a particularly arrogant and condescending boss may perform certain duties for her boss with great care and quality but may choose to make "mistakes" on the more menial tasks (like "forgetting" to make the coffee in the morning, doing the boss's personal errands, or cleaning the boss's office). These mistakes or oversights may be labeled as signs of incompetence but may also be forms of resistance, saying through behavior but not words, "I am equal to you," "I am intelligent," "You should not treat me as less than you," "I am (also) too busy to make your coffee," and "You must respect me." The administrative assistant cannot change the nature of the job without potentially, at least in her mind, risking her employment status; however, she can push against it and affect her work experience in these subtle ways through what she does and does not do well. Perhaps of greater importance, by

doing so she can also retain a space within and around herself that is not entirely constructed or “grafted” by the boss.[8]

Lugones' theory insightfully helps us to see how this “failure” of the administrative assistant to meet the expectations of a particular role or a particular aspect of a role located within a particular spatialized map can be read in two different ways. If viewed from within the spatialized map and without questioning the logic controlling this map, the action will be viewed as deficient and incompetent. If viewed, however, with a critical eye and an awareness that all is not always what it seems, actions and inactions may be seen as forms of resistance or ways of pushing back against the expectations of the spatialized context, even while necessarily functioning within it. Thus, the actions may be read either “as a mistake or as sabotage, there are many reasons why someone may read it as a mistake,...but the act may be read both ways. Both readings may coexist and one person may read and act both ways and, importantly, intend the act to be read both ways” (*Pilgrimages* 14). As in the case of the administrative assistant, “I am incompetent in certain ways, so do not ask me to do *these* things,” but also “I am incompetent because I am more competent than you think I am. I am more than you think I am. I am not entirely defined by you.” The administrative assistant protects herself (from being fired, demoted, or admonished) by largely entering into what Mead would call the “game,” by doing many things well, making herself invaluable to the boss and the organization, by understanding and fulfilling her role within the institution with awareness of the workings of all the roles of that institution and understanding her place within these dynamics, but without fully embracing every aspect of that role and thereby, in ways that leave the overall institution functioning, resists and pushes back, trespassing in small but important ways.

On the particular level of her situation, the administrative assistant knows that the boss needs her but also needs her to be subordinate in order to maintain his (or her) worldview. For this reason the boss would not tolerate direct refusal because this would disrupt the rules of the map (the game) in ways that effect the frame and its underlying workings and thus the fundamental nature of how the boss sees his (or her) world. Further, this perspective held by her boss is implicitly supported by the larger institution, an institution that does not question or even see the biased assumptions inherent in it and in the broader culture as a whole. The administrative assistant knows this as well, and also knows that if, as they say, “push came to shove” the boss would have the support of the larger institution and she would not. Thus the individual who resists is participating in a kind of trespassing against but also within the institution, and in this way is what Lugones calls an “active” and “attenuate” subject, necessarily working within the institution but also pushing against it.

Active subjectivity is to be contrasted with what has been commonly called “agency” in the Western philosophical tradition.[9] Agency is the assumption that an individual acts on his/her own free will, autonomously, choosing his or her actions without being influenced unduly by context or other individuals or institutions. Lugones

maintains that agency as traditionally understood is an illusory concept, developed for the dominating side of power and privilege in which the individual who embraces it operates unencumbered and sometimes even proactively supported by the institutions and practices that make agency for others within that same framework impossible.[10] Lugones rejects the idea that there is such a thing as an “effective individual agent” that can apply both to those with power and “lesser” individuals that are the “upholders” of the “institutional ‘apparatus.’” Those with power to create, draw, and redraw the spatialized maps of oppression and resistance have agency in that they have “single authorship, individual responsibility, individual accountability, and self-determination” (*Pilgrimages* 210). This is not, however, available to those lacking this power. She argues that those without power, those who are oppressed, “cannot exercise agency since they either enact a subordinate or a resistant intentionality. The subservient nature of the intentions disqualify the oppressed from agency in the first case. Lack of institutional backing disqualifies the resister from having agency” (*Pilgrimages* 211). Thus, returning to the example above, though the administrative assistant acts on her own free will, assessing situations and choosing from the options available, this does not count as agency for Lugones because the actions are necessarily subservient to the boss and the corporate institution and operate under the rules and hierarchical maps of the workplace, where some have more institutional support than others.

