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Emergent, Relational Revolution: What *More* Do We Have to Learn from Jane Addams?

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Abstract

What does Jane Addams's approach to social change offer to publicly engaged scholars and activists today? This essay explores several dimensions of Addams's work that have been misinterpreted and overlooked, putting these aspects of her work into conversation with research on endeavors to move higher education toward civic democratic engagement. The goal is to visualize opportunities and strategies for more inclusive and democratic engagement with issues across local, regional, and global communities. In particular, this essay explores how Addams's place-based, boundary-spanning methods of engagement provide strategies for more inclusive and collaborative philosophical activism, including (1) fostering and sustaining relationships across difference, (2) engaging with soft systems mapping, and (3) using synthetic imagination in crafting transdisciplinary engaged narratives. In conjunction with research on social change and creative innovation, Addams's work highlights the potential value of collaborative and democratic endeavors across difference as a means toward more radical imaginaries and relational revolution.

WHAT *ELSE* DO WE HAVE TO LEARN FROM JANE ADDAMS?

This essay examines what Jane Addams offers to publicly engaged scholars and activists today. It explores dimensions of Addams's work that have been misinterpreted and puts these aspects of her work into conversation with research on endeavors to move academics toward civic democratic engagement. The goal is to visualize opportunities and strategies for philosophers to engage with issues across local, regional, and global communities. In particular, this essay explores how Addams's place-based, boundary-spanning methods of engagement provide strategies for more inclusive and collaborative philosophical activism. The strategies highlighted include (1) fostering and sustaining relationships across difference, (2) engaging with soft systems mapping (a collaborative, visual process for generating a shared vision of complex interlocking systems), and (3) using synthetic imagination in crafting transdisciplinary engaged narratives.

A prolific writer and community organizer, Addams contributed to critical reform efforts within the United States across the first half of the twentieth century. She catalyzed the US settlement movement and served as an advisor to three US presidents. She

also devoted her life to advancing labor rights, immigrant rights, women's rights, and children's rights alongside advocating for peace and food justice. She published hundreds of articles and more than ten volumes reflecting on the social-philosophical issues she was addressing (Knight 2011) and was the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Her life's work, particularly when put in conversation with research on social change and creative innovation, highlights the potential value of collaborative and democratic endeavors across difference as a means toward more radical imaginaries and relational revolution (understood here as drastic, pervasive, and sustained—but not sudden or violent—transformation). That is, Addams's willingness to walk *within*, but also *between* diverse communities, to frame and reframe situations, and to test out her convictions can inform and reform the way philosophers in the academy engage in teaching, research, and service by making it far more inclusive and participatory as well as iterative and emergent. Given this and the rising interest in publicly engaged scholarship, I hope this essay might operate as a resource for transforming academic endeavors so they are more inclusive and responsive to issues across diverse communities.[1]

On the surface, this project may seem unnecessary, redundant, or even problematic. For more than a hundred years, many have been writing about—and enacting dimensions of—Addams's methods for social change (Linn 1935; Levine 1971; Deegan 1988a; Seigfried 1996; Elshtain 2002; Knight 2005; Nackenoff 2009; Fischer 2020). Much still needs to be learned by exploring the boundary-spanning philosophical activism of those whose voices have been excluded and marginalized. In addition to there already being a long line of scholarship and activism inspired by Addams, she herself warned that it is dangerous to seek "the advice of those who are no longer in touch with the living world" (Addams 1932, 131–32).

How, then, can this piece be justified? For starters, few have thoroughly situated Addams's approach within its time and place while *also* carefully situating their own interpretations (including me). Given her impact across a variety of sectors (for example, government, nonprofit, education, and so on) and disciplines (sociology, philosophy, food studies, peace studies, community engagement, and so forth), cursory readings can lead to problematic misappropriations of her work. Responding to this problem, *Jane Addams's Evolutionary Theorizing* carefully and thoroughly situates Addams's early work and by doing so explicates a number of strategies for enhancing efforts toward civic democratic engagement both outside of and within higher education that have not been fully visualized by others (Fischer 2020). These strategies are noted next and put into conversation with the research on social innovation and democratic engagement. The connections between these fields visualize the potential value of relational meliorism across difference for sparking radical imaginaries and incremental revolution.

