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Liberalism and the Atlantic World

Alan S. Kahan

Liberalism can be considered the first truly Atlantic ideology, in spite of undeniable national variations. Two moments in its history will be discussed: the birth of liberalism as a political formation, with a particular focus on Argentina, and the configuration of a new liberalism around 1900, as embodied by Jane Addams.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alan S. Kahan

Professor of British Civilization · Département d'études anglophones / Centre d'histoire culturelle des sociétés contemporaines · Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines · France

Alan S. Kahan received his Ph.D. in History from The University of Chicago in 1987. He is currently working on a history and theory of “democratic liberalism”, as opposed to the “liberal democracy” currently dominant. More information and some amusing quotations can be found at https://sites.google.com/site/alankahan/

This essay could easily consume its allotted space in definitions of "liberalism" and "Atlantic world." Instead, it will avoid them to the extent possible, and concentrate on (hopefully) suggestive examples of transatlantic liberalism. The circulation of liberals, liberal ideas, and liberal practices across and around the Atlantic Ocean begins as soon as, indeed before, the word "liberal" takes on political meaning. That

was once said to have happened in Spain around 1810-12. More recently it has been attributed to Benjamin Constant in France around 1795. More important than the place or the exact date is the crystallization of an Atlantic liberalism, a process ongoing since the American Revolution.

The fundamental problem liberalism addresses is fear. Its project is to make a world in which people need not be afraid of arbitrary power. In the late eighteenth-century liberal mind, the problem of arbitrary power was embodied in revolution and reaction, in Jacobins and Napoleons. Liberalism was the solution, a solution meant to avoid both Jacobin anarchy and Napoleonic despotism, and to enable civil society and the groups and individuals who composed it to flourish. Liberals strove to understand what a supportive political, economic, and moral/religious environment for liberalism would look like, and how to bring it about in the circumstances in which they found themselves. These varied radically from London to Paris, and from Port-au-Prince to Buenos Aires. This problem is Atlantic from the beginning, starting in America in 1776, crossing the water to France in 1789, returning to Haiti in 1791, and then spreading southward to Latin America.

Liberalism is thus the first truly Atlantic ideology unless one wishes to give that honor to Christianity. Unlike Christianity however, whose direction of spread, from Europe to Africa and the Americas, is clear, liberalism washes back and forth across the ocean in such a manner that it is hard to tell where the wave begins. The Americans who made their revolution in 1776 were European settlers and their descendants, whose ideas were a combination of originality and borrowing from European models in proportions impossible to untangle. The Americans exercised an influence on Europe, and were in turn subject to the influence of the French Revolution, which itself was made in full awareness of the American example. Down to the present day the liberalisms of North America and Europe remain in a state of constant communication, and mutual import and export.

By contrast, Latin America is predominantly an importer of both European and North American visions of liberalism, although North Americans and Europeans keep a close eye on developments there. But the intellectual/political trade deficit is not due to any lack of creativity or entrepreneurship — Latin American liberals are swift to create liberalisms that are distinctly Mexican, Colombian, Argentine, etc. Yet there are broad similarities among all the Atlantic liberalisms, as contemporaries recognize. For example, throughout the Atlantic worldliberals engaged in a struggle with the Catholic Church during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In predominantly Protestant nations like the United States, Catholicism represented an evil "other," embodied by immigrants, a struggle whose intensity varied, but which was ever-present. In a Latin America where Protestants were until recently a tiny minority, the Church encountered liberal anticlerical opposition.

Perhaps the most important similarity among Atlantic liberal that everywhere the majority of liberals rely on three pillars for support: freedom, markets, and morals, or to put it another way, politics, economics, and morality/religion, institutionalized in representative governments and constitutions, economic competition, and education in various forms. Only the details differ, although the differences within liberalism matter a great deal — a great deal more than there is space to discuss here.



