

Jane Addams and John Dewey

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Abstract and Keywords

In this chapter, the points of intellectual consonance between Jane Addams and John Dewey are explored, specifically their (1) shared belief that philosophy is a method, (2) parallel commitments to philosophical pragmatism, and (3) similar convictions that philosophy should serve to address social problems. Also highlighted are points of divergence in their thinking, particularly their positions on the United States's entry into World War I and, more generally, the value of social conflict. Finally, the chapter concludes with what the author believes is Addams's and Dewey's most significant joint contribution to the contemporary philosophical landscape: a vision of practically engaged pragmatism.

Keywords: Pragmatism, practically engaged philosophy, social reform, Jane Addams, John Dewey

Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.

—John Dewey (1978 [1917], MW 10:42)

I recall ... an audience who listened to a series of lectures by Dr. John Dewey ... as genuine intellectual groups consisting largely of people from the immediate neighborhood, who were willing to make 'that effort from which we all shrink, the effort of thought.' But while we prize these classes as we do the help we are able to give to the exceptional young man or woman who reaches the college and university and leaves the neighborhood of his childhood behind him, the residents of Hull-house feel increasingly that the educational efforts of a Settlement should not be directed primarily to reproduce the college type of culture, but to work out a method and an ideal adapted to the immediate situation.

—Jane Addams (*Twenty Years at Hull House*, 1910, p. 435)

Jane Addams and John Dewey were contemporaries, collaborators, and friends. Dewey assigned Addams's books as required readings in his philosophy courses at the University of Chicago. Addams was regularly invited by Dewey to guest lecture in his courses.

Dewey served on the Hull House board of directors, which Addams led. Addams often invited Dewey to deliver lectures for the Hull House residents as part of their weekly philosophy club. And Dewey showed his appreciation for Addams's immense intellectual influence on his social philosophy by dedicating *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935) to her.

In this chapter, I outline the points of intellectual consonance between Jane Addams and John Dewey, specifically their (1) shared belief that philosophy is a method, (2) parallel commitments to philosophical pragmatism, and (3) similar convictions that philosophy should serve to address social problems. I also examine notable points of divergence in their thought. The chapter concludes with an argument that Addams's and Dewey's most significant joint contribution to the contemporary philosophical landscape is a vision of practically engaged pragmatism.

While acknowledging that Addams and Dewey were contemporaries, friends, and collaborators, it ought to be kept in mind that their ideas were not identical. We should also be careful not to force Addams's ideas through the filter of Dewey's philosophical framework, for the sake of finding more common ground than there actually is.¹

Philosophy as a Method

Similar to the 17th-century French philosopher René Descartes, Addams and Dewey believed that philosophy is a method. Unlike their predecessor, though, they appreciated the philosophical method for its ability to directly impact our individual and collective lives, enriching both intellectual and practical endeavors. To Descartes, in contrast, philosophical inquiry was a thoroughly individual and intellectual activity, a meditation or way to methodically doubt all prior knowledge in order to arrive at a set of clear and distinct ideas (Descartes, 1984 [1641], p. 9).

What distinguishes Addams and Dewey from Descartes is that the former knew that we are at our best when functioning as members of a community of inquiry, not solitary thinkers. A human being is not an island. Living and working together—for instance, in a university, collective, or a settlement—generates cascading benefits for community members. Addams and Dewey believed that the method of philosophy should serve as a model for social inquiry, enriching the lives and activities of all members of a “community of inquiry” (Shields, 2003, 1999).

While Addams and Dewey were fellow philosophical travelers, their paths did, at times, diverge—even on the matter of philosophical method. Addams opined that the most educative of social situations do not demand the formal accouterments of higher-learning institutions—what Addams referred to as “the college type of culture” (Addams, 1910, p. 435). Although philosophy for Dewey was a method “for dealing with the problems of men” (1978 [1917], MW 10:42), he was nevertheless an academician at heart, having

spent the majority of his life immersed in university culture. For Addams, in contrast, a shared working space or commune could provide more propitious circumstances than a college or university for “work[ing] out a method and an ideal adapted to the immediate situation.” Unlike Dewey, Addams viewed scholastic pursuits as too fixated upon thought and preparation for life, and not sufficiently adapted to action and the effectuation of social change.²

So, while the thinking of Addams and Dewey parts ways on a few issues, their differences are mostly confined to the details, owing to distinct shades of contrast in their backgrounds, occupations, and, of course, their situated knowledge in a time when men and women were expected to pursue separate careers and life paths.

