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A Pluralistic Universe in Twenty Years

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Abstract: Placed side by side, James's *A Pluralistic Universe* and Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* seem to have little in common. James's critique of absolute idealism is written for intellectuals comfortable with philosophical abstractions. *Twenty Years* is full of stories about the lives of poor people and immigrants. Yet the two books echo each other. I will give a reading of *Twenty Years* as a presentation in real time of James's pluralistic universe, with both form and contents conveying the "essential provisionality" of experience in James's "strung-along" universe. I will then show how in *Twenty Years* sympathy and memory serve as wires upon which the universe is strung.

Keywords: William James, Jane Addams, *A Pluralistic Universe*, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, sympathy, memory, Leo Tolstoy

Text of Article:

Placed side by side, James's *A Pluralistic Universe* and Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* seem to have little in common. James's critique of absolute idealism is written for intellectuals comfortable with philosophical abstractions. *Twenty Years* is full of stories about the lives of poor people and immigrants. Yet sometime after April 1909 when *A Pluralistic Universe* appeared, and before November 1910 when *Twenty Years* was published, Addams inserted a few telling quotations into her manuscript. I will give a reading of *Twenty Years* as a presentation in real time of James's pluralistic universe, with both form and contents conveying the "essential

provisionality” of experience in James’s “strung-along” universe.¹ I will then show how sympathy and memory serve as wires upon which the universe is strung.

Addams and James appreciated each other’s work. James wrote her thank you notes. He thought *Democracy and Social Ethics* was “one of the great books of our time.” Of *Newer Ideals of Peace* James wrote, “I find it hard to express the good it has done me in opening new points of view and annihilating old ones.” He offered to send a copy to George Bernard Shaw. After reading *Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, he stated simply, “You inhabit reality.”² Addams complimented James by dropping his phrases and sentences into her writings. Few are attributed; some lack quotation marks.³

I have seen no evidence that Addams first read James (or Peirce or Dewey) and then “became” a pragmatist. In “Charity and Social Justice,” her 1909 Presidential Address to the National Conference of Charities and Correction, Addams tells how charity workers and social reformers had worked out their own pragmatist philosophy through practical activity. She couldn’t resist adding a bit of Jamesian vocabulary; truth to them was “that in which all their ‘experiences most profitably combined,’” and they found that “truth’s final test was its ‘propitious reaction’ upon the poor.”⁴ Walter Pater’s description of Renaissance figures applies to James and Addams just as well: “They partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other. . . . [They] breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other’s thoughts.”⁵

Biographer Louise W. Knight calls *Twenty Years* a memoir. In the Preface to *Twenty Years* Addams borrows a phrase from that great memoirist, St. Augustine, to describe how at Hull-House she was “launched deep into the stormy intercourse of human life.”⁶ Augustine gives a dramatic account of his inner turmoil as he resisted God’s call, until he could resist no more.

Substitute concrete experience for the divine, and we could read *Twenty Years* as Addams's "confession." Perhaps this what Addams means when she writes, "This volume endeavors to trace the experiences through which various conclusions were forced upon me."⁷

Essential Provisionality

The clue to reading *Twenty Years* as a pluralistic universe comes at the end of the chapter on economic discussion in the 1890s. Reflecting back from 1910, Addams writes, "So far as I have been able to reproduce this earlier period, it must reflect the essential provisionality of everything; 'the perpetual moving on to something future which shall supersede the present,' that paramount impression of life itself, which affords us at one and the same time, ground for despair and for endless and varied anticipation."⁸ Critiquing Hegel, James writes that the above inset quotation "is the Hegelian intuition of the essential provisionality, and consequent unreality, of everything empirical and finite." James thinks that Hegel got the provisionality part right.⁹ Hegel's mistake was in attributing "consequent unreality" to the empirical and finite, thus transporting concrete experiences out of the empirical and into the purely rational realm. James calls this a move of "vicious intellectualism."¹⁰

Essential provisionality is a suitable hinge on which to swing between *A Pluralistic Universe* and *Twenty Years*. This notion of constant movement and change expresses the dynamism of evolution. Darwin showed how organic species emerged within history, and could change and disappear out of history. James thinks philosophers need to adopt an evolutionary perspective and recognize that nothing is more real than concrete, everyday experience.¹¹ We experience a continuous flux, where moments interpenetrate each other. Experiences hang together, sometimes tightly, sometimes loosely, sometimes in remote and unidentifiable ways. James calls this a "multiverse," yet it is still a universe, a pluralistic one with "a strung-along

type” of unity. James understands the aesthetic appeal of absolute idealism with its pristine, internal logical relations. He admits that his pluralistic empiricism is “a turbid, muddled, gothic sort of an affair.” Concepts are artificial cuts into the flux, as we try to find stable places in which to rest.¹² James has no objection to forming concepts. It is how we make sense of our experiences. Problems arise when philosophers forget that concepts are tools humans devise for this purpose or that. They abstract concepts from their functional context, elevate them to unworldly heights, and then anoint them as more real than the experiences they were intended to clarify.

