Article

Rorty, Addams, and Social Hope

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Abstract: This paper takes up the practice and ideas of Richard Rorty and Jane Addams, considering their work at the intersection of pragmatism and social action. It argues that both Richard Rorty and Jane Addams, each in their own way, were thinking through the significant challenges that confront individuals in their everyday lives: How do we adjudicate between the competing values of individual accountability and helping others in our community? This is our social test, and the way we each answer the question matters for the future of democracy and our degree of social hope. Rorty was a champion of engagement with the community, and believed that out of this experience comes our capacity to creatively weave the fabric of liberal democracy. The paper argues that Addams's work at Hull-House in Chicago offers concrete examples of the potential of reciprocal social relations, providing practical substance to Rorty's ideas and showing how we can create social hope through action.

Keywords: pragmatism; democracy; contingency; creativity; practice; Hull-House

1. Introduction

In 1961, *The Philosophical Review* published Richard Rorty's "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language." In it, Rorty declared "pragmatism is getting respectable again" [1]. A pragmatist philosopher through-and-through, Rorty articulated a standpoint of social hope grounded in liberalism and public action. That very same year also saw the publication of a new edition of Jane Addams's autobiography *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, complete with an introduction by historian Henry Steele Commager. This edition brought Addams—a pragmatist in her own right and the founder of Hull-House—back into the American consciousness. Addams was, as Commager noted, an influence on the ideas of pragmatists William James and John Dewey. But ideas were not enough for Addams,

as she pointed out: "That which may have sounded like righteous teaching when it was remote and wordy, will be challenged afresh when it is obliged to simulate life itself" [2]. Addams was what might be called a "practical" pragmatist whose ideas emerged out of experimental and creative practice. We shall see that Rorty and Addams were very different in terms of each of their life's work. The former remained largely in the ivory tower, while Addams worked in the "real world" as a community activist and reformer. However, both had a strong commitment to pragmatist ideas.

Rorty and Addams each promoted strong ideas about the notion of "making a difference" in true pragmatist fashion. Rorty provided a systematic and carefully thought out articulation of "social hope", championing the liberal program of reforms promoting justice and freedom, while seeing less success in articulating the practical dimensions of any efforts to put his reforms into practice. While perhaps more elusive as an example of a person trying to translate ideas into social action, Rorty did influence legions of students in his introductory philosophy classes, and there is no question that some of them went on to "make a difference". However, as Rorty acknowledges, "The difference between early twentieth-century leftist intellectuals and the majority of their contemporary counterparts is the difference between agents and spectators" [3]. Rorty was mainly a spectator, and as such, the pragmatist "cash value" of his ideas for action is not always clear. Whereas, for a number of reasons, including lack of coherence, sexism, and effects of time, Addams is better known for her *efforts* to put what she called "social morality" [4] into practice at Hull-House. In counterbalance to Rorty, the "cash value" of Addams' practice for generating ideas in philosophy and social theory are at times underspecified and opaque.

While the year 1961 perhaps provides no more than a coincidental pairing of the two pragmatists, this paper points to the generative potential of considering Rorty and Addams together. In fact, part of my larger project is to urge the pairing of thinkers in the spirit of Habermasian theoretical (re)construction, which involves "taking a theory apart and putting it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself" [5]. Reconstruction through dialogue between a seemingly unlikely pair (cf. [6,7]) is not uncommon. This pairing in particular holds the potential for social growth in Deweyan fashion [8]. Both Richard Rorty and Jane Addams, each in their own way, were thinking through the significant challenge that has confronted (and continues to confront) individuals in their everyday lives: How do we adjudicate between the competing values of individual accountability and helping others in our community? This is our social test, and the way we each answer the question matters for the future of democracy. I argue that while both thinkers articulated a pragmatist vision of social democracy, Addams was much more effective at translating her ideas into practice. Addams's work at Hull-House in Chicago offers concrete examples of the potential of reciprocal social relations, providing practical substance to Rorty's ideas and showing how we can create social hope through action. In sum, Addams shows how we might bring some elements of Rorty's pragmatism down to the level of actual action in the community.

This paper is organized into three sections. First, it takes up Addams's practical and, to a lesser degree theoretical, expressions of pragmatism and social morality. Second, it considers the social dimensions of Rorty's articulation of humanism and hope, connecting them to the ideas of a few other pragmatist thinkers. Finally, it briefly puts the ideas and actions of the two pragmatists into dialogue, considering how we might benefit from reading Rorty with Addams's ideas and practice squarely in mind.