Ironically, with active subjectivity it is the lack of institutional backing that provides the possibility of this particular kind of resistance and sometimes, albeit rarely, the opportunity to redraw the map in significant ways. Either way, even if significantly redrawing the map is never possible, the active subject exerts resistance and perhaps makes it easier for the next individual to push back more effectively. (The boss will be less likely to ask the next administrative assistant to make coffee and will more likely develop a habit of making his or her own coffee.) Connecting back to Dewey's notion of the moral individual and the creation of ethereal things, we can say that this individual makes possible the creation of new spaces for transacting that have not yet been previously imagined. To do this the active subject must be what Lugones calls “attenuated.”[11] The “attenuated subject” is a contextual and connected subject, allowing him or her to “see deeply into the social” and requires that the subject “pay attention to people and to the enormously variegated ways of connection among people” (*Pilgrimages* 6-7).[12]

Assuming active subjectivity requires the skill of reading the spatial maps efficiently and with insight into the moods and dispositions of others in the situation in order to know how to “fit in” most effectively, in a way that preserves as much unobserved transgressions as possible. This is a skill mastered out of necessity by those who must navigate maps that do not welcome them or welcome them in restrictive ways. However, if honed, this skill can also afford greater acuity for resistance, creative imagination of alternate possibilities, and coalition with others who are also spatially mapped in positions of oppression. This skill makes the subject adroit

at traveling from one mapped "world"[13] to the next, and thus equips the subject with more options for resistance and coalition. Two different, but in some ways very similar, examples may help illustrate this point: first, an example of an undocumented immigrant worker and second, an example of a woman in an abusive relationship. These examples illustrate further Lugones' meaning of what it means to be "spatially mapped" yet also an "active subject," even if not an "agent."

Applied Considerations/Examples

When the immigrant worker without papers crosses the border to do the jobs that we will not do (working in our fields, planting our seeds, caring for our houses and our children), her choice is one of survival, a choice of "what other options do I have," and a "choosing of something rather than nothing," one that will more likely allow her, to eventually provide for and be closer to her family, perhaps even when she is many miles and sometimes many borders away. Either way, she does not have the support of the institutions within which she must act and with either choice (immigrating with the hope of a future but also with the guarantee of much hardship and struggle or staying where the future is known but without hope), she must attempt to move forward in life without that support and against the institutional rules of the accepted game. She chooses the path that seems better than the other, one that gives hope that the despair she feels when she is with her family will be replaced by the possibility of opportunity. In this way, the absence is less painful than the desolation of being present but unable to see a future for herself or her family.

Similarly, the woman who chooses to stay with her abusive spouse or partner makes a choice between, as she sees it, two not-so-great paths, neither of which considers her well-being and growth and both of which view her as a person who exists for the good and consumption of others, to be, as Lugones terms it, "grafted" for the use of others.[14] She chooses food, shelter, relative stability, and societal acceptance for her children and herself rather than poverty, instability, and societal isolation even though this choice brings the regular and seemingly unending and unrelenting conflicts with her spouse that leave her feeling inadequate, dejected, and exhausted. When she chooses to perform her self-accepted, even outwardly embraced role as the "good and supportive spouse" deficiently (not listening attentively enough, not agreeing quickly enough, and not cleaning and cooking well enough), she is a subject, responding versus merely reacting to her limited options, pushing back in the only way conceivable to someone in her situation but nevertheless creating the possibility of this response in her actions.

Like the individual who is an undocumented worker, the abused spouse gains limited freedom in response to her situation, stealing moments here and moments there, when the paths she must travel on provide unexpected breaks or opportunities in which she can carve out a little space, even while this space may only exist in the context and in contrast to having nothing that is otherwise her own. In those moments of retreat she is choosing to be, at the very least, present with herself as a welcome contrast to being

surrounded by others who view her arrogantly, as existing for them alone. In both cases the individual must remember that in order to preserve what relative freedom she does have she must not push too far or with too much deviance from the expected, and she must exercise her influence with care and, better yet, without being noticed. In other words, transgressions must be carefully calculated and checked so as to not belie any possibility that she may be venturing outside the paths to which her situation restricts her. Even though necessarily guarded, it is here, in these cracks, that Lugones' theory makes room for the resister's creation of Dewey's ethereal things.[15]