Addams presents essential provisionality using the techniques she had developed the previous two decades—speaking with multiple voices and telling concrete stories. Yet the feel of *Twenty Years* is new, more experimental. Sometimes Addams appears as a character in the narrative, sometimes as an observer. Often, though, the author’s mature voice seamlessly interjects her reflections. Addams rarely presents arguments, at least not directly. As in literature, her stories evoke truth through revelation, not through logical demonstration. Charlene Haddock Seigfried notes how Addams “artfully arrang[es]” her stories, using the endlessly repeating pragmatic-hermeneutic circle as her method. With this method, one begins with a perplexing experience, finds a response through reflection, and tests that response in experience. One’s new understanding of experience starts the circle of inquiry anew.¹³ To see how Addams does this, one needs to follow the stories’ sweep. How Addams juxtaposes stories is as important as their content.

One way Addams demonstrates essential provisionality is by scrambling the ideological categories people use to identify themselves. Her strategy is to focus primarily on the people—“living documents”—she calls them, who hold these positions.¹⁴ James also likes to scramble

categories. He treats philosophers as living documents and organizes their theories as cynical or sympathetic, tough or tender minded, foreign or intimate, thick or thin.¹⁵ In a pluralistic universe ideological and philosophical categories are concepts that can serve as rough guides, but do not hold the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ that partisans attribute to them.

Addams illustrates these categories’ fragility in “A Decade of Economic Discussion.” The 1890s was a time of deep recession and labor agitation; discussions in Chicago were particularly fraught. Addams uses “The Working People’s Social Science Club” as a touchstone. Speakers had an hour to present their case, followed by an hour of discussion. Addams sets the story with J.S. Mill’s hypothesis, describing the club as a place where speakers could modify each other’s views.¹⁶ She begins with the socialist-individualist divide. Addams recalls an exasperated member complaining, “Mr. B. believes that socialism will cure the toothache.” She summarizes Mr. B’s reply: “When every child’s teeth were systematically cared for from the beginning, toothache would disappear from the face of the earth.” Addams then tucks in a summary of the socialist-individualist debate so accurate and succinct, one doubts that anyone could deliver it that way on the spot.¹⁷ Was she summarizing what Mr. B and his opponent actually said, or was she presenting both positions quickly to move the focus from ideology to the living documents, themselves?

Sometimes, living documents representing opposite sides of the fence, end up on the same side of a different fence. Again Addams borrows from Mill, using his distinction between those whose thoughts “are in the region of ultimate aims,” and those who “are in the region of the “immediately useful and practically attainable.”¹⁸ Chicago itself was divided, with almost all of the socialists and individualists from the toothache debate falling on the utopian side of the fence, while both labor and management—trade-unionists and practically minded business

owners—belonged on the practical side. The utopians found the practical people “obnoxious”; the practical people worried that radicals were dangerous. Addams reminisces about an especially noisy anarchist she knew who at some point converted into a gentle, quiet, Buddhist.¹⁹

More stories follow, with more fences set every which way, and more living documents who did not reside comfortably on any side of any fence. What point is Addams trying to make in this chapter? Instead of offering a conclusion, Addams reframes the stories in terms of evolutionary growth. She interprets all this noisy, utopian debate as a healthy sign that youthful Chicago would grow into maturity, “quite as the youth of promise passes through a mist of rose-colored hope before he settles in the land of achievement where he becomes all too dull and literal minded.”²⁰ By 1910, the Hull-House residents had matured into appreciating the dull pace of addressing concrete issues bit by bit. Addams observes, “If the Settlement seeks its expression through social activity, it must learn the difference between mere social unrest and spiritual impulse.” James knows this, too, observing that “the clay matrix and the noble gem must first come into being unsifted.”²¹ It is later reflection that provides the sifting.

What does Addams conclude about Mill’s hypothesis, that opposing views become modified through discussion? Addams doesn’t say, but she shows that such discussions are part of the process of growth that modifies people and communities. She hopes that living with all this provisionality will lead to maturity where ideological differences do not matter so much, and people become willing to live in the slow, plodding dullness that genuine social reform requires. James makes a parallel observation. What we all want most is to feel at home in the world, and in light of that, philosophical debates are secondary affairs.²²

In *Twenty Years* Addams tests whether her own deeply held beliefs are themselves provisional. At the end of her chapter on Rockford Seminary, Addams tells how the new college

graduates pledged not to give up their ideals. She writes,

We believed, in our sublime self-conceit, that the difficulty of life would lie solely in the direction of losing these precious ideals of ours, of failing to follow the way to martyrdom and high purpose we had marked out for ourselves, and we had no notion of the obscure paths of tolerance, just allowance, and self blame wherein if we held our minds open, we might learn something of the mystery and complexity of life's purposes.²³