2. Jane Addams and the Social Test

Who was Jane Addams? Called "America's only Saint" by British MP John Burns [9], she was an influential figure in the development of sociology, social work, and pragmatist theory in the United States. Born in the mid 1800s in Illinois, she moved to Chicago in 1889 to found the celebrated Hull-House. Modeled after the settlement house Toynbee Hall, located in East London, Hull-House was a location for humanist social experimentation. Addams and her friend Ellen Gates Starr devoted all of their time and financial resources to providing a crucible for the development of neighborhood relations in the 19th Ward of Chicago (at the time one of the city's poorest immigrant neighborhoods). Understanding the idea and practice of the settlement house is critical for this paper. Those who lived in settlements were called "residents" and the houses were typically located in poorer neighborhoods of major cities. The settlement was a place that would promote education and culture, but also support reform efforts relating to wages, public health, and working conditions. For Addams, the main impetus of the settlement project was as follows: "It aims, in a measure, to develop whatever of social life its neighborhood may afford, to focus and give form to that life, to bring to bear upon it the results of cultivation and training" [2]. There is a powerful adhesion that is obtained through sharing of life in a community; Addams saw this "glue" as critical to the success of reforms in the workplace. So, too, was investigation: "A settlement accepts the ethics of its contemporaries that the sharing of the life of the poor is essential to the understanding and bettering of that life" [10]. Moreover, the best way to investigate and understand was through living cheek by jowl with neighbors.

The effects of nearness and proximity to neighbors, what Addams termed "propinquity" in the 19th Ward, enabled the establishment of reciprocal relations across class lines and fostered the effervescence of neighbors helping neighbors. Playgrounds, childcare, washing facilities, a coffee house, literature classes (the list goes on and on) all emerged out of Addams's efforts, and within several years her work at Hull-House was seen as a model for a "new" kind of social provision in the United States. A fine example of the development of social glue and propinquity can be seen in the success of the Social Science Club at Hull-House. Addams learned through connections with neighbors that there was a need for a place to talk through political and social issues and perplexities of the present time. So, she implemented a weekly meeting for neighbors to talk through everything from the value of socialism to the Haymarket riots [11]. Hull-House was also the site of the Hull-House Woman's Club, which among its many efforts focused on addressing juvenile delinquency. They brought in experts to talk about current issues related to the needs of Chicago children, and then took these ideas to the streets in an expression of what the club members perceived as their social obligation. Addams was convinced, based on outcomes, that Hull-House, with its activities and clubs, made a real difference in the ability of children to realize their potential for success. However, the club was not just about social meliorism. As Addams [2] points out, "the value of social clubs broadens out in one's mind to an instrument of companionship through which many may be led from a sense of isolation to one of civic responsibility, even as another type of club provides recreational facilities for those who have had only meaningless excitements, or, as a third type, opens new and interesting vistas of life to those who are ambitious." Civic responsibility (and hope for the future) emerged out of social relations.

As a final example of what one might call Addams's pragmatist practice, we can look to her support of women in the labor market. Deegan [12] labels Addams a "critical pragmatist," emphasizing Addams's interest in "empowering the community, the laborer, the poor, the elderly and youth, women and immigrants." Addams came to know working women through the childcare programming at Hull-House. Women would come in to drop off and pick up their children, and during these moments Addams heard their stories of struggle to make ends meet while caring for their children. The reciprocal relations between Addams and these women likely contributed to the development of the "Jane Club" in May of 1892. It was a cooperative venture for women that provided all one might need to live, including room, board, heat, light, and washing facilities for three dollars per week [13]. Addams [14] herself paid for the first month's rent for each woman who joined the Jane Club. Addams's efforts gave these women a sense of hope and possibility that had been absent from their lives, and with this hope the fabric of the community was strengthened.

The references above to pragmatist practice, or practical pragmatism might seem odd to those who consider pragmatism a body of thought and nothing more. What was it about Addams's work at Hull-House that made it so pragmatist?[1] A number of scholars of Addams, particularly those within sociology, have started to consider how Addams's contributions to this body of thought might have been wrapped up in her day-to-day practice, emerging out of it and in turn influencing subsequent actions. The work of two scholars in particular—Mary Jo Deegan [16,17] and Charlene Haddock Seigfried [18]—provide evidence of Addams's "feminist pragmatist" practice, her constant advocacy for social citizenship, and her efforts to bring racial equality to social relations in Chicago and beyond. Other work looks at the nexus of Addams's practice and democratic (and social) growth, and is framed as a reinterpretation or recovery of Addams's theory and practice. In terms of reinterpretation, Jackson [19], for example, examines Addams's practice in terms of "lines of activity" that are creative and performative, taking a dramaturgical approach to Hull-House as a stage for helping others. Westhoff [20] sees Addams's practice as central to the development of what she terms "democratic social knowledge." The edited volume *Jane Addams and the Practice of Democracy* [21] contains work in a similar vein. We see chapters that illuminate her cooperative spirit [22], highlight her ability to engage in "principled" compromise [23], and elucidate the ties between her democratic ideals and her spirituality [24]. Most recently, Bruce and Bloch [25] link Addams (among others) to pragmatism's "practical dimensions," in particular focusing on inquiry. What they mean by "practical" is that it involves a "real situation" and a "felt need." Addams's pragmatist practice can thus be understood as emerging out of situations she addresses using pragmatist ideas, and engaging in a continual back-and-forth in which the ideas are revised through experimentalism and creative efforts. Bonomo [26] calls this a "pragmatist method of deriving theory from lived experience, so the theories can then in turn improve experience." This is how, in the view of feminist scholars of Addams, a new strand of *practical* feminist pragmatism emerged out of Addams's life's work. Hamington [27] sums it up quite well: "for Addams, biography and philosophy are closely associated. Her feminist pragmatism dictates that her philosophy be derived from her experience."

