

THE ANTISLAVERY MOVEMENT AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY AFFECTIVE REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND: AN ETHNIC HYPOTHESIS

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INTRODUCTION

There is no more central question in evolutionary biology than the question of altruism. Altruists perform actions that benefit others without receiving anything tangible in return. In the absence of certain conditions, altruistic behavior is an evolutionary dead end. For example, research on cooperation has shown that cooperation can evolve if altruists assort with each other¹ and exclude non-altruists via reputational exclusion² or punishment.³

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the affective revolution that occurred in England beginning in the eighteenth century by focusing on the movement to abolish the slave trade (which culminated in 1807) and slavery (1833). As discussed below, this revolution extended to many other areas of British society. The consequences of this revolution are apparent in David Hackett Fischer's *Fairness and Freedom* which contrasts the British Empire of the nineteenth century with that of the eighteenth century, during the formative period of the American colonies.⁴ The American colonies were seen as areas to be ruthlessly exploited at a time when England was still dominated by an aristocratic elite which was gradually giving way to the rising middle classes whose first expression of power emerged in the rise of the Puritans in the English Civil War of the seventeenth century. By the 1840s, when New Zealand was populated with people from Britain, there were powerful currents of moral universalism, empathic concern and fairness in the British Empire. Fischer notes that what he labels the "Second Empire" as it developed in New Zealand was "highly principled and deeply Christian, with an elaborately developed sense of justice and equity. ... Their acts often fell short of their ideals. But there was a constancy of striving in their lives, and they planted the seeds of an ethical system that kept growing long after they were gone."⁵ There was a strong sense of "high-mindedness" and crusading moral universalism in New Zealand. Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, who became Anglican Bishop of New Zealand in 1841, was "a high-principled idealist" with a "broad ecumenical version of Christianity which in New Zealand became linked to an idea of racial

¹ For example, David Sloan Wilson & Lee Alan Dugatkin "Group selection and assortative interactions," *American Naturalist*, 149, 336–351, 1997.

² Kevin MacDonald, "Effortful Control, Explicit Processing and the Regulation of Human Evolved Predispositions," *Psychological Review*, 115(4) (2008), 1012–1031; Paul E. Smaldino & M. Lubell, M., Institutions and cooperation in an ecology of games. *Artificial Life*. & Lubell, in press.

³ Boyd, R., & Richerson, P. J. (1992). Punishment allows the evolution of cooperation (or anything else) in sizable groups. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 13, 171-195; J. Henrich R. Boyd, R. (Henrich, J., & Boyd, M., "Why people punish defectors: Weak conformist transmission can stabilize costly enforcement of norms in cooperative dilemmas." *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 208 (2001) 79-89. Why people punish defectors: Weak conformist transmission can stabilize costly enforcement of norms in cooperative dilemmas. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 208, 79-89.

⁴ David Hackett Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom* (New York,: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

equality between Pakeha [i.e., Whites] and Maoris”; Selwyn was “a fierce defender of Maori rights”).⁶

This affective revolution began in the eighteenth century. By the 1780s, “the moral character of imperial authority, the ethics of British conduct outside the British Isles, started to figure in public discussions of empire with increasing frequency.”⁷ In the following I will concentrate on the movement to abolish the slave trade and slavery as illustrative of this upsurge in empathic concern and fairness. The purpose is not to describe the political processes that finally resulted in abolition or even to explain why the movement happened exactly when it did, but to explore the psychology of some of the principle activists of the movement and the methods they used to make others resonate with their disgust at slavery. What Fischer writes about “the Second Empire” also applies to the activists and writers discussed here—they were “highly principled and deeply Christian, with an elaborately developed sense of justice and equity.” On the face of it, these movements involved altruism. In the words of Adam Hochschild, the movements to end the slave trade and slavery itself were

the first time a large number of people became outraged, and stayed outraged for many years, over someone *else's* rights. ... For fifty years, activists in England worked to end slavery in the British Empire. None of them gained a penny by doing so, and their eventual success meant a huge loss to the imperial economy. Scholars estimate that abolishing the slave trade and then slavery cost the British people 1.8 percent of their annual national income over more than half a century.⁸ (Emphasis in text.)

This movement occurred at a time when slavery was the norm in Africa, the Arab world, India, the Ottoman Empire, and, in effect, China. As historian Seymour Drescher notes, “freedom, not slavery, was the peculiar institution.”⁹

It should be noted that an explanation in terms of altruism is not uncontroversial. To be sure, as with any mass movement, there were doubtless a wide range of motivations, including selfish careerists who use a movement like abolitionism to further their own fame and fortune.¹⁰ Nevertheless, selfish motives for action do not imply that the empathy felt for enslaved Africans was not real and a spur to action. More importantly, at the indispensable core of the movement were Quakers for whom, as will be discussed below, imputations of selfish motives are difficult to support at best. And finally, even if it is indeed the case that elites achieved moral capital by abolishing slavery, one must ask how and why moral capital had psychological resonance—why is it that elites beginning in the eighteenth century justified themselves by drawing attention to their moral character of their policies rather than, say, rely simply on raw power or religious authority.

The point here is a narrow one—that moral idealism and unselfish motives characterized an important core of abolitionists, not that all abolitionists could be characterized in this way. To be sure, there continues to be substantial debate on the motives of those involved in the

⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Press, 2006), 161.

⁸ Adam Hochschild (*Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2006), 5; emphasis in text).

⁹ Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2.

¹⁰ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 450.

movement.¹¹ Even in the nineteenth century it was proposed that the campaign to end slavery avoided dealing with the exploitation of labor within England and resulted in moral capital that rationalized a far from perfect empire. “By the 1970s, few academic historians cared to write about ‘selfless’ men engaged in a ‘virtuous crusade.’”¹²

There are indeed strong intellectual currents opposed to the possibility of altruism, including not only what one might term traditional evolutionary thinking centered around self-interest as encapsulated above, but also Marxism which has often informed discussion in recent decades. Marxism implies self-interest on the part of all based on their interests as conditioned by their social class. From this perspective, ideology is nothing more than a reflection of class interests. Marxists are naturally skeptical that there could possibly be a movement spearheaded by people who had nothing to gain personally and, if these efforts were successful, would result in a cost to the society as a whole. For example, Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) proposed that the campaign to end slavery occurred when it was economically advantageous because the colonies had lost their value.¹³ This interpretation has been rejected by recent findings that in fact the colonies retained their value well into the nineteenth century.¹⁴ David Eltis notes “for the Americas as well as for Britain at the onset of industrialization, there was a profound incompatibility between economic self-interest and antislavery policy.”¹⁵

Clearly the economic costs of ... abolitionist policies were extremely high. During the first six decades of the nineteenth century, there was more than an ample supply of slaves on the African coasts. Since the ‘culture of enslavement’ continued to operate in Africa long after the sharp drop in European demand, the number of slaves in West Africa soon surpassed the number in the New World. Hence the price of slaves remained relatively low and stable. Yet throughout the American plantation societies, slave prices continued to rise in response to labor shortages.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the humanitarian basis of the movement has been “increasingly neglected and long discredited.”¹⁷ However, this sort of skepticism can easily be taken too far. As Christopher Leslie Brown notes,

warnings [about the inscrutability of motivations] have their place, but honored in practice they tend to close off investigation precisely where it needs to begin. When we ask why abolitionism, why did individuals and groups organize against the slave trade, we are asking not only about macrohistorical processes and contexts. We are asking also about motivations, about decisions to act. This problem cannot be dodged. If the answer to questions about motivation must be incomplete, as it must, dodging the problem encourages, as it has in most published work on the abolitionists, implied or perfunctory explanations of individual and collective behavior that merely assume or assert the noble

¹¹ Brown, *Ibid.*, 3–22; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 231–249.