Intellectual Entanglement

Addams and Dewey have been described as “intellectual soul mates from the moment they met in 1892” (Hamington, 2019). Their first encounter could have been the outcome of serendipitous circumstance, owing to a short visit Dewey made to Hull House, scouting his imminent academic home at the University of Chicago. Alternatively, the occasion of their first meeting could be credited to Dewey’s susceptibility to the influence of practical geniuses. According to Jay Martin, “[i]t was and remained a characteristic of [John] Dewey that he was always receptive to alternative ideas. With professional philosophers, he generally held to his own positions, but with intelligent women, non-philosophers, odd thinkers, and ordinary folk, he was a student again” (Martin, 2003, p. 167; cited in Cunningham et al., 2007, p. 27). Addams was one of those “intelligent women” who would, from their first encounter in 1892, have an immense influence on Dewey’s intellectual development going forward.

The significance of Addams and Dewey’s intellectually entanglement has been the subject of extensive commentary. For pragmatism scholar Scott Pratt, the annals of classic American pragmatism receive a renewal of diversity when Addams and Dewey met, inviting a novel, feminine perspective to a philosophical movement that had become temporarily dominated by male voices: “In their meeting, there is a sense in which the diverse sources of pragmatism were rejoined and together provided the catalyst and many of the key resources for the development of classical pragmatism” (Pratt, 2002, p. 283). According to Addams scholar Louise Knight, “[t]he influence of the two friends [Addams and Dewey] on each other was profound, and, in many of its various parts, untraceable to one party or the other. As the years passed, it was not Dewey who influenced Addams or Addams who influenced Dewey so much as the friendship that influenced them both” (Knight, 2005, p. 240). Nevertheless, it is possible to trace some direct influences from Dewey to Addams, and vice versa. For Barbara Stengel, Dewey was the beneficiary of Addams’s poetic insight: “Dewey became Dewey in the last decade of the nineteenth century and ... Jane Addams was present as poet to his philosopher” (Stengel, 2007, p. 30). Through her activities at Hull House, Addams had “discerned the shape of democracy as a mode of associated living and uncovered the outlines of an experimental approach

to knowledge and understanding; Dewey analyzed and classified the social, psychological and educational processes Addams lived” (Stengel, 2007, p. 30). While Addams provided the raw data—namely, her experience working with Chicago’s vulnerable populations at Hull House—Dewey contributed the tools of analysis, specifically his newfound pragmatist method, which was largely inspired by Addams’s example.

Stengel (2007) bases her position on two letters Dewey (2002a [1894]) wrote to his wife, Alice, in October 1894, both recounting Addams’s participation in a recent University of Chicago program. The purpose of the program was to share the aims of the Settlement Movement in anticipation of the university establishing its own settlement house. After hearing Addams’s talk and reflecting on her thesis that unity in the Settlement Movement was an outgrowth of diverse community aims, Dewey confessed in a letter to his wife: “Addams converted me internally” (Stengel, 2007, p. 33). Stengel interprets Dewey’s confession in two ways: (1) his devoutly Christian outlook and expression settled into a more secularized and humanitarian orientation toward the world, and (2) his high-minded Hegelianism took a more naturalized and experimental turn: “[H]e let go of religious practice and theological language, focused a conception of democracy as a mode of associated living, shifted from Hegelian dialectic to pragmatic experimentalism, acknowledged the relational nature of the self and found a way to think about thinking rooted in human action, thus acknowledging the unity of human experience” (Stengel, 2007, p. 30).³

Addams’s talk given in October 1894—the same one that likely inspired Dewey’s conversion—was likely an elaboration of her earlier essay “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements.”⁴ Some commentators have noticed the striking similarity between it and Dewey’s essay, shared earlier as a talk at Hull House, titled “Christianity and Democracy” (1893). In commentator Steven Rockefeller’s view, Dewey’s essay and talk impressed Addams, for she “may have drawn on Dewey’s thinking in ‘Christianity and Democracy’” in her own writings and later talks (Rockefeller, 1991, p. 208). In the essay, Dewey portrays democracy as a “Kingdom of God on Earth,” or a spiritual commitment to improving conditions for the poor, ameliorating industrial strife, and reforming institutions (Tröhler, 2006, p. 102; Ralston, 2010, p. 68). According to Dewey, “Christianity is revelation, and revelation means effective discovery, the actual ascertaining or guaranteeing to man of the truth of his life and the reality of the Universe. It is at this point that the significance of democracy appears. The kingdom of God, as Christ said, is within us, or among us” (Dewey, 1971 [1893], pp. 6–7). Dewey’s message about the Christian impulse toward social reform, mutual aid, and democratic ethos hints at an imminent shift in his thought. At around the turn of the century, he shed his Christian identity and embraced democratic humanism.⁵ It also resonates with Addams’s message in “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements”: “[T]here is a distinct turning among many young men and women toward this simple acceptance of Christ’s message. [...] The Settlement movement is only one manifestation of that wider humanitarian movement which ... is endeavoring to embody itself, not in a sect, but in society itself” (Addams, 1893, p. 19). To accept Christ’s message, for Addams and Dewey, does not simply mean to affirm the believer’s Christian

faith; more importantly, it indicates an inclusive commitment to serve God by serving humanity—even to the extent of seeing Jesus Christ as an early social reformer.

