

Lecture 5

David Hume, Richard Price and Rational Religion

Reading: *EHFE* chp.11; Hume Essays; Pearson on Price;
Price *Dissertation 4*

Topics

- The Dissenting Academics and Daniel Defoe
- Jonathan Swift and *Gulliver's Travels*
- The Writings of Richard Price
- Hume vs. Price on Miracles: Do you believe in miracles?
- Kant on Religion and Reason
- Unitarians and Rational Religion

Prelude to attacking non-Conformists

- Religion was an important sub-text in English history, especially following the Act of Supremacy (1534) by Henry VIII
 - Divine right of kings and making of Henry VIII as the Supreme head of the Church of England
 - Positioning the King at the head of the Church resulted in a hierarchical (episcopal) structure like the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope as the supreme head
- 16th and 17th C. were a period of emergence for numerous non-Conformist Protestant groups that denied the hierarchical structure of the Church of England
 - Origins of early groups stem from Calvinism → God is sovereign, no King, Pope or bishop can demand ultimate loyalty

Henry VIII (1491-1547)

**Ruled as King of
England from 1509-
1547**

**Notorious for having
six wives that
required breaking
with the Catholic
Church (initial
marriage to Catherine
of Aragon (m1509-
1533))**

**Painting by
Lucas Horenbout (c. 1526)**



Varieties of English Non-Conformists

□ Puritans

- Catchall term that applies to English Protestants of the 16th and 17th C. seeking to 'purify' the English Church of Roman Catholic practices → reached height during the religious tolerance associated with the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell (1653-8)

□ Presbyterians

- Evolution of Calvinism led by John Knox (1514–1572), leader of the protestant reformation in Scotland. Churches have ministers and elders, organized through councils and a general assembly

□ Congregationalists

- Authority for Church affairs lies with the individual congregations; arose in England during 16th and 17th C.
- Modern Baptists and Evangelical churches are congregational

□ Quakers (Religious Society of Friends)

- Quaker was initially a pejorative term, origins traceable to George Fox (1624-91) in mid-17th C. → subject to English persecutions



Quaker Meeting by Egbert van Heemskerck (1634-1704)

Quakers hold a variety of views ranging from liberal to conservative → central belief that every person possesses a supernatural gift from God that is an inward illumination of the Gospel's truth → maintained spiritual equality of men and women

Some Quaker groups hold meetings that are silent meditations only

The pejorative term 'Quaker' originates from the claim that Quakers "tremble at the word of the Lord."

Evolution of Religious Doctrine in 17th and 18th C. England: The Clarendon Code and the Test Act

- Lecture 3: the Clarendon code was identified as a set of four Acts passed after the Restoration to restrict activities of those worshipping outside the Church of England
 - Corporation Act (1661); Act of Uniformity (1662); Conventicle Act (1664); Five Mile Act (1665).
- Clarendon Code was superceded by the Test Act (1673) – only those taking communion in Church of England eligible for public employment
 - Communion requires acceptance of **Trinitarianism**
- **Trinitarianism** maintains the Doctrine of the Trinity: God is one God that takes the form of three coeternal and consubstantial persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Three distinct entities distinct, yet of one "substance, essence or nature"
 - The trinitarian belief has roots in homoousios (Greek for 'of the same essence –'homo-oo-see-ohs) that is embodied in the Nicene Creed.



Early History of Religious Persecution in America

- Religious persecution both overt and covert of non-conformists in England generated substantial immigration to America during the 17th C.
- Religious groups tended to migrate to areas that had substantial communities of similar faiths
 - The English crown granted 'colonial province' status, e.g., the Plymouth colony and Massachusetts Bay colony in New England and Province of Pennsylvania
 - Puritans tended to settle in New England, especially in the Massachusetts area, led by William Penn the Quakers settled in Pennsylvania
 - Quakers seeking to settle in Puritan areas were subject to sometimes draconian persecution

William Penn (1644-1718) founder of the Province of Pennsylvania in 1681 and an important influence on principles embodied in the US Constitution

Joined Quakers in 1666, close friend of George Fox credited as founder of the Religious Society of Friends → migrated to America in 1677 to flee religious persecution in England