STRATEGIES FOR PUBLICLY ENGAGED PHILOSOPHERS

I. Fostering and Sustaining Relationships across Difference: Humbly Situating among and between Different Communities

Situating ourselves among and between diverse communities is one of the first strategies academics can learn from Jane Addams. She occupied a particularly unique position within her place and time. As a white, relatively wealthy, US citizen connected to spheres of power, her unearned privileges were many. As a woman living outside the bounds of many early twentieth century expectations, she also resisted pressures to

live within narrow, discriminatory frameworks. She harnessed the power she did have in order to design a radically different life path, ultimately co-designing with an astoundingly diverse array of others.

According to Addams scholar Marilyn Fischer, Addams not only sought to learn from international reformers and academics, she also sought to learn from her neighbors (Fischer 2020). She believed that being together across diverse spaces was necessary not only for capturing the complexities of each situation, but also for prompting the urge and the wherewithal to organize in order to address social injustices (Addams 1896b, 149). By situating across diverse spaces, we come to know others in an embodied and relational manner; when we move with them through time and space, we generate opportunities to listen carefully, gaining the chance to more fully understand their current realities and future goals (Addams 2002). Fischer emphasizes that, for Addams, "the particular angle of vision gained through personal engagement in the situation is…essential to carrying out ethical deliberation" (Fischer 2020, 48).

Seeing our isolation from one another as a core contributor to our problems, Addams devoted her energy to fostering democratic social relations "by forgings webs of affiliation" (Fischer 2020, 65) with those who hold to "*differing conceptions of the good*" (111). She situated Hull House at a nexus between different communities and opened space for these communities to come together. In fact, her commitment to relationships across difference led her to believe that it is just as immoral to invite only those who live and think like we do to our social gatherings as is full-scale bribery. For instance, when confronting rampant political corruption in Chicago, Addams used this approach in order to shift the focus from blaming corrupt leaders and neighborhood residents for their willingness to give and receive bribes, toward recognizing how *all* are involved in this corruption. She points out how the privileges that critical reformers maintained—including their wealth and distance from the situations that neighborhood residents were confronting—enabled them to easily reject bribes and place blame on those who accepted them (and could not avoid the very serious consequences of refusing to do so) (110). We cannot, according to Addams, fulfill our responsibility to the community without consistent and sustained interactions.

However, situating oneself across diverse communities is not a strategy for coalition-building if it is not also accompanied by a strong dose of humility and a willingness to be transformed over time (Elshtain 1998; Addams 2007; Hamington 2009; Whipps 2010). When we learn with diverse others, we open space for new understandings and creative, experimental transformation. It is both the starting point for self-critique and the means by which we cultivate social change. That is, being with and open to others over time can uncover implicit biases, reveal values in conflict, and foster relations of empathy (Whipps 2019). It can move us toward situated understandings of different people and enable shared visions of a world with one another that diverge from narrow frames and dominant tropes.[2]

The strain and tension inherent to this work makes withdrawing from such spaces particularly tempting; and this temptation to retreat forecloses opportunities for genuine transformation. This is why it is especially critical to generate opportunities for sustained relationships across differences. Long-term commitments to be with diverse others create the space and time necessary for deconstructing various positionalities and together paving pathways toward creative and collaborative action. Addams uncovered, for example, that *being-together-across* had the power to catalyze collective and effective union-organizing among various constituencies. These workers held vastly different social identities and were in direct competition with one another for jobs

(Addams 2007, 142). To find a way forward together, they needed both shared space and time to see one another fully. In relationships we are more likely to endure the strain, the uncertainties, and the tensions long enough to cultivate pathways forward.

