

Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Thought

Edited by Gregory Claeys

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Introduction

'The Wonderful Century': the idea of the nineteenth century and its critics

Viewed at its culmination, the nineteenth century appeared incontestably to have been the most extraordinary epoch that had ever occurred. In it, as Alfred Russel Wallace insisted in *The Wonderful Century. Its Successes and its Failures* (1898), humankind had progressed as far as in the whole of preceding human history.¹ Principally this was a function of science and technology. It was an age richer in inventions than any other: steam-power, railways, gas illumination, electricity, refrigeration, the telegraph, the internal combustion engine, the phonograph, vaccination, anaesthetics, photography, radiation – to name but a few. Comforts increasingly abounded, and those who could enjoy their benefits found their lives immeasurably enriched. The world shrank rapidly: travel and communication were vastly easier; telescopes reached out into the universe, while microscopes and scalpels divulged a new world within. Life-expectations were greatly extended. Perceptions were sharpened, and urbanity and sociability expanded. These changes were intimately bound up with the fact that Europeans, in particular, left the land in ever-greater numbers for the bright lights of ever-larger cities, where, if they were well off, their standard of living and life-chances advanced steadily, while if they were not, they might well decline. But for all classes the experience was astonishing, bewildering and provocative.

The epoch could not but be an age equally richer in ideas than any other, and self-consciously, from the outset, an age of transition, where the rest of human history became the 'old', to be swept away, along with most of its best-loved certainties, by the brave new world of modernity. To describe the new, and to appraise its development, required new ideas: revolution, social welfare, the international market and division of labour, race, democracy, equality, feminism, industrialism, rationalism, capitalism, Romanticism, utilitarianism. Linking the two great achievements, political and technological, of the epoch, were the *nouveaux riches*, the triumphalist middle class or bourgeoisie, throughout the civilized world enriching itself, promising affluence to others, and everywhere disdainful of both the 'idle', 'parasitic' ruling landed elite above them, whose titles and privileges they coveted, and those among the hapless workers and peasants beneath them who were unwilling to enlist under the banner of the new order. Justifying their economic rights by the new political economy, for which capital accumulation was the *raison d'être* of modernity, and their political rights by the need to protect and foster this wealth, the middle classes increasingly embraced a secular, hedonistic, world-view in which the pursuit of pleasure became the highest aspiration of humankind, and modern standards of taste became increasingly those of the mass of consumers. Yet the new ideal met with fierce resistance from Romantics, some evangelicals, some conservatives, socialists and others, to whom a fragmented, atomized individualism coupled to an

exploitative factory system and decaying, impoverished urban existence held out no hope of real human amelioration. It was, thus, a century of widespread strife, social and economic as well as intellectual, in which the concept of struggle would finally emerge as the master-metaphor of the epoch, and war fought with the newly invented machine-gun and tank, and in the air and under the water, would be seen by some as a desirable way of testing and improving national virtues. And it was the age in which the greatest utopian ideal ever conceived, an internationalist communist order, would by 1900 increasingly be seen as the sole alternative to capitalist exploitation, inequality and militarism.

Eight leading ideas held sway over the imagination of the period: revolution, nationalism, industrialism, liberalism, socialism, evolutionism, scientific and technical progress, and, finally, civilization, which binds many of the rest together.

The nineteenth century's moment of initial self-definition was indisputably the French Revolution, with its sweeping assault on corrupt privilege and feudal unfreedom, and its bold assertion of equality, natural rights and personal freedom. Following close upon the American Revolution, the fall of the Bastille heralded an uncompromising assertion of popular sovereignty, and of national, ethnic and personal liberation. Man, Rousseau had said, had been born free, but found himself everywhere in chains; this was the century, revolutionaries asserted, in which humanity was to be unshackled. But, though Florence Nightingale recalled an 'old legend' 'that the nineteenth century is to be the "century of women"', the female sex largely remained enchained throughout it. Enslaved peoples regained their liberties by stages through the period, though not necessarily any recognition of their common or fundamental humanity, or security from conquest and bondage masquerading as 'the White Man's Burden' – possibly the most cynical concept of the epoch.

The ideology of liberty, exported throughout Europe by French armies, helped inspire one of the central developments of the epoch, nationalism, in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Greece, Ireland, South America, Egypt, India and elsewhere, and then throughout much of the rest of the world. By the end of the First World War three empires, Russia, Germany and Austro-Hungary, had fallen; the British, French, Belgian and Dutch would soon follow. The proclamation of the right of national self-determination assumed many forms, radical as well as conservative, secular as well as religious. Through Fichte, Schleiermacher, Ranke, Michelet, Mazzini and a host of others the 'state' and the 'nation' became imbued with higher, spiritual, even mystical, collectivist qualities, and yoked to Darwinism, Romanticism, Idealist philosophy, racialism and many other ideas. With it came a historicist appreciation, first heralded by Burke and Herder in the late eighteenth century, and applauded by Meinecke in the nineteenth century, of the uniqueness of national histories, and the need to celebrate and preserve their distinctive individuality.

But the rights of revolution and national self-determination were also often understood by most Europeans as anchored in a discourse on civilization, thus as applicable to 'civilised' but not to 'backward' nations. Non-Western peoples not only had no right of self-rule, but, it was widely felt, ought to welcome the extension of commerce, Christianity and civilization that Europeans graciously offered. By mid-century revolutionary ideas of the brotherhood of man jostled beside new theories of fundamental human inequality, notably in the racist theories of Gobineau. By 1900, however, anti-imperialism was gathering momentum. Resistance movements, like Mahdism in the Sudan, scored some notable triumphs over imperial forces, and heralded the enduring attraction of tradition and custom to many non-European peoples. Japan became the first non-Western nation to achieve technological parity with Europe, and European formal domination over most of the world would soon be ended.

Because it gained the largest empire, began the Industrial Revolution and was the leading mercantile power of the period, Britain stamped its image squarely upon the nineteenth century. The result of Waterloo, the exhaustion of Britain's great rival, gave her unprecedented sway until German unification introduced a late contender for European and imperial hegemony. The British constitutional model, the spirit of gentlemanly conduct, innovations in science and technology, the great British navy, all excited wonder, envy and emulation elsewhere. But the 'Pax Britannica' hardly implied peace for the non-Western world: the struggle for imperial supremacy brought constant warfare, from China and Burma to India and Turkey, to Egypt, Sudan and eventually much of the rest of Africa. And the scent of Britain's imperial success excited bloodlust elsewhere, until by 1900 even Japan and the USA had joined the scramble for empire. The growth of racialism after 1850, too, provided an even stronger justification for the invasion of non-European peoples than had the concept of civilization, particularly in relation to Africa. 'Greater

Britain', as John Seeley famously put it, 'in a fit of absence of mind',² became, with the other empires, increasingly intolerant of aboriginal peoples, and unconcerned about their probable extinction, notably in parts of Australasia.

The British model also represented two of the other great ideas of the epoch: liberalism, both economic and political; and industrialism, for until late in the century Britain was indisputably the most important industrial power in the world. The two were widely regarded as intimately inter-related: the growth of commerce in the early modern period had engendered a conflict of power between the towns and the countryside that had resulted in that limitation of executive power and system of constitutional checks and balances which Britons associated with the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. As commercial success fostered industry, the mercantile and manufacturing middle classes made still further demands for a share of political power, which was extended to them in three parliamentary reform acts (1832, 1867, 1884). By 1900 the social and political power of the aristocracy had been substantially eclipsed, and the last vestiges of feudalism swept away. A monarch had lost his head in seventeenth-century constitutional struggle; none need do so in the nineteenth century. While Continental Europe was periodically convulsed by revolutions, Britons smugly congratulated themselves on their 'matchless constitution'. The basis of liberal thought might shift; in the last decade Platonic and Hegelian neo-Idealism would make inroads on empiricism, and a trend towards collectivism, resisted by individualist critics, like Herbert Spencer, would reshape attitudes towards the state. The scope of state interference expanded greatly, to encompass old-age pensions, factory legislation, compulsory education and much more. The electorate grew steadily, as it did elsewhere. But despite these changes the liberal order itself seemed the crowning achievement of modernity, and to many historians it was the 'progress of liberty' that thus essentially defined European, and indeed world, history in the period, and which marked it as the culminating epoch of human development.