Charles Morton and the English Dissenting Academies

- The Restoration of 1660 and the subsequent passage of the Clarendon Code led to the creation of the Dissenting Academies, arguably more advanced centers of education than the grammar schools and universities from 1660 to 1800
 - The most important of the early academies was established by Charles Morton in 1672 continuing until 1685 when it was forced to close by the authorities
 - Unlike the orthodox educational venues, Morton conducted lessons in English
 - In 1675, the academy moved to the community of **Newington Green**, the most important dissenting community during the 18th century. Included among the students at the Morton academy at Newington Green was **Daniel Defoe**
 - Following his expulsion in 1685, Morton was obliged to relocate to New England where, despite problems created by the English authorities, Morton was able to contribute to the development of Harvard University
- Other important figures that benefited from education at the dissenting academies include Richard Price and Joseph Priestley.





**Daniel Defoe
(1660-1731)**

**Defoe was educated at
Newington Green
Academy**

**Likely authored over 300
works, difficult to estimate
as some published under
pseudonyms, including
numerous political and
economic pamphlets**

***Robinson Crusoe* (1719)**

***Roxanna* (1724)**

**A remarkable life
punctuated by sometimes
dishonest dealings**

Robinson Crusoe: the first English Novel?

- Version most commonly read is an abridged version, much of the first part is removed
 - *Title of first edition (1719): The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates,*
 - Thought to be based on the experiences of Alexander Selkirk a privateer and Royal Navy officer marooned on a island off Chile from 1704-09 (alone, there was no Friday) at his request due to concerns over the seaworthiness of the ship he was serving on → later proved to be correct as the ship foundered and the surviving crew and captain were forced to surrender to the Spanish
 - Selkirk obtained notoriety in England prior to the appearance of *Robinson Crusoe* → returned to privateering.





THE
L I F E
AND
STRANGE SURPRIZING
ADVENTURES
OF
ROBINSON CRUSOE,
OF YORK, MARINER:

Who lived Eight and Twenty Years,
all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the
Coast of AMERICA, near the Mouth of
the Great River of OROONOQUE;

Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, where-
in all the Men perished but himself.

WITH
An Account how he was at last as strangely deli-
ver'd by PYRATES.

Written by Himself.

L O N D O N:
Printed for W. TAYLOR at the Ship in Pater-Noster-
Row. MDCCXIX.

Jonathan Swift – critic in the Establishment

- Who was Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)?
 - Anglo-Irish priest, satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, and poet → definitely was **not** a dissenter
 - B.A. Dublin U. (1686), M.A. Oxford U. (1692); DDS Trinity College Dublin (1702)
 - Close friends with Alexander Pope, John Gay and John Arbuthnot – last 30 years spent as Anglican Dean at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland
 - Author of:
 - The Battle of the Books (1704, written earlier), Gulliver's Travels (1726); A Modest Proposal (1729);
 - An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity (1712)

Gulliver's Travels (1724)

- *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World* (in four Parts) by Lemuel Gulliver
- Part I: A Voyage To Lilliput (little people)
- Part II: A Voyage to Brobdingnag (big people)
- Part III: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, and Luggnagg
- Part IV: A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms



Laputa, the Island in the Sky

- ‘La puta’ is Spanish for ‘the whore’; possible reference to Luther (1483-1546) response: “that Great Whore, Reason”
- “Their heads were all reclined to the Right, or the Left; one of the Eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the Zenith” (Part III, ch.2)
 - Likely reference to importance of telescope and microscope
 - Reflects lack of concern for morality and ethics (humanism)
- “I never met with such disagreeable Companions. I conversed only with Women, Tradesmen, Flappers, and Court-Pages ... these were the only People from whom I could ever receive a reasonable Answer.” (Part III, ch.4)
 - Reflects the contempt that intellectuals and scientists had for the views of common folk.



A Laputian gentleman taking a walk. Arthur Rackham, 1900 and 1909.