Addams worked alongside Ida B. Wells-Barnett, W. E. B. Du Bois, and others in order to advocate for change. Her willingness to walk *within*, but also *between*, diverse communities and to test out her convictions in relationships created space, networks, and strategies that supported activist scholarship across communities. For instance, when racism foreclosed his entry into formal academic structures, Du Bois found a network of support and a set of strategies for his work in part through his relationship with Addams and other Hull House residents. These collaborations provided inspiration for *The Philadelphia Negro* and helped to support the founding of the NAACP (Deegan 2002; 2008b).

Addams's efforts can inform and reform the way philosophers (and others) in the academy engage in teaching, research, and service. I suggest that her work can inspire far more inclusive and participatory as well as iterative and emergent teaching and scholarship. For instance, this approach could reframe service as a critical opportunity to situate oneself in an embodied and relational way across diverse communities. According to Eric Hartman and his colleagues, the resultant increase in diverse spaces alongside honest engagement within the tensions can spotlight "the problematic nature of many of our sector's entrenched practices, calling us to consider new ways of thinking and operating that are ultimately even more inclusive through deep engagement with questions of equity" (Hartman et al. 2020, 37). Sustained service, for Addams, is essential for understanding the context-bound specificities in our social systems. Insights from these burgeoning relationships could filter into course design, pedagogy, and research projects, encouraging academics to pursue a situated approach. Teachers could, for instance, shift the space within which they facilitate learning, finding opportunities to learn with and in our communities, thereby contributing to the transformation of what has historically counted as "knowledge" within university structures. Inviting interested stakeholders into the classroom along with a willingness to move the classroom into public spaces is an obvious first step (Lake 2018).

These insights are filtering into calls for education to be less siloed and hierarchical and more relational and place-based (Daynes and Longo 2004; Bandy et al. 2018). They also begin from an assumption that there is "no neutral, objective point from which to obtain this understanding." They assume that we can deepen our understanding only from "inside the process, experiencing the confusions and perplexities" (Fischer 2020, 121). Just as Addams sought to leverage "the full ecology" available to her to address shared problems, this form of learning "transcends the boundaries of the classroom" and the "teacher–learner dichotomy" in order to create space for co-transformative, active learning (Daynes and Longo 2004, 62). This form of learning also inherently transcends disciplines and departments, requiring a willingness to partner with an array of others. For instance, this might mean that syllabi, project descriptions, and learning outcomes are co-constructed with communities and students over time (Fauvel, Lake, and Sisson 2017). Explored next, this requires the willingness to situate oneself in space and time, to "map" the complexities of the present.

II. Mapping the Hidden Complexities: Beyond Service toward Systems Change

For Addams, sustaining relationships across difference and movement between diverse communities must be accompanied by a willingness to trace "the geographical and

historical dimensions of social problems" (Fischer 2020, 68). We cannot come to understand the present situation through simply "being within it." We must also trace its historical and geographical axes. For example, in "Domestic Service and the Family Claim," Addams maps the complexities of household service by listening to and working alongside those affected and by tracing their historical complexities (Addams 1894). She pursues this same approach to the complexities surrounding industrialization in a "Belated Industry" (1896a). In doing so she situated "the home within the larger frame of community life" and shifted the loci of the problem as one that belonged "to the community as a whole" (Fischer 2020, 76).

Though many Addams scholars have failed to emphasize the centrality of this work, a number *have* highlighted this critical approach to her philosophical activism, including Marilyn Fischer, Jen Fenton, Regina Leffers, Charlene Seigfried, and Kathryn Sklar (Sklar 1991; Leffers 1993; Seigfried 2013; Fenton 2019; Fischer 2020). Leffers, for instance, notes that Addams traced the history of present conditions. She did not simply see the stranger passing by in the "nicely finished suit," she also intentionally aimed to be cognizant of "the woman who must have finished that suit in a rank and dingy basement" (Leffers 1993, 69). Sklar highlights the efforts of Hull House to conduct geographical mapping. Addams and Hull House residents painstakingly documented the complexities of life in the surrounding neighborhoods. Their efforts led to the creation of social surveys designed to visualize the conditions across space and inform more responsive and timely social policy. In fact, Hull House's maps and papers are included in the early social-mapping work noted by Sklar (Sklar 1991).

