

# AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM: AN INDIGENOUS CULTURE OF CRITIQUE

*American Transcendentalism*

*A History*

Philip F. Gura

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*Reviewed by Kevin MacDonald*

Philip Gura's *American Transcendentalism* provides a valuable insight into a nineteenth-century leftist intellectual elite in the United States. This is of considerable interest because Transcendentalism was a movement entirely untouched by the predominantly Jewish milieu of the twentieth-century left in America. Rather, it was homegrown, and its story tells us much about the sensibility of an important group of white intellectuals and perhaps gives us hints about why in the twentieth century WASPs so easily capitulated to the Jewish onslaught on the intellectual establishment.

Based in New England, Transcendentalism was closely associated with Harvard and Boston—the very heart of Puritan New England. It was also closely associated with Unitarianism which had become the most common religious affiliation for Boston's elite. Many Transcendentalists were Unitarian clergymen, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, the person whose name is most closely associated with the movement in the public mind.

These were very intelligent people living in an age when religious beliefs required an intellectual defense rather than blind acceptance. Their backgrounds were typical of New England Christians of the day. But as their intellectual world expanded (often at the Harvard Divinity School), they became aware of the “higher criticism” of the Bible that originated with German scholars. This scholarship showed that there were several different authors of Genesis and that Moses did not write the first five books of the Old Testament. They also became aware of other religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism which made it unlikely that Christianity had a monopoly on religious truth.

In their search for an intellectual grounding of religion, they rejected Locke's barren empiricism and turned instead to the idealism of Kant, Schelling, and Coleridge. If the higher criticism implied that the foundations of religious belief were shaky, and if God was unlikely to have endowed Christianity with unique religious truths, the Transcendentalists would build new foundations emphasizing the subjectivity of religious experience. The attraction of idealism to the Transcendentalists was its conception of the mind as creative, intuitive, and interpretive rather than merely reactive to external events. As the writer and political activist Orestes Brownson summed it up in 1840, Transcendentalism defended man's "capacity of knowing truth intuitively [and] attaining scientific knowledge of an order of existence transcending the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience" (p. 121). Everyone, from birth, possesses a divine element, and the mind has "innate principles, including the religious sentiment" (p. 84).

The intuitions of the Transcendentalists were decidedly egalitarian and universalist. "Universal divine inspiration—grace as the birthright of all—was the bedrock of the Transcendentalist movement" (p. 18). Ideas of God, morality, and immortality are part of human nature and do not have to be learned. As Gura notes, this is the spiritual equivalent of the democratic ideal that all men (and women) are created equal.

Intuitions are by their very nature slippery things. One could just as plausibly (or perhaps more plausibly) propose that humans have intuitions of greed, lust, power, and ethnocentrism—precisely the view of the Darwinians who came along later in the century. In the context of the philosophical milieu of Transcendentalism, their intuitions were not intended to be open to empirical investigation. Their truth was obvious and compelling—a fact that tells us much about the religious milieu of the movement.

On the other hand, the Transcendentalists rejected materialism with its emphasis on "facts, history, the force of circumstance and the animal wants of man" (quoting Emerson, p. 15). Fundamentally, they did not want to explain human history or society, and they certainly would have been unimpressed by a Darwinian view of human nature that emphasizes such nasty realities as competition for power and resources and how these play out given the exigencies of history. Rather, they adopted a utopian vision of humans as able to transcend all that by means of the God-given spiritual powers of the human mind.

Not surprisingly, this philosophy led many Transcendentalists to become deeply involved in social activism on behalf of the lower echelons of society – the poor, prisoners, the insane, the developmentally disabled, and slaves in the South.

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The following examples give a flavor of some of the central attitudes and typical social activism of important Transcendentalists.