¹² Brown, *Moral Capital.*, 16

¹³ Williams, Eric (1944). *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press..

¹⁴ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 15.

¹⁵ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 15.

¹⁶ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 244.

¹⁷ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 24.

(or contemptible) motivations of the figures in question. ... (T)o get at the problem of motivation, we need to revisit the Evangelicals' intentions.¹⁸

Similarly, David Brion Davis notes that, although a healthy skepticism is in order, explanations in terms of humanitarian motives should not be ruled out:

Yet if we have understandably become skeptics, we should recognize even in purely pragmatic terms, some of the virtues of Whig history. Consider the psychological consequences of the abolitionists' deep faith that all human beings are created in the image of God, and that we therefore have a compelling duty to overcome institutions that dehumanize groups of people by treating them as exploitable animals. (There are also strong links between abolitionism and the movement to prevent cruelty to animals.) Such optimistic views can continue to encourage new efforts to achieve social justice, whereas cynicism and relativism can easily lead to apathy, resignation, and the sanction of egoism and individual self-interest as the only ends in life.¹⁹

The point here is that a contemporary evolutionary psychologist need not be wedded to a psychology of inevitable self-interest. Explanations in terms of empathy and moral idealism are entirely congruent with contemporary psychology. The following section describes psychological mechanisms that could give rise to altruistic attitudes and behavior, especially in people so disposed—mechanisms that go some way to explain the moral idealism and moral outrage exhibited by an important subset of the opponents of slavery. Two mechanisms will be discussed: the emotion of empathy and explicit processing that enables moral idealism and the possibility of purposeful altruistic behavior in conformity with an ideology—in this case the ideology of moral universalism embedded in Christian religiosity of the period. Evidence is then provided that empathy and an ideology of moral universalism were indeed important to abolitionism.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ALTRUISM AND MORAL UNIVERSALISM

The Personality System of Empathy. Empathy is a social emotion that motivates helping behavior. Empathic individuals are strongly moved by the suffering of others; indeed, at the extreme, empathic individuals are prone to “pathological altruism” in which they engage in maladaptive, personally injurious or self-destructive behavior on behalf of others.²⁰ Pathologically altruistic persons are prone to Dependent Personality Disorder characterized by self-sacrificing behavior on behalf of others motivated by empathy and concern and fear of losing close relationships. “They may make extraordinary self-sacrifices or tolerate verbal, physical, or sexual abuse.”²¹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 315.

¹⁹ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 239.

²⁰ Barbara Oakley, Ariel Knafo, Curuprasad Madhavan, & David Sloan Wilson (Eds.), *Pathological Altruism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²¹ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (Washington, DC: APA, 2000), 722.

Individual differences in empathy are most closely linked to the personality trait of agreeableness in the Five Factor Model of personality.²² Within an evolutionarily informed factor rotation emphasizing evolutionarily expected sex differences in psychological adaptations, empathy lines up with Nurture/Love, the personality system underlying close relationships of intimacy and trust that evolved in order to cement close family relationships.²³ On average, women are more altruistic and empathic than men, but of course there is a great deal of overlap between the distributions. In the following, it will be shown that abolitionists appealed to the empathic tendencies of their audience by graphically depicting the suffering of slaves and that, although both sexes were responsive, women were more responsive than men.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that empathy by itself may not motivate altruistic behavior if the prospective recipient of the altruism is seen as a member of an outgroup. There is substantial research linking empathy to levels of oxytocin. However, oxytocin operates to make people more altruistic and defensive toward their ingroup— what DeDreu et al. label “parochial altruism.”²⁴ Since the ingroups in such studies are not based on ethnic homogeneity, these results may be interpreted as supporting the proposal that altruism-prone individuals would be likely to support and defend culturally created ingroups at cost to self.

This research suggests that a good strategy for abolitionists would be to frame the African slaves as members of a common humanity—as members of an ingroup rather than an outgroup. In the following, evidence will be adduced indicating that the abolitionist activists did indeed appeal to the common humanity of the African slaves. For Rev. James Ramsay, the leading intellectual light of the Evangelical Anglicans, the point of opposition to slavery was to “gain to society, to reason, to religion, half a million of our kind, equally with us adapted for advancing themselves in every art and science that can distinguish man from man, equally with us capable of looking forward to and enjoying futurity.”²⁵ Similarly, Rev. Thomas Clarkson, the most effective and well-known abolitionist activist, referred to slaves as “oppressed brothers.”²⁶

Moral Idealism and the Ideology of Moral Universalism. Another mechanism relevant to the human psychology of altruism allows for the possibility of moral idealism.²⁷ This analysis depends on psychological research indicating two very different types of psychological processing: implicit and explicit processing. These modes of processing may be contrasted on a

²² Thomas A. Widiger & Jennifer Ruth Presnall, “Pathological altruism and personality disorder.” In Barbara Oakley, Ariel Knafo, Curuprasad Madhavan, & David Sloan Wilson (Eds.), *Pathological Altruism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85–93.

²³ Kevin B. MacDonald, “Evolution, the Five Factor Model, and Levels of Personality.” *Journal of Personality* 63 (1995) 525–567; Kevin B. MacDonald, “Temperament and evolution.” In M. Zentner and R. L. Shiner (Eds.), *Handbook of Temperament* (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 273–296.

²⁴ C. K. De Dreu, et al.. The neuropeptide oxytocin regulates parochial altruism in intergroup conflict among humans. *Science*.;328(5984) (June, 11, 2010) 1408-11. doi: 0.1126/science.1189047.

²⁵ James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: James Phillips, 1784), 2–3.

http://books.google.com/books?id=Zf9AAAAcAAJ&pg=PR1&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false

²⁶ Clarkson, Thomas (1830). *Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, Vol. 1., (Augusta, GA: P. A. Brinsmade, 1830), 24..

<http://books.google.com/books?id=YHwNAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=clarkson+slaves&hl=en&sa=X&ei=N82cUYOULpC40AHQ3oD4CQ&ved=0CEEQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=clarkson%20slaves&f=false>

²⁷ Kevin B. MacDonald, “Evolution and a Dual Processing Theory of Culture: Applications to Moral Idealism and Political Philosophy,” *Politics and Culture* (Issue, #1, April, 2010); see also Kevin B. MacDonald, “Evolution, Psychology, and a Conflict Theory of Culture.” *Evolutionary Psychology*, 7(2) (2009), 208–233.

number of dimensions.²⁸ Implicit processing is automatic, effortless, relatively fast, and involves parallel processing of large amounts of information; it characterizes the modules described by evolutionary psychologists. Explicit processing is the opposite of implicit processing: conscious, controllable, effortful, relatively slow, and involves serial processing of relatively small amounts of information. Explicit processing is involved in the operation of the mechanisms of general intelligence²⁹ as well as controlling emotional states and action tendencies³⁰.