Addams believed that mapping out the terrain along these axes was essential for uncovering how we might move forward *together*. When we intentionally try to understand the context under which the situation has emerged (that is, when we trace the historical and geographical axes), we can start to uncover the root systems and thus potential pathways for addressing the situation (Fischer 2020, 76). Although an exhausting and challenging endeavor to undertake, mapping the geographical and historical terrain is essential. From within our own limited frameworks we are often *not* consciously aware of these complex interdependencies. Studies show we are also highly susceptible to the "single story," to incomplete and misleading narratives of people unlike ourselves (Calhoun 2004; Scheman et al. 2008; Adichie 2009). A number of effective visioning techniques have been developed in response to the need for and challenges of such mapping. I detail two such methods next.

Collaborative mapping has been designed to help diverse groups visualize together what they see within a complex situation. Emerging from soft systems thinking (Checkland 1999), this approach requires groups to identify the people, places, institutions, and nonhuman life involved in complex challenges as well as the often hidden connections among them (Crosby, Fam, and Lopes 2018). It focuses especially on including the voices of those directly affected by the issue and fosters opportunities for co-learning (Voinov and Bousquet 2010). Collaborative mapping can help generate an awareness of blind spots and open space for the possibility of creating a more comprehensive visual. For instance, at the beginning of collaborative engagement projects, this process can be used to explore how various entities (for example, community, education, social, civic, media, business, and so on) are affecting—and being affected by—the current situation. Such maps also encourage the groups to examine the experiences, values, and skills various individuals and groups bring to the situation, what power they hold, and how they might be included in the reflective-action process. This process

helps to make assumptions transparent and cue collaborators to the potential for exclusionary practices.

When used iteratively, such maps can encourage flexible adjustments in the process. For instance, after committing to an action step, participants can document the intended and unintended effects of an intervention across all stakeholders. And, by triangulating insights, they can capture changes in activities, behavior, and relationships (Wilson-Grau and Britt 2013). Such practices help expose what may appear to be progress from one angle as a *shifting* of the problem and thereby encourage groups to loosen their reliance on singular interventions.[3]

Whereas collaborative mapping is a tool for visualizing the geographical terrain of situations across diverse perspectives, the second method, *service ecosystem design*, is a process for designing and testing systemic interventions with others. Addams's methods also enact these practices. Service ecosystem design is an intentional shifting away from creating products and services *for* others, toward designing systems *with* others. The goal is to foster "the emergence of value-in-context" through intentionally and collectively shaping social structures and processes (Vink 2019, 116). This form of design requires situating oneself within the larger systems in which one resides. Through reflexive feedback loops, it seeks to visualize hidden assumptions and then prompt an exploration of alternative options for redesigning internal and external systems in relationship with others.

For example, service ecosystem designers in Norway intentionally redesigned how primary-care professionals interacted with patients by prototyping in-home visits and thus shifting the ecosystem of their interactions. The goal was to shift providers from their own institutional settings into patients' homes to learn more about the care that patients were receiving and their living conditions. Moving into patients' spaces, seeing their lives in context, and listening to them more openly quickly shifted providers' perceptions. As Vink writes, "seeing the set-up, smelling the smells, feeling what their furniture felt like, and hearing the patients' stories, healthcare staff began to understand care and chronic illness from another perspective" (16). This experience not only disrupted providers' assumptions, it also created a "groundswell of actors working to disrupt the existing role of the patient and change widespread norms concerning decision-making during care" (18). Some went on to initiate "a variety of large-scale processes of practice and policy change to help realize a new role for patients as healthcare partners" (18). The burgeoning relationships fostered by these interactions also shifted patients' perspectives. Vink shows that patients' sense of agency increased via these interactions, shifting how patients interacted with their providers and their healthcare plan. Patients felt they "had more influence over decision-making" within their care plan, and this sense of power shifted the ways they were engaging with providers (18). Over time, the provider and the patient together shifted "the entrenched rules around how patient and provider interactions should be carried out" (18). Situated and relational designing-with (service ecosystem design) can reveal the often hidden structures under which we are operating, help us confront (instead of avoid) conflicting perspectives, and encourage us to adjust through iterative prototyping (11).