As two of the greatest thinkers of the age, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, both acknowledged, the ruling ideas of the age were the ideas of its dominant classes. Yet both liberalism and industrialism met with a substantial challenge from the most important critical strand of thought in the period, socialism. Emerging simultaneously in the major European nations as a reaction to poverty, unemployment, and poor living and working conditions for the majority, socialism achieved international significance as the major alternative system of ideas with the Continental revolutions of 1848. Thereafter its earlier manifestations, notably Owenism, Fourierism and Saint-Simonism, were supplanted by Marxian socialism, which was more intent on industrial development than many earlier types of socialism, and much more revolutionary. By the 1880s various forms of liberalism had come to compromise with socialist proposals for a much more interventionist role for the state, and by 1900 many of the leading components of the twentieth-century welfare state, such as unemployment and old-age insurance, were being introduced not only in Europe, but also in New Zealand, Australia, Scandinavia, the USA and elsewhere. If the two great contending ideals of the era were non-interventionist liberalism and statist socialism, a substantial accommodation between these had been reached in principle by 1914. Everywhere writers began to herald the ideal of community, to deride or attempt to modify liberal individualism as destructive of the social virtues, and, like Emile Durkheim, to praise as preferable a condition of organic solidarity and mutual interdependence, while querying its sustainability in modern society.

It is often assumed that the single idea hegemonically dominating nineteenth-century thought was 'progress', in the sense of the increasing improvement of the quality of individual life, and, at least until a *fin de siècle* sense of degeneracy and malaise became pervasive, this is hardly surprising. The idea of progress was already well established by the French Revolution, but was lent enormous impetus by scientific discoveries and inventions, and a steadily rising standard of living, at least for the middle classes but, by the end of the century, often the working classes as well. Liberal political economy posited an indefinite growth of wealth through capital accumulation and the expansion of production and demand, a vision tempered only by the permanent spectre of working-class overpopulation, which would force wages down to the subsistence level. Liberal political thought acknowledged the gradual but probably inevitable growth of democracy. Socialists often envisioned a cataclysmic end to the old society, but then portrayed in rosy hues the quasi-perfectionist attributes of the new. Saint-Simonism and Positivism gave special stress to the role played by industry in transforming the old society, and shaped the views of left and right alike. As geology, palaeontology and other sciences advanced, it became evident that sacred chronologies had to be

abandoned in favour of a much longer time-frame. New sciences of society, history, anthropology, philology and archaeology arose. Crowning and uniting all of the progressive sciences was the idea of civilization itself, with its sharp demarcation between 'advanced' and 'backward' societies, its boasted rapprochement of science and Christianity, its vaunted superiority of customs, morals and manners. Yet even here there was ambiguity, the nagging fear that classical Greece, or the Roman Empire, or the medieval community, or some lost golden age, or primitive people, had penetrated more deeply into the inner secrets of human aspiration or more successfully captured the elusive condition called 'happiness'. Beneath the surface modern society was, some feared, like its produce, shoddy, hastily mass-produced, tawdry and vulgar, inauthentic and deeply unhappy, deprived of its spiritual essence and incapable of finding self-realization in mere consumerism. For writers like Goethe or Matthew Arnold 'culture' was to be the antidote to the 'anarchy' of lower middle-class self-assertion and self-definition. Others sought meaning in reversion to religion, or fashioning some substitute for it; this was also common outside industrializing countries.

In mid-century, like a great storm bursting upon a tranquil afternoon, there came Darwin – or more precisely, Spencer, Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, Sumner and a variety of other evolutionist thinkers, whose world-view when combined with other trends in religious criticism was deeply unsettling to theologians and moral philosophers in particular, but increasingly also to the wider public. No longer the benign extension of the deity, nature was now, in one popular view of Darwinism, an unlimited arena of free competition, in which the fittest survived, and the rest succumbed. Harmony gave way to incessant conflict, Christ became man, but man fell even further, from angel to ape. God became a mere hypothesis, or gave way to the worship of power. The meaning of human life, for some, became construed as an act of will-power, the will to live. Schopenhauer suggested, the will to power alone, Nietzsche insisted, predominating. Bishops mocked evolution, but pews emptied. The anti-clericalism of Voltaire and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, seemingly in retreat after 1815, surged forward. The great edifice of religious belief, for conservatives the very basis of social order itself, which had so often been repaired throughout the course of the century by legions of evangelicals, theists, pantheists, mystics and others, now teetered anew and even threatened to come crashing down. As churches weakened, secular forces seized the moment; *Kulturkampf* between Church and State broke out in the 1870s in Germany; in 1905, separation of Church and State occurred in France. The worship of science heralded by the new Enlightenment associated with Positivism was continued by Ernst Haeckel and others. And Marxism moved ever closer to the claim to represent the cause of natural science clothed in the garb of historical inevitability.

Darwinism was thus dual-edged, supportive of the enlightening propensities of empiricism and the scientific method on the one hand, but also of the predominance of the darker forces of animality and instinct over reason on the other. A further blow to reason came from the discovery of the psychology of the instinctive and the unconscious, beginning as early as von Schubert's study of the *Symbolism of Dreams* (1814), the poetry of Blake and others, and developed in E. von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869) and later in Jung and others. There rapidly emerged that central role posited for sexuality in the shaping of human behaviour, which we associate principally with Havelock Ellis, and Freud. The world within, it was increasingly evident, was disturbed, if not aberrant: it might be controlled, but would never, like the outer, be tamed or mastered; the struggle must be constant. The passions, as some Enlightenment thinkers had conjectured, would not bow before reason: now the erotic threatened virtually to subvert it. While some claimed that science could still promote species-progress, notably through eugenics, others dismissed such appeals as 'the meddlesome interference of an arrogant scientific priesthood'.³ It was, certainly, widely evident that the period from 1880–1914 marked a clear loss of confidence in the idea of the progress of rational, harmonious, human self-control. Even the Romantic ideal of the self, with its emphasis on the creative passions, seemed disturbed and unhappy, buoyed by the liberating rebellion against bourgeois morals of the period, but anxiously peering into the abyss of bottomless self-unknownability. Conscious mythologizing became in some quarters the order of the day: the masses or 'crowd', their collective psychology diagnosed as herdlike, needed heroes – the shadow of Bonaparte fell long into the century – and equally ideas by which they could be manipulated, and the period is often referred to as commencing the age of ideologies. But if it

was the age of the masses, the championship of elites was never far away, whether in Nietzsche's Superman or Pareto's assertion, based on a critique of Marx, that elites naturally emerged to steer any mass movement. But still others, notably anarchists like Michael Bakunin, resisted the claim that such elitism was inevitable.

The decade of the 1890s, then, has usually been seen as marking an important psychological watershed, where the sense of *fin de siècle* is pervaded with irrationalism, mysticism, disillusionment, various forms of neo-Romanticism and Social Darwinism. At root seemed to lie the sentiment that the promise to mankind of rational scientific control over the world was being subverted by deeper passions, psychologically, and their mirror social pathologies, especially nationalistic militarism. The solid edifice of civilization seemed increasingly like a papier mâché frontage or Potemkin village. Civilised mores appeared as a mere pastiche of civility, a fig-leaf barely restraining the lustful or blood-letting instincts: Rousseau enjoyed a renaissance. But if the passions were savage, their discovery could also be liberating and empowering, the overthrow of libidinal guilt marking a new epoch of sexual freedom for women. Literature, drama and painting all began to link ideas of artistic creativity to the assault on bourgeois respectability, and through Wedekind, Zola, Wells and a host of others the artist became the symbol of rebellion *par excellence*. Painters like Van Gogh and Gauguin exalted the primitive, the everyday, the humble, the fleeting, momentary, unrepeatable impression. Poets like William Morris, imbued with a guiding hatred of modernity, evoked the beauty and inner spiritual calm of the medieval world. Romantics of all stripes began a concerted rebellion against bourgeois conformism. But counter-attack was never far away, and works like Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1895) assailed the new aestheticism as decadent, corrupt and escapist. Painting moved still further into abstraction, music into atonality. The idea of the modern, in all its richness, pain and ambiguity, was emerging. The world had begun to move beyond a male, white, repressed, European bourgeois meta-narrative of progress towards something much more uncertain but clearly less restrictive.

