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Cosmic Patriotism and Spiritual Internationalism:

Addams's Newer Ideals of Peace

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In *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907) Addams notes the coming of a “beneficent and progressive patriotism,” a “newer patriotism” that may grow large enough “to soak up the notion of nationalism.” She charts rising cooperation and fellowship within cosmopolitan cities and across national boundaries. Not knowing what to call this phenomenon, Addams writes, “We are driven to the rather absurd phrase of “cosmic patriotism.”

What is she talking about? The first several times I read *Newer Ideals* a question tugged in the back of my head: what is this book about? I had too much respect for Addams as a theorist to accept George Herbert Mead’s assessment of the book: “One does not feel . . . the advance of an argument with measured tread.” Nor could I rest easy with Allen Davis’s comment in his 1973 biography, where he echoes Florence Kelley’s concern that the book was more about domestic social reform than about international peace.

I propose that we can make sense of *Newer Ideals* if we consider Addams’s use of social evolutionary theory as a savvy rhetorical strategy in which she uses the vocabulary of her opponents to subvert their arguments. Also, when we place her call for cosmic patriotism and spiritual internationalism in the context of pragmatist analysis, the phrases make good sense.

The Rhetoric of Social Evolutionary Theory

Addams titles the book, *Newer Ideals of Peace*. Newer than what? At the time, the dominant voices in the American peace movement were those of elite lawyers and businessmen who believed that the path to peace lay in developing legal institutions for international arbitration and in fostering international commerce. Addams's arguments in *Newer Ideals* make sense when we consider them as directed against the proposals of these so-called "practical peace advocates." They used the social evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer to support their position. Spencer had proposed an evolutionary trajectory of the progress of civilization from militarism to industrialism, which he associated with laissez-faire capitalism and classical political liberalism. He and the practical peace advocates agreed that warfare could no longer lead to international peace, but that international commerce within a classical liberal framework could do so.

Addams frames *Newer Ideals* with Spencer's categories of militarism and industrialism. She agrees with Spencer and the practical peace advocates that warfare is juvenile and that civilization had grown into an age of industrialism. But she disagrees with them about the character of industrialism. As a sociologist and a classical American pragmatist, Addams insists on testing theories in light of observation and concrete experience. She gives particular attention to those at the bottom of society, specifically immigrants and the urban poor, with special focus on women and children. Much of the book is devoted to explaining how industrialism is not peaceful, but is laced through with what she calls "survivals of militarism."

Addams begins with a stunning critique of classical political liberalism. She argues that in spite of the founders' rhetoric of liberty and natural rights, they created a government by adapting Anglo-Saxon aristocratic customs that protected the property

and privilege of the rich against the poor. Immigrants experienced government and law as essentially repressive and punitive, that is, as militaristic, rather than being expressions of their own voices as citizens.

Addams devotes several chapters to identifying survivals of militarism in industry. She argues that private property in the means of production, the very foundation of laissez-faire capitalism, is itself a survival of militarism. Addams sees a direct, clear analogy between hierarchical control under militarism and the powers of control that private property gives factory owners over workers' lives. This militarism took the form of wide-spread industrial abuses such as inadequate wages, child labor, monotonous work, and dangerous workplaces.

In the final chapter of *Newer Ideals* Addams identifies militaristic survivals in international commerce. Adapting British social theorist John Hobson's analysis of imperialism, she argues that international commerce at the time functioned as "the modern representative of conquest." International commerce, she writes, "has been the result of business aggression and constantly appeals for military defense and for the forcing of new markets."

The practical peace advocates defined peace as the absence of war. By pointing out survivals of militarism in government, industry and international commerce, Addams shows how militarism continues to infect domestic and international institutions. Social injustice at home and international disquiet are of a piece. This gives her the basis for proposing an alternate definition of peace, not as "an absence of war, but the unfolding of world-wide processes making for the nurture of human life."