Hull House created a critical space for supporting emergent and inclusive design of structures and processes that better support "all sides of the neighborhood life" (Addams 2002, 32). Early failures at designing *for* others—like those focused on providing healthy foods and art—rapidly evolved into the creation and implementation of programs, advocacy efforts, and campaigns that emerged from the surrounding community and were designed in partnership. With regard to Hull House, it created critical

opportunities for shared change-making by offering space for disparate city residents to meet; it was an essential bridge for generating the potential for more inclusive and responsive coaction. Indeed, *Twenty Years at Hull House* is full of examples of collaborative efforts among Hull House residents, their neighbors, various city organizations, and surrounding institutions (Addams 1910/1990).

Again, philosophers interested in engaging more directly in and with public issues can leverage these insights into the service opportunities they choose, the way they approach the construction of curriculum, and in their approach to scholarship. The next strategy we can learn from Addams can leverage lessons learned from such mapping in order to spark public interest in collaboratively reimagining and recreating ecosystems.

III. Practicing Synthetic Imagination: Co-creating Transdisciplinary Narratives

Fischer diagnoses Addams's methodology as one of "synthetic imagination," arguing that narrative enabled her to *synthesize* the interconnected complexities of the ecosystem around her. This work required both deep immersion and imagination (Fischer 2020, 64). Immersion was (and is) necessary for seeing the complex interdependencies and evolving complexities; imagination is necessary for generating the narrative thread through such complexities. Thus, for Addams, narrative is a methodology for visualizing the physical, mental, and emotional experiences within complex social realities and for sparking opportunities that might lead to social change.

Addams's narratives are not simple stories; they are "literary creations" (Fischer 2020, 45) intentionally crafted to encourage her readers to "shift" their "moral perceptions" (Fischer 2020, 163). She hoped her readers would reconsider how they think, feel, and respond to these situations. Like María Lugones's world-traveling (Lugones 2003), Addams's writings sought to prompt a shift from states of denial, blame, or excuse-making toward relational accountability. For example, Addams used this approach to shift how those with privileged identities placed blame for rampant political corruption. Many conversations of the time centered blame on neighborhood residents for their willingness to receive bribes from officials, but Addams highlighted how the privileges that reformers enjoyed both isolated them from the need to accept bribes and made it all too easy to assign blame to others (Fischer 2020, 110). In effect, Addams harnessed synthetic imagination in order to "reconceptualize and relocate" social problems (Fischer 2020, 111).

Addams's use of synthetic imagination can prompt academics to critically examine the processes by which we construct our work. As it stands, we have created sharp, artificial divides between academic and nonacademic products and activities. We have also pursued a one-way flow of knowledge-creation and application, from the instructor to the student and from the ivory tower into the community. How might we instead situate ourselves within and across diverse communities in order to uncover and co-create evocative narratives? When we reconsider what counts as a product of our teaching, service, and research, we open space for aligning these aspects of our work with student and public perspectives in mind. This moves teaching toward an emergent, relational act of co-creation with others (Hartlep et al. 2019; Lake 2018). As others have shown, it can also shift student perceptions of themselves as individuals in relation with the community (Freire 1970; Hernandez 2020).