**Orestes Brownson (1803–1876)** admired the Universalists' belief in the inherent dignity of all people and the promise of eventual universal salvation for all believers. He argued "for the unity of races and the inherent dignity of each person, and he lambasted Southerners for trying to enlarge their political base" (p. 266). Like many New Englanders, he was outraged by the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case that required authorities in the North to return fugitive slaves to their owners in the South. For Brownson the Civil War was a moral crusade waged not only to preserve the union, but to emancipate the slaves. Writing in 1840, Brownson claimed that we should "realize in our social arrangements and in the actual conditions of all men that equality of man and man" that God had established but which had been destroyed by capitalism (pp. 138–39). According to Brownson, Christians had

to bring down the high, and bring up the low; to break the fetters of the bound and set the captive free; to destroy all oppression, establish the reign of justice, which is the reign of equality, between man and man; to introduce new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein all shall be as brothers, loving one another, and no one possessing what another lacketh. (p. 139)

**George Ripley (1802–1880)**, who founded the utopian community of Brook Farm and was an important literary critic, "preached in earnest Unitarianism's central message, a belief in universal, internal religious principle that validated faith and united all men and women" (p. 80). Ripley wrote that Transcendentalists "believe in an order of truths which transcends the sphere of the external senses. Their leading idea is

the supremacy of mind over matter." Religious truth does not depend on facts or tradition but

has an unerring witness in the soul. There is a light, they believe, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; there is a faculty in all, the most degraded, the most ignorant, the most obscure, to perceive spiritual truth, when distinctly represented; and the ultimate appeal, on all moral questions, is not to a jury of scholars, a hierarchy of divines, or the prescriptions of a creed, but to the common sense of the race. (p. 143)

Ripley founded Brook Farm on the principle of substituting "brotherly cooperation" for "selfish competition" (p. 156). He questioned the economic and moral basis of capitalism. He held that if people did the work they desired, and for which they had a talent, the result would be a non-competitive, classless society where each person would achieve personal fulfillment.

**Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888)** was an educator who "believed in the innate goodness of each child whom he taught" (p. 85). Alcott "realized how Unitarianism's positive and inclusive vision of humanity accorded with his own" (p. 85). He advocated strong social controls in order to socialize children: infractions were reported to the entire group of students, which then prescribed the proper punishment. The entire group was punished for the bad behavior of a single student. His students were the children of the intellectual elite of Boston, but his methods eventually proved unpopular. The school closed after most of the parents withdrew their children when Alcott insisted upon admitting a black child. Alcott supported William Garrison's radical abolitionism, and he was a financial supporter of John Brown and his violent attempts to overthrow slavery.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)** stirred a great deal of controversy in his *American Scholar*, an 1832 address to the Harvard Divinity School, because he reinterpreted what it meant for Christ to claim to be divine:

One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth to take posses-

sion of his world. He said, in this jubilee of sublime emotion, "I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, he speaks. Would you see God, see me; or, see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think." (p. 103)

Although relatively individualistic by the standards of Transcendentalism, Emerson proposed that by believing in their own divine purpose, people would have the courage to stand up for social justice. The divinely powered individual was thus linked to disrupting the social order.

**Theodore Parker (1810–1860)** was a writer, public intellectual, and model for religiously motivated liberal activism. He wrote that "God is alive and in every person" (p. 143). Gura interprets Parker as follows: "God is not what we are, but what we need to make our lives whole, and one way to realize this is through selfless devotion to God's creation" (p. 218).

Parker was concerned about crime and poverty, and he was deeply opposed to the Mexican war and to slavery. He blamed social conditions for crime and poverty, condemning merchants: "We are all brothers, rich and poor, American and foreign, put here by the same God, for the same end, and journeying towards the same heaven, and owing mutual help" (p. 219). In Parker's view, slavery is "the blight of this nation" and was the real reason for the Mexican war, because it was aimed at expanding the slave states. Parker was far more socially active than Emerson, becoming one of the most prominent abolitionists and a secret financial supporter of John Brown.

When Parker looked back on the history of the Puritans, he saw them as standing for moral principles. He approved in particular of John Eliot, who preached to the Indians and attempted to convert them to Christianity.