Moral idealism is possible because of the ability of explicit representations of moral ideals to control the modular psychology of moral reasoning and behavior (i.e., affective states and action tendencies mediated by evolved implicit processing).³¹ For example, people are able to effortfully suppress ethnocentric tendencies.³² Thus, under experimental conditions, White subjects presented with photos of Blacks had less of a negative response when the photos were presented long enough for explicit processing to take place.³³ Other research indicates that people may suppress moral emotions like moral outrage, empathy and guilt. For example, Sanfey et al. showed that prefrontal rational choice mechanisms could suppress moral outrage at people who make unfair offers in a one-shot ultimatum game (presumably a modular mechanism promoting self-interest by producing anger directed at people who behave unfairly).³⁴ Further, moral emotions such as empathy may be overridden by utilitarian concerns (see Greene et al., 2009, for a summary³⁵): subjects will make decisions that override concern for a particular victim if more people will benefit.

Given the general findings that explicitly represented ideas may suppress emotions of moral outrage and empathy, it is a short step to suppose that a moral ideal could also motivate people to control sub-cortical egoistically inclined modular systems independent of self-interest or utilitarian considerations.³⁶ The psychological literature supports the proposal that moral idealism is possible and that people who are strongly motivated by empathy would be particularly prone to such moral idealism because they would they would be positively motivated to create or subscribe to moral ideals that implied empathy and motivated to suppress egoistic desires. Such a framework may be found in the abolitionist literature. For example, the seminal abolitionist writer Anthony Benezet emphasized the need to suppress human pride and desire for worldly success by engaging in charitable works.³⁷

²⁸ See, e.g.: David C. Geary, *The origin of mind: Evolution of brain, cognition, and general intelligence* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005); MacDonald, "Effortful Control, Explicit Processing, and the Regulation of Human Evolved Predispositions"; Keith Stanovich, *Who is rational? Studies of individual differences in reasoning* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999); Keith Stanovich *The Robot's Rebellion: Finding Meaning in the Age of Darwin* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²⁹ Dan Chiappe & Kevin B. MacDonald, "The evolution of domain-general mechanisms in intelligence and learning." *Journal of General Psychology* 132(1) (2005), 5–40.

³⁰ MacDonald, "Effortful Control, Explicit Processing, and the Regulation of Human Evolved Predispositions."

³¹ MacDonald, "Evolution and a Dual Processing Theory of Culture."

³² See review in MacDonald, "Effortful Control, Explicit Processing, and the Regulation of Human Evolved Predispositions."

³³ W. A. Cunningham, M. K. Johnson, C. L. Raye, J. C. Gatenby, J. C. Gore, & M. Banaji, "Separable neural components in the processing of Black and White faces. *Psychological Science*, 15 (2004), 806–813.

³⁴ A. G. Sanfey, R. Hastie, M. K. Colvin, & J. Grafman, J. (2003). Phineas gauged: decision-making and the human prefrontal cortex. *Neuropsychologia*, 41 (2003), 1218–1229.

³⁵ J. D. Greene, F. A. Cushman, L. E. Stewart., K. Lowenberg, L. E. Nystrom, & J. D. Cohen, "Pushing moral buttons: The interaction between personal force and intention in moral judgment," *Cognition*, 111 (3) (2009), 364–371.

³⁶ MacDonald, "Evolution and a Dual Processing Theory of Culture."

³⁷ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 398.

This implies that altruistic behavior is possible because of the power of explicit processing over implicit processing—the worldly temptations implied by slavery may be suppressed, just as it is possible to suppress reward-oriented behavior, aggression, and ethnocentrism.³⁸ Explicit processing is able to control egoistic moral emotions in the service of a moral ideal, including an altruistic moral ideal. In the following, evidence from the historical record will be discussed indicating that moral idealism was part of the self-conception of abolitionists.

Ideologies are a particularly important form of explicit processing that may result in top-down control over behavior. That is, explicit construals of the world — for example, explicit construals of costs and benefits mediated in turn by human language and the ability of humans to create explicit representations of events — may motivate behavior. This is implied, for example, by the Sanfey et al. study mentioned above.³⁹

Ideologies characterize a significant group of people and motivate their behavior in a top-down manner. Ideologies are coherent sets of beliefs.⁴⁰ These explicitly held beliefs are able to exert a control function over behavior and over evolved predispositions. There is no reason to suppose that ideologies are necessarily adaptive.⁴¹ Ideologies often characterize the vast majority of people who belong to voluntary subgroups within a society (e.g., the abolitionist movement in the United States or England). Ideologies are often intimately intertwined with various social controls — rationalizing the controls but also benefitting from the power of social controls to enforce ideological conformity in the schools or in religious institutions. In the following I will describe the ideologies of the abolitionists, particularly religious ideologies that conceptualized all humans as created by God, as having equal natural abilities, and as candidates for eternal salvation. Quite clearly, the point of the abolitionist movement was to enact social controls in opposition to the slave trade and to slavery. The ideologies of the abolitionist movement rationalized such controls.

In the following, I will sketch a view that an ideology of moral universalism was critical to the abolitionist cause. A theoretically similar ideological perspective has been proposed by David Brion Davis who argues that “by the late eighteenth century there was a pressing need felt by both skilled workers and employers to dignify and even ennoble wage labor, which for ages had been regarded with contempt. And what could better dignify and ennoble free labor, and even provide a sense of equality between the man who pays wages and the man who receives them, than a common crusade against chattel slavery?”⁴²

Nevertheless, while I agree with Davis that such a view is ideological, it fails because it does not have a central place for empathy which, as noted, figured very strongly as the target of the propaganda campaigns carried out by the abolitionists. Further, because it is restricted to employer-employee relations, such a theory is unable to explain the slavery-specific imagery of the abolitionist campaign—the emphasis on chains and manacles, whips and lethal overcrowding—that do not relate to relations between employers and free labor. Finally, the ideology of free labor also seems unable to explain the wider affective revolution of the eighteenth century reviewed below. Indeed, as Davis notes in the passage quoted above in the Introduction, there is a strong correlation between views on abolitionism and the movement to

³⁸ MacDonald, “Effortful Control, Explicit Processing, and the Regulation of Human Evolved Predispositions.”

³⁹ Sanfey et al., “Phineas Gaged.”

⁴⁰ J. Gerring, “Ideology: A definitional analysis,” *Political Research Quarterly*, 50 (1997), 957–94; K. Knight, “Transformations of the concept of ideology in the twentieth century,” *American Political Science Review*, 100 (2006), 619–625.

⁴¹ MacDonald, “Evolution, Psychology, and a Conflict Theory of Culture.”

⁴² Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 248.

prevent cruelty to animals. Such a broad sensibility can only be explained by invoking the psychology of empathy combined with an ideology of moral universalism in which even the suffering of animals becomes a moral imperative.