However, Stengel insists that Rockefeller overstated Dewey's influence on Addams. In her account, Dewey's ideas about Christianity and democracy were the result of observing Addams' work at Hull House: "What he [Rockefeller] doesn't state clearly is that Dewey's search [for a link between Christian ethos and democratic function] found fruition at Hull House. Jane Addams's work gave substance to Dewey's embryonic thinking" (Stengel, 2007, p. 34). Regardless of the exact direction of influence, both Addams and Dewey were intellectually entangled as early as 1892. They shared commitments to social democracy, economic justice, industrial peace, secular humanism, and—as we will see in the next section—philosophical pragmatism.

Fellow Pragmatists

In addition to being contemporaries, friends, and collaborators, Addams and Dewey were both budding Pragmatists.⁶ Pragmatism is a philosophy of action and experience, endorsing a number of positions that differentiate it from—or offer a third way between—the two standard Western philosophical traditions: analytic and continental philosophy (Margolis, 2011, p. 136). Pragmatism's commitments include instrumentalism, fallibilism, experimentalism, naturalism, and pluralism, among others.⁷

At the turn of the century, Dewey embarked on a period of philosophical transition, undergoing a conversion from Hegelian idealism to experimental Pragmatism.⁸ In the late 19th century, the idealist philosophical outlook was most closely associated with thinkers such as T. H. Greene, F. H. Bradley, and Edward Caird, all followers of G. W. F. Hegel. Pre-1894, Dewey's philosophy was unmistakable for its idealistic commitments: meaning is constituted by ideal relations (i.e., bare objects or facts have significance in virtue of humans' ideas about them); comprehension of meaning involves negating those relations (through dialectical reasoning); and, ultimately, meaning progresses (in consciousness and history) toward the ideal limit of rational thought, the absolute.⁹ According to Dewey (1969 [1889]), "the problem of the nineteenth century reduces itself to a choice between pessimism and faith" (p. 42). As the superiority of scientific method became increasingly obvious, pessimism set in. Idealism lost its glow for Dewey. Particularly after reading William James's *Principles of Psychology*, he sought to recover his faith in the truth of his philosophical convictions, gravitating toward a more empirical and scientifically based theory of human psychology. Consequently, Dewey abandoned his earlier, idealistic views.¹⁰

According to Stengel, Addams likely inspired this philosophical conversion too. Interacting with Addams and observing her experimental work in the settlement movement were probably the impetus for Dewey to embrace a naturalistic understanding of social relations. Stengel elaborates: "Dewey was searching for a way to instantiate his thinking about democracy, about Christianity and about experimentalism. [...] [I]t was at Hull House in the company of Jane Addams that Dewey found what he was looking for" (Sten-

gel, 2007, p. 30). Charlene Haddock Seigfried echoes Stengel's point: "In the early years, when Dewey was developing pragmatist philosophy, there were two communities with which he was intensely engaged and that he frequently acknowledged as important influences but were largely ignored by subsequent scholars in favor of a more traditional history of ideas approach. One was the Laboratory School [... and] [t]he other community was the Hull House Settlement ..." (Seigfried, 1999, p. 212). The change in Dewey's philosophical allegiances, from absolutism to experimentalism, from Hegelianism to Pragmatism, was therefore the result of Addams's influence.

Specifically, Stengel suggests that the reason for Dewey's philosophical conversion was Addams's 1894 talk, which—as noted above—was likely a variant of her essay "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" (1893). In a letter to his wife, Dewey explained how Addams's ideas disrupted his idealism: "I can see that I have always been interpreting the Hegelian dialectic wrong end up—the unity as the reconciliation of opposites, instead of the opposites as the unity in its growth, and thus translated physical tension into a moral thing" (Stengel, 2007, p. 33). For Dewey-the-idealist, similar to Greene, Bradley, and Caird, philosophical method was identical to dialectical reasoning, that is, negating and synthesizing concepts into a singular object, thereby revealing the all-inclusive and transcendental whole, the absolute (Hegel 1910 [1807]). In transitioning from absolutism to experimentalism, Dewey operationalized Hegelian concepts and objects as instruments and objectives of inquiry; scientized dialectical reasoning, making it the process of experimental inquiry; and biologized the absolute into the unity of all experience.¹¹ In this way, Dewey loosened his intellectual grip on idealism. He naturalized the philosophical method, so that it became a tool of scientific inquiry and practical reform. Biological metaphors, such as adaptation, growth, and experience, substituted for idealist ones, such as concept, object, and absolute. For catalyzing that philosophical transformation, Stengel concludes, Dewey owed an immense debt to Addams.