The Islands of Part III

- Part III: A section where inhabitants are highly intelligent and dedicated to intellectual study but do not produce much that is productive
 - Possibly referring to the government and, by extension, the universities and other centers of higher learning such as the Royal Society



Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib and Luggnagg to Japan

□ Balnibarbi

- Ruled from Laputa, Gulliver observes desolate world consumed by blind pursuit of science without practical results
 - Ye wise philosophers explain ... spoof of Royal Society

□ Glubbdubdrib

- Waiting for a ship to Japan from Balnibarbi, Gulliver takes a brief sojourn to Glubbdubdrib.
 - At a magician's dwelling Gulliver reviews history with the ghosts of historical figures including Aristotle, Caesar and Descartes

□ Luggnagg

- An island with immortals that are not young but old

□ Japan

- At Swift's time a mysterious realm, returns to home

Some definitions

- Flapper
 - Obscure usage in Swift: a person who stands between a popular or powerful person with many demands on his time and many of those people who want to talk with such a person, filtering what messages are allowed to pass.
 - Modern usage from 1920's (Roaring Twenties): 'loose ladies' who frequent jazz clubs, dance provocatively, smoke cigarettes (usually in long holders) and dated (sexually promiscuous)
- Jansenism
 - Branch of Catholicism emphasizing original sin and human depravity, counterbalanced by the necessity of divine grace and predestination of the soul
 - Pascal, Racine and Quesnel
 - Associated with the convent at Port Royal (a convent near Paris responsible for launching a number of cultural changes)

David Hume and Empiricism

British Empiricism

Epistemology: Experience is the source of all knowledge

- Hypotheses and theories must be tested against observations from the natural world
 - *Versus* logical reasoning, intuition, revelation
 - Originates with John Locke (1632-1704)
 - Other types of empiricism before
- David Hume (1711-1776)
 - Scottish philosopher and historian
 - Introduced skepticism into empiricism
 - Belief about cause and effect depends on sentiment, custom and habit, and **not** upon reason or immutable Laws of Nature

David Hume (1711-1776)



Classical Empiricism

- For Hume the “empiricist principle” applies to words and has two parts, one psychological and one epistemological
 - The psychological part maintains that all “ideas” are conditioned on experiences – experiential data -- of some kind (“**Prior impressions are a necessary causal condition of meanings**”)
 - In the epistemological part, a word associated with an ‘idea’ is either simple – directly associated with an experiential datum – or complex – which can be analyzed to reduce the word to ‘end-terms’ composed of experiential data (“**If there are no impressions, then there can be no meanings**”)
- If a word cannot be reduced to a single experiential datum or reduced to component experiential data, that word is “meaningless”
 - Consider reference to the word “God”
- The psychological part is an important point of departure the rationalism of Descartes – where absolute knowledge is available independent of experience – or transcendently through reason as with Kant.