Nevertheless, Parker is a bit of an enigma because, despite being a prominent abolitionist and favoring racial integration of schools and churches, he asserted that the Anglo-Saxon race was "more progressive" than all others.<sup>1</sup> He was also prone to making condescending and disparaging comments about the potential of Africans for progress.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/theodoreparker.html>

**William Henry Channing (1810–1884)** was a Transcendentalist writer and Christian socialist. He held that economic activity conducted in the spirit of Christian love would establish a more egalitarian society that would include immigrants, the poor, slaves, prisoners, and the mentally ill. He worked tirelessly on behalf of the cause of emancipation and in the Freedman's Bureau designed to provide social services for former slaves. Although an admirer of Emerson, he rejected Emerson's individualism, writing in a letter to Theodore Parker that it was one of his deepest convictions that the human race "is inspired as well as the individual; that humanity is a growth from the Divine Life as well as man; and indeed that the true advancement of the individual is dependent upon the advancement of a generation, and that the law of this is providential, the direct act of the Being of beings."<sup>2</sup>

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In the 1840s there was division between relatively individualist Transcendentalists like Emerson who "valued individual spiritual growth and self-expression," and "social reformers like Brownson, Ripley, and increasingly, Parker" (p. 137). In 1844 Emerson joined a group of speakers that included abolitionists, but many Transcendentalists questioned his emphasis on self-reliance given the Mexican war, upheaval in Europe, and slavery. They saw self-reliance as ineffectual in combating the huge aggregation of interests these represented. Elizabeth Peabody lamented Emerson's insistence that a Transcendentalist should not labor "for small objects, such as Abolition, Temperance, Political Reforms, &c." (p. 216). (She herself was an advocate of the Kindergarten movement as well as Native American causes [p. 270].)

But Emerson did oppose slavery. An 1844 speech praised Caribbean blacks for rising to high occupations after slavery: "This was not the case in the United States, where descendants of Africans were precluded any opportunity to be a white person's equal. This only reflected on the moral bankruptcy of American white society, however, for 'the civility of no race can be perfect whilst another race is degraded'" (p. 245).

Emerson and other Transcendentalists were outraged by the Fugi-

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/whchanning.html>

tive Slave Law of 1850. Gura notes that for Emerson, "the very landscape seemed robbed of its beauty, and he even had trouble breathing because of the 'infamy' in the air" (p. 246). After the John Brown debacle, Emerson was "glad to see that the terror at disunion and anarchy is disappearing," for the price of slaves' freedom might demand it (p. 260). Both Emerson and Thoreau commented on Brown's New England Puritan heritage. Emerson lobbied Lincoln on slavery, and when Lincoln emancipated the slaves, he said "Our hurts are healed; the health of the nation is repaired" (p. 265). He thought the war worth fighting because of it.

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After the Civil War, idealism lost its preeminence, and American intellectuals increasingly embraced materialism. Whereas Locke had been the main inspiration for materialism earlier in the century, materialism was now exemplified by Darwin, Auguste Comte, and William Graham Sumner. After the Civil War, the Transcendentalists' contributions to American intellectual discourse "remained vital, if less remarked, particularly among those who kept alive a dream of a common humanity based in the irreducible equality of all souls" (p. 271). One of the last Transcendentalists, Octavius Brooks Frothingham, wrote that Transcendentalism was being "suppressed by the philosophy of experience, which, under different names, was taking possession of the speculative world" (p. 302). The enemies of Transcendentalism were "positivists" (p. 302). After Emerson's death, George Santayana commented that he "was a cheery, child-like soul, impervious to the evidence of evil" (pp. 304-305).