Allegory of Independence (1834)

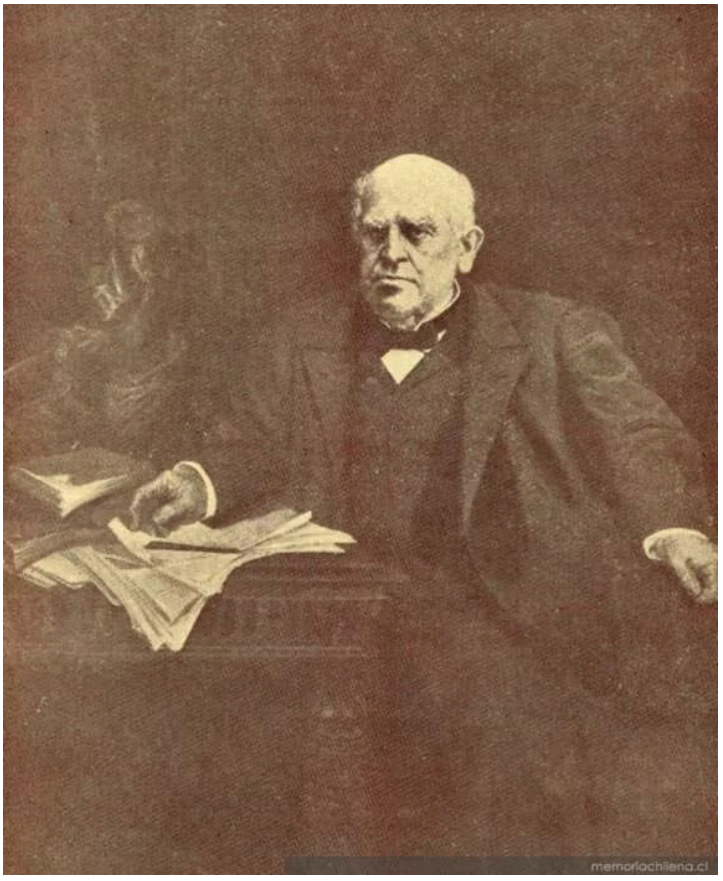
Source: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia de México

Two particular moments in the history of Atlantic liberalism illustrate some of its characteristic ebb and flow. The first is the birth of liberalism as a political formation, what has been described as the "Western constitutional moment between 1787 and 1830," [1] when liberals reacted to the Atlantic revolutions that began in 1776. This may be considered liberalism 1.0. Liberalism 2.0 was created when a new fear, the fear of poverty, overtook many liberals in the decades around 1900 and led to the creation of a "new liberalism."

An integral part of the "Western constitutional moment" was the wave of Latin American revolutions associated with independence, which together form "the third great revolution in the Western world, after the North American and the French," a revolution until recently often ignored or underestimated by scholars outside the region. Liberalism was as central to the responses to these revolutions in Latin America as it was in the United States and Europe. Everywhere, constitutions were written — more than 60 in Europe alone before 1820, and another 80 in the period 1820-50, in both Europe and the Americas. Here Argentine liberalism, leading up to the liberal constitution of 1853, is used to show the Atlantic nature of Liberalism 1.0: the development of constitutional and representative government as a means of warding off revolutions and reactions and limiting arbitrary power.