Hume's Argument Against Miracles and the Attack on Christianity

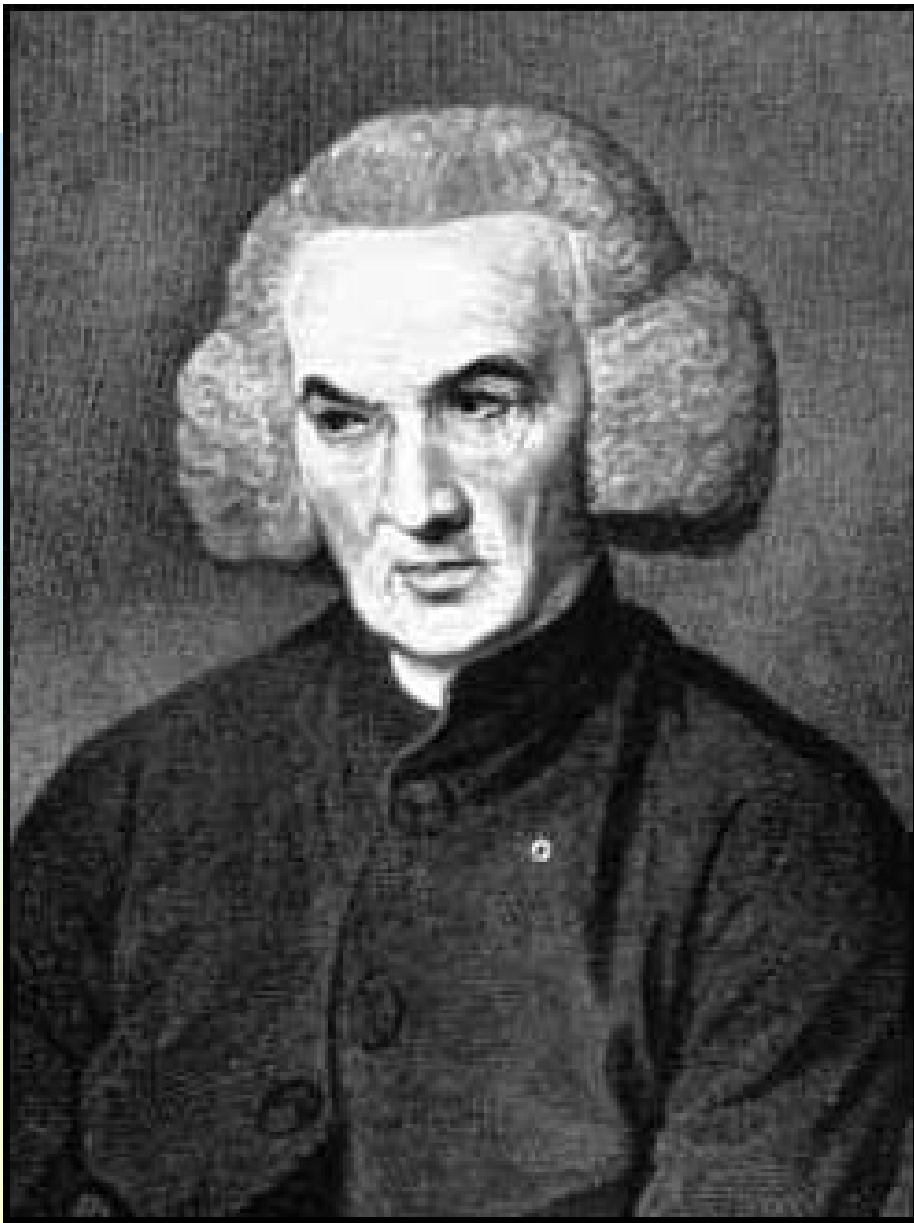
- A number of quotes reflecting Hume's empiricist approach
 - “the ultimate standard, by which we determine all disputes, that may arise concerning them, is always derived from experience and observation” (p.5)
 - “where there is an opposition of arguments, we ought to give preference to such as are founded on the greatest number of past observations” (p.8)
 - “It is experience only which gives authority to human testimony” (p.16)
 - “If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous than the event which he relates; then, and not until then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion” (p.7)

The Miracle of the Miraculous

- “A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature” (p.6)
 - “the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire an argument from experience as can possibly be imagined”
 - “it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country” (p.7)
 - Indirect support for Arianism
 - Was Hume an atheist, unitarian or Arian?
- “Our evidence, then, for the truth of the Christian religion, is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses” (p.3)
 - “no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion” (p.16)
 - “compare the instances of the violation of truth in the testimony of men, with those of the violation of the laws of nature by miracles, in order to judge which of them is most likely and probable.” (p.17)

The Writings of Richard Price

- **Who was Richard Price (1723-1791)?**
 - Dissenting minister, educated within dissenting academies
 - 1763 publishes Bayes theorem, posthumously to Bayes
 - 1765 Price elected to Royal Society (based on letters he wrote to Ben Franklin that evolved into “*Observations*”) – most of his important contributions still to come
- *Observations on Reversionary Payments* (1772), founding book of actuarial science and modern insurance mathematics
 - Involvement with the Society for Equitable Assurances started in 1768 (first modern life insurance company)
- *Observations on Civil Liberty* (1776)
 - Took the American view vs. that of England



**Rev. Richard Price
(1723-1791)**

**Assumed a position as a
dissenting preacher at the
important dissenting
community of Newington
Green in 1758**

**Was married to a devout
Anglican**

**Among his friends and
acquaintances were:
Benjamin Franklin, Joseph
Priestley, Mary Wollstonecraft,
David Hume**

What is Bayes Theorem?