PHILOSOPHICAL ANTECEDENTS

One advantage that the abolitionists had was that they could cite the authority of important, well-known philosophers who collectively had altered elite opinion in the direction of prizing empathy. Gertrude Himmelfarb's *Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments*, describes the British Enlightenment as a "sociology of virtue" that was quite in contrast what she characterizes as the French "ideology of reason."⁴³ Its central feature is a concern with an ethic that "derives from a moral sense that inspired sympathy, benevolence, and compassion for others."⁴⁴ "The British moral philosophy ... was reformist rather than subversive, respective of the past and present even while looking forward to a more enlightened future. It was also optimistic and, in this respect at least, egalitarian, the moral sense and common sense being shared by all men, not merely the educated and the well-born."⁴⁵

The "moral sense" or "moral sentiment," the "social virtues" or "social affections," the ideas of "benevolence," "sympathy," "compassion," "fellow-feeling,"—these were the defining terms of the moral philosophy that was at the heart of the British Enlightenment. ... It was that ethos that found practical expression in the reform movements and philanthropic enterprises that flourished during the century, culminating in what the Evangelical writer Hannah More described (not entirely in praise) as "the Age of Benevolence," and what a later historian called "the new humanitarianism."⁴⁶

Hannah More was a member of the Evangelical Anglicans discussed below as having a major role in abolitionism. The "later historian" is Mary Gwladys Jones whose book, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* describes the Puritan roots of the eighteenth-century "age of benevolence"—which included concern for African slaves and is also discussed below.⁴⁷

Indeed, abolitionists commonly cited philosophers such as Montesquieu, David Hume, and Adam Smith.⁴⁸ Hume proposed a moral sense common to all humans. At the root of the moral sense was sympathy, the "chief source of moral distinctions," and the source of "the public good"⁴⁹ and "the good of mankind."⁵⁰ In *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume claimed that all humans resonated to positive emotions:

The minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations; nor can any one be actuated by any affection of which all others are not, in some degree, susceptible. As in

⁴³ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴⁷ Jones, Mary Gwladys, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

⁴⁸ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 430.

⁴⁹ Hume, 1739–1740/1969, Book III, pt. 3, sect. 6, p. 668

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pt. 3, sect. 1, p. 635.

strings equally wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movements in every human creature.⁵¹

In *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume emphasized “general benevolence” or “disinterested benevolence”—benevolence without concern for personal interest.

It appears that a tendency to public good, and to the promoting of peace, harmony, and order in society does, always, by affecting the benevolent principles of our frame, engage us on the side of the social virtues.

There is some benevolence, however small, infused into our bosom; some spark of friendship for human kind; some particle of the dove kneaded into our frame, along with the elements of the wolf and serpent.⁵²

Adam Smith’s well-known and highly regarded *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) had similar themes, but much elaborated.

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortune of others and render their happiness necessary to him, although he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others when we either see it or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. ... By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation ... [w]e enter, as it were, into his body and become in some measure the same person with him.⁵³ ...

Hence it is, too, that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfish [via effortful control as described above⁵⁴] and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature.⁵⁵

Man naturally desires not only to be loved but to be lovely. ... He naturally dreads not only to be hated but to be hateful. ... He desires not only praise but praiseworthiness.⁵⁶

Smith thus emphasized the moral emotions rather than abstract rules of justice based on reason. Moreover, theories of moral emotions were divorced from religion and thus appealed to the more secularly minded elites that looked down on the religious enthusiasm of the Evangelical Anglicans and Methodists (Brown, 2006, 380)—not to mention the Quakers. Smith was an ardent opponent of slavery, stating in 1759 that colonial slaveholders were “the refuse of the jails of Europe.” Calling them “wretches”; “fortune never exerted more cruelly her empire over

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 626–627 (bk. III, part 3, ch. 1).

⁵² *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 67, 109.

⁵³ Adam Smith, *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 9 (pt. I, sect. 1, ch. 1).

⁵⁴ MacDonald, “Effortful Control, Explicit Processing, and the Regulation of Human Evolved Predispositions.”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25 (Pt. I, Section 1, Ch. 5).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 113–114 (Pt. III, Ch. 2)

mankind, than when she subjected those nations of heroes” [Africans] “to the levity, brutality, and baseness” of British Americans.⁵⁷

The fact that this intellectual work dominated the most elite intellectual circles of British society made it easy for abolitionists to make a credible moral argument. Opposition to slavery could easily be seen as an example of Hume’s disinterested benevolence and Smith’s universal compassion for the suffering of others. Further, it was difficult to defend slavery when “the luminaries of the Enlightenment [e.g., Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* and *Encyclopédie*] increasingly subjected human bondage to a sustained critique. It would be difficult ... to find many in the British Isles willing to describe colonial slavery and the Atlantic trade as an emblem of social, cultural, or moral progress during the mid-eighteenth century”⁵⁸ “It became more common to doubt the morality of the slave system because certain intellectuals did too, because prominent theologians, philosophers, and historians raised troubling questions about the moral and legal foundations on which the system stood.”⁵⁹

EMPATHY AND ABOLITIONISM

The abolitionist movement clearly emphasized the suffering of slaves. “In Britain, the campaign to abolish slavery, like the other reform movements, was motivated not by ‘rational will’ but by humanitarian zeal, by compassion rather than reason.”⁶⁰ The movement realized that “the way to stir men and women to action is not by biblical argument, but through the vivid, unforgettable description of acts of great injustice done to their fellow human beings. The abolitionists placed their hope not in sacred texts, but in human empathy.”⁶¹ Although practical arguments were also made (e.g., that slave owners would benefit from the abolition of the slave trade), empathy elicited by depictions of the suffering of slaves was not only the main way that the abolitionists appealed to the masses, it was also apparent in the key figures of the movement. While doing research for his prize-winning essay at Oxford University in 1785, Thomas Clarkson, perhaps the central activist in the British abolitionist movement, “found himself overwhelmed with horror”⁶²; his essay exhibits “heartfelt outrage about slavery.”⁶³

This empathy in the activists was apparent to observers. The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote of Clarkson, “Nothing can surpass the moral beauty of the manner in which he ... relates his own [part] in that Immortal War. ... [Clarkson is] a moral steam engine.”⁶⁴

Clearly his emotions were not religious, but empathic. Clarkson spent much time traveling around England in an effort to find examples of cruelty and witnesses to cruelty, not only of slaves, but also of the sailors on slave ships. Their appeals to mass audiences also emphasized the universalist ideology aimed at combatting the idea that slaves were an outgroup rather than members of a common humanity. A famous medallion with a kneeling slave was inscribed “Am I not a man and a brother?” “Reproduced everywhere from books and leaflets to snuffboxes and cufflinks, the image was an instant hit.”⁶⁵

⁵⁷ In Brown, *Moral Capital*, 115.

⁵⁸ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 48.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁰ Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity*, 234.

⁶¹ Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 366.

⁶² In *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶³ In *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁴ In *Ibid.*, 313.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

Another very effective empathy-inducing illustration was a drawing of a slave ship, the *H. M. S. Brookes*, showing the very cramped quarters of slaves on their journey to the West Indies. This image was used in parliamentary debates over slavery and was included in Clarkson's *Abstract of the Evidence delivered before a select committee of the House of Commons in the years 1790 and 1791, on the part of the petitioners for the Abolition of the slave trade* which sold several hundred thousand copies. Rather than religious sentiments, the abstract is completely devoted to detailing the suffering of slaves "in gory detail."⁶⁶ The appeal was to the empathy of his readers.