Argentine Liberalism in a Constitutive Moment: Alberdi and Sarmiento

Because liberals have so often perceived power, and especially government power, as the chief cause people have to fear for their safety and freedom, liberalism is sometimes described as "in essence 'a philosophy of resistance to power.'" [2] In post-independence Latin America, states and civil society had to be constructed from a minimal base after the revolutions, and the initial problem was a power vacuum. As a result, liberalism was as much a philosophy for the organization of state power as of resistance to it. This was not in contradiction with liberalism, which sees as much a threat of arbitrary oppression in anarchy as in despotism. The Scottish stage theory of society, as developed by Adam Smith among others, includes the replacement of feudal anarchy by a central state in commercial societies, which Latin Americans, surrounded by warlords and *caudillos*, think an appropriate analogy to their situations. François Guizot's *History of Civilization in Europe*, a work very influential among Argentine liberals, also tells the story of liberalism as the organization of social power. Hence the tale told by the Argentine liberal leader Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, his classic *Facundo: Or, Civilization and Barbarism*, about the liberal struggle of civilization against barbarism in Argentina, is a very liberal story. It demonstrates the need to constitute a liberal power, a liberal government in a liberal society, before limiting it. Or rather the operations are simultaneous: the constitution of a liberal society and government will mean both the creation of power and the institutionalization of means to resist power, means that will not require revolution or reaction. The culmination will be a constitutional state.



Portrait of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento published in a 1938 edition of *Facundo*

Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Chile

Sarmiento's book is structured as the biography of an Argentine warlord, Juan Facundo Quiroga (1788-1835), but it is a highly literary and embellished account. It is also, from its opening account of Argentina's climate and geography — a deliberate reference to the opening of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, similar to that in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* — an analysis of Argentine society, and a program for Argentine political, economic, and moral development, the building up of the three pillars of liberalism. It is highly eclectic and thoroughly Atlantic in its inspirations, and in this as in much else Sarmiento is typical of Argentine and Latin American liberal constitutionalism. In the 1810s and 1820s, many in Latin America knew their Smith and Montesquieu, Sieyès, and Constant, along with the British, French, Spanish and United States constitutions (Federal and state) as well as the Federalist Papers. Sarmiento was among these.

Even more typical of his generation of Atlantic liberals, Sarmiento was a Romantic nationalist who thought the universalist rationalism of the Enlightenment outmoded, and added Victor Cousin, Guizot and above all Tocqueville to his reading list (he wrote a book attacking Rousseau's idea of a social contract, relying on Tocqueville and Edmund Burke). A member, like his later rival Juan Bautista Alberdi, of "Young Argentina," a group founded in emulation of Mazzini's "Young Europe," Sarmiento believed in the crucial importance of national circumstances and the formative power of institutions and education.

Facundo is less a biography and much more about its subtitle, the struggle between civilization and barbarism. This struggle is between two cultures, the barbaric, isolated, pastoral *gauchos*, late incarnations of the Spanish conquistadors (who represented an earlier stage of Scottish history, the pastoral); and the urban, educated, European, commercial civilization that is sooner or later destined to win. Commercial society is incarnated in the city of Buenos Aires, where people read Rousseau and Mably — alas. For the liberal Sarmiento, the revolutionary naiveté of the Enlightenment represented by Rousseau and Mably and represented in Argentina by the Unitario party must be overcome, as well as the barbarism of a previous stage of civilization. [3]

What Sarmiento means by this becomes apparent when he criticizes the Unitario politician Rivadavia for having failed because, wedded to Constant's view of liberal constitutionalism, he refused to exercise a strong executive power. But in Argentina, a strong executive power was needed because civilisation had not yet triumphed over barbarism. The remedy for barbarism is a strong liberal government that will develop civilization and establish a liberal society. Sarmiento's blueprint for a liberal society requires constitutional government. Nevertheless, that government must provide for a strong central authority, because in Argentina provincial power means feudal anarchy and barbarism. For Sarmiento, Constant's *Principles of Politics Applicable to All Governments* must be adapted to national circumstances. A series of political mistakes by naïve Enlightened revolutionaries like Rivadavia led to the temporary triumph of barbarism in Argentina, according to Sarmiento, and thus to the despotism incarnated by Facundo and his rival and political heir Juan Manuel de Rosas, dictator of Argentina from 1835 to 1852 (Sarmiento wrote *Facundo* from Chilean Exile in 1845). Sarmiento's rejection of both Rivadavia and Rosas is the Argentine version of the classic liberal war on two fronts, against revolution and reaction. [4]