- Rev. Thomas Bayes (1702-1761)
 - Credited with the 'discovery' of Bayes theorem that is the foundation for Bayesian statistics, an important branch of modern statistical theory
 - Bayes Theorem published post-humously by Price contains a special (equi-probable) case of the result
 - The most important section of the paper is a scholium written by Price so it is not clear that Bayes theorem is the appropriate eponym
 - Interpret the result as densities:
 - Posterior Conditional = empirical likelihood * prior
 - See downloadable note on 'Bayes Rule for the Evidence of Testimony'

$$Prob[E | A] = \frac{Prob[E] Pr[A | E]}{(Prob[E] Prob[A | E]) + (Prob[\sim E] Prob[A | \sim E])}$$



Price's Four Dissertations

- ▣ Four Dissertations (1768)
 - ▣ 1. On Providence
 - ▣ 2. On Prayer
 - ▣ 3. On the Reasons for expecting that virtuous Men shall meet after Death in a State of Happiness
 - ▣ 4. On the Importance of Christianity, the Nature of Historical Evidence, and Miracles
 - ▣ Argues that the human mind is connected to the divine mind and knowledge is incomplete
 - Contra Hume, experience is not the sole source of knowledge, this permits Price to argue that the probability of an event is distinct from the credibility of the evidence,

Price's Argument for Christianity

- Price appreciates Hume's Approach
 - “The opposition hitherto made to Christianity, has, I think, done it the greatest service. It has been the means of causing it to be better understood, of shewing, in a clearer light, on what foundation of evidence it stands, and of removing from it many incumbrances and adulterations, which, for many ages, had miserably disguised and debased it.” (p.365)
- Price is concerned with giving meaning to death
 - “There is nothing in all nature, about which we have so much reason to wish for information as *death*” (p.362)
 - “It is a set of facts exhibiting and demonstrating this one truth: Eternal Life, the Gift of God, Through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (p.377)

Miracles versus Prophecies

- “Christians insist, and they think they have proved, that there are very remarkable appearances of the completion of several scriptural prophecies” (p.381)
 - The argument from prophecies is much stronger than that of miracles → Harrison JHI article explores this issue
- Beyond Belief → there is a third form of evidence for Christianity (religion): miracles, prophecies and **revelation**
 - Revelation is a slippery slope for organized religion because many revelations are based on individual experience
 - The Pope, leader of the Catholic Church, direct descent from Peter
 - Gnosticism and the search for inner ‘gnosis’

Moral Certainty and Rational Intuition

- Price was a dissenter
 - “It would be much better, if christians, instead of being so free as they often are in ascribing infidelity to the worst motives, would take case that their own faith is the result of honest enquiry, and at the same time study to demonstrate the excellence of their religion by the excellence of their tempers and lives.”(p.463)
- “It is reasonable to believe that events of this kind are continually happening in the immense universe; and it is **certain** that they must be brought about under the direction of some superior power”, (p.436)
 - “The favourableness of christianity to virtue must indeed be a powerful recommendation of it to good minds; and is almost enough, without the aid of miracles, to prove its heavenly origin” (p.462)
 - Price disputed that a miracle was a violation of the laws of nature

The two schools of religious fideism

- The philosophical split between Protestants and Catholics has implications for moral principles and epistemology
 - Early basis from St. Augustine (354-430): “I believe so that I may understand” – faith in the word of God provides a basis for understanding
 - For St. Augustine, the love of God is the basis of moral guidance, for St. Thomas Aquinas, knowledge of God is the basis
 - Catholics receive the word of God “objectively” through the hierarchy of the Church headed by the Pope (descendent from St. Peter)
 - Protestants receive the word of God as an act of individual consciousness based on faith – the mind of God acting through the individual mind
 - Mystics employ more esoteric inner illuminations for the process of the intentions of God being revealed
- All forms of religious fideism require a heartfelt belief in a transcendent and theistic entity that is the source of (religious) moral guidance
 - Some concept of ‘God’ is required for a religion





St. Augustine

by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

Initially a follower of Mani,
Augustine of Hippo (part of the
Roman Empire in N. Africa to
the west of Carthage)
converted to Christianity in
386 – recognized as a saint by
both Catholic and Protestants