Although the agency of the mother, the immigrant worker, and the administrative assistant is thwarted, the power of resistance is intact and the skills of survival and resistance that these women have developed as a result of their situations provide them with tools that make creativity possible. Creativity is key to active subjectivity, making possible the creation of what we might now call "ethereal identities" and what Lugones describes in "On Complex Communication," "relational identities [and meanings] that did not precede the encounter" and that "transcend nationalisms, root identities, and other simplifications of our imaginations" (84). The creation of these ethereal identities is important because this provides the self with another self and hence another perspective(s), which can offer greater understanding along with the ability to conceive of a solution or solutions that have not been imagined before. Further, at the very least, this creation of an alternate self preserves a self that is not completely defined by or grafted by the dominating other.

Thus, looking back to our examples, the mother, the undocumented immigrant worker, and the administrative assistant are often able to find places in which they can be creative or "playful,"[16] places where they can assume a role and sense of self that is not so strictly bounded by the rules and the consequences of not following the rules. These spaces are between or on the edge (the limen) of the spatialized maps of oppression within which they otherwise must function in order to work or, in the most extreme cases, to survive. In these in-between spaces, at the borders, the mother and the immigrant take on another self. For the immigrant worker this might occur when, for example, transacting within her groups of fellow immigrants, or within her church community or family. For the mother it may be in those unpredictable moments when the demands of the spouse subside, or the spouse is absent for a period of time and she is with her children or trusted friends. During these times and places these women are more playful, more willing to risk visibility. Thus, while a consequence of their oppressive situations, having multiple selves and the ability to "travel" between the locations in which these selves thrive is a skill that is useful for survival and also one that can be honed for liberating, even if this use is limited.

More specifically, having multiple selves, one or more of which are ethereal identities, provides these women and others in similar situations with the advantage of having multiple perspectives. With this comes an enhanced ability to know the world more fully and with greater imaginative possibilities. With this broader and deeper

knowledge about the world the individual also gains more options, especially if the individual has honed the creative skill of tapping into the options available in one "world" in order to solve problems in another. This is especially effective if the individual has learned how to work with others to make this happen, drawing on the resources and multiple identities of a collective of others who are also in oppressed situations in order to bend and push against the otherwise unyielding map of oppression. Having multiple selves provides the ability to operate within the spaces between these selves and the maps in which they exist, making resistance—ideally collective resistance—more effective and containing greater potential to effect positive change, change that involves Dewey's creation of ethereal things.

For the mother this may result in the accumulation of the strength and space needed in order to push away and, importantly, to see that pushing away is possible. For the immigrant worker the result may be, with the help of others also living within these oppressive situations, the effective manipulation of the rules of the game. While playing the game, he or she thus survives despite the odds and then eventually moves into a less precarious position on the map (within the game), perhaps gaining relative security by making herself invaluable at her job and/or bringing family to this country as well and securing a more hopeful existence, even if still subject to the remaining oppressive map of restrictive immigration policies. In both cases, the maps are not erased; rather, the individual's relation to and within the map are redrawn, if only slightly, to allow for greater push back and space to have a self and to connect with others with whom she can be open and available without the threat of being constructed and/or erased by the other.

In addition to better understanding of the nature of oppression and resistance, Lugones' work also provides the critical observer seeking growth and ameliorative change a new perspective from which to affect this growth and change. More specifically, Lugones helps to explain how part of "active subjectivity" includes being able to recognize resistance, even as it is otherwise called incompetence, and label it as such rather than as simply deficient. As she articulates in "On Complex Communication," "Recognition of another as liminal, as standing in a borderlands, is a necessary condition for reading their words and gestures differently. If I think you are in a limen, I will know that, at least some of the time, you do not mean what you say but something else" (79). This recognition opens the door for communication among and between those who are oppressed as well as with empathetic individuals, like Dewey and myself, who initially lack the perspective to see the oppression but are open to doing so and to embracing necessary change when these kinds of "problems of fellow human beings" are identified. This can further lead to a coalition between these individuals and groups, and hence the augmentation of imagination through dialogue and the hope of liberating possibilities through collective problem solving, organized resistance, and the creation of ethereal identities and ethereal coalitions.