As Deegan [16] points out in discussing feminist pragmatism at Hull-House, the instability resulting from gender lines drawn in nineteenth-century society allowed women to use their separation as a

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[1]   Much of the discussion on pragmatism and feminism that follows is drawn from [15].

"fulcrum for redefining the *larger social situation*". Addams and other residents of Hull-House chafed against these gender lines, which were even supported by some contemporary pragmatists, notably William James. Seigfried [18], in her book *Pragmatism and Feminism,* shows that Addams rejected James's "espousal of the ideology of separate spheres because she explicitly attack[ed] men's injustices to women and argue[ed] that women should not let their responsibilities in the home prevent their active participation in society". The process of redefinition through active participation was pragmatist, but it stemmed from a maternalist attempt to restore what Deegan calls "the natural unity of the world" [16]. In sum, the particular social possibility at Hull-House came to pass (in part) because of the ability of (upper-) middle-class women to yield to male pressure to become "public mothers" but then capitalize on the opportunities that community mothering provided, namely, the ability to pursue careers, participate in the public sphere, and help their community while serving as a catalyst for the merger of the separate spheres of life and work for women. In pragmatist fashion, they were able to transform and redefine their situation.

However, Addams is not known solely for her great deeds. She was a theorist in her own right. Addams's speeches and writing, particularly her work *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902), are increasingly being recognized as part of the pragmatist effervescence of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. What then, were the main elements of Addams's vision of society and democracy? When Addams opened the doors of Hull-House in September 1889, she had very little idea of what she was going to do next. In fact, she was frequently stymied in her early efforts to get to know her neighbors, and was often muddled in thinking through how to translate Toynbee-style settlement principles into action. The concept that Addams developed to encompass such an uncertain situation is "perplexity". In fact, a major theme of *Democracy and Social Ethics* is how the person trying to help others is constantly perplexed as she encounters moments of rupture from her habitual action. Habits break down, and one doesn't know how to move forward. Addams develops this concept using the example of the "charity visitor", typically a well-to-do woman who volunteered to enter the homes of the needy and investigate the situation to determine whether or not there was genuine need. This whole visit and the ensuing investigation often led to bad feelings and judgments on both sides. It also frequently left the visitor and the person in need perplexed about what to do next. However, the perplexity is not an end, but a way station through which one passes on the way to an effort to move forward, doing things differently in experimental fashion. Perplexity is the crucible of creativity and dynamism. According to Addams [4] the whole point of "knowledge and the holding of convictions" is to put the information and principles to work in the real world:

> Indeed, part of the perplexity in the administration of charity comes from the fact that the type of person drawn to it is the one who insists that her convictions shall not be unrelated to action. Her moral concepts constantly tend to float away from her, unless they have a basis in the concrete relation of life.

A critical element of Addams's framework here is that there is no Truth that we can hold on to as we move forward. Addams was very uncomfortable with the idea of reifying categories of knowledge, particularly in social provision. This explains her discomfort with charity organization, which was the dominant method of helping others in late 19th century Chicago. The charitable organization movement, as it came to be called, was in part a reaction to the widespread belief that outdoor relief (help provided in-home) had failed to alleviate poverty. The charitable organization movement had

strong practical and philosophical ties to business, grounded in the ideas of "survival of the fittest" and the "self-made man". Addams [4] expressed distaste for the whole charity organization enterprise, but her opposition did not lie with the idea of investigation, for Hull-House was the impetus for significant investigations into poverty in Chicago. The difference is in believing that investigation and questioning leads to Truth, which in the case of social provision could be used to categorize people as "worthy" or "unworthy" of help. "[The settlement] does not lay so much stress upon one set of virtues, but views the man in his social aspects. If the individual is the agent for social experience, certainly social life must be the expression of that experience" [28]. For Addams, then, our deeds ought to be a reflection of our social engagement and efforts toward meliorism; we cannot simply focus on our own interests in the private sphere without losing some connection to society and civilization. Hull-House decision making was an example of how Addams and her colleagues tried to transcend their own private interests; residents engaged in a form of collective decision-making that was argumentative but also democratic in that Addams actively encouraged other residents to take ownership of the process [11,29]. Somewhat surprisingly, Addams wrote very little about the deliberative process at Hull-House and the resident meeting minute books are very thin on the details of the process. But while underspecified at the level of ideas, the deliberations at Hull-House marked a new, feminist articulation of experience in the public sphere.