Proposed doctrines of divine
grace and salvation

Died in the besiege of Hippo
by the Vandals – an East
Germanic tribe that had
converted to Arianism –
mythology of Augustine death
portrayed as part of the
struggle against Arianism

Immanuel Kant: Moral Philosophy, Religion and Reason

- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was, arguably, the most important philosopher of the 18th century
 - Kant presented an approach to moral philosophy that differed substantively for philosophers in the Anglo tradition
 - Original texts in German can pose significant translation issues
- Kant provided a profound treatment of issues in moral philosophy associated with the “Enlightenment Problem”
 - The Enlightenment was a period where the moral principles of religion were rejected on the basis that the fundamental elements of religion were based on ‘irrational’ notions – the Eucharist, the resurrection of Jesus, the Trinity, the miracles, the prophecies, etc.
 - The associated moral problem is how to determine appropriate moral behavior by reason without the guidance provided by religious dictums
- *Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason* (1792, 1st ed.) is perhaps the most important work by Kant dedicated to Christian religion

Kant on the notion of religion and morality

“The term *religion* ought never to be employed in catechisms or addresses to the great bulk of people. It is too learned and unintelligible. Indeed no modern language possesses a corresponding synonym. The boor invariably understands by religion his church-creed, which can be laid before him in a seen and embodied form; whereas religion lies hidden in the man within, based on his moral sentiments. Most men were honoured too much by ascribing to them any religion. They neither know nor desire any, and the established church-creed is all that this word suggests them.”

Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason (p.142)

Kant on Good will and the Categorical Imperative

- ‘The only thing that is unconditionally good is good will’
 - An action of ‘good will’ is the result of doing one’s duty, i.e., when the act is motivated by a sense of moral obligation.
 - This differs from the ‘utilitarian’ concept of ‘good’, i.e., the pursuit of individual happiness may result in outcomes that are not good → the pursuit of wealth or power to achieve happiness may lead to corruption
- Problem: How to determine one’s duty? This requires using reason to determine the ‘**categorical imperative**’
 - Basic idea: Determine whether the action of duty is consistent with a world where all others pursued such an action → treat others as an end in themselves and not as a means to an end
 - For example, it is a duty to not break promises

The Philosophical Battlefield: the Question of morals

- With Kant and Hume a range of philosophical perspectives on morality – in opposition to the previously dominant religious fideism -- appears in Western philosophical thought that had been absent since the time of the Greeks
 - Relative vs. Absolute perception of the 'Good'
 - Relativists maintain that moral principles are culturally dependent and will vary from one era to another → divided into skeptics that deny there are objective/universal principles, e.g., Epicurus, Hobbes, Ayer; and subjectivists that maintain morality depends on personal tastes, e.g., ethical nihilism
 - Absolutists maintain there are absolute (objective) moral principles inherent in human nature independent of subjective feelings, external factors. Variation across absolutists dependent on how the moral principles are perceived/reasoned/obtained
- Main absolutists schools are **rationalists** (Descartes) – maintaining there are innate *a priori* truths known intuitively (Plato, Hegel) or obtainable from reasoning (Stoics, Kant); **empiricists** – maintaining universal moral principles are obtained from experience through moral sense (Aristotle, Hume) or relational (utilitarian) calculation (Bentham, J.S. Mill, G.E. Moore)



Rational Religion and the Rise of Unitarianism

- Unitarians deny trinitarianism: the God in Christianity is a single entity
 - Unitarians also **deny that Jesus was a deity** – rather Jesus was a profound teacher and, for some Unitarians Jesus was a Savior
 - Distinct from other non-trinitarian perspectives such as United Pentecostalism which maintain the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one entity
 - More generally, Modalism denies the Trinity but maintains that Jesus was a deity
- Roots of Unitarianism can be found at the beginnings of Christianity → organized groups appear in late 16th C. in E. and SE Europe → full emergence in 19th C. America and England