By the early twentieth century, then, Transcendentalism was a distant memory, and the new materialists had won the day. The early part of the twentieth century was the high water mark of Darwinism in the social sciences. It was common at that time to think that there were important differences between the races in both intelligence and moral qualities. Not only did races differ, they were in competition with each other for supremacy. Whereas later in the century, Jewish intellectuals led the battle against Darwinism in the social sciences, racist ideas were part of the furniture of intellectual life—commonplace among intellectuals of all stripes, including a significant number of Jewish racial nationalists concerned about the racial purity

and political power of the Jewish people.<sup>3</sup>

The victory of Darwinism was short-lived, however, as the left became reinvigorated by the rise of several predominantly Jewish intellectual and political movements: Marxism, Boasian anthropology, psychoanalysis, and other ideologies that collectively have dominated intellectual discourse ever since.<sup>4</sup>

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So what is one to make of this prominent strand of egalitarian universalism in nineteenth-century America? The first thing that strikes one about Transcendentalism is that it is an outgrowth of the Puritan strain of American culture. Transcendentalism was centered in New England, and all its major figures were descendants of the Puritans. I have written previously of Puritanism as a rather short-lived group evolutionary strategy, supplementing the work of David Sloan Wilson on Calvinism, the forerunner of Puritanism.<sup>5</sup> The basic idea is that, like Jews, Puritans during their heyday had a strong psychological sense of group membership combined with social controls that minutely regulated the behavior of ingroup members. Their group strategy depended on being able to control a particular territory—Massachusetts—but by the end of the seventeenth century, they were unable to regulate the borders of the colony due to the policy of the British colonial authorities, hence the government of Massachusetts ceased being the embodiment of the Puritans as a group. In the absence of political control, Puritanism gradually lost the power to enforce its religious strictures (e.g., church attendance and orthodox religious beliefs), and the population changed as the economic prosperity created by the Puritans drew an influx of non-Puritans into the area.

The Puritans were certainly highly intelligent, and they sought a system of beliefs that was firmly grounded in contemporary thinking. One

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Firstbooks, 2004), Chapter 5.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Bloomington, Ind.: Firstbooks, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> David Sloan Wilson, *Darwin's Cathedral* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Kevin MacDonald, (2002). "Diaspora Peoples," Preface to the First Paperback Edition of *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (Lincoln, Nebr.: iUniverse, 2002).

striking aspect of Gura's treatment is his description of earnest proto-Transcendentalists trekking over to Germany to imbibe the wisdom of German philosophy and producing translations and lengthy commentaries on this body of work for an American audience.

But the key to Puritanism as a group strategy, like other strategies, was the control of behavior of group members. As with Calvin's original doctrine, there was a great deal of supervision of individual behavior. Historian David Hackett Fischer describes Puritan New England's ideology of "Ordered Liberty" as "the freedom to order one's acts in a godly way—but not in any other."<sup>6</sup> This "freedom as public obligation" implied strong social control of thought, speech, and behavior.

Both New England and East Anglia (the center of Puritanism in England) had the lowest relative rates of private crime (murder, theft, mayhem), but the highest rates of public violence—"the burning of rebellious servants, the maiming of political dissenters, the hanging of Quakers, the execution of witches."<sup>7</sup> This record is entirely in keeping with Calvinist tendencies in Geneva.<sup>8</sup>

The legal system was designed to enforce intellectual, political, and religious conformity as well as to control crime. Louis Taylor Merrill describes the "civil and religious strait-jacket that the Massachusetts theocrats applied to dissenters."<sup>9</sup> The authorities, backed by the clergy, controlled blasphemous statements and confiscated or burned books deemed to be offensive. Spying on one's neighbors and relatives was encouraged. There were many convictions for criticizing magistrates, the governor, or the clergy. Unexcused absence from church was fined, with people searching the town for absentees. Those who fell asleep in church were also fined. Sabbath violations were punished as well. A man was even penalized for publicly kissing his wife as he greeted her on his doorstep upon his return from a three-year sea voyage.

Kevin Phillips traces the egalitarian, anti-hierarchical spirit of Yankee republicanism back to the settlement of East Anglia by Angles and

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<sup>6</sup> David H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 202.

<sup>7</sup> *Albion's Seed*, 189.

<sup>8</sup> See *Darwin's Cathedral*.