Taking inspiration from this model, philosophers could work with "constituency-led efforts" to "identify knowledge projects," generate shared goals, and marshal "higher

education resources that can support the projects" (Stoecker 2016, 169 and 171). Philosophers might also support such efforts as facilitators and liaisons (Dewey 1981; Lake and Thompson 2018), project- and field-based negotiators or bureaucrats (Frodeman 2014; Frodeman and Briggle 2016), and activists (Boggs 1998). Additional examples can be found through reviewing the work of the Society of Philosophers in America, the Engaged Philosophy Internship Program at Michigan State University, the *Public Philosophy Journal*, the Philosophy Bakes Bread podcast, and others.[4]

This assumes that the university should be a space not simply to create knowledge, but to *mobilize* it in relationship with "outside" actors. It assumes the university can position itself more equitably and inclusively within an "eco-system of knowledge" (Lynton 1996, 10). Within this framing, knowledge ceases to "move from the locus of research to the place of application, from scholar to practitioner, teacher to student, expert to client" and begins to move through messy, iterative feedback loops that trigger "new explorations and new syntheses" (Saltmarsh 2019, 42). We can point with hope to some current examples within higher education. Michigan State University's College of Arts and Letters, for example, has made some strides toward this approach, requiring faculty to consider how they are "sharing knowledge," "expanding opportunity," and "contributing to greater transparency and accelerating creativity." They have created a visual model that emphasizes equity and reciprocity as well as mentorship (http://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:23681/), suggesting that we need to cease measuring teaching, research, and service as ends in themselves and begin measuring their broader impacts.

WHAT MIGHT THESE STRATEGIES REALLY DO FOR US?

Addams moved between an impressive array of disciplinary fields and communities in order to "keep science tethered to the world of practical activity" (Fischer 2020, 150), synthesize her insights, and apply them to public issues. This analysis offers academics an array of new approaches to explore in their own work. To begin, it calls on academics interested in engaging their communities *not* to "impose their own vision" through disciplinarily framed, programmatic, or institutional goals, but to co-create and work on initiatives emerging in their own time and place. These strategies foster more inclusive, relational, and emergent publicly engaged scholarship. They open pathways toward what Grace Lee Boggs has labeled radical imaginaries. They also spark opportunities for what I have begun to think of as "relational revolution," a hypothesis that drastic, pervasive, and sustained—but not sudden or violent—transformation requires relationships across difference, a willingness to sit in the tensions and ambiguities, to risk being wrong. They prompt us to move toward what Steven Johnson has referred to as the "adjacent possible," creative and viable possible futures that hover at the edge of our present (Johnson 2010, 31).

Hull House settlement was a space to live out strategies for more embodied and imaginative "habits of caring" across differences in order to co-create a better society (Hamington 2004, 92–93). Addams's writings were narratives designed to do the same by transcending the limitations of physical space (Fenton 2019). And given that methods for thinking and strategies for social change are limited by implicit bias, cultural tropes, and individual habitudes, it is particularly important that we seek to spark as much creative collaboration as we can.[5]

Table 1. Strategies for Engagement

Strategy	Fischer on Addams	Public Engagement
Fostering and sustaining relationships across difference: Humbly situating among and between different communities	Propinquity	Begin in and with public concerns. Link service to research and teaching
Engaging with soft systems mapping: Beyond service toward systems change	Historical and geographical mapping	Explore potential outcomes/impacts with diverse stakeholders
Practicing synthetic imagination: Co-creating transdisciplinary narratives	Sympathetic understanding, synthetic imagination, and rhetorical framing	Value diverse outcomes

Collectively, the strategies reviewed in Table 1 open space for creative, relational thinking alongside pathways for collective action. Psychologists, sociologists, and historians studying creativity, social change, and innovation have in recent years been highlighting the need for the strategies noted here. According to Pierre-Michel Menger and Steven Johnson, for instance, creative action requires a willingness to wade into uncertainty (Menger 2001; Johnson 2010). In addition, a host of researchers have found that a willingness to engage in conflict, build and sustain trust, collaborate across difference, deviate from standard tropes, risk failure, and adjust one's pathway based on setbacks is critical (Farrell 2001; Parker and Hackett 2012; Liedtka and Bahr 2019). Researchers have also consistently shown that sustainable and transformative innovation requires some level of legitimization by others (Burns, Machado, and Corte 2015; Cattani, Ferriani, and Colucci 2015). And legitimizing innovation requires relationships across differences that are sustained over time (see Johnson 2010).