It was common among activists to assert that if people knew what really went on with the slave trade, they would be sympathetic to abolitionism. Another important activist, Granville Sharp, noted "We are clearly of the opinion that the nature of the slave-trade needs only to be known to be detested"⁶⁷ — a comment that assumes the empathic capability of his audience. Clarkson wrote of this "enormous evil" that he "was sure that it was only necessary for the inhabitants of this favoured island to know it, to feel a just indignation against it" (Hochschild, 2006, 366).⁶⁸

As a result of these efforts, abolition of the slave trade was popular with the public long before it was banned in 1807. Indeed, even in 1787–1788 "if the question could have been decided by public opinion, the slave trade would have been abolished at once."⁶⁹ A contemporary estimated 300,000 gave up sugar because of its moral taint; another claimed 400,000. Olaudah Equiano, a former slave, wrote an autobiography depicting the cruelty of slavery and the slave trade that became a best-seller. In 1788, Joseph Wool, a merchant and Quaker abolitionist, wrote that "the British people were like 'Tinder which has immediately caught fire from the spark of information which has been struck upon it.'⁷⁰ In April, 1788, a touring actor wrote that "the many British cities he had passed through had 'caught fire' over slavery."⁷¹ When the slave trade was finally abolished, it was not the government that was the moving force; an article in the *Edinburgh Review* claimed "the sense of the nation had pressed abolition upon our rulers."⁷² Similarly with slavery itself, in 1833 Parliament received 1.5

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶⁷ In *Ibid.*, 366.

⁶⁸ While there is little doubt that Clarkson's humanitarian feelings were genuine, he also had a heroic sense of ambition that was foreign to the Quakers he worked among. "Grand in ambition, visionary in aim, demanding in execution, and nearly impossible to achieve, yet principled in purpose, altruistic in spirit, and a pleasure to contemplate—what could be more heroic than a life devoted to the abolition of the slave trade and an end to slavery?" (Brown, *Moral Capital*, 441); Brown (*Ibid.*, 438–439) describes several antislavery figures who had a similar heroic sense of ambition utilized in the cause of moral righteousness. Such motivations recall Ricardo Duchesne's *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization* with its emphasis on heroic action and glory seeking as fundamental to the Western spirit: "It is my contention that the aristocratic culture of Indo-Europeans was dominated by men whose souls were 'too high-spirited, too intrepid, too indifferent about fortune'" (Duchesne, *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization*, 486; emphasis in text; the inner quote is from philosopher David Hume). "The expansionist aggression of the West is an inescapable expression of its roots in aristocratic men who are free and therefore headstrong and ambitious, sure of themselves, easily offended, and unwilling to accept quiet subservience" (*Ibid.*, 481).

Ricardo Duchesne, *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁶⁹ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 23.

⁷⁰ In Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 128-129.

⁷¹ In *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 307.

million signatures. “In the early 1830s, as in the late 1780s, early 1790s, and mid-1810s, there were far more petitions for the abolitionist cause than for any other issue.”⁷³

The importance of inducing empathy for the slaves and moral revulsion is compatible with the self-perceptions of abolitionists. For example, when slavery was finally outlawed in 1833, “whatever compromises seemed necessary, Britons and many Americans hailed the emancipation act as one of the greatest humanitarian achievements in history. ... For at least eighty years after the American Civil War, the triumphant achievements of the British abolitionists were interpreted in Britain and then in much of the English-speaking world as irrefutable evidence to support the view, as phrased by the philosopher John Stuart Mill, that ‘the spread of moral convictions could sometimes take precedence over material interests.’”⁷⁴

EMPATHY AND IDEOLOGY IN OPPOSITION TO SLAVERY: QUAKERS, EVANGELICAL ANGLICANS, AND METHODISTS.

Anti-slavery sentiments were often expressed earlier in the eighteenth century, and indeed appear to have been quite common, waiting only for an organized movement and greater democratization of political institutions to have an effect on public policy.

Slave traders in Britain encountered public disapproval early in the eighteenth century, decades before the emergence of those cultural movements often credited for engendering antislavery sentiment, decades before the height of the Evangelical revival or the apex of the European Enlightenment, or the emergence of a cult of sensibility ... [In 1746] a propagandist for the Royal Africa Company observed that ‘many are prepossessed against the Trade, thinking it *a barbarous, unhuman, and unlawful traffic for a Christian Country to Trade in Blacks.*’⁷⁵

Remarks in opposition to slavery were made in an “offhand manner” which shows that the author assumed widespread antislavery sentiment. Further, “a culture of sympathy made it increasingly fashionable by the middle of the eighteenth century to romanticize enslaved Africans as exemplars of wounded innocence.”⁷⁶ During the American Revolutionary War, apologists for Britain emphasized the hypocrisy of the American rhetoric of liberty in the context of slavery. Americans countered that the British were hardly free from the practice, and indeed were ultimately responsible for slavery in America. Antislavery elements in America (notably the Quakers and descendants of the New England Puritan heritage) emphasized that slavery was indeed incompatible with American ideals.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, there was no effective movement until the 1780s. By that time it was possible to envision a career as an antislavery activist:

To condemn slavery in principle and colonial institutions in practice had become by the 1780s the mark of an enlightened, humane Christian. Since the midcentury, novelists like Sarah Scott and Laurence Sterne had presented the man and woman of feeling, with their characteristic sympathy for the African, as the exemplar of moral virtue. It required only

⁷³ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 238.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 37–38.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 106–153.

a small step to see that active opposition to slavery could be used as a way to demonstrate individual moral worth, once such aims lost their association with hopeless idealism.⁷⁸

Although antislavery attitudes were much affected by empathy for suffering others and were not necessarily tied to strong religious beliefs, the key activists and organizations were all associated with religious groups, doubtless reflecting the general religiosity of the period: the Quakers, the Evangelical Anglicans, and the Methodists. An exception perhaps is Granville Sharp, a high Anglican and early activist against slavery. Like Evangelical Anglicans such as James Ramsay, he was motivated by moral fervor mixed with concern about the effects of slavery on the afterlife. “When he believed that something was evil, he confidently marched off to confront the evildoer in person.”⁷⁹ The slave trade and colonial slavery brought Britain “indelible disgrace,” a “notorious wickedness”⁸⁰; “*to be in power* and to neglect (as life is very uncertain) even a day in endeavouring to put a stop to such monstrous injustice and abandoned wickedness, must necessarily endanger a man’s *eternal welfare*”;⁸¹ emphasis in text). For Sharp, opposition to slavery was a moral duty, deeply embedded in his religious worldview; “he could never regard human bondage in anything other than moral terms.”⁸² Brown situates Sharp in the context of New England Calvinism;⁸³ as discussed below, in the U.S., the Puritan heritage of New England was the most powerful opposition to slavery in the period leading up to the Civil War. Like the Quakers and the Evangelical Anglican women discussed below, Sharp seems to have been uninterested in self-promotion and typically avoided the limelight.⁸⁴

Quakers. Quakers in Philadelphia developed an early antipathy toward slavery, coming out it in 1754⁸⁵ and expelling slaveholders in the 1760s and 1770s.⁸⁶ Quakers in the U.S. freed their slaves and some paid compensation. The American Quakers pressured the British Quakers to be more actively involved in abolitionism.⁸⁷

In Britain, Quaker networks and Quaker money were “of critical importance” in the early campaigns of 1787–1788; they were “the foremost champions of liberty for enslaved Africans.”⁸⁸ In 1783 Quakers, with around 20,000 members, started an energetic campaign against slavery, responsible for the first petition to the House of Commons in 1783, the first anti-slavery committees (beginning in 1783 but including the very influential Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade established in 1787), and the printing and distribution of antislavery literature. Quakers did the vast majority of the practical, day-to-day work of the Society and were a major source of funding.