<sup>9</sup> Louis T. Merrill, "The Puritan Policeman," *American Sociological Review* 10 (1945): 766-76, p. 766.

Jutes in post-Roman times.<sup>10</sup> They produced “a civic culture of high literacy, town meetings, and a tradition of freedom,” distinguished from other British groups by their “comparatively large ratios of freemen and small numbers of *servi* and *villani*.”<sup>11</sup> President John Adams cherished the East Anglian heritage of “self-determination, free male suffrage, and a consensual social contract.”<sup>12</sup> East Anglia continued to produce “insurrections against arbitrary power” — the rebellions of 1381 led by Jack Straw, Wat Tyler, and John Ball; Clarence’s rebellion of 1477; and Robert Kett’s rebellion of 1548. All of these rebellions predated the rise of Puritanism, suggesting an ingrained cultural tendency.

This emphasis on relative egalitarianism and consensual, democratic government are tendencies characteristic of Northern European peoples as a result of a prolonged evolutionary history as hunter-gatherers in the north of Europe.<sup>13</sup> But these tendencies are certainly not center stage when thinking about the political tendencies of the Transcendentalists.

What is striking is the moral fervor of the Puritans. Puritans tended to pursue utopian causes framed as moral issues. They were susceptible to appeals to a “higher law,” and they tended to believe that the principal purpose of government is moral. New England was the most fertile ground for “the perfectibility of man creed,” and the “father of a dozen ‘isms.’”<sup>14</sup> There was a tendency to paint political alternatives as starkly contrasting moral imperatives, with one side portrayed as evil incarnate — inspired by the devil.

Whereas in the Puritan settlements of Massachusetts the moral fervor was directed at keeping fellow Puritans in line, in the nineteenth century it was directed at the entire country. The moral fervor that had inspired Puritan preachers and magistrates to rigidly enforce laws on fornication, adultery, sleeping in church, or criticizing preachers was universalized and aimed at correcting the perceived ills of capitalism

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<sup>10</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins’ Wars: Politics, Civil Warfare, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin MacDonald, “What Makes Western Civilization Unique?” in *Cultural Insurrections: Essays on Western Civilization, Jewish Influence, and Anti-Semitism* (Atlanta: The Occidental Press, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> *Albion’s Seed*, 357.

and slavery.

Puritans waged holy war on behalf of moral righteousness even against their own cousins – perhaps a form of altruistic punishment as defined by Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter.<sup>15</sup> Altruistic punishment refers to punishing people even at a cost to oneself. Altruistic punishment is found more often among cooperative hunter-gatherer groups than among groups, such as Jews, based on extended kinship.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the political and economic complexities that led to the Civil War, it was the Yankee moral condemnation of slavery that inspired and justified the massive carnage of closely related Anglo-Americans on behalf of slaves from Africa. Militarily, the war with the Confederacy was the greatest sacrifice in lives and property ever made by Americans.<sup>17</sup> Puritan moral fervor and punitiveness are also evident in the call of the Congregationalist minister at Henry Ward Beecher's Old Plymouth Church in New York during the Second World War for "exterminating the German people . . . the sterilization of 10,000,000 German soldiers and the segregation of the woman."<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting that the moral fervor the Puritans directed at in-group and outgroup members strongly resembles that of the Old Testament prophets who railed against Jews who departed from God's law, and against the uncleanness or even the inhumanity of non-Jews. Indeed, it has often been noted that the Puritans saw themselves as the true chosen people of the Bible. In the words of Samuel Wakeman, a prominent seventeenth-century Puritan preacher: "Jerusalem was, New England is; they were, you are God's own, God's covenant people; put but New England's name instead of Jerusalem."<sup>19</sup> "They had left Europe which was their 'Egypt,' their place of enslavement, and had gone out into the wilderness on a messianic journey, to found the New Jerusalem."<sup>20</sup>

Whereas Puritanism as a group evolutionary strategy crumbled when the Puritans lost control of Massachusetts, Diaspora Jews were

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<sup>15</sup> Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter, "Altruistic Punishment in Humans," *Nature* 412 (2002): 137-40.