The end of the 'long' nineteenth century, bounded by the French Revolution and the First World War, demonstrated all too clearly the bleak, horrifying, destructive, lemming-like aspect of modernity. As one catastrophe followed another after 1914, many blamed the voluntarist philosophies of Nietzsche, Bergson and others, with their stress on energy and power as principles, perhaps supra-moral principles, of neo-pagan, Social Darwinist, irrationalist self-assertion. To the pious this was only the logical consequence of the uncertainty created by scientific questioning, and of Darwinism in particular; science, as Francis Power Cobbe put it, was 'essentially Jacobin', and would leave no king dethroned.⁴ Man had been returned to nature, and now began to act naturally, freed of the restraints provided by both divinity and civility. Particularly where the state became identified with this force, no long as the incarnation of a higher spiritual ideal, as in Hegel, but as a self-expanding collective will, a shark amongst minnows, as it was in Treitschke, international violence was sure to follow. With a fear of species degeneration came the apprehension of a creeping barbarism, first noticed by some at the time of the Armenian massacres from 1894–6, about which Leonard Hobhouse later recalled that:

It was not so much the actual cruelty and outrage, bringing the worst horrors of the seventeenth century into the midst of a supposedly humane and ordered civilisation. It was the indifference of Europe in face of such deeds that affected every one with the least touch of imagination'.⁵

Following close on this came a war between Turkey and Greece, another in Cuba, and then the South African conflict. Nations, as one observer put it, 'intoxicated with patriotism', became 'wild beasts, who looked upon a large part of the world as undivided prey'.⁶ The new Great Powers, the USA, Germany and Japan, in particular, anxious to expand their power, began to cut away at the pre-existing imperial structure. The catastrophe of 1914, which we often presume to have marked the end of the century, came as less of a surprise to many observers than we might imagine today, and its eventual consequence, the greater catastrophe of 1939, seemingly followed inevitably. The technology of destruction, now wedded to racial arrogance, began to unleash its full potential. The 'Wonderful Century', its ideals and confidence exhausted, closed with the near-dissolution of the world-order that had dominated and defined it, and the prospect that its alluring promises would fade into mere collective delusion.

Notes

- 1 A.R. Wallace. *The Wonderful Century. Its Successes and its Failures* (1898), p. 150.
- 2 J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (1883), p. 8.
- 3 James Marchant. *Alfred Russel Wallace, Letters and Reminiscences* (2 vols, 1916), vol. 2, p. 247.
- 4 Frances Power Cobbe, *The Scientific Spirit of the Age and Other Pleas and Discussions* (1888), p. 27.
- 5 L.T. Hobhouse, *The World in Conflict* (1915), p. 10.
- 6 Havelock Ellis, *The Nineteenth Century. A Dialogue in Utopia* (1900), p. 24.

Acknowledgements

This collection of essays does not represent an intellectual history of the period as such, but a series of incursions into a vast, complex and ever-contested arena of ideas. No two editors will ever see such a diverse panoply of ideas the same way, but while responsibility for this volume is entirely mine, it is presented in the hope that readers in perusing it will want to explore further the mysteries, delights and perplexities of such an extraordinary era.

While editing a volume of this type is akin to marshalling an army of cats, my co-editors and collaborators in this dictionary have on the whole performed admirably to specification, and have produced an exciting, interesting and informative reference work. I owe much to the calm efficiency of my editor, Dominic Shryane, an adept feline-tamer, and to Fred Beiser, Christopher Duggan, Pamela Pilbeam and Chushichi Tsuzuki for their assistance in the sometimes daunting task of matching topics to suitable contributors. Finally, as ever, I am grateful to my family for patiently enduring absences, flights of fancy, and an unhealthy obsession with making software work properly.

Gregory Claeys
London
April 2004

A

ACTON, JOHN EMERICH DALBERG (1834–1902)

John Emerich Edward Dalberg, 1st Baron Acton, eminent British historian, was born on 10 January 1834 at Naples, the son of a Roman Catholic baronet. Educated at Oscott under Dr, later Cardinal, Wiseman, he studied at Edinburgh, then at Munich under Döllinger, who inspired him to become a historian. His great aim was to write a 'History of Liberty', but this was never achieved. He spent several years as a Member of Parliament (1859–65), where he adhered to William Gladstone, and developed a reputation as an individualist, free-trading Liberal. Disputing the view that slavery had caused the American Civil War, he supported the Southern states' right of secession. But his real love was Catholicism: 'The one supreme object of all of my thoughts is the good of the Church,' he wrote to his wife. Acton thus exerted much energy as the editor of the Catholic monthly, *The Rambler*, which merged with the *Home and Foreign Review* in 1862, though as a liberal Catholic he was isolated even from most British Catholics, and was nearly excommunicated (Döllinger was) because of his opposition to papal infallibility. He helped to found the *English Historical Review* in 1886, and became Sir John Seeley's successor as Regius Professor of History at Cambridge in 1895. Following the success of his inaugural lecture, 'The Study of History', he gave two courses of lectures, on the French Revolution and on Modern History, and achieved a reputation as a remarkable tutor.

Relatively little of Acton's historical work was published during his lifetime. The essays on 'The History of Freedom in Antiquity' and 'The History of Freedom in Christianity' do not develop

adequately his Tocquevillian worries about the threat of democracy to modern liberty. His journalism, though deeply partisan (he took issue with 'the materialist' Buckle in *The Rambler* over the role of both free will and Providence in history, for instance, on overtly Catholic grounds), offers as much insight into the key theme of his political philosophy, the interpenetration of religious and political liberty, and the need to secure both by abridging the power of the state. Acton's account of liberty as 'the highest political end' is abstract, Burckian and Whiggish: he defines liberty as 'the assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion.' Acton seemingly ignored the great debates on the reshaping of liberalism towards a 'New Liberal', interventionist ideal, during the 1880s and 1890s. Nonetheless he conceded the compatibility of Christianity and socialism, and agreed that the poor should be aided where private enterprise had failed them. Both his liberalism and his Catholic cosmopolitanism also led him to warn of the destructive effects of nationalism, notably in the well-known essay on 'Nationality' (1862). Acton died on 19 June 1902.

Further reading

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SEE ALSO: historiography and the idea of progress; liberalism

GREGORY CLAEYS

AESTHETICS, PAINTING AND ARCHITECTURE

The history of aesthetic thought in the nineteenth century has been little investigated by modern scholars, and is still largely unknown territory. In the Anglophone world, at any rate, this is attributable to the long reaction against Victorianism, which dominated the first five or six decades of the twentieth century. From a modernist point of view, the Victorian tendency to moralize made it practically impossible for a serious investigation of the proper objects of aesthetics to take place, a state of affairs of which modernists regarded the supposed corrupt sentimentality of Victorian art as a symptom.

This twentieth-century dismissal of the dominant nineteenth-century tendencies in aesthetics was in large part the culmination of a process that began in the later nineteenth century. The development of a scientific, and eventually laboratory-based, psychology in Britain, Germany and the USA during the last 30 years of the nineteenth century effected a transformation in the discourse of aesthetics, in that it became increasingly difficult to invoke final causes in the discussion of aesthetic questions. This problematization of the theological argument from design, in part a result of the intellectual impact of evolutionary theory, affected thinking about aesthetics particularly profoundly because an appeal to natural beauty had been in many ways the last bastion of religious providentialism.