By bypassing the existing, largely male-dominated social provision organizations in Chicago, residents were able to promote "a creative mixture of mutual support and individual expression" [30]. Moreover, this creativity and expression led to the kind of activist mothering and community care that informed feminist pragmatist ideas. Addams and the other residents did not follow the traditional route of giving aid through the male head of the household. Rather, they frequently provided aid directly to women in need, for example, in the form of childcare, laundry facilities, training classes, or opportunities to socialize with other community women. The direct challenge to "women's economic and political dependency on men" [31] unfettered some neighborhood women, enabling them to do their best possible work as mothers by removing men from the equation. The merging of the spheres of life and work carried over into the way the residents perceived the needs of women and children in the community. Helping was helping—no matter what the area of need—from keeping clothes clean to finding someone to watch the children during work or imparting adequate skills for certain paid jobs. This maternalist approach at Hull-House is part of the explanation for the development of feminist pragmatist ideas by Addams.

While she is most renowned for her practice, Addams was perhaps above all things a theorist engaged with the question of how we might work through the dilemma of helping others in our community without compromising our individual needs and wants. Addams [4] writes of how everyday people try to understand there relationship to society, and wonder what is expected of them as *social citizens* in an ever more complex and modern world. How can one be socially engaged and still get by in industrial society? I call this the "American's Dilemma" in which one is torn between personal and family obligations on the one hand, and an obligation to the community on the other. For Addams, the tug of obligation toward community and the social is compelling, and action in this area is one that contributes to a "code of social ethics" and a "practice of social morality". The code emerges from practice. Without engaging in the community, Addams tells us we do not grow as social citizens: "if the latter day moral ideal is in reality that of a social morality, it is inevitable that those

who desire it must be brought in contact with the moral experiences of the many in order to procure an adequate social motive" [4].

It would be easy to put Addams on a pedestal, as is often the case with scholars who study her work, amounting to a sort of "Saint Jane" complex. That would be a mistake. She had her flaws, like all of us, both in word and deed. Her efforts at Hull-House were supported (at first) by a generous inheritance. It is certainly much easier to do good if one is independently wealthy. Furthermore, her ideas, while inspirational and occasionally transformative, lack coherence and the sense of an overarching perspective. Perhaps this is why she is not typically mentioned in the same breath as Peirce, James, and Dewey. Some scholars might object to this statement, pointing to a number of volumes written on Addams's ideas over the past fifty years. As I write elsewhere [15] there has been significant attention paid to Addams's work, particularly in terms of race, class, and gender (c.f. [32–34]), because it had much to offer the political agenda of the 1960s, particularly in terms of her efforts to empower women. The point is that Addams scholarship increasingly became the site of contestation, with a plethora of publications in history and social work (c.f. [35–37]) viewing Addams with a critical eye, particularly on matters of race [38], while celebrating her work in advancing feminism and democracy (c.f. [27,39–42]). However, one cannot help notice that these more recent works on the importance of Addams's ideas are primarily written by women about feminist ideas, with a few notable exceptions [43–45]. As early as 1991, Seigfried [46] talked of a "missing perspective" and pointed out that "pragmatism has more resources [*i.e.*, women pragmatists] than we have yet tapped". The point perhaps is that we should be cautious of dismissing Addams as not worthy of being a comparator (in either ideational or practical terms) to Rorty, simply because she might be "untapped" (relative to Rorty). Addams was articulating and acting upon ideas that were not formalized by pragmatists such as Dewey, James, and Mead until years later. And these ideas in turn influenced Richard Rorty nearly fifty years later.

3. Richard Rorty and Social Glue

For any student of democracy, pragmatism, or philosophy in general, Rorty needs no introduction. However, it is a commonplace that outside of academia (where he was a superstar), Rorty is not a name that rolls off the tongue of the average person. This is unfortunate not just because it shows a gap in general public knowledge, but because Rorty's ideas hold significant promise for helping us think through ways to be better social citizens. As set out in the introduction, Rorty was a pragmatist through and through. What does this mean? Well, for Rorty it meant finding a third way [47] that was neither post-modernist irony nor metaphysical universalism. There "are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones" [47]. In general terms, the pragmatists moved away from Cartesian mind-body dualism and toward the idea that *action and experience* form the foundation of knowing. For pragmatists, thought and action are not separate, but rather intertwined [48]. Under the influence of the ideas of John Dewey and William James, Rorty argues that our "frame of reference" lies in practice, in "the process of experimentation and decision that is an individual or a national life" [3]. To look anywhere else, particularly in a move away from practice to theory alone, represents a "failure of nerve" no less! More than anything, a reader of Rorty's work gets the sense that he wanted to give up all of this talk about metaphysics and epistemology for its own sake. It is like James's [49] dismissal of