Perhaps, by 1910, Addams had so internalized this path of tolerance, she didn't notice how closely this sentence paraphrases one of her favorite passages from George Eliot's *The Mill and the Floss*.²⁴ Yet Addams subjected her well-tested belief in the path of tolerance to further testing. She praises the many young people participating in Hull-House clubs, with their "great desire for self-improvement, for study and debate." In the very next sentence she points to a failure—a club that came to "an untimely end." The young men in the debating club expelled three young women, thinking them "frivolous." The women asked the Hull-House Men's Club for help. Its members confronted the debaters so hotly that a shot was fired.²⁵ The debaters refused to meet at Hull-House, although they did invite Addams to their next meeting in a new location. She counseled them to welcome back the frivolous girls, echoing another Eliot quote, "[The] right will not dazzle us by its radiant shining, and can only be found by exerting patience and discrimination."²⁶ The club members insisted they were right to expel unruly members. Addams, they contended, safely ensconced as head resident of Hull-House, could afford to preach tolerance, but as young people they had to be concerned with their reputations for moral uprightness. Addams elusively comments, "They still maintained their wholesome bourgeois position, which I am now quite ready to admit was most reasonable."²⁷

How to read this last sentence? Was she inwardly laughing at the young, who were acting much as she had at their age, holding their ideals in “sublime self-conceit”? Was she laughing at herself, because the young people judged her as acting according to her social position, just as she had judged the bourgeois charity visitor in *Democracy and Social Ethics*? In either case, the story illustrates the essential provisionality of moral stances. They reflect, not universal truths, but what concrete individuals within specific social and economic locations can hold to be true. Even Eliot’s wisdom is applicable only provisionally.

Sympathy

Living in a pluralistic universe, with relations between things always in motion with varying degrees of looseness and tightness, how is one to avoid experiencing only chaos? James says that sympathy helps us feel at home in the world. The intellect deals only with the surfaces of experience. James writes, “The only way in which to apprehend reality’s thickness is either to experience it directly by being a part of reality oneself, or to evoke it in imagination by sympathetically divining someone else’s inner life.”²⁸ Sympathy for James and Addams is not so much a feeling or emotion, as a stance of receptiveness and openness, a readiness to receive what experience brings.

To understand sympathy’s role, Addams draws on British literary figure, Walter Pater. Reminiscing on childhood experiences of the Civil War, she worries, in Pater’s words, about “the grief of things as they are” and “the inexplicable shortcoming or misadventure on the part of life itself.”²⁹ She had quoted from this same passage in “Charity and Social Justice”; one almost hears James’s voice about the fear of living in the flux when Addams notes how we need a “certain power of compassion—humanity’s standing force of self-pity—as an elementary

ingredient in our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all.”³⁰ The existential need for sympathy is clearly expressed here—“if we are to live in it at all.”

Addams draws from many wells to help readers “apprehend reality’s thickness.”³¹ At the time, many middle and upper-class people thought poor and working-class people were lazy and undisciplined. They regarded recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe as culturally and intellectually inferior, and emotionally prone toward radicalism.³² How could Addams help her readers feel at home in a world that contained people whom they saw only as strangers to be despised, belittled, and feared? Addams writes, “We are slowly learning that social advance depends quite as much upon an increase in moral sensibility as it does upon a sense of duty.”³³ Addams’s sympathetic portraits aim to change her readers’ moral sensibilities so they come to perceive those different from themselves as fully and “thickly” human.

One technique Addams uses throughout *Twenty Years* is to describe immigrant and working-class people using phrases from literary sources her readers admired. They would recognize the phrases; Addams rarely felt the need to name the author. To reinforce how the legal working age needed to be raised, Addams writes that few young people working in factories “could endure the strain of long hours and bad air.” She reinforces this, not with statistics, but with literature. “Thus the average human youth, ‘With all the sweetness of the common dawn,’ is flung into the vortex of industrial life. . . . Twice in one year we were compelled ‘To find the inheritance of this poor child / his little kingdom of a forced grave.’” The first inset quote is from Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*; the second from Shakespeare’s *King John*.³⁴ Addams turns to Pater’s *Greek Studies* to describe children participating in Hull-House gymnastics classes. She watches the children move with “that scrupulous and uncontaminated purity of form which recommended itself even to the Greeks as befitting messengers from the

gods.” She continues with Pater’s evocation from Pindar: “Grant them with feet so light to pass through life.”³⁵ Even poor people are worthy of literary affirmation.

