

Transcendentalists dvd

Emerson, Thoreau, and the Transcendentalist Movement

Course No.
2598

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http://www.thegreatcourses.com/tgc/courses/course_detail.aspx?cid=2598

see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitarian_Universalism

finished lecture 5

Emerson:

“This world we live in is nothing but thickened light”

finished lecture

Thoreau:

Hume materialist says

Idealist vs materialist

Plato's Idealism like the concept of Maya

German idealist; mysticism

Immanuel Kant argues that behind phenomenal reality lies the noumena, or ground of being, which cannot be sensed. Dualistic

What is it that exists outside our senses; how can we prove its existence.

English romantics: Wordsworth, Coleridge

Spiritual; like energy

Emerson in Nature: “Build therefore your own world”

Questions accumulation of wealth for wealth's sake

Christian mystics

Swedenberg

Emphasize crucial importance of self

Unfettered mind

Inner light for each person.

Attempted to resolve Plato Aristotle idealism/materialism debate by saying spiritual somehow resides (is immanent) in matter. (immanence)

Materialism (scientific rationalism) dominates today

Unitarian universalists value his work. (whose work?)

William Ellery Channing:

“Congregationalists” included Calvinists.

Boston “Congregationalists” who eventually, grudgingly, accepted the title of “Unitarian”. Emphasized not dogma, but social responsibility, charity, and moral action. Very popular. Participated in early meetings of the transcendental club, but he was old by then. His idea of self development found its way into Emerson’s “Self Reliance”.

Very similar to Emerson & Transcendentalists in stressing my freedom to determine my religious belief based on my experience.

Unitarian: do not agree with idea of Trinity.

Channing helped others to break away from strict Calvinism, with its notion of predestination and idea of basic human sinfulness.

His idea of the mind as something that grows, or develops like a plant or animal is similar to the British romantics, specially Coleridge.

“Unitarianism” originated in England as result of numerous experiments in religious denominations.

His specific theology evolved into Unitarian Universalism, still widely active today. His social activism included peaceful abolitionism. Anti-poverty, anti war. His ideas led to foundation of social services. Distrusted governments.

British scientist Joseph Priestly was instrumental in bringing Unitarianism to the U.S. He was run out of Birmingham by an angry mob, who also burned his home and lab because they say his ideas, especially his religious ideas were far too radical.