Placing this research in relationship with the strategies noted in Table 1 highlights the potential value of a feminist-pragmatist commitment to meliorism when it emerges from sustained relationships across difference. Defined as a living hypothesis that continuous "observation and experience" (Hildrebrand 2013, 59) can be harnessed to "effect change to make the world better" (Whipps 2019, 317), meliorism has been a consistent source of critique. Incremental improvements, critics worry, can be harnessed as convenient facades that cover over and thus sustain root injustices.

However, placing recent work on Addams alongside research on creativity and social change highlights the potential value in a meliorist approach that is also grounded in relationships across diverse communities (Whipps 2019; Fenton 2019; Fischer 2020). The cultivation of such relationships alongside the commitment to fallibilism can spark radically new ways of thinking and acting in the world. Empathetic listening, on-the-ground observation, and iteratively defining the situation with those who are most directly affected can encourage the development of a "hybrid observer" (Huutoniemi 2015, 5), a collaborative actor, and a flexible cultivator (Liedtka and Bahr 2019). It is worth noting that the strategies uncovered in this article are foundational to the high-impact learning practices now endorsed as effective by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (Kuh 2008).[6]

FROM REFORM OR REVOLUTION TO RELATIONAL REVOLUTION

All of this—Fischer's contextualization of Addams's work alongside research on the history of innovation—puts into question the value of debates about how we move toward a more just world. Many conversations around reform and revolution characterize these approaches to social change as mutually exclusive. Discussions of service, for example, are contrasted with organizing work; and scholarship has been artificially separated from advocacy efforts. In contrast, this reading of Addams explores the value of opening pathways toward relational revolution in place of divisive dead ends. Take, for example, a recent study overseen by Stanford University. In 2017, their "Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement" study revealed that today's undergraduate students are most interested in direct service, defined as efforts that aim to address the immediate needs of others through direct contact (medical clinics, food-distribution efforts, and so on). Many students in this survey also felt direct service was the *best way to effect change*. The study presented more than 3,000 students across more than thirty-five public and private institutions with an array of social-change opportunities, asking them to consider which they felt would have the most effect on the world. Options included community-engaged learning, organizing, activism, philanthropy, policy and governance work, social entrepreneurship, and direct service. Direct service was, for many, the type of social-change work they had the most experience with and the type they were most interested in supporting.[7]

Given that direct service often fails to dig into the historical and systematic nature of oppression, these findings are disturbing and disheartening, seeming to perpetuate extremely problematic, oppressive, and patriarchal savior practices and mentalities. Yet these readings of Addams's approach to social change contextualize the study in a different light. In conjunction with recent research on decolonial engagement practices and creative co-action, these findings also reveal opportunities to reframe some service practices as spaces to be with, work with, and learn with communities (Alessandri 2019; Hernandez 2020). They also open opportunities to inclusively map the geographical and historical dimensions of the situation, sustain engagement across diverse spaces, collaboratively construct course outcomes in relationship with students and communities, and encourage diverse course "products" that hold space for narrative.

THE EASE AND THE PERILS OF MISREADING

I have engaged with Addams's work for almost two decades, but a number of more situated analyses of her work have helped me see how frequently Addams has been misinterpreted and misappropriated (Fischer 2014; Seigfried 1996, 2013; Fischer 2020; Whipps 2020). Unfortunately, such misinterpretations (both my own and others') are both too easy and highly problematic. Many of these misinterpretations emerge from failing to place Addams's writings within their time and place (that is, their "penumbra of associations"). Indeed, a number of Addams scholars have shown that historians and biographers of Addams have themselves failed to accurately interpret her work (Deegan 1988a; Seigfried 1996; Fischer 2020).