Social reformers need not worry about many of the concepts philosophers dote on, but they do need a conception of justice. In a pluralistic universe, justice cannot be understood as a Platonic form, an eternal law, movements of an invisible hand, or as the outcome of procedures correctly followed. What notion of justice is consistent with the messy, always provisional pluralistic universe? In the chapter on her college years, Addams inserts a sentence from a college essay, which she labels a “bit of premature pragmatism,” although she admits she still holds to it in 1910. “The actual Justice must come by trained intelligence, by broadened sympathies toward the individual man or woman who crosses our path; one item added to another is the only method by which to build up a conception lofty enough to be of use in the world.”³⁶ Addams interrupts her college tales with a later experience that illustrates how hard it is to add bits of justice. She was asked to help arbitrate a dispute between a manufacturing firm, its unionized workers, and an employee who had not joined the union. After explaining the difficulties they encountered, Addams writes, “At last we all settled down to that wearisome effort to secure the inner consent of all concerned, upon which alone the ‘mystery of justice’ as Maeterlinck has told us, ultimately depends.”³⁷ In an essay titled “The Mystery of Justice,” Maeterlinck places the question into an evolutionary context; the mystery is how justice emerges within human evolutionary history. On the one hand, nature advances by struggle, seemingly indifferent to human suffering. On the other, humans seem to have an instinct for justice deeply embedded in the psyche, inherited from our evolutionary past.³⁸ Maeterlinck’s description of human justice is very close to Addams’s: “Human Justice, with nothing of the supernatural, . . . [is] built up of many thousand very real little incidents.”³⁹

Addams tested this bit by bit conception of justice many times. The method's several successes did not remove the sting of a failed attempt, as that attempt raised serious questions about the limits of democracy.⁴⁰ Chicago's mayor appointed Addams to the School Board during disputes between the Teachers' Federation and the Board over salaries and teacher autonomy. The controversy had been going on for ten years, laced with political corruption and lax enforcement of the tax code on businesses.⁴¹ The two sides were so polarized, that Addams "became convinced that partisans would never tolerate the use of stepping-stones. . . . All [mediation] efforts were looked upon as compromising and unworthy."⁴² This polarization was further entrenched by sensationalistic newspaper accounts, making serious discussion of the issues virtually impossible. Addams wonders if the city's population had grown too large to settle matters through discussion.⁴³ Is democracy, which functions via collaborative decision-making, even possible among polarized, large populations when the most important communication media are just as polarized? Can people in such a setting hold onto the sympathetic bonds needed to attain justice bit by bit? *Twenty Years* gives no conclusion. The provisionality of democracy remains an open question.

Memory

Absolute idealists make sense of the world through concepts. For them, intellect functions by putting the most fundamental concepts in order. Doesn't work, James complains, concepts cannot "connect us with the inner life of the flux"; that's not what intelligence is for. The function of intelligence is to give practical guidance. To complicate the picture even more, rationality has "at least four dimensions, intellectual, aesthetical, moral, and practical; and to find a world rational to the maximal degree *in all these respects simultaneously* is no easy matter."⁴⁴ Addams liked this passage. Agreeing with James that people want a rational world to live in,

Addams transposes these four dimensions of rationality into four aspects of what the Settlement tries to do, and notes how tricky it is to juggle them all.⁴⁵

Intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and practical: different aspects of a settlement's function, different kinds of rationality, different kinds of truth. If we can't attain these through organizing concepts, how do we juggle them in a pluralistic universe? In *Twenty Years*, it is memory that connects us with the inner life of the flux. Memory reconstructs the past, placing concrete experiences into larger contexts, and softening emotional valences to create patterns of meaning. Memory does not function by imprinting series of events on the brain. Memory is an active power eliding reminiscence with anticipation of possible futures. With memory's aid we can sustain sympathetic bonds that carry the past toward these futures' realization. Six years later, in *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*, Addams would write of memory's "sifting and reconciling power."⁴⁶ Chains of connection constructed through memory can help us navigate James's "strung-along universe."

To see how memory functions in *Twenty Years*, one needs to attend to how Addams moves from one sentence or paragraph to the next. Passages do not tell of the past in any straightforward way, but are dense reconstructions. Many passages read like streams of consciousness; someone expecting chronology can barely hold on. One quick example is in Chapter Two, "Influence of Lincoln." The chapter begins, appropriately enough, with Addams's childhood recollections of Lincoln's death and her sorrow over war deaths in her neighbors' families. This launches a long discussion of her childhood visit to "Old Abe," an eagle who had traveled with the troops and had taken up residence in Wisconsin's state capitol building.⁴⁷ The bird fades into the capitol's curved dome, as Addams time travels to Rome a decade or so later, where "only the great dome of St. Peter's itself has ever clutched my heart as did that modest

curve.” She flies forward to 1904, and back to Madison to receive an honorary doctorate, where “the dome again appeared to me as a fitting symbol of the state’s aspiration even in its high mission of universal education.”⁴⁸ Only memory could thread the bird, curved domes, and education’s mission together, and somehow make them fit into a chapter on Lincoln.