For Sarmiento and the rest of budding Argentine liberalism after 1830, Tocqueville, Sismondi, Michelet and Guizot replace the "hollowness of the constitutionalism of Benjamin Constant" in Argentine liberal political thinking. [5] It is in their light that Sarmiento developed his program for Argentina. Along with a strong executive, a liberal Argentina required a market economy, including the elimination of internal tolls and monopolies and the abolition of slavery. Sarmiento's project was also characterized by two characteristically Latin American aspects of Atlantic liberalism, the encouragement of European

immigration — a source of cultured people who will civilize Argentina; and the spread of education. Free immigration has some non-obvious liberal consequences: all European immigrants will be welcome, including Protestants, who must be given the right to practice their religion and marry in their churches, thus eliminating the Catholic monopoly on churches and weddings. Sarmiento thus carried on the liberal anticlerical tradition. [6]

As book and as political program, *Facundo* and its author were highly influential. In the Hispanic world the book was called "*el Quijote de América*," and elsewhere was translated into French, Italian, and English, the latter by Mary Mann, an admirer (and wife of the American educational reformer Horace Mann, who much influenced Sarmiento), who personally introduced Sarmiento to Emerson, Longfellow and Hawthorne on his American visits. Sarmiento travelled widely in Europe and the United States, before and after becoming minister of education, senator, provincial governor, ambassador to the United States, and president of Argentina from 1868 to 1874. But he was not without competitors on the Argentine liberal scene, and the Argentine constitution of 1853 — the beginning, despite modifications and dictatorial interludes, of an essentially liberal constitutional system in Argentina — was more influenced by the views of his rival Juan Bautista Alberdi.

Unlike Sarmiento, Alberdi refused offers to enter government in Argentina, and preferred to remain an intellectual influence. He wrote two important books in 1852-55, one about politics, *Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic* (1852), full of quotations from the *Federalist,* and one about economics and taxation, *The Economic and Revenue System of the Argentine Confederation according to its Constitution of 1853* (1855). Sarmiento and Alberdi represent alternate paths to liberal development that are often found in Atlantic liberalism, Sarmiento focused more on politics and Alberdi on economics. [7]

There is however much similarity between the two, perhaps no small reason for their bitter rivalry. Alberdi like Sarmiento was a member of Young Argentina, influenced by the same authors, and perhaps even more strongly by the *Federalist Papers.* He, too, travelled widely, and spent 24 years living in Paris. Sarmiento would surely have endorsed Alberdi's view that power without a constitution is tyranny, while a constitution without power is anarchy Alberdi's reading of Argentine history was remarkably like the standard French liberal reading of the French Revolution. Like the French of 1789, the newly independent Argentines of 1810 lacked any real political education, and thus were susceptible to the abstract theories of the Enlightenment — Tocqueville's *Old Regime* thesis transferred to Buenos Aires, in a manner similar to Sarmiento's reading of Argentine history. By seeking too much freedom before they were ready for it, before an Argentine state, people, and society had been created, the result was anarchy and a reaction that led to the Rosas dictatorship (1835-1852). To improve government, the society must be improved. Whereas in European discussion of suffrage questions, it is the capacities of individuals and social groups that need to be improved for them to usefully participate in politics, in Latin America it is society as a whole that requires improvement. The balance to be struck is delicate, because denying that society possesses the capacity to govern itself justifies despotism. Alberdi used the Rosas dictatorship as a jump-off point. Rosas had founded the Argentine state, Argentine society could therefore cautiously begin its developmental phase. All this was in line with Sarmiento's arguments. Alberdi's liberalism shared the same basis in Atlantic liberalism as Sarmiento's. He too sought common liberal ends by means appropriate to Argentina and its unique history. [8]



Maurico Rugendas, "gaucho" (1845), illustrating a 1938 edition of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo*

Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Chile

Where Alberdi and Sarmiento parted company was in their idea of the proper course to develop a liberal Argentine state and society. Both endorsed immigration and free elementary education. But Sarmiento emphasized higher education and formal political structures, whereas Alberdi insisted on economic development as a kind of practical education in free association and civilization. For Alberdi, "Education is not instruction," real education comes from practice. [9] What Argentina needs, Alberdi claims, is the education of things, not of words, not the liberal arts and law schools, but engineering schools. Economic development is central to Alberdi's vision of Argentine education. According to him, at the time of independence Latin Americans admired Sparta and republican freedom. They didn't think about trade or immigration: "Political ends were the great ends of that time; today we must preoccupy ourselves especially with economic ends." [10] This was not simply an appeal to materialism. Economic development has a crucial moral and political role to play for Alberdi, as it does for Smith and Guizot. Trade will tame the passions of the *gaucho* barbarian. This requires free trade and free markets, not the protectionism practiced by the United States and the French Revolution. Sir Robert Peel and Jean-Baptiste Say are Alberdi's heroes. Nevertheless, Alberdi lauds an American state constitution as a model in fostering economic development: not Sarmiento's ideal of Massachusetts, with its model public school system, but California, which knows how to profit from the Gold Rush in ways that Mexico, in Alberdi's view, never could have. [11] In order for this civilizational process to take place, the Argentine constitution has to guarantee economic freedoms. This means five guarantees "common to all types of industry and the exercise of all industrial force: Liberty, Equality, Property, Security, Education. These guarantees have two aspects, one moral and political, the other material and economic." [12] Thus although Alberdi begins with free trade, his guarantees swiftly extend to all three traditional pillars of liberalism, political and moral as

well as economic. If the constitution of 1853 emphasized trade and free immigration, created a strong executive, and giave only limited powers to representative institutions, it was because in Argentine circumstances, these provisions were the most conducive to fostering a liberal nation.

Argentine liberal constitutionalism is an excellent example of the circulation of ideas, institutions and people across the ocean. Sarmiento and Alberdi both think, travel, and act in a consciously Atlantic manner. Liberal Atlanticism continues throughout the twentieth century. One more example may serve as an illustration of this ongoing process: the intense Atlantic exchange over "new liberalism." This differs from the Argentine example in a significant way, because here there is much more of a two-way trade in ideas and people.

Jane Addams and the New Liberalism

A new development of liberalism takes place across the Atlantic world during the fin de siècle, the period running from roughly 1873 (an arbitrary date chosen to memorialize the death of John Stuart Mill) to 1919. To the fear of arbitrary power exercised in the name of the monarch, of religion, of revolution or reaction, hitherto the main fear that dominated liberalism, a new fear was added, the fear of poverty. While these "new liberals", who go by different names in different countries, e.g. New Liberals in Britain, Progressives in the United States, Solidarists in France, social liberals in Germany, etc., still worried about the old liberal fears of revolution and reaction, the problem of poverty preoccupied them above all. They recognized that the poor were subjected to cruelty and arbitrary power, and deprived of the opportunity for self-development, by their poverty. The "new liberals" of the fin de siecle no longer saw poverty chiefly as a source of revolution, reaction or religious fanaticism. Instead of seeing the poor being a threat to freedom, they saw envisioned poverty as a threat to the freedom of the poor, a threat that liberals had to address. It was liberals' business to find solutions for poverty, and to enlist the state in their aid as the only agency capable of doing so. This "new liberalism" was an Atlantic phenomenon, present to a greater or lesser degree everywhere in the Atlantic world. Here some particular exchanges between the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and the United States show how the Atlantic serves as a highway for Liberalism 2.0.