In the reader's defense, Addams rarely explicitly wrote about how she was affected by her outreach efforts and her relationships with diverse others, nor did she often cite where her ideas were coming from (a practice not common at the time). She also harnessed a wide array of methodologies, theories, and strategies from the early twentieth

century in order to craft complex narratives intended to open opportunities for transformation within particular moments and for particular audiences. The evolving nature of language and the shifting understanding of science and culture add to the challenge of accurately understanding Addams's writings. In sum, situating her work requires a depth of historical and contextual awareness that the casual, modern-day reader is unlikely to possess (or pursue).

Such easy misinterpretations have led to simplistic disparagements and quick dismissals, and this is problematic precisely because Addams's boundary-spanning relational activism can generate shared visions and resilient responses to our social challenges.

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Thus, despite the wealth of prior scholarship on Jane Addams, additional explication of her work could act as a powerful source for catalyzing effective philosophical activism emerging from within, but also outside of academic spaces. Future efforts that more fully situate Addams within the milieu of her time and space could further help current philosophical activists imagine how they might resiliently apply potentially fruitful approaches to their own work today.

As a "theorist and a social reform activist" (Fischer 2020, 146), Addams provides philosophers committed to collectively addressing social challenges with important clues about how we might move our work toward activism. This more nuanced and situated understanding has enhanced my own work and, I hope, might offer guidance to academic philosophers exploring more inclusive and responsive approaches to philosophical activism. In particular, these threads visualize the need to map the historical and geographical axes of situations with diverse others and create spaces for transdisciplinary narratives. In conjunction with the emergence of research from a variety of fields, it highlights the potential value of relational, iterative co-creation for cultivating innovative responses that address systemic barriers.

Notes

1 I explore the merits of this approach as an engaged philosopher, associate professor, and a director of a new center trying to figure out how to do this work more inclusively. I also explore these threads as a white, cisgender woman and a feminist pragmatist, as someone both sympathetic to—and concerned by—a move toward democratic engagement within higher education.

2 Interpretations of Addams's commitment to being-with and sympathetic understanding have been another source of controversy and misinterpretation because of a failure to situate Addams's work. Judy Whipps writes that it is essential that we understand the different meanings of *sympathy* and *empathy* over time. Whipps traces the evolution of these words, noting that empathy did not arise until 1909. Addams's use of *sympathetic understanding* conveys what we mean today when we talk about "coming alongside others and working to understand their lived experience as a basis of democratic change" (Whipps 2019, 319).

3 A range of methods supports this shift toward a more inclusive, situated, and relational praxis, including intergroup dialogue, participatory action practices, systems thinking, collaborative modeling, and design thinking. For more, see the Riddle and Hanneman 2005. Valuable resources can also be found through the Innovations in Collaborative Modeling site: http://modeling.outreach.msu.edu/about.

4 The *Public Philosophy Journal*, for instance, invites a back and forth, dialogical, and open review process that includes the voices of an array of stakeholders and interested individuals. It also shares its revising process openly, visualizing the process in a more transparent and relational format.

5 Although Addams used the phrase *sympathetic understanding* and scholars today use the word *empathy*, Whipps makes it clear that the intentions behind both approaches are in alignment (Whipps 2019). *Empathy* is a newer term, arising in the early twentieth century.

6 First-year and common intellectual experiences, along with learning communities, collaborative projects, and internships, for instance, all open space for sustained relational work. Writing-intensive courses, undergraduate research, global experiences, and community-based learning—at their best—also prompt systems mapping work and leverage the power of narrative reflection and philosophical analysis to spark opportunities for transformative action.

7 See https://haas.stanford.edu/community/pathways-public-service-and-civic-engagement-international-working-group for further information.

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