To demonstrate how memory can serve the same function as concepts in constructing truth, I will examine Addams’s account of her visit to Leo Tolstoy. The chapter itself presents Addams as a master rhetorician. Nearly every paragraph contains a critique of Tolstoy, while still giving a sympathetic portrait. The critiques are kindly and often implicit, the truth told “slant,” as Emily Dickinson would say. I cannot tell how much Addams’s memory by 1910 had subconsciously reconstructed past events, or how much the account is the author’s construction. In any case, the account is true in James’s four aspects. It demonstrates essential provisionality and so has intellectual truth; it tells us how to go on in a moral and practical sense, and as a compelling story, it has aesthetic truth.

Many noted Americans had made the pilgrimage to Tolstoy’s Russian estate. Historian James Cracraft writes that by the 1890s, “Tolstoy had become an Olympian figure among literate Americans.”⁴⁹ Addams became fascinated with Tolstoy when she read *What To Do* and *My Religion* before founding Hull-House.⁵⁰ Her early experiences at Hull-House gave particular urgency to Tolstoy’s question of whether one should share the poor’s poverty.⁵¹ Tolstoy’s response was to give up aristocratic privilege and adopt the life of a peasant. Addams formulated a different response. She writes that Hull-House had embraced the wider approach of “gathering to itself all the pathetic human endeavor which had indicated the forward direction.” Still, Addams reflects, a “chill of self-distrust” pervaded all their efforts.⁵² The next few sentences clarify Addams’s reason for visiting Tolstoy. She did not regard him as a seer—“his message is

much too confused and contradictory for that.” Instead, she wanted a direct encounter with someone who had brought theory and action into harmony. She wanted to see if Tolstoy’s adoption of poverty had “brought him peace.”⁵³

Addams devotes several pages describing the weeks she and Mary Rozet Smith spent in London, before spending less than half a day at Tolstoy’s country estate.⁵⁴ In London, Addams met with labor organizers, political figures, social activists, journalists, and economists. She was most impressed with Ben Tillit and John Burns, both labor leaders elected to the London County Council with programs for housing, education, recreation, and sanitation reform.⁵⁵ She met Member of Parliament Sir John Gorst, author of an educational reform bill; economists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, cofounders of the London School of Economics; and many other social reform luminaries. She even met Wilhelm Liebknecht, an “old-fashioned orthodox socialist,” at a reception hosted by Marx’s daughter, Eleanor Aveling.⁵⁶

Why are these stories placed in a chapter titled “Tolstoyism”? True, the London visit took place on the way to Tolstoy, but in *Twenty Years* Addams only occasionally uses chronology as an organizing principle. Placed immediately before her account of visiting Tolstoy, the stories give an implicit critique. If the point is to relieve suffering, then the reformers in London, with their extensive organizational and political networks, did far more to relieve suffering than Tolstoy did by taking up the plow and cobbling shoes. The chapter on Tolstoy has James’s moral and practical truth, by indicating how best to approach problems of poverty in practice. But even here, Addams acknowledges provisionality. In industrial cities such as London and Chicago, wealth and poverty lay at the ends of a variegated economic scale. Russia had only stark affluence and stark poverty.⁵⁷ Addams acknowledges that her preferred responses to poverty are themselves contingent on time and place.

Addams tells about her visit to Tolstoy by giving a snippet from the visit, describing her emotional response, and then inserting some commentary. The commentaries, under the guise of her emotional confusion, give highly condensed versions of her matured reflections on Tolstoy's various positions. Aylmer Maude, translator and disciple of Tolstoy, escorted Addams and Smith from Moscow to Tolstoy's estate. As Maude explained the Hull-House project, Tolstoy pulled out Addams's dress sleeve "to an interminable breadth" and asked why she indulged in silk, rather than wearing the plain peasant clothing of the poor? Addams recounts how Tolstoy "listened gravely" and "glanc[ed] distrustfully" at the sleeve. She felt "too disconcerted" to explain anything clearly, although she tried to say that some girls in her neighborhood wore sleeves larger than hers, and besides, how would she ever choose which of the neighborhood's thirty-six nationalities to replicate? Tolstoy then asked Addams how she supported herself. Hearing that she relied on farm income, Tolstoy asked a "scathing question" about her status as an absentee landlord. Addams felt "a new sense of discomfort over a failure to till my own soil."⁵⁸