The economic and social convergence that was rapidly taking place at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and the Americas — the development of large industrial cities and urban slums, for example — encouraged Atlantic liberals to take a common approach to the problem of poverty. They crisscrossed the Atlantic to compare notes, observed each other's successes and failures, and saw themselves as participating together in the renovation of liberalism. The American Progressives, for example, were constantly looking at their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic — and vice versa. Many Progressive economists got their doctorates in Germany, and German welfare economics had a huge influence on turn of the century America. But it was not only Progressive academics who studied in Europe. Many important Progressive organizations were run by women, and many American women studied in Europe, where educational opportunities were often greater for them than they were in the United States. Other American Progressive men and women who did not engage in formal education in Europe nevertheless went there on informal educational and fact-finding trips.

When they crossed the Atlantic in either direction, physically or intellectually, new liberals saw the same cry for "reform" as at home, for the most part no longer for political reforms (Atlantic countries all had more or less liberal constitutions by the end of the nineteenth century), but for social reforms. New liberals on both sides of the Atlantic supported a wide list of social changes, from old-age pensions, to the

regulation of the food supply, to expanded educational opportunities. Urban problems and how to deal with them played a major role. London's East End and Whitechapel, and New York City's Five Points district became regular stops on the Atlantic tour for visiting reformers. In response to the problems of urban poverty new liberals developed what is sometimes called "municipal socialism." In Birmingham, England; Frankfurt, Germany; and Cleveland, Ohio, among many other places, liberal city governments created municipal water and sewer companies, electric companies, public transportation, etc., and carefully observed how the others went about it.

New liberals vary greatly in how much state intervention they consider desirable in fighting poverty, but they all think that more of it is desirable than existed in 1900. This represents a transformation in liberal attitudes towards the role of the state. For example, this statement written by the German-trained American Progressive economist Richard T. Ely (1854-1943), which was adopted by the American Economic Association at its founding in 1885: "We regard the state as an agency whose positive assistance is one of the indispensable conditions of human progress." The new liberals' new economics, as Ely wrote, "does not acknowledge laissez-faire as an excuse for doing nothing while people starve, nor allow the all-sufficiency of competition as a plea for grinding the poor." [13] The ethical thrust is clear, and there was in general an ethical and sometimes a religious element prominent in the new liberalisms on both sides of the Atlantic — many of the founding members of the American Economic Association were clergymen. The Social Gospel movement in the United States was part of American Progressivism, while evangelical Christians of various sorts supported British New Liberalism. The German "social liberal" Friedrich Naumann began his career as a Lutheran pastor. Most liberals, from Adam Smith on, had never been doctrinaire supporters of laissez-faire, but the new liberals' willingness to expand the scope of the state to take on the problem of poverty provoked a laissez-faire reaction. Just like new liberalism, what during the fin de siècle began to be called "classical liberalism" was Atlantic in scope.

It was not at all clear to contemporary observers if what was going on was the Europeanization of America or the Americanization of Europe. First and foremost, it was the ever-tighter knitting-together of the Atlantic world. One symptom of this was that European liberals were no longer so sure that the United States was a more liberal society than Europe. By 1900 most European new liberals saw America as behind the times, lagging advanced European countries in adopting reforms in everything from obligatory schooling to social insurance.

All these new liberal phenomena: the mutual transatlantic inspiration; the focus on urban poverty; and the ethical impulse, were incarnated in the "settlement house" movement and its most famous representative, the American Progressive Jane Addams (1860-1935). Throughout the Atlantic world, the "settlement house," a private association dedicated to improving the lot of the urban poor, situated in a city slum, multiplied in this period. These settlement houses would today be called community centers. They provided education, social services, and opportunities for local activism and development. The settlement house movement was not exclusively liberal, but many liberals were involved in it. Addams co-founded the Hull House settlement in Chicago with Ellen Gates Starr in 1889, and it rapidly became the shining beacon of the movement.

Addams is a good example of the transatlantic nature of the new liberalism. She is typical in her evolutionism, and her stress on what she calls "social ethics." These are found across broad swathes of the new liberal spectrum across the Atlantic. She diverges from most other new (and classical) liberals in her

commitment to diversity, and her defense of the freedom of minorities, as groups and cultures rather than merely as individuals. Even though this is unusual, it points to the reality on the ground that forced liberals to become increasingly conscious of the diversity of the Atlantic world.