Charlene Haddock Seigfried also reveals the overlap between Addams's and Dewey's Pragmatist philosophies. She contends that the "emancipatory" quality of Addams's social theory is itself an elaboration of Dewey's idea that democracy is not primarily political, but social—a means of association and community living:

[T]he pragmatist model of democracy is radically different from the liberal model. Pragmatists see behind the political forms of democracy another reality altogether. Instead of taking the political form as an expression of isolated units of self-seeking individuals, they understand democracy as a form of association especially appropriate for persons who are constituted by the multiple relations through which consciousness evolves and values develop [...] Having imaginatively reconceived the behavior it encourages and the values it presupposes, they seek to cooperate with others in that continual transformation of varied and interactive forms of life toward those better ends that pragmatism seeks. [...] The horizontal linkage of persons, no one of whom is granted antecedent advantage, that constitutes democratic forms of organization profoundly challenges the assertion of

privilege that underlies hierarchical forms of government in which power flows from the top down.

(Seigfried, 1999, p. 210)

To combat these fixed social hierarchies, Addams recommended leveling liberal-democratic institutions and then rising above the structural inequalities through philanthropic and educational projects. Accomplishing this involves the integration of the interests of the privileged and the marginalized, so that the former serve the latter, redistributing cultural, educational, and economic capital more widely. Hamington (2009a, p. 11) calls Addams's solution "lateral progress," Seigfried (1999, p. 220) "emancipation," and Dewey (2008[1939], LW 13:226)—four years after Addams's death—"democracy as a way of life" (Ralston, 2008).

Social Reform Ethics

Addams and Dewey integrated their vision of right or ethical action with a practical goal to enact far-reaching social reforms. According to Erin McKenna, both conceived ethics as relational: "We find ourselves in socially complex and reciprocal relationships that demand a social, rather than an individualistic, ethic" (McKenna, 2002, p. 147). In undertaking such reforms, Dewey and Addams's conception of social ethics was tested by events in late 19th-century Chicago, where urban poverty, industrial strife, and the exploitation of children were commonplace.

Three cases stand out: (1) Hull House, a project integral to the larger settlement movement, (2) the Pullman strike, a monumental event in the US labor movement and (3) child labor practices in industrial factories, which were slowly being reformed in favor of universal compulsory public education. While Addams and Dewey's levels of commitment to social reform were not identical—and some even note, insufficiently radical¹²—these three cases illustrate their shared devotion to democratic meliorism (i.e., hope for continual improvement for the prospects of people across the social spectrum) and social inquiry (i.e., cooperative effort to solve problems of public concern and distribute gains widely) (Westbrook, 1991, xiv).

The Hull House Settlement

While the settlement movement can be traced back to 1884—specifically Samuel Bennet's encampment in east London—the late 19th-century United States became a hotspot for settlements aimed at aiding the poor. Three appeared in this period independently of each other, located in Boston, New York, and Chicago. The settlement in Chicago was, of course, Hull House, led by Addams, and later served by Dewey, who was on its board and gave regular talks to its philosophy club.

In "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," Addams described the purpose of Hull House: "The Settlement ... is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the so-

cial and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city" (Addams, 1893, p. 22). Rather than isolate Hull House, the idea was to integrate it into the wider community. Chicago's luminaries, including professors, politicians, and community leaders, came to the settlement to share their wit, wisdom, and resources with its residents. According to Addams, the settlement fostered democracy with projects that emphasized our common humanity: "[T]he identification with the common lot which is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the source and expression of social ethics" (Addams, 1902, p. 11). Dewey shared this democratic conviction and devoted his time to advancing the project.

Addams also commented on the political situation in Chicago in "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements." While the "franchise" (or right to vote) had been expanded, it did not improve the quality of life of the city's immigrants, marked as it was by growing urban poverty, industrial strife, and racial inequality. Addams lamented, "[d]emocracy has made little attempt to assert itself in social affairs" (Addams, 1893, p. 2). In the absence of genuine social democracy, Chicago became a balkanized city, its communities and neighborhoods divided along socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic lines. The clearest division manifested between those who were uneducated, indigent, and culturally impoverished and those with wealth, power, and education. Addams identifies the crux of the problem: "[T]he paradox is here: when cultivated people do stay away from a certain portion of the population, when all social advantages are persistently withheld, it may be for years, the result itself is pointed at as a reason, is used as an argument, for the continued withholding" (Addams, 1893, p. 5). In a viciously circular way, the status quo served to justify itself; only dedicated reform and integration of these divided communities could produce genuine social change.