The late nineteenth-century call for a scientific aesthetics was accompanied by a change in the definition of aesthetics itself, a change that had profound consequences for the way in which the history of nineteenth-century aesthetics was written (or, more frequently, left unwritten). JOHN RUSKIN, early on in the second book of *Modern Painters*, objected to the very term 'aesthetics' itself, as a description of the philosophical study of beauty, because it focused attention on the role played by the senses in appreciation of the beautiful, rather

than on what the mind perceived by means of the senses. The later nineteenth-century psychologization of aesthetics, coupled with Whistler's impressionist-influenced proclamation that the only criterion by which a painting could legitimately be judged was its sensuous immediacy, fulfilled Ruskin's fears that use of the term 'aesthetics' heralded a behaviouristic redefinition of beauty purely in terms of sensory inputs.

Consequently, in order to understand the development of nineteenth-century aesthetics we must expand our category of 'the aesthetic' beyond what most twentieth-century commentators have understood by the term. This means that we must abandon the assumption that the appeal to an extra-artistic reality, characteristic, for example, of Victorian narrative painting, is necessarily aesthetically incoherent, or merely 'sentimental'. The characteristic twentieth-century attitude that pronounces reference outside the artwork itself aesthetically illegitimate is a reflection of a relativistic philosophy for which reality, outside the structuring systems of human aesthetics and culture, is essentially chaotic: reference to such a reality by a work of art must in this view be either an exercise in falsification, or in contravention to the work's own principles of aesthetic order. For the majority of nineteenth-century thinkers, however, there is no such conflict between intrinsic aesthetic qualities and external reference, so that aesthetic order can be understood as corresponding to an order that really exists outside the work of art, and which can be referred to by the artist in its support.

The philosophical perspective that justified this predominant nineteenth-century view of art, as indicative of a reality which transcended it, may be identified with that of the so-called Common Sense school of philosophy founded in the eighteenth century by Thomas Reid. Common Sense philosophy was a protean intellectual tradition that continued to be an important influence in all major European countries, and also in North America, until the 1870s. It thus constituted the philosophical frame within which arguably the majority of nineteenth-century aesthetic thought took place, and whose rejection lay behind the scientific psychology of such figures as Alexander Bain and James Sully, and the Decadent aesthetics of Pater.

The Common Sense tradition has been little studied by twentieth-century scholars, who have generally found its insistence on philosophical

realism unappealingly dogmatic (although a revival of interest in the realist position among philosophers during the 1990s has led to a corresponding upturn in the academic fortunes of Thomas Reid). The widespread nature of the influence of Common Sense philosophy has therefore attracted little recognition even in studies of the nineteenth-century British intellectual tradition. It has however been shown that in Germany Scottish Common Sense philosophy formed the matrix from which the philosophy of Kant and the German Idealists emerged, and that in France its influence was perpetuated by the philosophical eclecticism of Cousin and his pupil Jouffroy. In both Britain and France Common Sense philosophy was heavily implicated in the development of nineteenth-century faculty psychology and studies of the physiology of the brain, as well as in popular movements such as phrenology and mesmerism. The Scottish Enlightenment inheritance of educational systems in North America has been well known for some time, and Common Sense philosophy represented an important part of that inheritance, influencing EMERSON and the transcendentalists. Because of the overlap between Common Sense philosophy and German Idealism, many nineteenth-century ideas of great importance for aesthetic theory (such as that of the essential activity of the mind in the process of perception), which have usually been attributed to the influence of German Idealism in twentieth-century scholarship, are more correctly viewed as belonging to the Common Sense tradition's intellectual heritage; this has been shown to be the case, for example, for THOMAS CARLYLE, often regarded even in his own day as an essentially 'German' thinker, but whose actual acquaintance with German Idealist philosophy appears to have been scanty at best.

Common Sense philosophy's importance for nineteenth-century thinking about aesthetics lies in its development of Berkeley's account of perception. Thomas Reid, in his 1764 *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, analysed each of the senses in turn in order to show that human perception was essentially dependent on the interpretation of divinely ordained sensory signs, as Berkeley had claimed. Reid argued, in an anticipation of Kant, that Hume's demonstration of the insufficiency of reasoning based on the data available to the senses to justify common human beliefs, such as that in a world external to the mind,

made it necessary to suppose that these beliefs represented fundamental intuitions that were inherent in the mind's capacity to apprehend the world. Such intuitions (collectively entitled 'common sense' by Reid) were the enabling conditions that allowed the mind to form a coherent interpretation of the perceptual cues, or signs, presented by the world, and were comparable to the basic assumptions about the structure of experience that for Reid were embodied in the grammar of every language.

The Common Sense philosophy of Reid insisted on the irreducibility of the mind's perceptions of the world to mere sense-data, an argument that was intended to refute the materialist associationism of Hume. Later developments in the Common Sense tradition, however, tended to combine this account of foundational transcendent intuitions with associationist arguments. An early example is Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, first published in 1790, but influentially popularized by FRANCIS JEFFREY in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1811, which went on to be a standard nineteenth-century text on aesthetics and was later read by Marcel Proust. Alison's work is normally described as an example of associationism, but as is made clear by the conclusion to its second volume, where Alison cites Reid's Common Sense philosophy, Alison's associationist analyses take as their basis the kind of foundational intuitions described by Reid (who returned the compliment, writing a commendatory letter to Alison). This tendency to combine Reidian Common Sense philosophy with associationism was taken to an extreme by the later Common Sense philosopher Thomas Brown who controversially argued in the 1810s that there was no inherent conflict between the philosophy of Reid and that of Hume, and proceeded to elaborate an essentially Humean analysis of the methodological problems of the physical sciences. Brown's combination of Reidian intuitionism with Humean associationism is reflected in his notion of unconscious 'suggestion', which proved to be influential on much subsequent nineteenth-century aesthetic discussion.

The Common Sense tradition's potential for combining Berkeleyan immaterialism with the materialist implications of Humean psychology meant that its intellectual legacy to nineteenth-century aesthetic thought was fundamentally ambiguous. On the one hand, Reid's claim for the

semiotic basis of perception pointed the way towards various varieties of symbolist doctrine, a trend that extended from the symbolist poetics of writers such as Carlyle, Emerson and Elizabeth Barrett Browning right up to the French *Symbolistes* at the end of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Reid's insistence on the fundamentally immaterial nature of perception, as an interpretative act of the mind, prompted scientific inquiry into the physiological basis of perception, a tendency foreshadowed by Reid's own investigations into the nature of sensation and that ultimately led to the physiological aesthetics of 1870s writers such as Grant Allen.

It would be a mistake to regard this physiologically orientated research, particularly in the early part of the nineteenth century, as necessarily motivated by a materialist agenda; the study of involuntary physiological processes, it was thought, could help to demonstrate the essentially immaterial nature of mind and its independence from the body. Charles Bell's *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression*, first published in 1806 and, in its many revised editions, a major influence on the pre-Raphaelite painters, is an example of this kind of immaterialist-orientated physiological investigation. The ultimate effect of such research, however, was to emphasize the physiological workings of the brain to such an extent as to suggest that the individual characteristics of works of art could be traced back to peculiarities in the dietary habits and physical organization of the artist. The early reception of Edgar Allan Poe's writings in France affords an example of this physiological reading of aesthetics, with critics explaining Poe's artistic idiosyncrasies as the inevitable result of his alcoholic temperament.

One of the major facets of Common Sense philosophy's influence over aesthetic thought in early nineteenth-century Britain was its encouragement of a typological approach to art. The extent to which Victorian art was typological in orientation, in the sense that it included apparently realistic detail that was intended to be interpreted allegorically as significant of a spiritual world transcending what could be represented, has been commented on by many critics. A well-known example is Holman Hunt's painting *The Awakening Conscience*, where the minutely rendered bourgeois parlour contains many indicators both of the young woman's status as a kept mistress, and of her newly aroused moral capacity to redeem herself

through repentance. The critic F.G. Stephens, in his anonymously issued 1860 memoir of Hunt, furnished a lengthy interpretation of the painting *The Light of the World* in these terms, objects such as the unusual seven-sided lantern that Christ carries being assigned quite specific theological significance.