Robert Carter (1875-1918), *Enlisted for the Great Battle*, 9 August 1912

Source: Theodore Roosevelt political cartoon collection, MS Am 3056, 1653, Box: 48. Houghton Library. Harvard University Library

Addams is well known as a great American social reformer, the Saint of Chicago, but less well known as an important philosopher (she influenced Dewey's Pragmatism) and political theorist in her own right. Perhaps the most important intellectual influence on her own thought was one that was typical of turn of the century Atlantic liberalism — her reliance on evolutionary theory. This derived not so much from Darwin as from the work of the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Spencer was renowned in the United States, famous in his native Britain, well known in France, where many of his works were rapidly translated, and, if we are to believe Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, popular even in Bengal. Spencer remains famous for his application of the theory of evolution to socio-economic questions, often referred to as "Social Darwinism." Spencer himself was a classical liberal, a defender of strict laissez-faire economics and a bitter opponent of the new liberals, and today Spencer and Social Darwinism in general are strongly associated with laissez-faire views. At the turn of the century, however, the appeal to evolution as arbiter was made just as often by those on the left as by conservatives. Among new liberals Jane Addams was far from alone in using Spencerian language and concepts to justify government intervention and regulations that horrified Spencer himself.

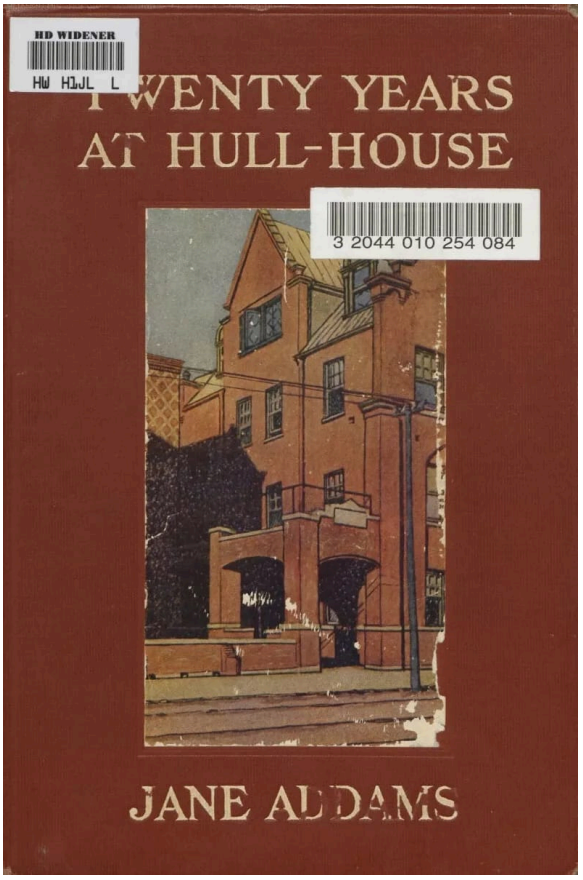
The nature of Addams' relationship to Spencer can be seen by comparing the title of one of her essays with its contents. In "Survivals of Militarism in City Government," the title borrows from the evolutionary perspective of Spencer's theory of evolution, in which "militarism" belongs to a previous evolutionary

stage, and is in the process of being replaced by "industrialism." Industrialism is based on cooperation rather than conflict. For Spencer, the cooperation of industrialism is embodied in markets, but for Addams cooperation means something more than free contract. Addams strenuously supports everything from legislation to protect factory workers and prohibit child labor to developing municipal water and sewer systems, creating decent housing for the poor, etc. For Addams, these are examples of what cooperation ought to mean in an industrial society.