Was Tolstoy grave, distrustful, and scathing? Did Addams feel disconcerted and discomforted? Maude's eyewitness account has a very different emotional valence. He heard merely an exchange of friendly banter, with "not a shade of offence given or felt between these two."⁵⁹ Addams had already formulated a response to Tolstoy's critique of private property before the visit. A year earlier she had written to Smith, whose family was wealthy, "I am sorry that Tolstoy gives your circle a hard time with your principles. I had an awful time the two years before I came to Hull-House. I do not like it now when my farmer pays his rent, but I do not believe that Tolstoy's position is tenable, a man cannot be a Christian by himself."⁶⁰ In a letter to Maude written just a few days after the visit, Addams's assessment is articulated with the clarity

and precision of matured thoughts that have gestated for years, not just a few days. Framing the issue in terms of the process of working toward economic justice when vast disparities exist, she writes that using Tolstoy's rebuke of private property would elicit strong opposition from the wealthy and thus be a barrier to progress. Instead, Addams continues, if sympathetic relations could grow and intensify while social reforms are made gradually until all could enjoy the fruits of prosperity, the salience of the question of individual property rights would fade away.⁶¹

Addams, Smith, Maude, and a number of other guests joined the Tolstoy family for supper. Talk turned to nonresistance. Addams reports that she experienced "that inner sense of mortification with which one finds one's self at difference with the great authority." She does not say if she voiced her concerns to Tolstoy, but she inserts her thoughts into the text. "Curiously enough I was disappointed in Tolstoy's position in the matter. It seemed to me that he made too great a distinction between the use of physical force and that moral energy which can override another's differences and scruples with equal ruthlessness."⁶² This statement telegraphs Addams's understanding of nonresistance, a position she had experimented with over many years. Addams does not identify nonresistance with a refusal to use physical force, for example, in self-defense or in carrying out police duties. Nonresistance to her is not a doctrine or a creed that directs action through deduction, but a stance of responsiveness toward others. Addams expanded on her stance in the letter to Maude written just a few days after the visit. Adopting a pluralist's perspectival viewpoint, Addams acknowledges how Tolstoy's moral absolutism throws settlement work "into the ugly light of compromise and inefficiency." By contrast, Hull-House residents had learned through concrete experience not to impose their way of life on others, or base their lives solely on the logic of their ideals. Instead, they would "seize upon the highest moral efforts we could find in the labour movement or elsewhere, and help them

forward.” From this point of view, Tolstoy’s nonresistance is flawed. Addams continues, “The expectation of opposition and martyrdom . . . was in itself a sort of resistance and worked evil or at best was merely negative.”⁶³ Maude wrote back to Addams that as he understood it, she and Tolstoy agreed on the ideal of universal kinship, but they differed in method. Maude writes, “No doubt a fiery prophet (like Tolstoy) . . . [is] apt to go too far. . . . To draw the line between bowing the knee to Baal on the one hand—and hewing Agag, logically, to pieces on the other is often very difficult.”⁶⁴ To pluralists like Addams and James, this difference in method reflects *the* philosophical difference between idealists and pluralists. Both groups can agree that universal human kinship is indeed a shining ideal. James agrees with Addams that in the unpredictable flux of an imperfect world, compromise will inevitably dirty pathways toward the ideal.⁶⁵ Maude understood how Addams’s nonresistance was a mode of listening, not a dictate of conduct. She had brought “the heavy ballast of experience” to test her reflections, something that Tolstoy in all his magnificent rigidity, refused to do.⁶⁶

In the *Twenty Years* account, Addams writes that her conversation with Tolstoy “for the moment stirred vague misgivings within me,” and a few sentences later writes that she and Smith left for the night train in a “tumult of feeling.”⁶⁷ In between Addams inserts three rhetorical questions. The structure of the paragraph suggests that these were the “vague misgivings” that troubled her that evening. In fact, the three rhetorical questions go straight to the heart of a pluralistic, empirical critique of idealism. First the fundamental critique: “Was Tolstoy more logical than life warrants?” That is, our concepts should not outrun the particularities of actual living they are supposed to explain. Addams’s stance matches James’s claim that “reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy . . . exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it.”⁶⁸ The next question draws out the relation between truth and conduct. Addams asks, “Could the wrongs

of life be reduced to the terms of unrequited labor and all be made right if each person performed the amount necessary to satisfy his own wants?" In other passages in *Twenty Years* Addams quotes James that the test of truth is "the conduct it dictates or inspires."⁶⁹ Her experiences with labor issues had proven the inadequacy of Tolstoy's individualistic solution. Finally, Addams asks, "Was it not always easy to put up a strong case if one took the naturalistic view of life? But what about the historic view, the inevitable shadings and modifications which life itself brings to its own interpretation?"⁷⁰ Here, using the parlance of the day, Addams is saying that Tolstoy's naturalistic view is that of a static moral universe. The historic view is the evolutionary view, the view that insists that life's "inevitable shadings and modifications," its essential provisionality, must be included in one's construction of truth. Addams had been working with the historic, evolutionary view well before her visit to Tolstoy, and she continued to refine its implications over time as she repeatedly journeyed through the pragmatist-hermeneutic circle.⁷¹ Here Addams demonstrates the intellectual rationality and the intellectual truth of the pluralistic universe.