That the architecture of the Gothic Revival was also understood by the Victorians as possessing typological significance is suggested by the writings of its first great exponent, Augustus Welby Pugin, who argued that the Gothic style was the only appropriate one for a church, because its use of height was, by a natural typology, indicative of the Resurrection. A similar kind of typological reading of church architecture, though applied to a very different theological purpose, is to be found in the eccentric late Victorian occultist Hargrave Jennings. Chris Brooks, in his 1984 study *Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World*, has advanced typological interpretations of a number of specific Victorian churches.

Although the prominence of typological interpretation in early Victorian aesthetics has often been attributed by late twentieth-century commentators to the influence of evangelicalism, the recourse to a typological aesthetics is found in nineteenth-century writers belonging to a number of theological persuasions. John Keble, the prominent Tractarian, advanced as early as 1814 his view that the effect of poetry could be understood as deriving from its use of natural 'types' of the divine that had been authorized for the Christian by their appearance in the Bible, a view that he expounded at length in Tract 89 ('On the Mysticism Attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church') and in his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*. The striking proliferation of arguments from natural typology in early nineteenth-century Britain is probably to be attributed to the use made of Common Sense philosophy by orthodox defenders of Trinitarian theology, such as Bishop Magee, in their controversies with the Unitarians during the 1790s.

Common Sense philosophy encouraged an aesthetics based on a natural typology in which hidden correspondences were identified between the realm of Nature and that of spirit (rather than just between separate passages of the Bible) because in its view perception itself was based on just such unexplainable correspondences. For the Common Sense school, the sensory cue of the perceptual sign was recognized, through the human

mind's intuition, to correspond to an intelligible perception of the external world, just as a linguistic sign might be recognized to correspond to a concept, without the connection between the two being amenable to rational analysis. Since from this perspective all perception was a form of typological correspondence, religious typologies were easily understood as an aspect of everyday experience, however much they might be disregarded in the course of the normal business of life. In this intellectual context, SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE's German Idealist-influenced theorizing about the nature of the 'symbol', often regarded by modern critics as the chief source of Keble's and Carlyle's aesthetic thought, may be understood as merely one aspect of a wider British intellectual preoccupation with the implications of the relationship between perception and signification. Coleridge certainly attempted to modify his contemporaries' understanding of perceptual and linguistic signification, in that he suggested a biological model of assimilation and digestion might serve as a paradigm for the process whereby the connection between sign and concept was formed, but he did not originate the basic parallel between language and perception that underlies the majority of nineteenth-century British aesthetic thinking, as has sometimes been claimed.

The aesthetic writing of John Ruskin is the most sustained exposition of Victorian typological aesthetics, the developing crisis in which is reflected in changes of view at various stages in his career. Ruskin seems to have encountered Common Sense philosophy through his Scottish parents, and its influence is reflected in the view, forcefully articulated from the outset of *Modern Painters*, that painting is essentially a kind of language whose effects may be compared to poetry. Ruskin derived from this position his characteristic claim that the aim of painting should not be imitation, but communication of truth. This Ruskinian argument follows on from the Common Sense School's Berkeleyan account of perception as a process of interpretation of signs. For Ruskin, the painter's weighty moral calling was to learn how to manipulate the divine language of visual signs, success in which would supply immediate evidence of the existence of God. Painterly imitation of the materiality of objects, on the other hand, led, in Ruskin's view, directly to atheism, since it substituted an unmeaning sensuousness for this typologically charged visual language.

Ruskin's later writing, on the other hand, from book three of *Modern Painters* onwards, accords much greater weight to the role of individual association in aesthetic appreciation. In part this reflects developments within the Common Sense tradition on which I have already commented, but it also appears to stem from a decrease of confidence in the stability of natural 'types' that can be linked to the development of evolutionary thought. The natural typology on which Ruskin had founded his account of painting as a divinely instituted visual language was based on the assumption that Nature, and natural species, had remained essentially unchanged since God's creation of the world, and so ultimately represented an embodiment of ideas in the mind of God. The perspective of evolution challenged the notion that there was anything inevitable or necessary about the categories that could be discerned in the natural world, an idea on which the Victorian typological aesthetic relied for its credibility.

The development of aesthetic thought in North America during the nineteenth century closely parallels trends in Britain, being based on many of the same intellectual sources. Transcendentalist aesthetics, as presented by Emerson in his essays, may be regarded as a version of the typological aesthetics I have described as characteristic of early nineteenth-century Britain, where Nature is regarded as full of spiritual correspondences that can be perceived by the intuition of the contemplating mind; it prepared the way for an enthusiastic reception of Ruskin during the 1850s. Although the Transcendentalists had an interest in German Idealism, their actual knowledge of it appears to have been largely mediated through French sources such as Victor Cousin, which assimilated it to the Common Sense tradition (a tendency that is also apparent in reception of German Idealism in Britain up till the late nineteenth century). Transcendentalism is probably best characterized as a reaction against the tendencies within the Common Sense tradition that were tending to equate it with Humean associationism; in this respect it might be compared to the position represented by William Hamilton in Britain, whose popularization of Kantian thought was coupled with an attempt to renovate the Common Sense philosophy of Reid. This is an interpretation that is supported by a comment of the nineteenth-century historian of Transcendentalism, Octavius Brooks Fotheringham, equating

the Transcendentalist movement with the English philosophy of Butler, Reid and Coleridge.

From the 1860s onwards, German intellectual influences, especially Hegel, appear to have played a more substantial role in US aesthetic debate, figuring in the work of writers such as James Eliot Cabot, who expressed dissatisfaction with the anti-systematic nature of Ruskinian aesthetics. The tenor of discussion, however, remained directed towards modifying Ruskin in the direction of a quasi-Coleridgean organicism rather than in rejecting his typological aesthetics altogether; Leopold Eidlitz's 1881 *The Nature and Function of Art, More Especially of Architecture* is representative of this tendency. Ruskinism was eventually replaced during the 1890s by a physiologically and psychologically based aesthetics in the work of Henry Rutgers Marshall and George Santayana.

Aesthetic thought in France during the nineteenth century also presents considerable similarities with the narrative I have outlined of the development of a typological aesthetics in Britain, although in the latter part of the century the intellectual prestige of BERGSON appears to have inhibited the development of a scientific aesthetics. The promotion of Common Sense philosophy by PIERRE PAUL ROYER-COLLARD and, later, by his pupil Victor Cousin formed part of the Napoleonic backlash against *Idéologues* such as Destutt de Tracy; this intellectual tendency was continued by Théodore Jouffroy, who translated the works of Reid and his pupil DUGALD STEWART as well as producing original work on aesthetics. The prominent status of all these figures in French academic life ensured that the Common Sense tradition dominated French aesthetics for a large part of the nineteenth century; it underlies, for example, Charles Lévêque's *La Science du Beau* [The Science of Beauty], published in 1861.

The aesthetic thought of Charles Baudelaire in many ways sums up the opposing tendencies I have identified in the Common Sense tradition. On the one hand, an essay such as *The Painter of Modern Life* is quite clearly based on a view of art as the manipulation of a transcendently significant visual language, a view that can be compared to Ruskin's (although Baudelaire is prepared to find more value in the man-made world of fashion than the early Ruskin). On the other hand, Baudelaire's writings on Poe elaborate an aesthetic of nervous

stimulation and exhaustion that owes much to contemporary medical physiological investigations. Eugène Delacroix's ideas about art seem similarly indebted to the Common Sense tradition; in a famous passage in his journal, Delacroix describes art as a kind of 'hieroglyphic' that forms a bridge between the perceptions of the artist and those of his audience, a characterization that, once again, recalls the Common Sense emphasis on perception as a process of interpretation of divine visual signs.