a hypothetical conversation about a squirrel running around a tree. What side of the tree is the squirrel on now? The answer is of no consequence. What *is* of consequence is that along with Rorty's standpoint on metaphysics comes a particular way of thinking about theory and social action. Here philosophy and sociology come together. In fact, one of the most important and influential works of sociological theory in the past twenty-five years, Emirbayer's [50] "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology," draws on John Dewey [51] to articulate an approach to understanding society by studying relations as units of analysis in their own right.

What does a pragmatist theory of social action inspired by Rorty look like, then? I try to answer this below, drawing on other pragmatists (particularly John Dewey) to help clarify and expand upon Rorty's ideas. We might start with the idea that the ways in which we experience the social world are messy and contingent, plain and simple. Our habits often fail us and we come up short, not knowing how to move forward. For example, we might want to help people in the community but we do not have a set of habits that will help us to act. We are stuck and begin to experiment, making space for contingency in a process of "creative syncretism" [52,53]. Hans Joas [54], a pragmatist who has much in common with Rorty on ideas concerning the generation of values through experience, sees this creative action as lacking a specific *telos*. Action is a process with no beginning or end. Dewey [55] famously writes of "ends-in-view" that arise from experience. The accomplishment of an act directs one on to other acts, in a process that has no clear ending. What might appear to be the end of an act turns out to be the means to another, and so on. As Dewey [56] tells us, "means are means; they are intermediates, middle terms […] the "end" is the last act thought of; the means are the acts to be performed prior to it in time." Are we aimless in our acts, moving toward nothing at all in particular? What is Rorty's sense of the point or goal of the social action described above? We are not aimless, but neither are we moving toward an ultimate goal. For Rorty, "the drama of an individual human life, or of the history of humanity as a whole, is not one in which a preexistent goal is triumphantly reached or tragically not reached" [57].

As a student of Dewey, we might say that Rorty, like Dewey, eschewed any firm *telos*, rather looking toward the growth of social intelligence. We ought to be clear with Rorty [58] that the idea of "social glue" is not based on common ends, but rather a binding that comes from "common vocabularies and common hopes." The idea of a vocabulary is reminiscent of the work of C. Wright Mills on "vocabularies of motive." For Mills, society provides structure on how to move forward when we are stuck: "*a motive tends to be one which is to the actor and to other members of a situation an unquestioned answer to questions concerning social and lingual conduct*" [59]. There is room for uncertainty here; Rorty [1]—drawing on Peirce in this instance—points out that "leaving room for doubt does not paralyze action." Uncertainty, questioning, and doubt are what oftentimes move us forward. The whole enterprise of what Rorty speaks of as the "language of moral deliberation" is entirely contingent, and as such, one's conscience, community, and hopes are also contingent [57]. The vocabularies of Rorty and Mills emerge from action, and in turn structure subsequent action in a processual fashion. The community is a space for social growth, Rorty [60] tells us, acting as what Mary Parker Follett [61], another pragmatist, calls a "dynamo station" generating ways to move forward and act creatively. Rorty sees action as potentially life-changing: "The work in question is that of enlarging oneself. That requires being ready to be bowled over by tomorrow's experiences" [62].

Following from this comes the idea that we must rely on relations with others if society is going to grow, in Deweyan fashion, toward a more democratic community. In other words, the burden is on us to make things work in society. We cannot just sit around envisioning and hoping for a better community to come along. As Rorty [3] points out, "Dewey wanted Americans to share a civic religion that substituted utopian striving for claims to theological knowledge." But we are moving toward a new social situation, at least in Rorty's [63] view, where we eschew the notion that there is something to rely on *beyond* the reciprocity and solidarity that emerge out of human experience:

> The democratic community of Dewey's dreams is a community in which nobody imagines that. It is a community in which everybody thinks that it is human solidarity, rather than knowledge of something not merely human, that really matters. The actually existing approximations to such a fully democratic, fully secular community now seem to me the greatest achievements of our species.

Rorty points out that "democracy is not itself an absolute. It is simply the best means to the greatest human happiness that we have been able to imagine so far" [64]. Robbins [65] argues that Rorty's democratic community is very much tied to experimentalism and the creativity of action: "The greatness of a democratic system of governance, therefore, is not is guarantee of the actualization of ideals but its recognition of any political system as a work in progress."