Ethereal Identities and Ethereal Subjectivity

A central goal of this paper has been to show the very practical and useful value of María Lugones' work. Like Pragmatism, Lugones starts with primary experience and in so doing gives us a way to talk about particular experiences of oppression and liberating action that are not afforded by discussion of agency alone. Lugones offers a way to add a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of how the self is constructed within and by our social, institutionalized, and spatially mapped contexts, and how, as recognized by the Pragmatist tradition though not detailed as such, the experience of this social context is different from person to person, depending on how they are mapped within it according to power and privilege. Further, Lugones offers a better understanding and elucidation of how resistance and "incompetence" are related and may be exercised by an individual in the same act. This resistance makes room for the creation of ethereal identities and ethereal subjectivity, where resistance and ameliorative change merge within and according to the rules of the map, yet also change the map through "imperfect" yet also creative conformity. As a result, new possibilities emerge that are at least potentially ameliorative, even if not entirely transformative, to the oppressive situation.

Notes

[1] John Dewey, a central Pragmatist theorist, argues that "the chief role of philosophy is to bring to consciousness, in an intellectualized form, or in the form of problems, the most important shocks and inherent troubles of complex and changing societies, since these have to do with conflicts of value." Dewey echoes this same sentiment in his essay "The Need for the Recovery of Philosophy," where he argues that we should begin and end with experience, with the "problems of men [and women]." Like Dewey, Lugones argues that our theorizing should occur "in the midst," from a "pedestrian view" rather than from "on high" or from a "birds-eye view." See María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 5. For the first reference to Dewey's work above see *Contribution to Encyclopedia of Social Sciences. The Later Works: 1933: Volume 8*, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 2. For Dewey's essay "The Need for the Recovery of Philosophy" see *The Middle Works: Volume 10*, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 46. Future references to the Carbondale critical editions of John Dewey's texts will be parenthetically noted in customary fashion, first designating *The Early Works (EW)*, *The Middle Works (MW)*, or *The Later Works (LW)*, and then designating the volume number and page (e.g., *LW 8:2* means *The Later Works*, volume 8, page 2).

[2] Dewey embraces what he calls a “transactional” notion of the self and of life in general, arguing that “life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its body frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself. ... The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way” (LW 10:13). Dewey maintains that all things are interdependent and co-constitute each other through what he elsewhere calls “transactional” relations.

[3] The idea that we are “spatially mapped” in the way Lugones describes is consistent with a transactional notion of the self, and gives additional meaning to what George H. Mead, a social behavior sociologist and Pragmatist philosopher who worked closely with John Dewey, calls the “generalized other” and how it functions. Like Dewey’s and Mead’s idea of being necessarily transactional, necessarily playing in the “game” of the generalized other in order to have a self, Lugones’ notion of “spatialized maps” is pervasive and serves a similar function in explaining how our lived experience functions in ways that are necessarily intertwined with others. See George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1934), 152-64, see esp. 154.

[4] See Jim Garrison, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), esp. 76-77. Here Garrison highlights Dewey’s concepts of ethereal things and “creative bestowal” and finds these to be central components of Dewey’s moral theory.

[5] See Gregory Fernando Pappas’s comprehensive account of Dewey’s ethics in *John Dewey’s Ethics: Democracy as Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). Pertaining to this comment on imagination, see page 102.

[6] For example, looking at the issue of gender (a focus of the examples I discuss in this essay), Charlene Seigfried, a respected contemporary feminist pragmatist, points out that while Dewey recognized that the perspective of women (as well as other diverse voices) is an important element of the pluralism that he advocated, his own writings were not always consistent in his support of that concept. For example, in his 1919 work *Philosophy and Democracy*, Dewey addresses the inequality of women’s influence on and in philosophy. Dewey writes, “Women have as yet made little contribution to philosophy. But when women who are not mere students of other persons’ philosophy set out to write it, we cannot conceive that it will be the same in viewpoint or tenor as that composed from the standpoint of the different masculine experience of things” (MW 11: 45). Similarly, in *Democracy in Education*, Dewey insists that we should strive for the realization of democracy in social practice, and that any truly democratic society will “make provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and [will] secure flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life” (MW 9:105). The concept of “different forms of associated life” allows for, and even requires, the inclusion of all groups that are not part of the present mainstream or, in Lugones’ terms, do not draw the maps but nevertheless live and function within them. However, though Dewey recognized that the inclusion of different voices and perspectives would lead to diverse