The later enthusiasm for the philosophy of Schopenhauer among French *Symbolistes*, such as the art critic Albert Aurier, may be understood as a continuation of this intellectual heritage, rather than a radical break with it. Schopenhauer's conception of art as the intuition of the Ideas underlying phenomena is not very remote from the typological conception of art I have described, and his interest in physiological modes of explaining mental phenomena is also akin to elements in the Common Sense tradition, with which Schopenhauer was probably familiar as a result of his English education.

Aesthetic thought in Germany, at least in the area of the visual arts, seems after the end of the Romantic period in about 1815 not to have been greatly influenced by Idealist philosophy until about mid-century. The aesthetic theorist F.W. Schlegel, for example, abandoned Idealist scepticism in favour of a fideistic position that could be identified with the *Glaubensphilosophie* [philosophy of faith] of F.H. Jacobi, essentially a restatement of some of the central positions of Common Sense philosophy. Jacobi's influence on Romantics such as Novalis suggests that it might be possible to interpret German Romanticism itself as a reaction against aspects of post-Kantian idealism in favour of a philosophically realist position akin to Common Sense philosophy; this certainly seems to be how Heinrich Heine interpreted Romanticism in his well-known 1836 essay *The Romantic School*. The major movement in German art during this period, the Nazarene school of painters led by Peter Cornelius, certainly subscribed to a similar religious fideism, expressed by Cornelius in his cultivation of a monk-like persona. Nazarene painting was also characterized by a typological aesthetic very similar to the one underlying early pre-Raphaelite art in Britain, in which painting was understood as a language of visual signs that transcended the material world.

The German development that did most to shape aesthetic thought in Europe and North America was in fact the reaction against Hegelian Idealism represented by the work of Johann Friedrich Herbart. Herbart brought about a revival of Kant's formalist aesthetic that permeated the physiological and psychological research done into perception in the latter half of the nineteenth century by Hermann Helmholtz and Gustav Fechner; Helmholtz's work in particular was widely known among physiologically orientated aestheticians in Britain. Hermann Lotze, Fechner's pupil, rejected this formalist emphasis, insisting, in company with Friedrich Theodor Vischer, on empathy as the essential characteristic of art, a position that can be related to the development of expressionism in Germany. Lotze's work was known in the USA, where it was an important early influence on the philosophy of George Santayana.

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SEE ALSO: psychology, the emergence of; religion, secularization and the crisis of faith; Social Darwinism

GAVIN BUDGE

AMERICAN THOUGHT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

For many, the greatest achievements in American thought pre-dated the nineteenth century. The creation of a 'city on a hill' and its intellectual defence, the philosophical and theological writings of Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), the popular and scientific

writings of Benjamin Franklin (1706–80), the political writings of the framers of the US Declaration of Independence and Constitution, particularly John Adams (1735–1826) and THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826), and the defence of the Constitution by the writers of *The Federalist Papers* (1787–88), particularly Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804) and James Madison (1751–1836) all demonstrate that there was a lively and significant intellectual life on which nineteenth-century thinkers could build, either through development or rejection.

The thinkers of the first half of the nineteenth century had to face an issue that their forerunners had largely chosen to set aside, slavery. Those in the second half of the century had to confront the aftermath of the way that slavery had been handled, which often meant following in the footsteps of eighteenth-century thinkers and setting aside or ignoring the issues involved. And slavery was symbolic of another major issue that has bedevilled American political thought throughout its history, the relations between the national government and the governments of the states. The Civil War, still called the War Between the States by many Southerners, was fought at least as much over this issue as it was over slavery, and while the issue of slavery was formally ended by the war (only to be replaced by discrimination and segregation), the debate over the locus of power continues to this day.

Perhaps due to these overriding issues and their continued relevance throughout the century, much of the thought in the period can be at least loosely labelled social thought. Philosophy in the sense the term is used today was generally weak until the end of the century, and, for much of the period, was closely related to religious thinking. When it did develop, it was often written in social terms. Theology was also often concerned with human relations on this earth as much as it was concerned with relations between people and God.

It is also important to recognize that there was a strong anti-intellectual current in the nineteenth century, which continues. This current led to regular attacks on almost all the thinkers discussed here, but, during this period, particularly on the scientific thought stemming from Darwin.

Religion

The eighteenth century had seen the ending of the complete dominance of Puritanism and

Congregationalism and the growth of Unitarianism and Deism, and the initial inroads of Methodism and Baptism. By the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, Unitarianism dominated in intellectual circles. Denying the Trinity did not, however, imply a rejection of the active intervention of the divine in human life, as symbolized by miracles. This would lead to various challenges to the dominance of Unitarianism and its gradual demise as an intellectual force throughout the century, being challenged initially by Transcendentalism and ultimately replaced by both science and more conservative religious doctrines that did not reject Trinitarianism.

The nineteenth century witnessed a series of religious revivals and the development of new Protestant denominations and both the development of significant alternatives within the mainstream of Christianity and various radical challengers that saw themselves as Christian but were virtually heterodox. The tour of the USA by John (1703–93) and Charles Wesley (1707–88) in 1736 ultimately led to the rapid expansion of Methodism, which by the beginning of the twentieth century was the largest Protestant denomination in the USA. John Wesley represented a branch of Perfectionism that has waxed and waned in the USA, one that emphasizes the need to be personally saved, as Wesley believed he had been. With this awareness of one's personal salvation, this 'Second Blessing', it became possible to live a good life on this earth. Followers of Wesley in the USA tended to support a double standard of morality for men and women because women did not have to go out into 'the world' with its dangers of corruption.

More radical movements included the continuation of the Shakers, or the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, who, although there remain a few adherents in the twenty-first century, reached their peak in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Shakers believed in a quadripartite God (the Trinity plus Holy Mother Wisdom) and that Christ's second coming had already occurred in the form of their founder, Ann Lee (originally Lees – 1736–84). The Shakers practised celibacy and community of goods, aimed at gender equality, and were extremely successful.

The Shakers radical perfectionism then taught that it was possible for human beings on this earth to attain or at least approach perfection. The

best-known exponent was JOHN HUMPHREY NOYES (1811–86). A less well-known exponent of Perfectionism, Adin Ballou (1803–90), illustrates the common drive to social reform inspired by the doctrine. Ballou founded a community, called Hopedale, in Massachusetts, which was quite successful economically, but it was his argument that we must make the teachings of Christianity real through our lives that illustrates an important thread in nineteenth-century thought. He wanted, as the title of one of his periodicals has it, to develop *Practical Christians*. Later in the century, using similar language but outside the Perfectionist camp, thinkers like Edward Everett Hale (1822–1909), best known as the author of 'Man without a Country' (1863), pastor of the famous South Congregational Church of Boston from 1856 to 1909, and Chaplain of the US Senate from 1903–9, proposed very similar ideas. In *Ten Times One is Ten* (1870), Hale suggested that if each person taught another person the truth of Christianity, in roughly 27 years the world could be transformed. His *How They Lived in Hampton* (1888) was subtitled *A Study in Practical Christianity* and argued for the need to apply Christianity to economic relations.

Spiritualism was another popular movement in the nineteenth century. The belief in the ability to communicate with the dead or with more advanced beings on other planets also gave rise to a very popular, as measured by book sales, belief in what came to be known as the 'domestic' heaven or an afterlife little different from life before death but better. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's (1844–1911) *The Gates Ajar* (1868), *Beyond the Gates* (1883) and *The Gates Between* (1887), and a number of imitators all described contact with those who had died and were living comfortable middle-class lives in heaven.