The purpose of Addams, Dewey, and other Chicago settlement reformers, then, was to disrupt the status quo. They aimed to foster interaction between segregated communities, especially through philanthropic projects aimed at uplifting the poor and marginalized. The wealth, ideas, and culture of the well-to-do were recruited to serve this end. Hull House was the realization of an ideal that emerged from the lived experience of Addams and Dewey, two of Chicago's public figures and social reformers devoted to healing a community that had long been divided by social enmity, economic injustice, and industrial strife.

The Pullman Strike

Although Addams was more directly involved in the Pullman Strike than Dewey, both reacted similarly to the 1894 uprising of industrial workers in southern Chicago. Arriving in the city during the first days of the strike, Dewey (2002b [1894]) commented in a letter to his wife that the industrial action was "a great thing and the beginning of greater." In the month prior, discussions between the workers' union and the Pullman Car Company had reached an impasse, leading to the closure of most railroad lines, as union workers re-

fused to touch any trains with Pullman cars attached. Addams tried to mediate the strike and, likely owing to her gender, was rebuffed by Chicago's elites.

In reaction, Addams authored an essay titled "A Modern Lear," comparing the owner of the Pullman Car Company, George M. Pullman, to Shakespeare's King Lear and his striking workers to Lear's daughter, Cordelia. Addams chastised Pullman for his overly paternalistic approach to managing the lives of his workers. In the essay, she also demonstrated how enlightened leadership leads to "lateral progress":

The man who insists upon consent, who moves with the people, is bound to consult the feasible right as well as the absolute right. He is often obliged to attain only Mr. Lincoln's "best possible," and often have the sickening sense of compromising with his best convictions. He has to move along with those whom he rules toward a goal that neither he nor they see very clearly till they come to it. [...] What he does attain, however, is not the result of his individual striving, as a solitary mountain climber beyond the sight of the valley multitude, but it is underpinned and upheld by the sentiments and aspirations of many others. Progress has been slower perpendicularly, but incomparably greater because lateral.

(Addams, 1912, p. 136)

Slow, lateral change occurs when the enlightened leader brings her followers along with her, rather than forces them to follow her and to trust in her purportedly superior judgment.¹³ Dewey (2002a [1896]) praised Addams's essay as "one of the greatest things I have ever read as to its form and ethical philosophy."

During the Pullman Strike, both Addams and Dewey experienced stressful events in their separate lives. Addams's sister, Mary, was suffering from a terrible illness that would eventually end her life. Though less tragic, Dewey was in the midst of a career transition, moving from an academic post at the University of Michigan to the chair of the Philosophy and Pedagogy Department at the University of Chicago. Both set aside their personal troubles to show sympathy toward the industrial workers. The practical activism and writings in support of the strikers are a testimony to what Leffers identifies as the "caring response": "The work of Addams and Dewey can explain why the caring response in moral reasoning is capable of becoming universal, including the self, those who are close to us, and those who lie outside of our circle of personal relationships" (Leffers, 1993, p. 74).

Child Welfare

Another way in which Addams and Dewey demonstrated the caring response was in how they reacted to the exploitation of children. In the late 19th and early-20th centuries, poor children would forego education in order to supplement family income through factory work. Children's small hands and agile bodies were valued by industrialists. Addams saw city government and regulation as a vehicle for social justice, a mechanism to reform these deplorable practices. She subscribed to a model of city administration, referred to

as “municipal housekeeping,” whereby the point was to ameliorate social problems, such as the industrial exploitation of children, by remedying the underlying social and economic conditions (Addams, 1905, p. 425). In concert with local government, Addams and the settlement movement established organizations and rules (e.g., the Children’s Bureau and child labor laws) to protect the welfare of children. Dewey likewise opposed the industrial exploitation of children. He supported mandatory public schooling as an alternative to the factory work system, which damaged the health and life prospects of poor children. In 1913, a *New York Times* article highlighted Dewey’s endorsement of public schooling, settlement activism to protect child workers, and vocational education for “dull children,” who would ordinarily be exploited by the industrialists (Dewey, 1913, p. 4). Dewey’s consonance with Addams in this regard is perhaps unsurprising, given his love for children and his seminal work on the philosophy of education. According to Dewey’s friend Max Eastman, “Dewey is at his best with one child climbing up his pants leg and another fishing in his inkwell” (quoted in Peter Gibbon, 2019).