Had Tolstoy found peace? Addams does not say directly. She ends the chapter by telling of her visit to a Tolstoyan community in Arkansas. Noting that it was close to failure, Addams writes, "It yet embodied the peace of mind which comes to him who insists upon the logic of life whether it is reasonable or not—the fanatic's joy in seeing his own formula translated into action." James also acknowledges that moral absolutism gives emotional comfort that is hard to achieve in a pluralistic universe. Addams continues that even though she could not follow a life based on logic, she had only admiration for such dedicated exemplars.⁷² Shortly after *Twenty Years* was published, Addams wrote to Graham Taylor about a time, years before, when "nonresistance was clearer to me than it is now." Yet, she continued, "My affection for Tolstoy

has only increased and no divergence of view could lessen it.”⁷³ With memory’s reconstructive aid, Addams’s sympathetic bond with Tolstoy held firm.

Why had Addams laced her *Twenty Years* account of visiting Tolstoy with emotional unease, given that she had already worked out her responses to Tolstoy’s philosophy? Perhaps she had genuinely felt that way at the time, with her emotions lagging behind her reflections. The chill of self-distrust can linger long after reflection has done its work. But perhaps Addams had not actually experienced those emotions in Tolstoy’s presence. In a letter to Gertrude Barnum written the day after visiting Tolstoy, Addams comments, “Tolstoi himself is one of the gentlest and kindest of human creatures I ever saw. He was tired so that the actual conversation did not amount to so much as his presence and spirit.”⁷⁴ In the Preface to *Twenty Years* Addams worries that giving “an accurate report of each isolated event” might give “a totally misleading impression of the whole.”⁷⁵ She wanted *Twenty Years* to have emotional, and thus aesthetic truth. She used memory to consolidate into one brief story how Tolstoy’s writings had deeply troubled her mind. She remained in his debt, long after working out why she could not agree with him. Regardless of the emotions she experienced on the actual occasion, Addams’s account in *Twenty Years*, written for popular consumption by an interested public, encapsulates *this* truth poignantly and powerfully.

The book echoes. Throughout *Twenty Years* Addams keeps circling back to the residents of Hull-House. Their living and working together was also a site of experiential testing. In spite of their wide ranging political and religious views and varying approaches to social reform, Addams writes that “many memories hold us to each other.”⁷⁶ These bonds continued to hold throughout World War One, when the majority of residents disagreed with Addams’s pacifism

and actively supported U.S. involvement in the war.⁷⁷ If Pater is right that sympathy is the only thing we may safely trust, and if James is right that the test of truth is the conduct it inspires, then Addams and her fellow residents lived in the truth of sympathy's adhesive strength.

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¹ James, *Pluralistic* 45, 147.

² James, "Letter to Addams" 1902. James, "Letter to Addams" 1907. James, "Letter to Addams" 1909.

³ A few examples where Addams quotes James using quotation marks, but without attribution: in *Twenty Years*, 51, she quotes from "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," 291; in *Peace and Bread*, 116, she quotes from "What Makes a Life Significant," 151; and on 120 from "A Certain Blindness," 135. In *Twenty Years*, 46, she quotes from "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," p. 291, without attribution or quotation marks.

⁴ Addams, "Charity" 444-445; James, "Humanism" 465.

⁵ Pater, *Studies* xiii.

⁶ Knight 5; Addams, *Twenty* 2; Augustine 12.

⁷ Addams, *Twenty* 2. Biographer Allen Davis, 168-69, calls *Twenty Years* a conversion story, identifying the bullfight incident as redirecting Addams from a life of cultured leisure to a life of social activism. Knight, however, is more correct in placing the bullfight as just one experience among many that led to Addams's gradual conversion away from her father's moral absolutism and toward pragmatism and social democracy. See Knight, *Citizen* 357-58.

⁸ Addams, *Twenty* 116; James, *Pluralistic* 45.

⁹ James, *Pluralistic* 45-46.

¹⁰ For discussions of vicious intellectualism, see James, *Pluralistic* 32, 52-54, 99.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹² James, *Pluralistic* 146-47; 26; 147.

¹³ Seigfried 140.

¹⁴ Addams, *Twenty Years* 111.

¹⁵ James, *Pluralistic* 19-20; 64.

¹⁶ Addams, *Twenty* 106; Mill, *Liberty* 231-32.

¹⁷ Addams, *Twenty* 107.