and more insightful conceptions of what is good, right, moral, and just, his work made certain assumptions that were problematic and central to what Pragmatism is missing and why Pragmatism needs theorists like Lugones. He did not, for example, seem to recognize the implications of his nod toward the necessary inclusion of the woman's voice (and other diverse voices) in his understanding of a pluralistic democracy. As Charlene Seigfried highlights, Dewey underestimated the depth of gender discrimination and thus minimized the changes that are required to "fix" or ameliorate the problems identified. In fact, in *Ethics* Dewey expresses concern for the dissolution of the "traditional" family, failing to perceive the connectedness of the traditional family with women's oppression, loss of power, and loss of voice as a barrier to the very kind of democracy he advocated. This is also true for Dewey with respect to issues of difference in general. In this way Dewey seems to be incompletely aware of the institutional depth of the problems of racism and of the way that sexism and racism can operate on the unconscious level of individuals and institutions. For an appreciative critique of Dewey's insights, see Charlene Seigfried, *Feminist Interpretations of John Dewey* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

[7] In *Mind, Self, and Society*, George Herbert Mead, a social theorist and Pragmatist who worked closely with John Dewey, posits a social theory of the self and argues that the process of self-development takes place in two stages, which he equates with the stage of "play" and the stage of the "game." In "play" the individual tries on different roles without consistently assuming any one role over time, but still does so in relationship to the context and surroundings (the "generalized other"). At the stage of the "game" the individual takes on a role in relationship to a larger context, goal, and purpose, assuming his or her role in relationship to and with consideration of the other roles assumed in the context and situation of the generalized other and the game being played. Mead describes the distinction between the stage of play and the stage of the game as follows: during the first stage of the development of the self, the stage of play, the individual is "constituted simply by an organization of the particular attitudes of other individuals toward himself and toward one another in the specific social acts in which he participates with them. [In contrast, in the second stage, as in a game, the self is] constituted not only by an organization of these particular individual attitudes, but also by an organization of the social attitudes of the generalized other or the social group as a whole to which he belongs." See Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 158.

[8] Lugones speaks in terms of a "grafting" of the subject by the oppressor in connection with her discussion of arrogant perception and its distinction from loving perception. See chapter 4 of *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception," esp. 277. See also n. 14.

[9] Lugones offers a number of different terms that all loosely fall under the concept of active subjectivity and/or are required of the active subject. These concepts include: streetwalker theorizing, curdling ("against the grain creativity"), witnessing faithfully, trespassing, "world" traveling, "inhabiting the limen," double vision, playfulness, walking illegitimately, tactile strategies, pedestrian vision, and pilgrimages. These are all explored in the different essays in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes* (2003) and/or

in the essay "On Complex Communication," *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (summer 2006). Common to all of these concepts is an exploration into how resistance is a response (versus a new reaction) to the "interlocking of intermeshed oppressions" and how, as a response, resistance can be a "thoughtful, often complex, devious, insightful response, insightful into the very intricacies of the structure of what is being resisted" (*Pilgrimages* 29). By the term "intermeshed oppressions," Lugones argues that all forms of oppression, even if different in kind (gender, racial, economic, political, and so on), coalesce together collectively and inseparably, "mold[ing] and reduc[ing]" the oppressed into a subservient position (*Pilgrimages* 223). By "interlocking oppression" Lugones refers to the strategy of fragmenting the oppressed "as individuals and as collectives," treating the different kinds of oppressions as separable, (even though we know them to be inseparable because they are intermeshed), and thereby increasing the control, isolation, and therefore the effectiveness of the oppression. Treating oppressions as interlocking is a way to disguise the intermeshed nature of oppressions and hence a way of making resistance more difficult to achieve. Active subjectivity and the various associated concepts mentioned above are the tools Lugones advocates as necessary to successfully address and meliorate the intermeshed nature of oppressions, as well as the problematic tendency to treat these as atomistically distinct and thus as possibly interlocking but not intermeshed.