Addams' ethics are also based on a Spencerian evolutionary perspective. Formerly people had believed in self-help as the remedy for poverty, and that belief had been appropriate in a "militarist" age. No longer: "The virtues of one generation are not sufficient for the next..." [14] Both our ethics and our economics must be conceived in new, broader, "industrial" terms. "In a community dominated by industrial ideals, ... we must reach motives more substantial and enduring than the mere fleeting experiences of one phase of modern industry which vainly imagines that its growth would be curtailed if the welfare of employees were guarded by the state." [15] An ethical advance more in accord with our evolutionary state should thus be secured by law, and we must "insist upon the right of state regulation and control." [16]

Addams' intermingling of ethics and economics is an example of the takeover of economics by ethics, the heavy-to-exclusive reliance on the moral pillar of liberalism, found among many new liberals. Much more unusual, anywhere in the Atlantic world, is Addams' endorsement of racial and ethnic diversity. Addams maintained her Spencerian evolutionary standpoint, but once again came to different conclusions. Spencer vaunted the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, but for Addams civilization is a complex struggle, with each race and nation contributing, and "the variety and continuity of this commingled life afford its charm and value. We would not, if we could, conform them to one standard." [17] She pays attention to the diversity of the poor, African-Americans and immigrants, and respects it. Cultural and moral diversity are "industrial," Anglo-Saxon hegemony is "militant," a relic of a previous stage of evolution. The recognition of diversity is necessary if ethnic conflict is to be replaced by cooperation. [18]

Intellectually Addams was thus both a good Spencerian and a typical Atlantic new liberal. Personally, she travelled often to Europe and especially England, where she had close contact with a number of British liberals. She found the ecumenical Protestant religiosity of many of them attractive, and was one of many new liberals who annexed some form of religion or spiritual belief to their social and political ideas. Her Hull House in the Chicago slums was modelled, Addams herself said, after Toynbee Hall in London, which she visited in 1887, 1888, and 1889, the year of the foundation of Hull House. Canon Barnett, the Warden of Toynbee Hall, in turn referred to Addams as "the greatest man [sic] in America." (as did Sidney Webb). [19] Addams' transatlantic ties were not limited to England. She visited the Paris Exposition of 1900, where she was involved in the social work section, and was an active member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a feminist pacifist organization.



Cover for Jane Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull House* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912)

Source: Harvard University Library

Addams exemplifies the Atlantic character of turn of the century liberalism, both in her practical social work and reform efforts and in her political thought. She takes the common new liberal emphasis on poverty and adapts it to the conditions of Chicago's immigrant and African-American communities in a manner analogous to Sarmiento and Alberdi's adaptation of liberal constitutionalism to Argentina. Both the Argentine and the American examples show how Atlantic liberalism is a constant process of borrowing and creation, in which questions of priority were among the least important for contemporaries, and ought to be for historians. This is equally true of liberalism 1.0, the wave of constitutional liberalism of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, as of liberalism 2.0, the new liberalisms that fought poverty around the Atlantic in the decades on either side of 1900.

Later twentieth-century liberalism was no less Atlantic. After WWII, when liberalism was characterized by the fear of totalitarianism, the same fear was found throughout the Atlantic world and beyond, even if the success of liberal remedies for it varied widely. At the end of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twenty-first, liberalism once again experiences a common fear and struggle, this time with populism, in Europe, the Americas, and across the globe. The transatlantic nature of liberalism is evident from its beginning at the end of the eighteenth century. Liberalism, beginning in the Atlantic, will come to embrace the planet, and become the first global political ideology (if conservatism is almost by definition equally widespread, it is inevitably local— conservatives of different places necessarily defend radically different things, whereas liberals contend for broadly similar goals by broadly similar means, as the Argentine case shows). Whether the global spread of liberalism is evidence of the power of liberalism or the

impoverishment of alternate forms of political thought is very much in the eye of the beholder. What no observer can deny, however, is the Atlantic breadth of the liberal perspective. If there is an "Atlantic ideology", it is liberalism.

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NOTES

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