Points of Divergence

Although they might have been soulmates, Addams and Dewey’s practical and philosophical commitments did not always align. According to the orthodox interpretation of the two figures’ differences, the reformist and practical impulse of Addams can be sharply distinguished from the academic and theoretical focus of Dewey.¹⁴ However, this account is in all likelihood an oversimplification, since, as Stengel (2007) notes, Dewey’s philosophical transformation benefited immensely from Addams’s influence, both as a practical and theoretical matter.

Where the points of divergence are more noticeable is with respect to their positions on issues of the day—for instance, US entry into the First World War—and, more generally, how they viewed the value of conflict in social life.

United States Entry into World War I

Though the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand arguably triggered the outbreak of the First World War, it was ultimately the web of deadly alliances that brought all of Europe into the melee of armed conflict and mass death in the trenches on the Western Front. US entry into the “war to end all wars” was hotly debated. Addams, the pacifist, argued against US involvement, and suffered public scorn as a result. On June 10, 1917 (two months after US entry into WWI), Addams gave a speech before the First Congregational Church in Evanston, Illinois, titled “Pacifism and Patriotism in Time of War,” in which she argued that “opposition to the war is not necessarily cowardice.” Pacifism is instead perfectly compatible with patriotism. She was heckled by members of the audience and portrayed by the press as soft, sentimental, and prone to expressing “pro-German twaddle” (Joslin, 2010, p. xix).

Dewey, in contrast to Addams, believed that US entry into the war was a necessary evil. American involvement was crucial to secure long-lasting global harmony. World War I was to be the “war to win the peace” or, more ambitiously, the “war to end all wars.”¹⁵ According to Molly Cochran,

... when it came to practical judgment about what democracy as a way of life required at the international level, they [Dewey and Addams] disagreed on arguably the most significant matter of the day: the US decision to enter World War I. For Dewey, US participation was needed to defeat Germany and move to the important business of public control of transnational interests and world organization; war was a necessary means to international democratic ends. Jane Addams, in the face of harsh public criticism ... maintained a pacifist stance; democracy as a way of life could not be realized through such means.

(Cochran, 2017, p. 160)

Although Addams and Dewey never publicly debated the issue of American entry into WWI, Dewey suffered at the hands of his critics too. The public intellectual Randolph Bourne (1977[1917]) launched a scathing attack against Dewey’s, accusing the Pragmatist philosopher of hypocrisy. Historian Alan Cywar comments: “Bourne contended that Dewey’s instrumentalism was no longer an adequate ideology for radical reform in America” (Cywar, 1969, p. 579). According to Bourne, democratic ends no longer require *only* democratic means for their realization. Indeed, Dewey’s instrumentalism licenses jingoistic means as well.¹⁶

With respect to US involvement in WWI, Dewey’s thinking could not have differed more from Addams’s.¹⁷ Later Dewey would realize the error of his ways and support the outlawry of war movement. On the occasion of Dewey’s seventieth birthday, Addams’s toast to Dewey acknowledges that their differences on the war was a learning experience for both:

Only once in a public crisis did I find my road taking a sharp right angle to the one he [Dewey] recommended. That fact in and of itself gave me pause to think, and almost threatened my confidence in the inevitability of that road. Our rough journeyings thereon often confirmed John Dewey’s contention that unless truth vindicates itself in practice it easily slips into futile dogma.

(Addams, 2002, p. 29)

Their differing positions on US entry into the First World War also suggested a deeper disagreement about the value of social conflict.

The Value of Social Conflict

Anticipating his later view that “conflict is the gadfly of thought” (Dewey, 1922, p. 300), Dewey conceived social conflict as instrumentally valuable to inspiring fresh ideas and new paths of inquiry. Although he did not embrace violence, he viewed friction and un-

ease as instigations for more productive avenues of thought. In Dewey's 1894 letter to his wife, describing his first encounter with Addams, Dewey distinguished his view of social conflict from Addams's. Dewey summarized Addams's position as follows: "[A]ntagonism was not only ... useless and harmful, but entirely unnecessary; that it lay never in the objective differences, which would always grow into unity if left alone." When Dewey pressed Addams, asking whether "a realization of the antagonisms was necessary to an appreciation of the truth," she responded in the negative.¹⁸

One way to illustrate their contrasting views is to consider the difference between conflict as pluralism versus conflict as acrimony. Conflict understood as an ever-present feature of social and political life is sometimes described as value pluralism. Since humans have diverse opinions, cultures, and ways of life, pluralistic conflict is inevitable. It is distinct from acrimony, or hateful and tribalistic conflict that takes the form of *ad hominem* attacks and threats of physical violence. Neither Addams nor Dewey endorsed the latter, though Dewey, more than Addams, insisted that the former was a sociological fact.