Other radical religious movements included the Millerites, followers of William Miller (1782–1849), who believed that the end of the world was imminent. While Miller was never specific as to the date, Joshua V. Himes (1805–95), who became the publicist for the Millerite millennium, initially said March 1843 or 1844 and then 22 October 1844. When all these dates passed, most Millerites, who had, in their thousands, sold their worldly goods, rejected the message. But a few remained, and the Millerite phenomenon ultimately produced the denomination today known as the Seventh Day Adventists. The belief in the imminent end of the

world or the nearness of the Second Coming is a common feature of US religious history and, for all of the popularity of Miller, this belief may well have been more popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it again became popular near the end of the twentieth century, particularly as the year 2000 approached.

Transcendentalism

The most important movement in the first half of the nineteenth century that was both philosophical and theological, and dealt with social issues was Transcendentalism. Its foremost spokesperson was RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803–82), who, after Edwards and Franklin, was among the earliest US thinkers to have a contemporary influence outside the USA.

In addition to Emerson, transcendentalist thinkers included Orestes Brownson (1803–76), who searched the religious spectrum and ended his life as a Roman Catholic; Margaret Fuller (1810–50), the most outspoken feminist among the Transcendentalists; George Ripley (1802–80), the founder of Brook Farm (1841–7), a communal experiment that briefly attracted Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) among others; and Bronson Alcott (1799–1888) and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (1804–94), educational theorists. But it was Emerson who was the central figure and primary theorist of Transcendentalism, in part because he directly challenged the then dominant Unitarian orthodoxy of the Boston intellectuals of his day. The leader of the Unitarians was William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), who had challenged the earlier Puritan/Congregational orthodoxy by insisting that reason be applied to religion. This led to the 'higher criticism' that became the basis for serious Biblical scholarship, but it also led to a 'cold' religion that failed to attract the Transcendentalists, who also believed that there was a fundamental contradiction in Unitarianism's insistence on the compatibility of reason and the belief in miracles. A movement that had similar objections to Unitarianism but later joined with it was Universalism. Led initially by Hosea Ballou (1771–1852), Universalism has often been called the rural version of Unitarianism and stressed the power of God's love.

Emerson, who was an ordained minister, refused to give communion in his church, thus rejecting the miracle of transubstantiation, lost his pulpit and in 1838 gave a speech at Harvard

Divinity School that was in many ways the founding moment of Transcendentalism. He was not invited back until after the end of the Civil War. Emerson's new religion was based on 'the infinitude of the private man' and stressed self-reliance, but not a self-reliance that would be recognized by the proponents of the 'self-made man' of capitalism and the Social Darwinists. Emerson's self-reliant person would be active in the world as a reformer.

Pre-war reform

The main debates over the Constitution were completed with its ratification in 1787 followed by the adoption in 1791 of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights, plus the adoption in 1798 and 1804 of two further amendments of a more technical nature. There followed a period in which the energies that had been expended in the constitutional debates seemed to move to more general social reform. As Emerson wrote to THOMAS CARLYLE (1795–1881) in 1840, 'We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new Community in his waistcoat pocket. I am gently mad myself, and am resolved to live cleanly' (*The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson 1834–1872*, 2nd edn, 2 vols, ed. Charles E. Norton. [Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1883], pp. 308–9).

These reforms included the abolition of slavery and the enfranchisement of women as well as much more wide-ranging programmes of social transformation. These latter movements gave rise to the establishment of Brook Farm, Fruitlands, Oneida and many other intentional communities/communitarian experiments, many inspired by either ROBERT OWEN (1771–1858) or CHARLES FOURIER (1772–1837).

The best-known result of the pre-war reform is an essay by HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817–62), 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience' (1849), which influenced MOHANDAS K. GANDHI (1869–1948) in India and, through Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr (1929–65) in the USA. Thoreau argued that one has a duty to disobey unjust laws. Thoreau is also known for his *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854), which recounts a period of self-reliance at Walden Pond where Thoreau demonstrated that one could live both fully and cheaply by withdrawing from

the competition to do better than one's neighbours and living simply.

Another aspect of pre-war reform was feminism. Although feminism in the USA clearly pre-dates the nineteenth century, it was in the nineteenth century that it had its first real flowering. Feminist thought of the period included arguments for education of women and votes and equal rights for women. Women like Margaret Fuller, whose *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1844) was an early feminist text, and Frances Wright (1795–1852) wrote and spoke in favour of such changes and tried to live lives reflecting their desire for the changed status of women, although they did not always do so successfully. The best-known document of the period was the 'Declaration of Sentiments' of 1848, adopted by the first women's suffrage convention held at Seneca Falls, New York. The 'Declaration of Sentiments' was modelled on the 'Declaration of Independence' with a virtually identical statement of basic principles followed by a list of grievances and insisting on the franchise as a way of solving these grievances. The other well-known document was the speech 'Ain't I a Woman' that was given by Sojourner Truth (1797–1883) in 1851 at another women's rights convention. In this speech the ex-slave reflects on the image of women as weak and refutes it using her experience as a slave, manual labourer and mother.

After the war, the female suffrage movement was defeated because the advocates of votes for male ex-slaves thought that including women would lead to the defeat of the attempt to expand the franchise. This did not end the campaign and in 1873 Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) was found guilty of voting, and in a famous speech to the court challenged its right to try her. Other women, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) tried to ensure that feminists sought a more wide-ranging equality than the franchise, but as a movement, it tended to become a single-issue campaign. At the end of the century, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) published *Women and Economics* (1898), a pioneering analysis of the economic disadvantages that women worked under and an argument for significant improvement.

Union/states' rights/slavery

The lead up to the Civil War focused on the related issues of slavery and the locus of power, related

because if power was in the states, the South could protect its 'peculiar institution.' But if power was in the national government, the inevitable expansion of the USA west into areas where slavery was not economically feasible would upset the balance of power found at the beginning of the century and produce a system where non-slave states dominated. Thus, those thinkers who supported states rights or the supremacy of the union over the states supported those thinkers who supported or opposed slavery.

Slavery was defended and attacked on biblical grounds, but it was also defended by George Fitzhugh (1806–81) in his *Cannibals All!* (1857) as being a better system than the wage slavery of the North. While Fitzhugh romanticized slavery and assumed that all slave owners behaved as the best of them did, certain of his criticisms of the northern industrial system were well-taken, and near the end of the century, critics of industrial capitalism made many of the same points that Fitzhugh had made.

The opponents of slavery ranged across a wide spectrum in their attitudes toward slaves, with many of them believing that the slaves were inherently inferior. But they all agreed that owning another human being was wrong, whether from a humanitarian or a religious perspective. And the opponents of slavery, who included ex-slaves like Frederick Douglass (1817–95) and Sojourner Truth, did not have the delusions of a George Fitzhugh regarding the behaviour of slave owners. They knew that slaves were beaten, raped, ill-fed, clothed and housed, and often assumed to be and treated like animals.

Whether intending primarily to protect slavery or based on a principled belief in states' rights over against national power, the defenders of the states rarely mentioned slavery. The Constitution of the Confederate States of America (1861), which is almost identical to the United States Constitution and includes the Bill of Rights in the main text, barely refers to slavery, differing mostly on political and economic issues.

The most important theorist of states' rights was John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), whose theory of 'concurrent majorities' is now often equated with the consociational democracy being tried in countries like Lebanon. Calhoun argued for a system in which a group that constituted a majority in a particular place would have, in effect, a veto on a policy designed to be adopted

nationally. All potential majorities would have to concur for a law to be passed.

Other defenders of states' rights argued, as many had at the time the Constitution was ratified, that the states had formed the national government and were, therefore, superior to it. Defenders of the Union argued, as had Alexander Hamilton, that something new had been created that took precedence over the states. The issue has not yet been entirely settled.

Reconstruction

During and after the war, there was a brief period when radical theorists proposed not merely ending slavery and giving male ex-slaves the vote, but went so far as to propose the enfranchisement of women and the integration of ex-slaves into the wider society. The intellectual leader of the Radical Republicans was Thaddeus Stevens (1792–1868), who was particularly concerned with the possibility of redistributing Southern land to ex-slaves so as to develop a black yeomanry because he believed that in addition to the vote, which he considered a minor issue, blacks needed equality of opportunity and equality before the law.