Evolution of Unitarian Doctrine

- Distinction between non-Trinitarianism – Jesus was not co-eternal with God -- and view that Jesus was not a deity
- **Arianism** was an early form of Unitarian thought associated with Arius (c. AD 256–336) → Jesus as the Son of God, not of the same eternal essence, i.e., Jesus is not co-eternal
 - Arianism was a term used by non-Arians
- **Socinianism** named for Renaissance humanist Lelio Sozzini (1525 – 1562) that rose to prominence in the Polish reformed Church in the 16th C. and is related to the rise of Anabaptism
 - Maintains Jesus came into existence as a human being, was not divine and the resurrection was not able to provide salvation.
 - Jesus was still worthy of worship and for some Socinians had been adopted by God → disagreement about the possibility of virgin birth
- **Later Unitarians**, emerged in a variety of forms, especially from the 17th C. in England



The American Unitarians

- Unitarianism rose to prominence in numerous Congregational churches in New England in the late 18th C.
- Members of Unitarian congregations and those that held Unitarian views played key roles from in America from late 18th C. to the mid-19th C.
 - Including presidents John Quincy Adams and Willard Filmore (the last president not either Democrat or Republican)
 - Though not formally Unitarians, various famous Americans expressed Unitarian views, e.g., Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson
- Important event in American Unitarianism is the 1805 election of Henry Ware to the Hollis Chair at Harvard Divinity School
 - Established in 1721, the prestigious chair had previously been held by Calvinists ministers (consistent with Puritan roots in New England)



Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82)

Early working life as a Unitarian minister, strong friendship with Henry David Thoreau

Considerable education at Harvard University

1833 travelled to Europe and met Woodsworth, J.S. Mill, Carlyle

Influenced John Dewey and Friedrich Nietzsche

Emersonian themes:

Education

Power and fate

Importance of poetry and history

Critique of Christianity.



Emerson's Religion and Philosophy

- Defining event: 1838 address to the graduating class of the Harvard Divinity School that critiqued prevailing mainstream Unitarian views and “historical Christianity”
 - Christianity more likely to be found in a ‘boat in a pond’ than in a church – ‘God is, not was’
- Thoreau adopted the Humean perspective that there was no possible empirical proof for God or ‘natural religion’
 - The miracles claimed in the Bible as evidence for the truth of religion have no empirical basis
- Incorporated aspects of Kantian philosophy
- Often criticized for lack of consistency

Emerson and American Transcendentalism

- American transcendentalism (as distinct from the Kantian variant) emerged from a group of disaffected Unitarians focused around the 'Transcendental Club' formed circa 1836
 - Members included Emerson, Henry Hedge, Bronson Alcott
 - Published *The Dial* and numerous anti-slavery tracts
- Three main aspects of transcendentalism:
 - Intuition
 - Based on Kantian notion that some (*a priori*) form of intuition is required to interpret the sense data central to empiricism
 - the primacy of the self
 - Especially the virtue of self-reliance
 - insufficiency of social and religious institutions

Early contributions to environmentalism

- Members of the Transcendental Club and others with similar views produced contributions that captured themes of modern environmentalists
 - Henry Thoreau (1817–1862) ***Walden; or, Life in the Woods*** (1854) recounts a two year-two month-two day stay in a cabin near Walden pond living a simple life communing with nature – the book establishes the importance of closeness to nature.
 - Emerson in “Nature” states that the natural world provides “a sanctity which shames our religions.” Emerson was a mentor to Thoreau and owned the location where Thoreau created Walden.
 - **Brook Farm**, a utopian farming commune experiment by the Transcendentalists in Roxbury, Mass. Founded by George Ripley in 1841 with issue of shares in a joint-proprietorship, bankrupt in 1847.
 - **Fruitlands**, another transcendentalist utopian farming community founded at Harvard in 1843 by Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane. Emphasized strict vegan abstinence combined with absence of trade and minimizing labor.

Other social views of the transcendentalists

- Questioned the morality and entrenchment of **slavery**
 - Key events:
 - Extension of slavery to Texas after annexation in 1845;
 - Fugitive Slave Law (1850) a federal law that required the return of runaway slave to owners;
 - Acts of John Brown in 1859
- Treatment of 'Native Americans'
 - Key event: Expulsion and forced march of 16,000 Cherokees as part of 'ethnic cleansing' of Native Americans east of the Mississippi River
- War with Mexico
- Early contributions to Feminism and Woman's Rights
 - Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845)