<sup>16</sup> See my discussion in "Diaspora Peoples."

<sup>17</sup> *The Cousins' Wars*, 477.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 556.

<sup>19</sup> A. Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 20-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

able to maintain their group integrity even without control over a specific territory for well over 2,000 years. This attests to the greater ethnocentrism of Jews. But, although relatively less ethnocentric, the Puritans were certainly not lacking in moralistic aggression toward members of their ingroup, even when the boundaries of the ingroup were expanded to include all of America, or indeed all of humanity. And while the Puritans were easily swayed by moral critiques of white America, because of their stronger sense of ingroup identity, Jews have been remarkably resistant to moralistic critiques of Judaism.<sup>21</sup>

With the rise of the Jewish intellectual and political movements described in *The Culture of Critique*, the descendants of the Puritans readily joined the chorus of moral condemnation of America.

The lesson here is that in large part the problem confronting whites stems from the psychology of moralistic self-punishment exemplified at the extreme by the Puritans and their intellectual descendants, but also apparent in a great many other whites. As I have noted elsewhere:

Once Europeans were convinced that their own people were morally bankrupt, any and all means of punishment should be used against their own people. Rather than see other Europeans as part of an encompassing ethnic and tribal community, fellow Europeans were seen as morally blameworthy and the appropriate target of altruistic punishment. For Westerners, morality is individualistic – violations of communal norms . . . are punished by altruistic aggression. . . .

The best strategy for a collectivist group like the Jews for destroying Europeans therefore is to convince the Europeans of their own moral bankruptcy. A major theme of [*The Culture of Critique*] is that this is exactly what Jewish intellectual movements have done. They have presented Judaism as morally superior to European civilization and European civilization as morally bankrupt and the proper target of altruistic punishment. The consequence is that once Europeans are convinced of their own moral depravity, they will destroy their own people in a fit of altruistic punishment. The general dismantling of the culture of the West and eventually its demise as anything resembling an

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<sup>21</sup> See Kevin MacDonald, "The Israel Lobby: A Case Study in Jewish Influence," *The Occidental Quarterly* 7 (Fall 2007): 33–58.

ethnic entity will occur as a result of a moral onslaught triggering a paroxysm of altruistic punishment. Thus the intense effort among Jewish intellectuals to continue the ideology of the moral superiority of Judaism and its role as undeserving historical victim while at the same time continuing the onslaught on the moral legitimacy of the West.<sup>22</sup>

The Puritan legacy in American culture is indeed pernicious, especially since the bar of morally correct behavior has been continually raised to the point that any white group identification has been pathologized. As someone with considerable experience in the academic world, I can attest to feeling like a wayward heretic back in seventeenth-century Massachusetts when confronted, as I often am, by academic thought police. It's the moral fervor of these people that stands out. The academic world has become a Puritan congregation of stifling thought control, enforced by moralistic condemnations that a seventeenth-century Puritan minister could scarcely surpass. In my experience, this thought control is far worse in the East coast colleges and universities founded by the Puritans than elsewhere in academia—a fitting reminder of the continuing influence of Puritanism in American life.

Given this state of affairs, what sorts of therapy might one suggest? To an evolutionary psychologist, this moralistic aggression seems obviously adaptive for maintaining the boundaries and policing the behavior of a close-knit group. The psychology of moralistic aggression against deviating Jews (often termed "self-hating Jews") has doubtless served Jews quite well over the centuries. Similarly, groups of Angles, Jutes, and their Puritan descendants doubtlessly benefited greatly from moralistic aggression because of its effectiveness in enforcing group norms and punishing cheaters and defectors.

There is nothing inherently wrong with moralistic aggression. The key is to convince whites to alter their moralistic aggression in a more adaptive direction in light of Darwinism. After all, the object of moralistic aggression is quite malleable. Ethnonationalist Jews in Israel use their moral fervor to rationalize the dispossession and debasement of the Palestinians, but many of the same American Jews who fervently support Jewish ethnonationalism in Israel feel a strong sense of moralistic outrage at vestiges of white identity in the United States.