“Quaker propagandists shaped the information available to the reading public after 1783.”⁸⁹ They also aggressively distributed their literature among the elite (e.g., political figures) and non-

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 437.

⁷⁹ Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 45.

⁸⁰ In Brown, *Moral Capital*, 170, 181.

⁸¹ In *Ibid.*, 175.

⁸² In *Ibid.*, 199.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 179–180.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 441.

⁸⁵ Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 91.

⁸⁶ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 78.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 405.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 426.

elite alike (e.g., articles in provincial newspapers without attribution to Quaker sources, an approach that “allowed them to disguise the extent to which the sudden appearance of antislavery sentiment in the press reflected Quaker initiative.”⁹⁰ “Dozens of Quakers across England devoted countless hours in 1784 and 1785 to placing antislavery literature in the proper hands.”⁹¹ Beginning in the 1780s all anti-slavery literature was printed by the Quaker James Phillips, typically with the financial support of other Quakers. The works of Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet were of seminal importance and often cited by other writers; Jackson subtitles his biography of Benezet “the Father of Atlantic Abolitionism.”⁹² Slavery and the slave trade were “prodigious wickedness,” “prodigious iniquity.”⁹³

Quakers were at the margins of British society: “They were marginalized because they could not hold office because only [Church of England] members could. Often mocked, “laughed off as powerless oddballs.”⁹⁴ Brown argues that Quakers used the public consensus against slavery that had developed by the 1780s as a way of obtaining greater acceptance.⁹⁵ They received wide praise for introducing an anti-slavery petition to the House of Commons: “These tributes encouraged Friends to picture themselves as moral campaigners, to assume the mantle of crusaders for justice and virtue”⁹⁶ Opposition to slavery came to be a central aspect of Quaker identity “Laboring against ‘the avarice of unrighteous men’ reinforced the religious fellowship and instilled a collective sense of purpose.”⁹⁷

Elizabeth Hayrick, a convert to Quakerism, was effective advocate for abolition. In general abolitionism was very popular among women and many were engaged in street-level activism, distributing literature, etc. Women’s societies were “almost always bolder than men’s.”⁹⁸ Women kept the movement alive when it had lost steam in the 1820s and early 1830s.

Quaker religious ideology is the apotheosis of moral universalism. They believed that the ‘Inner Light’ of God’s revelation shone equally on human beings of any race or class.”⁹⁹ For Anthony Benezet, human equality “was an ontological fact rather than a philosophical doctrine or maxim”;¹⁰⁰ in addition to his African slaves, he extended his interest to the welfare of Native Americans and the poor in Philadelphia. A statement by a Quaker subcommittee submitted to Parliament was titled *The Case of Our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed Africans*.¹⁰¹

Quakers were also highly egalitarian: they were “democratic and nonhierarchical”;¹⁰² there were no bishops or ordained ministers, and any person (including women) could speak. Policy was passed by consensus of the entire meeting. Quakers were economically successful, a merchant class capable of devoting substantial resources to the cause of anti-slavery activism.¹⁰³

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 430.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 428.

⁹² Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

⁹³ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 401.

⁹⁴ Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 78.

⁹⁵ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 424.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 424.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁹⁸ Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 327.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 397.

¹⁰¹ Brown, 425.

¹⁰² Hochschild, 2006, 108.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 127.

Even early in the eighteenth century, Quaker concerns went beyond utilitarian reasons (e.g., the dangers of slaveholding).

Quaker moralists from William Edmundson to John Woolman insisted on a conflict between slavery and the fundamental principles of justice, morality, and righteousness. This attitude reflected, in part, the peculiar cast of the Quaker faith. More than other sects, Quakers attempted to realize in practice the egalitarian principles implicit in the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation. Friends knew that Christ had enjoined compassion for the weak. And they knew that the violence required to institute and sustain slavery conflicted with their unique commitment to pacifism They placed particular emphasis on renouncing worldly luxuries, on demonstrating through everyday life the disavowal of greed and self-interest.¹⁰⁴

John Woolman, the "Quintessential Quaker," was an eighteenth-century figure who opposed slavery, lived humbly, and, most tellingly from an evolutionary perspective, felt guilty about preferring his own children to children on the other side of the world.¹⁰⁵ Like other Quakers, Anthony Benezet certainly did not see opposition to slavery in terms of personal ambition: "Like most Quakers, Anthony Benezet showed little interest in self-promotion. Unprepossessing and lacking in charisma, he had a greater interest in charity than in burnishing his reputation."¹⁰⁶

Evangelical Anglicans. Like Granville Sharp, the Evangelical Anglicans were motivated by moral outrage at slavery combined with strong ideological overtones based on a religious worldview. Unlike the Quakers or Methodists, they "enjoyed prominence and social standing"¹⁰⁷ and were thus in a better position to alter the attitudes and behavior of elites. The principle figures are Rev. Thomas Clarkson (the principle activist, an effective writer, and a bridge between the Evangelical Anglicans and the Quakers), Rev. James Ramsay (the preeminent writer and pamphleteer), William Wilberforce (the leader of abolitionist forces in Parliament), Hannah More (a writer and philanthropist), Beilby Porteus (an influential anti-slavery Anglican bishop), Elizabeth Bouverie (a wealthy benefactress), and Admiral Charles and Margaret Middleton (the latter a wealthy, pious benefactress who "insisted that Barham Court [Middleton's estate in Teston] serve as a space for conversations about slavery"¹⁰⁸); she is regarded as a formative force among the Evangelical Anglicans.

While empathy for the slaves is quite apparent in their writings and comments, there was a strong religious emphasis—a universalist ideology in which all humans were created by God and candidates for eternal salvation.¹⁰⁹ "The Evangelical revivalists sometimes overlooked racial and ethnic difference more readily. There were important differences in theology and in practice among the Evangelicals sects. Yet they possessed a shared tendency to assume the spiritual equality of black men and women."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 88–89.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 441.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 341.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

Indeed, in his book, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*, Rev. James Ramsay (1784), emphasized the intellectual and moral equality of the African slaves: “I shall assert the claim of Negroes to attention from us, by explaining their natural capacity, and proving them to be on a footing of equality in respect of the reception of mental improvement, with the natives of any other country.”¹¹¹ Ramsay’s book was influential and well-reviewed in elite publications; it provoked “paroxysms of outrage” from the West Indies interests.¹¹² By 1788 even pro-slavery tracts conceded the basic moral premise of the abolitionists, for example, noting “that slavery is an evil no man can deny” or “no man condemns, as an abstract proposition, more than I the command over the lives and properties of their fellow creatures.”¹¹³

Nevertheless, with authority deriving from his experience of having lived nearly 20 years in the West Indies and as a former slaveholder himself, Ramsay provided graphic descriptions of the oppression of the slaves clearly designed to evoke empathy. “Slave owners are “accustomed from their infancy to trifle with the feelings and smile at the miseries of wretches born to be the drudges of their avarice and slaves of their caprice.”¹¹⁴ He describes slaves getting “twenty lashes of a long cart whip” for minor failures of the daily tasks of gathering grass for domestic animals.¹¹⁵ The cart whip, “in the hands of a skillful driver, cuts out flakes of skin and flesh with every stroke; and the wretch in this mangled condition, is turned out to work in dry or wet weather, which last, now and then, brings on the cramp, and ends his slavery altogether.”¹¹⁶ There are detailed descriptions of the punishments given to slaves, often for trifling offenses. The dangers of work on the sugar plantations are also described, such as arms being cut off in the machinery, the danger made worse because overworked slaves were so exhausted from lack of sleep.