“Cosmic Patriotism” and “Spiritual Internationalism”

Addams uses a pragmatist methodology in both her 1902 book, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, and in *Newer Ideals of Peace*. In *Democracy and Social Ethics* Addams argues that because society has evolved into an era of urban industrialization, a corresponding evolution in morality is needed. People need to move from individual morality to social democracy. Given the thorough interdependencies of an urban, industrial society, possessing individual virtues is no longer sufficient for ethics. The hallmarks of social democracy include responding to the needs and developing the capabilities and powers of all members of the society, and fostering cooperative methods for addressing social concerns.

In *Newer Ideals of Peace* Addams presents a parallel argument: we need to move from nation-centered patriotism and nationalism to a cosmopolitan humanitarianism and internationalism. In her 1899 speech to the Anti-Imperialist League, Addams made this point succinctly. “Unless the present situation extends our nationalism into internationalism, unless it has thrust forward our patriotism into humanitarianism we cannot meet it.” Addams refers to this new, emerging stage of humanitarianism, variably as “an enlightened industrialism,” an “enlarged industrialism,” “a rising tide of humanitarianism,” and even “cosmopolitan humanitarianism.” Ideals of nurture and social justice are the newer ideals of peace that she seeks.

Addams claims that these newer ideals of peace are emerging in several different international arenas. For twenty-first century readers, the term “transnational” is more appropriate than “international.” For Addams, the nation-state was not the primary unit

of analysis. She saw many community groupings, in addition to nation-states, forming cosmopolitan, transnational ties and acting upon humanitarian ideals.

In *Newer Ideals* Addams gives particular attention to how these ideals were emerging among immigrants in urban communities, such as the one where Hull-House was located. Addams gives several reasons why immigrants are likely to recast their ideals and sensibilities toward internationalism and humanitarianism. Immigrants from disparate nations, stripped of the contexts of traditional village life, gather into tightly congested, urban settings. Because they must make such extensive cultural adjustments, they have “an unusual mental alertness and power of perception.” In such neighborhoods Addams finds evidence that nationalistic patriotism is being reconfigured into internationalism. “They are really attaining cosmopolitan relations through daily experience,” Addams notes, and forecasts the implications for international peace. “We may then give up war, because we shall find it as difficult to make war upon a nation at the other side of the globe as upon our next-door neighbor.”

It wasn't only among immigrants to the United States that Addams saw evidence of these newer ideals. Addams was in close correspondence with social justice reformers in other nations and points to protective legislation from many nations as evidence that the newer ideals were emerging internationally. She cites the international effort to eliminate tuberculosis, efforts in Germany, Australia, and elsewhere to respond to the needs of the elderly, and efforts in England and on the European continent to regulate dangerous occupations.

In all the examples given above, these humanitarian ideals give Addams a way to articulate the clear link she sees between social justice and peace. This realization marks

a clear difference between Addams's newer ideals of peace and the ideals of the practical advocates of peace. As members of business and legal elites, they benefited from and in some cases actively perpetuated institutions and practices of social injustice. The practical peace advocates understood "international" as the arena in which separate, independent, sovereign nations met to work through differences either through war or through diplomacy. They did not consider unjust practices within sovereign states or by non-state actors as germane to questions of peace.

Cosmic patriotism and spiritual internationalism are Addams's substitutes for the national patriotism of the practical peace advocates. She was searching for terms that would incorporate the ties of affection and action, as well as of intellect, through which people could transcend national boundaries. Addams admired patriotic virtues of courage, self-sacrifice, and high enthusiasm. However, she wanted these virtues detached from a militaristic nationalism, and attached to humanitarian commitments on an international scale. Addams projects that if these newer, humanitarian ideals of nurture and social justice are deepened and made more active throughout the world, the strictures of nationalism would be transformed into a peaceful, spiritual internationalism and the scope of our patriotism could then sensibly be called "cosmic."