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<sup>22</sup> Preface to the paperback edition of *The Culture of Critique*.

A proper Darwinian sense of moralistic aggression would be directed at those of all ethnic backgrounds who have engineered or are maintaining the cultural controls that are presently dispossessing whites of their historic homelands. The moral basis of this proposal is quite clear:

(1) There are genetic differences between peoples, thus different peoples have legitimate conflicts of interest.<sup>23</sup>

(2) Ethnocentrism has deep psychological roots that cause us to feel greater attraction and trust for those who are genetically similar.<sup>24</sup>

(3) As Frank Salter notes, ethnically homogeneous societies bound by ties of kinship and culture are more likely to be open to redistributive policies such as social welfare.<sup>25</sup>

(4) Ethnic homogeneity is associated with greater social trust and political participation.<sup>26</sup>

(5) Ethnic homogeneity may well be a precondition of political systems characterized by democracy and rule of law.<sup>27</sup>

The problem with the Transcendentalists is that they came along before their intuitions could be examined in the cold light of modern evolutionary science. Lacking any firm foundation in science, they embraced a moral universalism that is ultimately ruinous to people like themselves. And because it is so contrary to our evolved inclinations, their moral universalism needs constant buttressing with all the power of the state—much as the rigorous rules of the Puritans of old required constant surveillance by the authorities.

Of course, the Transcendentalists would have rejected such a “positivist” analysis. Indeed, one might note that modern psychology is on

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<sup>23</sup> Frank K. Salter, *On Genetic Interests: Family, Ethnicity, and Humanity in an Age of Mass Migration* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> J. Philippe Rushton, “Ethnic Nationalism, Evolutionary Psychology, and Genetic Similarity Theory,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (2005): 489–507.

<sup>25</sup> Frank K. Salter, *Welfare, Ethnicity and Altruism: New Data and Evolutionary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Robert Putnam, “*E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century*,” The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture, *Scandinavian Journal of Political Studies* 30 (2007): 137–74.

<sup>27</sup> Jerry Z. Muller, “Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2008.

the side of the Puritans in the sense that explicitly held ideologies are able to exert control over the more ancient parts of the brain, including those responsible for ethnocentrism.<sup>28</sup> The Transcendentalist belief that the mind is creative and does not merely respond to external facts is quite accurate in light of modern psychological research. In modern terms, the Transcendentalists were essentially arguing that whatever "the animal wants of man" (to quote Emerson), humans are able to imagine an ideal world and exert effective psychological control over their ethnocentrism. They are even able to suppress desires for territory and descendants that permeate human history and formed an important part of the ideology of the Old Testament—a book that certainly had a huge influence on the original Puritan vision of the New Jerusalem.

Like the Puritans, the Transcendentalists would have doubtlessly acknowledged that some people have difficulty controlling these tendencies. But this is not really a problem, because these people can be forced. The New Jerusalem can become a reality if people are willing to use the state to enforce group norms of thought and behavior. Indeed, there are increasingly strong controls on thought crimes against the multicultural New Jerusalem throughout the West.

The main difference between the Puritan New Jerusalem and the present multicultural one is that the latter will lead to the demise of the very white people who are the mainstays of the current multicultural *Zeitgeist*. Unlike the Puritan New Jerusalem, the multicultural New Jerusalem will not be controlled by people like themselves, who in the long run will be a tiny, relatively powerless minority.

The ultimate irony is that without altruistic whites willing to be morally outraged by violations of multicultural ideals, the multicultural New Jerusalem is likely to revert to a Darwinian struggle for survival among the remnants. But the high-minded descendants of the Puritans won't be around to witness it.

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<sup>28</sup> Kevin MacDonald, "Psychology and White Ethnocentrism," *The Occidental Quarterly* 6 (Winter, 2006–2007): 7–46.