Our life and our community are continually in progress. But, Rorty tells us that "to retain social hope, members of such a society need to be able to tell themselves a story about how things might get better, and to see no insuperable obstacles to this story's coming true" [57]. The idea of telling stories is reminiscent of sociologist, Charles Tilly, who might be considered a pragmatist as well [66]. Tilly [67,68] tells us that the way we make sense of the world is by constructing stories that offer reasons as to why we do what we do. Tilly sees "standard stories," which are so prevalent in our society and in the social sciences, as limited by their reliance on the notion that social actors are self-directed, conscious entities. And they also avoid the introduction of the ironist's "radical doubt" [57], allowing the social glue to continue to work. In other words, we need those simple, standard stories that give us hope. True, actors may be buffeted by social forces, but there is a sense that they are (to some degree) able to alter their social trajectories and thereby possess some modicum of control over their own destinies. Tilly's work on stories contains an implicit criticism of the teleological intentionality of action contained in the means-ends dualism of most theories of action. As Tilly [67] points out, "few social processes actually have causal structures that conform to the logical requirements of standard stories. Most social processes involve unanticipated consequences, cumulative effects, indirect effects, and effects mediated by their social and physical environment, none of which fit the causal structure of standard stories." Stories make boundaries. They reconcile and make peace. They offer solace. They conceal (and thereby enable us to ignore potential obstacles). Tilly urges the social scientist to be suspicious of these kinds of stories and to hold them at arm's-length.

According to Tilly [67], we need to move beyond them in pursuit of the construction of what he calls "superior stories." Rorty appears (unintentionally) to have answered Tilly's call and does not fall in to the trap of teleology. We *can* have a story full of hope, but it is ever changing, re-writing itself as it moves along. Our morality does not come from some "divine" portion of our self, but rather is something that emerges out of practice, as "one more of Nature's 'experiments'" [57]. Here we find a strong connection between the social morality of Rorty and Addams; the moral code emerges through

action. Dewey [8] might have called Rorty's story one of "growth," in which we are trying to make ourselves better through social relations in the community: "improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing, [and] the end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation." As part of this growth, we develop what Rorty terms "a greater sensitivity" that helps with the process of "knowing how" and moves us away from the egotistical position of "knowing that" [62]. Rorty is clear that we do not have everything figured out, again showing affinities with Addams's idea that we are often perplexed, and are constantly trying to "know how" in the social world.

How to transform the situation simply at the level of ideas without action? Pragmatists from Peirce and Dewey to Rorty would likely say thinking is not enough. In the case of Addams, it is easy to see the link between social action and transformative growth. In the case of Rorty, it is clear at the level of ideas, but it is a bit more difficult in terms of his practice. Rorty would have been the first to acknowledge that he and his peers were not known for their actions, taking us back to the quote above in which he characterized academics as "spectators." This assessment, particularly when turned on Rorty himself, seems a bit strong and perhaps inaccurate Certainly, Rorty has been accused of moving away from experience in favor of a linguistic turn [69,70], resulting in what Kloppenberg characterizes as "rigid divisions" between the two positions [71]. The consequences of such a turn away from experience, according to Danisch, is a "missed opportunity" to further social democracy [70]. In his work, Rorty was very clear about the division between public and private spheres. We can see this theme in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* where he quips, "my private purposes, and the part of my final vocabulary which is not relevant to my public actions, are none of your business" [57]. Rorty is adamant that at the level of theory we cannot join the "quests" of self-creation and human solidarity into "a single vision." Their demands are "forever incommensurable." The best we can do is to let people "do as they please" as long as they do no harm. Justice, democracy, and human solidarity arise out of the practice of "argumentative exchange" in the public sphere [57]. And Rorty did step out of the ivory tower to engage in the arguments of national politics, perhaps allowing himself space to be an agent of change in the public sphere. Again, there are links here to Addams, particularly in terms of the idea of argumentative exchange. Addams and Rorty both tried to make change through national political engagement. However, Addams was able to bring about change at the local level as well. The deliberations at Hull-House seem to be just the kind of thing Rorty saw as important to generating human solidarity. Yet, Rorty himself did little at the level of experience to engage in similar practices in his day to day life. The public and private remained separate.

Pettegrew points to Rorty's public-private divide and argues Rorty did not manage to see a way past it. He offers "a corrective" to Rorty, asking us to consider the "isolation of self-interest in the hope of momentarily leaving it so that one is in a position conducive to free and unbiased decision-making" [72]. The implication is that with this kind of thinking comes a different kind of action moving past the public-private divide. We can see from the autobiographical portions of *Achieving Our Country* that Rorty was passionate about the Left and the notion of "constructing inspiring images of the country" [3]. Gross argues that Rorty developed the "intellectual self-concept of a leftist American patriot" from his parents and it "became reactivated in the 1970s in response to their deaths, the rise of the New Left, and other historical developments, and that its effects was to renew Rorty's commitment to American pragmatism" [73]. But his self-concept does not appear to have translated into any kind of experience