Addams did not share Dewey's view that social conflict was an inevitable and valuable feature of social life. On Addams's account, pluralistic conflict lacked social worth. For her, unity and harmony are the only valuable social states toward which all groups, institutions, and communities should aspire and progress. In contrast, for Dewey, social conflict possesses a functional value insofar as it generates rupture between the ideal and the real—between what ought to be and what is the case. In the process of inquiry, a felt difficulty, problem, or conflict disturbs an initially unified and harmonious state, initiating a process of problem-solving aimed at resolving the conflict and restoring unity. Although on its face Addams's and Dewey's differing views concerning the value of social conflict might appear trivial or semantic, they could explain why Addams, on some social issues of the day (e.g., US entry into WWI), took a decidedly more pacifistic stance than Dewey.

Toward a Vision of Publicly Engaged Pragmatism

Despite their divergent views on the value of social conflict, what Addams and Dewey shared was a unique understanding of the philosophical method. Indeed, it was more public, practical, and engaged than had been witnessed among fellow pragmatists. In their hands, philosophy was no longer a solitary, intellectual endeavor, or a Cartesian search for clear and distinct ideas. By applying experimental inquiry to social and political issues, philosophy becomes what Dewey called "a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men" (Dewey, 1978 [1917], MW 10:42). As Stengel persuasively argues, Addams inspired Dewey's conversion to democratic humanism and experimental pragmatism through her own examples of public, practical, and engaged activism. Hamington (2005) calls this Addams's "public pragmatism" (p. 167). The approach also resonates with what nowadays is termed "public philosophy."¹⁹ However, public philosophy as it is currently performed in mass culture—specifically, the popularization of philosophical ideas for wider consumption—does not quite capture the philosophical practice

of Addams and Dewey.²⁰ For them, the method of philosophy involved immersing oneself in public issues and political controversies, engaging in debates of the day and applying ideas to experience in order to improve existing social conditions. So, perhaps a better way to describe Addams and Dewey's vision of philosophy or philosophical activism is "publicly engaged pragmatism." Their pragmatism begins and ends with worldly engagement. The purpose of publicly engaged pragmatism is not to theorize from an armchair, but to engage actual social problems as a member of a community of inquiry. In other words, the ultimate value of pragmatism as a philosophical method is tested in the crucible of public, practical, and engaged experience.

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Notes:

(1) This heuristic maneuver is what I have elsewhere referred to as the “filtering strategy.” Filtering involves forcing the ideas of a historical figure through more contemporary interpretive lenses or filters, so that the result is a version of those ideas that supports the interpreter's pet theory. See Ralston (2011, 2009, 2008). Although Dewey and Addams were contemporaries, it is nevertheless possible to filter Addams's ideas through Dewey's more familiar philosophical framework.

(2) For instance, in Addams's essay “The College Woman and Christianity,” she argues that Christianity might be a better preparation for life than university, especially for women who wish to become “ready to act.” She portrays Jesus as a social activist who “alone of all great teachers made a masterly combination of method, aim and source of motive power” (Addams, 1901, p. 1855). Cited in Hamington (2009b, p. 88).

(3) In this section I address the first stage in Addams's conversion of Dewey, the theological-political, while in the next section I address the philosophical stage of his conversion.

(4) The essay was composed in 1892, anthologized in *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (1893), and later reprinted in *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910). I quote from text of Addams's essay collected in *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (1893).

(5) For those more familiar with Dewey's mature writings on religion and religious experience—for instance, his landmark *A Common Faith* (1934)—Dewey's pre-1894 statements about Christianity might seem out of place. This is because Dewey made a break with the institutionalized Christian religion sometime between 1894 and 1904, secularizing his faith and adopting the outlook of a democratic humanist. Rockefeller (1991) explains: "Dewey as a young man acquired an abiding sense of religious meaning and value of life [...] Over time he learned to trust in the democratic way of freedom and growth, a faith in intelligence, and an understanding of ideals as natural possibilities can be a valid liberating religious way in its own right. It gave his life hope, purpose and unity" (533). Also see Baurain (2011), Ralston (2007), and Morse (2019).

(6) I use the capital P to indicate the philosophical or sophisticated sense of Pragmatism, rather than more ordinary or garden-variety pragmatism. Eldridge (2009) refers to the latter as the "adjectival" sense—as in pragmatic, synonymous with efficacious, realistic or sensible.