During the war, the Freedmen's Bureau was established with a view of bringing the ex-slaves into national life. Led by Robert Dale Owen (1801–77), a son of Robert Owen, the Freedmen's Bureau report proposed education, land and family stability as means of solving the problems brought on by the end of slavery. The focus of most was much more limited, the legal abolition of slavery and votes for male ex-slaves. With the assassination of Abraham Lincoln (1808–65), the focus turned to the reintegration of the South into the Union and concern with the ex-slaves virtually disappeared for some years, only to be resurrected by African Americans themselves.

At the turn of the century, two major African American thinkers emerged. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON (1856–1915) and W.E.B. DU BOIS (1868–1963), who represented diametrically opposed approaches to the racial situation in the USA. Washington counselled accommodation and acceptance of the reality of segregation and Du Bois counselled opposition. Washington's Atlanta Exposition address of 1895 argued that African Americans, then known as Negroes, were willing supporters of capitalism and that they accepted being primarily

agricultural and manual skilled workers. As head of Tuskegee Institute, Washington provided the type of education needed for these goals, while rejecting any comparison to white education, even rejecting the label 'college' for Tuskegee. At the same time, Washington also founded the National Negro Business League to encourage entrepreneurship, and he encouraged the development of black bankers, funeral directors, lawyers, physicians, teachers and so forth to serve the black community.

Du Bois, who had a doctorate from Harvard University, was a scholar and activist, publishing many books on the situation of African Americans in the USA. Du Bois changed his approach over his lifetime, becoming a Marxist and adopting a class analysis, but at the time of his disagreement with Washington, he argued that those blacks that were able, the 'talented tenth', should get the best university education possible. They should demonstrate that they were inferior to no one and then work to help achieve change for all African Americans.

Philosophy

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, a tradition of US philosophy emerged, mostly from Harvard University. The founder of what came to be known as pragmatism was Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), who, in 1877–8, published the first articles that gave rise to the tradition. Peirce, who was a pioneering thinker in logic and the philosophy of science, did not develop his original insights, and in fact later tried to separate himself from what became known as pragmatism. William James (1842–1910) developed Peirce's ideas, initially in his 'Philosophical Concepts and Practical Results' (1898) and then more fully in *Pragmatism* (1907). James, who had been first a scientist and then a professor of psychology before turning to philosophy, argued that philosophy should be concerned with the actual, concrete results of acting on philosophical concepts and that the success or failure of such action could be a test of their truth or falsity. JOHN DEWEY (1859–1952) applied the principles of pragmatism to education, arguing that the school should be both experimental and democratic, and include the pupils in the democracy. As a result, US conservatives blame Dewey for much of what they perceive to be wrong with US education.

The other significant US philosopher at the end of the nineteenth century, Josiah Royce (1855–1916), rejected pragmatism. Royce had been inspired by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), as had Dewey early in his career. Royce, unlike Dewey, remained an Idealist and argued for a religious philosophy in works like *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885), a defence of theism, *The World and the Individual* (2 vols; 1899, 1901) and *The Problem of Christianity* (1913). In the last, he is somewhat less Hegelian, replacing his earlier insistence on the Absolute with a stress on the Universal Community.

Social Darwinism

A central issue for all thinkers in the latter part of the century was the impact of Charles Darwin (1809–82). For some the issue was evolution, for some it was the possible conflict between science and religion, and for others it was how to use Darwin's insights. There was, and still is, a strong anti-evolutionary current in US thought based on the belief that the Bible does not support evolution. But for most nineteenth-century thinkers, the question was how to reconcile science and religion, and, given the emergence of the 'higher criticism', many thinkers had no serious problem with rejecting a literal interpretation of the Bible in light of scientific evidence to the contrary.

One aspect of Darwin's language came to predominate in social theory, 'the struggle for survival'. What came to be called Social Darwinism was used to justify ethnic and racial discrimination, capitalism and the division between the rich and the poor. Social Darwinists argued that those who did well deserved to and those who failed also deserved to, and, in particular, that those who failed were not owed assistance by those who succeeded. They had no one to blame but themselves. The most important thinker taking this position was William Graham Sumner (1849–1910), whose essay 'The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over' (1894) can be taken as emblematic of the position.

The main spokesperson of the opposition to Social Darwinism was Lester Frank Ward (1841–1913), one of the founders of the discipline of sociology in the USA. He argued that evidence showed that co-operation and the ability to plan ahead were human characteristics. Thus people are disposed to and perfectly capable of modifying the

natural and social environment for the betterment of all. Another opponent of Social Darwinism was Jane Addams (1860–1935), whose Hull House in Chicago and the settlement house movement that it inspired were based on the premise that it was social conditions, not inherent personal flaws, which produced poverty.

A critic of capitalism coming from a somewhat different perspective was Thorstein Veblen. His *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) stressed the role in the operations of US capitalism of waste and 'conspicuous consumption', a phrase that came to be commonly used.

Utopianism

Among those social theorists who adopted the language of evolution for radical purposes was EDWARD BELLAMY. While utopianism has a strong presence throughout US thought, the most utopian moment in US history followed the publication in 1888 of Edward Bellamy's (1850–98) novel, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887*. It was followed over the next 25 years by over a hundred other utopias that responded to Bellamy directly, either positively or negatively, or, stimulated by the popularity of the form, provided alternative visions of the good life or the horrors of a potentially worse future. Some, like Ignatius Donnelly (1831–1901) and Jack London (1876–1916), provided both. Donnelly's *Caesar's Column* (1890) was almost wholly negative, depicting a class war and its results, while his *The Golden Bottle* (1892) presented a populist utopia in which readily available money frees the farmers and small businessmen from the dominance of capitalism. London's *The Iron Heel* of 1907 and 'A Curious Fragment' of 1908 presented the terrible future, including, as in Donnelly, class war, to be brought about by capitalism, while his 'Goliath', also from 1908 showed the better future to be achieved through socialism.

Socialism and anarchism

Although he downplayed the centralizing and non-democratic elements when he wrote *Equality* (1898), a sequel to *Looking Backward*, Bellamy's vision was based on state socialism, which he called nationalism because socialism had such negative connotations in the USA. But the main tradition

of US socialism is democratic. While mostly a phenomenon of the post-First World War period, it had its roots in the late nineteenth century. The leader and theorist of democratic socialism during this period was Eugene V. Debs (1855–1926). The revolutionary socialists, a very small number, were led by Daniel De Leon (1852–1914).

While many commentators trace the origins of US anarchism to Thoreau, it is more accurately seen as first identified with Lysander Spooner (1808–87) and the immediate post-Civil War period. While Spooner had little immediate impact, he is of particular importance in that he developed a theory of anarcho-capitalism, which is arguably the chief US contribution to anarchist theory, albeit mostly in the late twentieth century. Spooner and other anarcho-capitalists believed that only capitalism fits with anarchism, that any collective system, such as those proposed by PIETR KROPOTKIN (1842–1921) or EMMA GOLDMAN (1869–1940), undermines personal freedom. Only personal, individual consent to collective arrangement is permissible. BENJAMIN R. TUCKER (1854–1939), writing later in the century, began a continuous US tradition of anarchism. Tucker's writings were close in spirit to Spooner's. While most modern anarchists are collectivists rather than individualists like Tucker or anarcho-capitalists like Spooner, US anarchism has always had a strong component stemming from these thinkers, together with a more collectivist strain stemming from Goldman.

The issues of the nineteenth century, particularly the relations of the states and the national government, the position of African Americans and women, and the benefits and problems of competition, remain in the twenty-first century. Religion as an important factor in US thought remains, although the specific issues are different. Philosophy has become more and more technical since the end of the nineteenth century but has also played a significant role in a wide variety of debates in US thought. Thus, the issues and ways of addressing them have changed in detail but often not in substance.

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