outside of writing and lecturing. Rorty talks passionately about the need for the Left to "form alliances with people outside the academy" but there is no record of him doing so in any concerted way himself outside of the political realm. Pettegrew [72] shows a few of examples Rorty "dropping down to the level of social experience," for example when he gave a lecture at a labor teach-in at Columbia University in 1996. However, this appears to be the exception rather than the rule. In fact, in the wake of the publication of *Achieving Our Country*, Rorty announced in an interview that, "Stupid as it sounds, I'm going to spend the next 12 months writing replies to critics" [74]. Lectures at teach-ins and brilliant replies to critics are important, but do not appear to be the kind of practices Rorty envisioned in his philosophy. Addams comes closer to the mark, and as such, might provide Rorty's ideas with some traction on the ground.

While Rorty's practice might have deviated somewhat from his vision of what the Left might do, he did have a significant impact on others (and contributed to his vision of social democracy) through education. Rorty was perhaps above all things a great teacher, primarily at Princeton and the University of Virginia. This kind of action is rarely counted as a sort of social provision, but it is essential to the humanist project of fostering social cohesion. What is a better example of reciprocal social relations than the give and take of teacher and student? For example, Greg Mankiw, Professor of Economics at Harvard University and former Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors to the U.S. President, cites Rorty as shaping his worldview as a first-year student at Princeton:

> Rorty's lectures were not flashy, but they were serious and deep. The popular lecturer seemed to want to entertain the students; Rorty was inviting them to think hard about the issues that he struggled with. […] I have not seen Rorty since leaving Princeton. In fact, the course was large enough and I was shy enough that I probably never spoke to him one on one. This is just another example of how a professor can profoundly affect a student he has never even met [75].

One might argue that Rorty's teaching was a moment in which he inspired students through his own self-creation, again sticking to the private realm. This might be so, as Rorty was primarily focused on his own self-cultivation and appears to have had little regard for others. He does not strike the observer as one who was overly "perplexed" about the lives of those in his community, save in the most abstract sense. However, this position does not consider the potential for perplexities and back-and-forth in the classroom. The sort of argumentative exchange that one can find in the spirited moments of a class discussion would certainly contribute to human solidarity and our ability to "know how." To have influenced the core thoughts of one who would eventually shape economic policy for the United States is only one of countless examples of Rorty's successful action as a teacher. And it certainly speaks to the potential for stories to emerge out of relations. True, Rorty may have kept his stories simple in an effort to avoid the introduction of the ironist's radical doubt. But in this example, Mankiw's social hope was transformed in a meaningful sense by Rorty's influence. Whether teacher, social worker, or elected official, what we *do* as members of society is of critical importance, Rorty tells us: "there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves" [47]. Put another way, Bernstein (a close contemporary of Rorty's) observes of Rorty's work that "there is a dominant theme that emerges repeatedly. *There is nothing that we can rely on but ourselves and our fellow human beings*" [76]. Agency, experience, and hope are intertwined, and the *potential* for growth is boundless.

4. Conclusions

Having briefly considered Addams and Rorty as pragmatists thinking about and acting upon the idea of making a difference in society, let us now turn to a consideration of them together. The backgrounds of Addams and Rorty are similar in many respects. As Gross [73] points out, "the story of Richard Rorty is […] one of class reproduction." Such is the case for Addams as well. Rorty was raised by middle-class intellectuals and Addams saw her social trajectory develop under the influence of her father, an Illinois State Senator. Both had access to a plethora of books and were exposed to art and philosophy as they grew up. This common ground, at least in the view of a sociologist, is not insignificant when considering their ideas together. Both were exposed to and focused on what I call the "American's Dilemma", though the national adjective could easily be replaced by others. How do we develop our values in the face of competing demands from the public and private spheres of social life? What ought we to do as social citizens as we move forward? Their awareness of this dilemma stems in part from the socialization at the hands of their parents. Neither Addams nor Rorty were satisfied with staying on what Addams called the "secluded byways" of life, working hard and raising a family, and maybe even enjoying a bit of the good life in the evenings. This is not to say they thought one should subsume oneself to the collective. Far from it! Rorty was adamant that self-creation was private, and secondary to helping others. Addams, too, was deeply protective of her private life, for all that she opened her home to the neighborhood. She battled with constant health problems and often had to step away from her work at Hull-House to manage her own care. However, this did not stop her from a constant effort to develop what Rorty would call her "final vocabulary of public action."