Ramsay, although contemptuous of greed, maintained that improving the lot of slaves would be good for the owners: “While the man of feeling finds every generous sentiment indulged in the prospect which it opens, the politician, the selfish, will have all their little wishes of opulence and accumulation fully realized.”¹¹⁷ He is also careful to emphasize that his involvement is altruistic—that he is not motivated by any sort of personal gain or approbation. Indeed, his behavior will be costly because he will suffer censure from others: “Profit he disclaims and willingly he would transfer all the credit that can possibly arise from it, to him who would take on him the censure.”¹¹⁸ Ramsay thus regarded himself “as a martyr, not a hero.”¹¹⁹

Based on the ideology of moral universalism, the desirability of bringing slaves within the Christian fold was paramount. This ideology rationalized strong social controls aimed to rein in the planters. The Evangelical Anglicans proposed to achieve their aims by effecting, “in the words of Bishop Beilby Porteus, the institution of ‘fixed laws’ and ‘police’ to restrain abusive slaveholders and for initiatives that would provide the enslaved ‘protection, security,

¹¹¹ Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*, xvii.

¹¹² Brown, *Moral Capital*, 366.

¹¹³ In *Ibid.*, 369.

¹¹⁴ Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*, 67.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74–75.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁹ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 442.

encouragement, improvement, and conversion.”¹²⁰ Porteus was clearly greatly affected by the descriptions of the treatment of slaves: “for him the treatment of British slaves had become by 1784 a measure of collective virtue.”¹²¹

Reflecting the fact that antislavery attitudes had become entirely mainstream by the 1780s, Brown interprets the Evangelicals’ support as motivated by obtaining moral capital that they could use to further their wider goals of increasing piety and morally circumspect behavior in other areas.¹²² In other words, the cause of abolition had achieved a moral imperative to the point that among the public in general it “was associated with politeness, sensibility, patriotism, and a commitment to British liberty.”¹²³ It could therefore be utilized as a battering ram against immorality in other areas. Nevertheless, their attachment to abolition was not merely instrumental; there was a strong empathic motivation: “their horror at the trafficking and enslavement of human bodies was genuine”¹²⁴—a judgment that certainly leaps out at anyone reading Ramsay’s essay.

Methodists. During this period, Methodists were Evangelicals who opposed slavery but operated outside the Church of England. In her book on the British Enlightenment, Himmelfarb describes the Methodist movement as emphasizing the centrality of moral sentiments. Founded in 1739, Methodism was very much in tune with the emphasis on a universal moral sense: “While the philosophers were invoking the moral sense as the basis of the social affections, Methodist preachers were giving practical effect to that idea by spreading a religious gospel of good works, engaging in a variety of humanitarian causes, and welcoming the poor into their fold.”¹²⁵

Although the emphasis was upon the personal giving of charity and good works, the Methodists helped establish and support philanthropic enterprises and institutions of every kind: hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages, friendly societies, schools and libraries. They also played a prominent part in the movement for the abolition of the slave trade. Wesley himself was passionate on the subject of ‘that execrable villainy,’ slavery. ‘An African ... was in no respect inferior to the European’; if he seemed so, it was because the European had kept him in a condition of inferiority, depriving him of ‘all opportunities of improving either in knowledge or virtue.’¹²⁶

In a letter to William Wilberforce, the parliamentary leader of the abolitionists, Wesley wrote, “Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.”¹²⁷ According to Wesley, if the empire required slavery, the empire would have to be renounced¹²⁸—an excellent example of the lack of concern for individual or national interests at the heart of opposition to slavery.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 357.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 387.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 388.

¹²⁵ Himmelfarb, *Roads to Modernity*, 120.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹²⁷ In *Ibid.*, 129.

¹²⁸ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 210.

Although they were involved in petitioning Parliament,¹²⁹ the Methodists were not at the center of the activist movements. Nevertheless, their position was clear. In 1774 Wesley published an antislavery tract titled *Thoughts upon Slavery* containing stark descriptions of the recruitment of slaves and their treatment during the passage to the West Indies and as slaves on sugar plantations:

And what can be more wretched than the condition they enter upon? Banished from their country, from their relations and friends forever, they are reduced to a state scarce any way preferable to that of beasts of burden. ... Their sleep is short, their labor continual and frequently above their strength : so death sets many at liberty before half their days. ... They are whipped by overseers who, if they think them dilatory, or think any thing not so well done as it should be, whip them most unmercifully, so that you may see their bodies long after wheal'd and scared usually from the shoulders to the waist. ... As to the punishment inflicted on them, says Sir *Hans Sloan*, "they frequently geld them or chop off half a foot: after they are whipped until they are raw all over, Some put pepper and salt all over them. Some drop melted wax upon their skin. Others cut off their ears and constrain them to broil and eat them. For Rebellion" (that is, asserting their native Liberty which they have as much right to as the Air they breathe) "they fasten them down to the ground with crooked sticks on every limb, and then applying fire by degrees, to the feet and hands, they burn them gradually upward to the head."¹³⁰

Whether or not such practices occurred or were common, passages like this were clearly intended to evoke empathy in readers.

Methodism had a well-developed emphasis on altruism. Any wealth beyond the necessities to rear a family should be given to the poor and it should be done, according to Wesley, in "as secret and unostentatious way as possible."¹³¹ This effectively de-emphasized personal glory as a motive for charity. The Methodists tended to avoid organized approaches to charity in favor of individual action.

A disposition rather than an organisation for philanthropy was thus established, which explains in great part, the generous support of members of the Methodist Connection for the amelioration of human distress, whether that of poverty, or sickness, or imprisonment, or slavery; it explains too the lack of organised effort in tackling any of the leading social problems of the age.¹³²

The artistic production of Methodism emphasized moral virtue. "The Methodists published sentimental novels and poems ..., as well as sermons and tracts. And theology had at its core feelings, sentiments, and emotions that were given expression in prayers, hymns, homilies, and, not least, in personal services for the sick and needy."¹³³

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹³⁰ John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (Dublin: W. Whitestone, 1775; orig. pub. 1774), 13–14; spelling and punctuation in original.

http://books.google.com/books?id=iTdcAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

¹³¹ John Wesley, quoted in Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, 141.

¹³² Jones, *Ibid.*, 141.

¹³³ Himmelfarb, *Roads to Modernity*, 139.