(7) For presentations of Pragmatism's basic tenets, see Talisse and Aikin (2008), Brandom (2011), and Margolis (2011).

(8) The question of which factors ultimately influenced the transformation of Dewey's philosophy from Hegelian absolutism to Pragmatist experimentalism is highly contentious. For want of space, I will not wade into the debate. A sample of perspectives in the debate, including arguments concerning what constitutes the "permanent Hegelian deposit" in Dewey's pragmatism, can be found in Dalton (1997), Shook (2000), Good (2005), Garrison (2006), Midtgarden (2011), Jackson (2012), and Morse (2019).

(9) Donald J. Morse (2019) distinguishes Hegelian Idealism from Dewey's idealism insofar as the former emphasizes continuity and harmony, while Dewey's version focused on disruption and longing (4). Also, in contrast to T. H. Greene's (1969) idealism, the absolute for Dewey was not a thing—in Greene's case, an eternal consciousness—but instead was an ideal limit to development. With the switch to naturalism and experimentalism, Dewey's epistemological and metaphysical theories began to endorse both continuity and disruption as phases of biological growth and cultural experience.

(10) See, for instance, Dewey's "Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (1896). In this paper, he first treats stimulus and response as distinguishable functions, rather than as pre-given categories or concepts. Backe (1999) argues that although Dewey's approach is largely credited to William James, the extent to which actually influenced this shift is likely exaggerated. It could have just as easily been the result of Addams's influence.

(11) For Dewey's (1930) own account of his turn-of-the century philosophical transition, see the essay "From Absolutism to Experimentalism."

(12) Cornel West (1989) refers to Addams as "bourgeois progressive," a pejorative description that also pertains to Dewey insofar as his commitment to social reform, like Addams's, was not radical enough (pp. 78–79). Hamington (2009b) believes Addams was

more radical than Dewey, for she “addressed a wide audience while provoking significant discussions of social import” (p. 87). Fischer (2013) identifies a strain of Burkean conservatism in both Addams’s and Dewey’s social reform ethics, evidenced in Addams’s strategy of compromise during the 1912 Progressive political convention and Dewey’s tragic notion of political reconstruction. Although scholarly opinion is indeterminate on the matter of whether they were sufficiently radical in their commitment to social reform, it is perhaps safe to state that neither Dewey nor Addams were what we would nowadays call social justice warriors.

(13) For more extended treatments of Addams’s Lear essay, see Knight (1997) and McMillan (2002).

(14) For instance, Hamington (2008), notes: “Although Dewey and Addams would gain celebrity status in their lifetime, their fame and legacies are characterized much differently. Dewey was the great intellectual—a thinker—and Addams was the activist—a doer.” Many scholars have since attempted to correct this mischaracterization. For instance, see Davis (1973), Deegan (1988), Farrell (1967), Lasch (1965), Linn (2000), Seigfried (1996), and Stengel (2007).

(15) President Woodrow Wilson’s administration was especially effective at communicating this message through its Committee on Public Information (CPI), as well as severely punishing free speech aimed at criticizing the war effort. Walter Lippmann, who would later author the books *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925), was a member of the CPI and, despite Dewey’s initial support for the war, would come under fire from Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) for his elitist view that government experts should manipulate public opinion because most public issues were inscrutable to all but the very few. See Ralston (2005).

(16) For more exhaustive treatments of Bourne’s criticisms of Dewey’s position on US involvement in WWI, see Livingston (2003) and Nichols (2017).

(17) Nevertheless, it is possible to find inspiration for a model of constabulary peacekeeping in Dewey’s writings on international relations. See Soeters and Shields (2013) and Ralston (2013). Also, Shields (2016) notes that Addams supplies a notion of an active, positive peace—what she calls “peace-weaving”—that is perhaps a better model for contemporary peacekeepers.

(18) The letter dated October 10, 1894, titled “John Dewey to Alice Chipman Dewey” can be found in Dewey (2002 [1894]). This is the same letter discussed by Stengel (2007, 32–35). It is also summarized by Morse (2019, 22–23), who claims that it proves that Dewey “believed that antagonism should not be seen ‘merely negatively’ [contra Addams] but had real ‘functional value’ instead. It could lead to something valuable” (23). To his credit, Dewey wrote Addams a letter to apologize for his disagreeable tone and to admit that she was right in her own way.

(19) Hamington (2019) writes: “Addams was indeed a public philosopher.” Shields (2017) also offers a compelling account of Addams as a public philosopher.

(20) Indeed, this could also be another instance of the filtering strategy. Op cit. note 1.

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