Rorty [47] points out that "no other American writers have offered so radical a suggestion for making our future different from our past, as have James and Dewey." A friendly amendment to this statement would include Jane Addams, and it is likely James and Dewey would agree. After all, they were both heavily influenced by Addams's work. Further, both would agree that ideas by themselves, no matter how "radical," do not matter unless we put them into practice, and act differently. Rorty [3] was quite aware of the practical efforts of Jane Addams to promote social justice. However, he did not appear to see the connections between his work and the theory and practice of Addams. Rorty [3] reveals his mode of understanding Addams when he labels her as a "social worker" in *Achieving Our Country*. Rorty's description sells Addams short as a theorist, and is also inaccurate. While Addams influenced the development of social work, she was engaged in social provision before social work existed. In this sense, she was a pioneer. The same could be said for her theory, which clearly influenced the work of John Dewey, who was a frequent visitor to Hull-House and eventually sat on the Board of the Hull-House Association. Dewey's ideas on perplexity, expressed for example in *How We Think* [77], were very likely influenced by Addams's lectures in 1899 that eventually became *Democracy and Social Ethics* [4]. It is unfortunate that Rorty did not make connections in his writing between the actions of Addams and the ideas of James and Dewey. This is notable, given how grounded Rorty was in the "Deweyan requests for concrete alternatives and programs" [58].

Hull-House was as concrete as it could get in terms of offering a pragmatist program for fostering social provision and creating the social glue that Rorty viewed as critical to liberal democracy. Addams was engaging in practice grounded in pragmatism (and fostering social hope) before Dewey and James were dreaming about it. Their ideas were grounded in her practice. Perhaps this disconnect

is emblematic of the division between sociology and philosophy. Sociologists see pragmatism not just in terms of text and ideas, but also in terms of practice. Bernstein points out that one of Rorty's primary concerns was that "as philosophy becomes more academic, professionalized, and technical it becomes more and more remote from, and irrelevant to, the everyday concerns of human beings" [76]. Addams [4] shared Rorty's concern, pointing out that "social ethics is not attained by travelling a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road." Addams does offer a much more exciting and engaging vision of how social practice can connect us to others and further self-transformation. Her example is perhaps a way to bridge the gap between philosophy and everyday life that Rorty worried about.

American sociology, in particular, has its origins in solving social problems of everyday life that arose from industrialization coupled with massive immigration in the 19th century. The work of the Chicago School of Sociology emerged in large part from action designed to help other people in the city. Meliorism is one of the cornerstones of sociology. As such, discursive shifts or even a change in ontological commitments would not have satisfied Addams, nor would it be enough for most sociologists today focused on addressing social problems. However, one might say the same of many philosophers as well. Rorty [78] himself wanted more than just ideas, acknowledging the fairness of a critique of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [79] that "the sense that people have at the end of the book is that I should have answered the question 'What should philosophy do now' is probably my fault." But Rorty [3] was not sanguine about the ability of sociology to rise to the challenge of the social test: "I doubt that American sociology departments will ever again be the centers of social activism they were in the early decades of the century." Perhaps the answer lies in making connections? If the whole is bigger (and better) than the sum of its parts, sociology and philosophy might seek more interdisciplinary connections as a way of mapping ideas on to practice. The intellectual and practical dialogue between John Dewey and Jane Addams might serve as a model for how we might cross-pollinate in the future. In a sense, this is the theme of this paper—when we synthesize ideas and practice from seemingly disparate figures in the social sciences, we occasionally are able to help them more fully realize their potential.

I conclude this discussion, in pragmatist fashion, by turning to Peirce and James. The reader may be familiar with Peirce's pragmatist maxim, which is as follows: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" [80]. Peirce asks us to question our understanding of the world and any actions related to that understanding in terms of what William James [49] calls their "cash-value" in society. "What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true?" asks James [49]. Let's think of this paper as a search for what Rorty [47] terms "a hint of how our lives might be changed." The cash value of this paper is to show how Addams's work exemplifies the kind of practice that Rorty pointed to with his ideas. Rorty remained largely on the sidelines of everyday life outside of politics and academia. Despite the occasional lecture at a labor rally or opinion piece in a national newspaper, in his own life he failed to make the connections between private self-creation and fostering community solidarity. As we make our way through our daily lives, we are constantly faced with the question of what to do with our dilemmas. How do we help others while pursuing our private interests as well? Given that Rorty [64] like Addams rejected Truth, perhaps the only truth is that we should engage in reciprocal social relations:

I think of the philosophy common to Mill, Dewey, and Habermas as saying: Now that we have made politics secular, let us also make politics non-metaphysical. Let us give up even secular ways of trying to assure ourselves that there is something large and powerful on our side. Let us try to make progress simply though hope for cooperation with one another, rather than in hope of achieving universal truth or contact with the transcendent.

Cooperation and reciprocal relations, both at the level of ideas and practice, are the common ground of Rorty and Addams. While they diverged in terms of their own practice and the depth of their theoretical expression, they both were able to articulate a robust vision of how to move forward and foster social hope. It is this vision of the boundless potential of creative community practice and experience that will enable our society to grow into a fuller expression of liberal democracy and social morality.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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