

March 30, 2009

**“Cultural Contradictions: Jane Addams’s Struggles with the
Life of Art and the Art of Life”
A Public Lecture**

Abstract

This paper focuses on the struggles of Jane Addams to reconcile the importance given to the pursuit of culture, in the restricted sense of literature and the fine arts, in her own education and social circles, with her efforts to reform society and participate in culture in the larger sense. It is an arena in which Addams first worked through the deep and troubling divisions between theory and practice and the prevalence of biases due to class differences and reveals her developing pragmatist understanding of philosophy as a critique of culture. Addams concludes that both areas of culture badly need reform and that culture in the sense of the fine arts, which she had experienced as a young woman as distancing herself from more useful engagements with the world, can also provide welcome avenues to, and instruments for, that reform.