¹⁸ Addams, *Twenty* 112; Mill, *Autobiography* 196.

¹⁹ Addams, *Twenty* 109.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

²¹ Addams, *Twenty* 116; James, *Pluralistic* 143.

²² James, *Pluralistic* 10-11.

²³ Addams, *Twenty* 38.

²⁴ Eliot writes, “That is the path we all like when we set out on our abandonment of egoism—the path of martyrdom and endurance (where the palm-branches grow) rather than the steep highway of tolerance, just allowance, and self-blame (where there are no leafy honours to be gathered and worn)” 331-32. Addams had used fragments of this quote a number of times between 1890 and 1910. In the early 1890s it gave her patience with the newly formed labor unions’ militancy and rashness, compared to the self-restraint and level-headedness of the older, more established unions. See “Settlement as Factor.”

²⁵ Addams, *Twenty* 197-98.

²⁶ Eliot writes that right cannot be found by applying general ethical rules, but only by “exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality . . . [that comes from] a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide, fellow feeling with all that is human.” *Mill* 567. Addams had used iterations of the quote throughout the 1890s and 1900s. They tended to become more fragmented over time.

²⁷ Addams, *Twenty* 198.

²⁸ James, *Pluralistic* 112.

²⁹ Addams, *Twenty Years* 17; Pater, *Marius* 181.

³⁰ Addams, “Charity” 442; Pater, *Marius* 182.

³¹ James, *Pluralistic* 112.

³² Jacobson 6-12.

³³ Addams, *Twenty* 205.

³⁴ Addams, *Twenty* 219; Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book 4, “Summer Vacation”, line 330; Shakespeare, *King John* Act 4, Scene 2, Lines 97-98.

³⁵ Addams, *Twenty* 253; Pater, *Greek* 294, 288.

³⁶ Addams, *Twenty* 36.

³⁷ Addams, *Twenty* 36-37.

³⁸ Maeterlinck 6-7.

³⁹ Maeterlinck 2.

⁴⁰ For successes, see Addams, *Twenty* 185-89 and 195-96.

⁴¹ Addams, *Twenty* 189-95.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

⁴⁴ James, *Pluralistic* 111; 54-55, italics in original.

⁴⁵ Addams, *Twenty* 257; James, *Pluralistic* 54-55.

⁴⁶ Addams, *Long Road* 16.

⁴⁷ Addams *Twenty* 17-18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19. Addams spent several weeks in Rome in 1884 and in 1888. For descriptions of her experiences at St. Peters see Addams, "Letter to Sarah Blaisdell."

⁴⁹ Cracraft 11. For information on Americans visiting Tolstoy, see Cracraft 28-33.

⁵⁰ Knight 145, 149.

⁵¹ Addams, *Twenty* 152.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 153-55.

⁵⁵ Addams, "Letter to Lloyd"; Addams, *Twenty* 153.

⁵⁶ Addams, *Twenty* 154.

⁵⁷ Addams, *Twenty* 152-55.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

⁵⁹ Maude, "Talk" 210.

⁶⁰ Addams, "Letter to Smith".

⁶¹ Addams, "Letter to Maude."

⁶² Addams, *Twenty* 159.

⁶³ Addams, "Letter to Maude."

⁶⁴ Maude, "Letter to Addams."

⁶⁵ James, *Pluralistic* 141-43.

⁶⁶ Maude, "Talk" 206, 210.

⁶⁷ Addams, *Twenty* 159-60.

⁶⁸ James, *Pluralistic* 96.

⁶⁹ James, "Philosophical Conceptions" 291. Addams, *Twenty Years* 46, 51. Neither instance is exact, but close enough to recognize as James's words. The quote fragment on p. 46 does not have quotation marks.

⁷⁰ Addams, *Twenty* 159.

⁷¹ For early uses of the historic and evolutionary method, see Addams, "Outgrowth" and "Subjective". It was common at the time to use "historic" and "evolutionary" interchangeably. English jurist Frederick Pollock wrote in 1890, "The doctrine of evolution is nothing else than the historical method applied to the facts of nature; the historical method is nothing else than the doctrine of evolution applied to human societies and institutions" 41.

⁷² Addams, *Twenty* 162; James, *Pluralistic* 55.

⁷³ Addams, "Letter to Taylor".

⁷⁴ Addams "Letter to Barnum".

⁷⁵ Addams, *Twenty* 1-2.

⁷⁶ Addams, *Twenty* 257. Political differences among the residents ranged from one person who "looked upon all social unrest as mere anarchy" to a committed socialist (probably Florence Kelley), 116. Of religious differences, Addams writes that "there were among us Jews, Roman Catholics, English Churchmen, Dissenters, and a few agnostics," 256.

⁷⁷ Addams, *Second* 142-43.

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