[10] There are many, including myself, who find this distinction between agency and active subjectivity one of degree and not kind. When Lugones rules out the possibility of agency for the oppressed she understands agency in a narrowly defined way that is necessarily connected with having the power to create the rules and influence the institutions in which the rules operate in a significant way. A broader definition of agency, defined as "the ability to effect change in one's environment," would seem to include within it Lugones' concept of active subjectivity. Regardless, Lugones' point is well taken, namely the way a person who is spatially mapped in pervasively oppressive ways must operate to effect change in their environment is significantly more difficult and nuanced than for someone who is spatially mapped in positions of power.

[11] Here Lugones notes that in using the term "attenuated" she draws on the Spanish word *tanear*, which she defines as both "exploring someone's inclinations about a particular issue" and "putting one's hands in front of oneself as one is walking in the dark, tactilely feeling one's way." See *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, 1.

[12] This emphasis on "paying attention" has similarities to Dewey's distinction between recognition and true perception, as well as George H. Mead's acknowledgement of the importance of taking on the role or attitude of the other toward oneself. In both cases Dewey and Mead want to recognize, like Lugones, that we can be in the presence of others without being with the other or available to the other in richly transactional ways. Dewey and Mead associate this with a particular understanding of the nature of intelligence. As Mead understands it, intelligence is the ability to make complex combinations in the context of the activity, process, or practice being considered and in connection with and toward the improvement of both the particular relation in question and the more broadly conceived relation in which the particular relation finds its home. See Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 243-44 and

254-56. For Dewey's distinction between recognition and perception see *LW* 10:58-59. Further, for development of the distinction between Dewey's recognition and perception in connection with one account of moral agency as "esthetic moral agency" see my essay "Receptive Perception, Particularized Justice, and Moral Agency," *Review Journal of Political Philosophy* 5, Special Issue: Moral Perception (spring 2007).

[13] By "world" Lugones is not referring to "culture" or actual different "worlds"; rather, she intends the term to capture a particular experience of an individual that is "lived" and that is "intertwined semantically and materially, with a logic that is ... self-coherent and sufficiently in contradiction with others to constitute and alternative construction of the social" (20). Connectedly, Lugones also speaks of "world"-traveling, which involves an epistemic shift, moving into and out of different "worlds" at will and as needed. "World"-traveling is something that "all people who have been subordinated, exploited, and enslaved have been forced to shift to a reality that reduces and contains one's subjectivity and possibilities as it arrogates one's substance" (17-18). The active subject learns to hone this skill in order to "witness faithfully," i.e., in order to "sense resistance, to interpret behavior as resistant even when it is dangerous, when that interpretation places one psychologically against common sense, or when one is moved to act in collision with common sense, with oppression" (7). Thus "world"-traveling is a skill that accentuates the ability to see things differently and hence, connecting to Pragmatism, the ability to "imagine the previously unimagined," the "ethereal thing."

[14] Lugones speaks of consumption of the other in connection with her distinction between arrogant and loving perception. She explores this in her essay "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception." Here she points out that the arrogant perceiver, in contrast with the loving perceiver, views the other as someone for "using, taking for granted, and demanding her services in a far reaching way." The goal of the arrogant perceiver is to consume the other for one's own benefit, "grafting" the substance of the other "onto themselves" as someone existing for the oppressor's use and abuse. See chapter 4 in *Pilgrimages*, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception," 77-100, esp. 80.

[15] In "On Complex Communication" Lugones argues that part of being an effective resister to oppression requires operating within the limen or, in other words, "at the edge" of the spatialized maps of oppression. From here it is possible to recognize that others, though differently oppressed, are also mapped oppressively like oneself. This prepares the resister to see that others may also be resisting, which may help the resister cultivate a "disposition to read each other away from structural, dominant meanings" (79). The first step is to recognize that liminality (the state of being between borders where resistant ways of living may occur) is possible for the self and others. The next step is to cultivate communication between the self and the others who are also, even if differently, located in a state of liminality in which pushing back or transgressing against oppression is possible.

[16] Lugones intends a particular meaning when she employs the term "playful" or "playfulness." "Playfulness" for Lugones is not "frivolous fun"; rather, it is or involves "an openness to uncertainty, which includes a vocation not bound by the meanings and norms that constitute one's ground, is characteristic of what I identify as a playful

attitude. ... It is that openness to uncertainty that enables one to find in others one's own possibilities and theirs" (*Pilgrimages* 26).

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