Like the Quakers and the Evangelical Anglicans, there was a strong streak of egalitarianism in Methodism. Although loyal to established hierarchy, within the church “the movement was, in spirit if not formally, democratic. ... Within the church, there were few social distinctions. ... And the organizational structure, however hierarchical, promoted a spirit of community and fraternity.”¹³⁴ Women were often the majority in congregations and they played a major role in leading “in prayer, counseling, and exhorting.”¹³⁵ There were many female preachers with the same status as men. Methodism encouraged a Puritan-like ethic of thrift, diligence and hard work along with “the social obligation of charity and good works, so it made ‘self-help’ a correlative of helping others.”¹³⁶ Methodism appealed “to the middle classes; it remained allied with Evangelicalism which “would inspire the ‘Moral Reformation’ and philanthropic movements that were so distinctive a part of the British Enlightenment.”¹³⁷

PURITANISM AS A PROTOTYPE OF “THE AGE OF BENEVOLENCE”

Quakerism is an offshoot of Puritanism, developing in the context of the Puritan revolution and sharing many of its attitudes and ideas.¹³⁸ This includes attitudes on the moral basis of society (“purifying the world”) and “visible sainthood” among believers.¹³⁹

These attitudes had strong repercussions throughout eighteenth-century England. Mary Gwladys Jones *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* describes the Puritan roots of the eighteenth-century “age of benevolence,”¹⁴⁰ with opposition to slavery as a prime example of benevolence. Although Puritans per se were not at the forefront of the movement to abolish slavery, Jones’s work shows that the Puritan ethic was at the roots of what she describes as the eighteenth century’s “sustained humanitarianism and generous philanthropy.”¹⁴¹ This included concern for African slaves:

The call of the mission field abroad, the distress of religious refugees, the misery of negro slaves, foundling children and climbing boys, the brutalities of the criminal law, the hardships of the very poor, the aged and infirm, the struggle of the “second poor” to keep their heads above water, the suffering of the sick and diseased, of those in prison never failed to stir the consciences and untie the purse-strings of the pious of philanthropic men and women of eighteenth-century England.¹⁴²

In linking these tendencies to Puritanism, Jones is implying not allegiance to any particular religious dogma, but a tendency toward an effort “to live their lives in punctilious conformity to Christian teaching.” Such people could be found in all the religious sects, including the Church of England. “They were united not by a specific form of Church constitution, but by a pietism, or precisianism, which aimed at promoting by an austere personal discipline the glory of God and

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 127–128.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹³⁸ Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), 2ff.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Jones, *The Charity School Movement*.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴² Jones, 3.

the inner sanctification of the individual.”¹⁴³ Their motivation was “spiritual rewards in the world to come.”¹⁴⁴ The sensibility of the Evangelicals of the eighteenth century thus represented the characteristics of what she terms “classical Puritanism.”¹⁴⁵ “The steady, unswerving practice of piety and charity remained their dominant characteristics.”¹⁴⁶

THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE AFFECTIVE REVOLUTION

Although the focus here is on abolitionism, the “age of benevolence” did not stop with the concerns about slavery.

Between 1720 and 1750, five great London hospitals and nine in the country were founded, and the following half century saw the establishment of dispensaries, clinics, and specialized hospitals (maternity, infectious diseases, insane asylums). An act providing nursing care in the country for the infants of paupers, and such other measures as the paving and draining of many London streets and the clearing of some of its worst slums, resulted in a dramatic reduction of the death rates, for children especially.¹⁴⁷

The education of the poor became accepted as part of the new zeitgeist:

The movement for the education of the poor thus reflected the same sensibility and ethos that inspired such other philanthropic and reform movements as the campaign against cruelty to animals, for the abolition of slavery, for prison and legal reforms, and for the establishment of a multitude of societies that undertook to alleviate a variety of social ills.¹⁴⁸

It was also the period when, as seen in the work of historian Lawrence Stone, close relationships based on affection and love became universally seen as the appropriate basis for monogamous marriage in all social classes, including landed aristocrats.¹⁴⁹ Stone describes “a new ideal type, namely the Man of Sentiment, or the Man of Feeling, the prototype of the late eighteenth-century Romantic.”¹⁵⁰ Novels emphasized morality—“the sentimental novel” such as Richardson’s *Pamela*.

The new ethic transcended social class, political party, and religious divisions.¹⁵¹

[The Methodists] regenerated the Church of England. ... They even had an effect on free thinkers, who subsequently refrained from criticizing Christian doctrine in order to devote themselves to political economy and philanthropy. Utilitarians and evangelicals

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 8

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Himmelfarb, *Roads to Modernity*, 134.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 142. The special emphasis on the education of the poor is documented in exhaustive detail in Jones’ *The Charity School Movement*.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1977).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁵¹ Himmelfarb, *Roads to Modernity*, 144.

agreed to work together for commercial freedom, the abolition of slavery, and the reform of criminal law and prison organizations.¹⁵²

Freethinkers in association with the philanthropists of the evangelical movement would work for the material and moral betterment of the poor. In the interval, they were ‘converted’ to philanthropy through the influence of Methodist preachers.”¹⁵³

This is not to say that the result was an ideal society. “By later standards, of course, the reforms, societies, and institutions reflecting this ethic seem woefully inadequate . . . ‘The Age of Benevolence’ obviously had its underside. If it produced a generation of reformers and humanitarians, it was partly because there was so much to reform and even more to offend the sensibilities of a human person.”¹⁵⁴

The emphasis on reforming society went along with utopian idealism—essentially explicit ideologies on how to construct society for the purposes of moral benefit. Abolitionists developed ideas of model communities in which freed slaves. For example, Granville Sharp envisioned a utopian society in which freed slaves and Whites would be settled in Sierra Leone.¹⁵⁵ The community would be governed by the freed slaves with the consent of native Africans. “All this was far more idealistic than many later Utopian communities: Brook Farm in Massachusetts, for instance, never invited American Indians to join.” The actual community had a flag depicting clasped Black and White hands; at least half of juries were of same race as defendant; employing both Blacks and Whites. It did not end well,¹⁵⁶ and Sierra Leone eventually became a British colony.

If the abolitionists, and their countless supporters, had sought abolition only, they would not have demanded recognition of their moral virtue. They would not have had to parade their reputation for sincerity and special merit. Abolition and then emancipation, would have been enough, as they were, indeed for Granville Sharp, who never learned to make his opposition to slavery politically useful or the basis of public importance.¹⁵⁷

THE AFFECTIVE REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND: AN ETHNIC HYPOTHESIS

To be sure, the costs involved in actively opposing slavery and the slave trade were not extraordinarily high. Certainly for some of those involved the costs involved a great deal of time or money, but not to the point of compromising their lives. It was not pathological altruism. One has to remember that at the time, England was a dominant power. Those involved doubtless did not feel threatened by the consequences of ending slavery in far off places like Jamaica. It was a low-cost form of altruism, but altruism nonetheless.

An ethnic hypothesis proposes that the eighteenth century saw the emergence of an ethos of egalitarianism that reflected the evolutionary past of an important segment of the British population as Northern hunter-gatherers. European groups are part of what Burton et al. term the

¹⁵² Elie Halévy, *The Birth of Methodism in England*, trans., Bernard Semmel (Chicago, 1971), 37.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵⁴ Himmelfarb, *Roads to Modernity*, 146.

¹⁵⁵ Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 146ff.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁵⁷ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 461.

North Eurasian and Circumpolar culture area.¹⁵⁸ This culture area derives from hunter-gatherers adapted to cold, ecologically adverse climates. In such climates there is pressure for male provisioning of the family and a tendency toward monogamy because the ecology did not support either polygyny or large groups for an evolutionarily significant period. These cultures are characterized by bilateral kinship relationships which recognize both the male and female lines, suggesting a more equal contribution for each sex as would be expected under conditions of monogamy.

There is also less emphasis on extended kinship relationships and marriage tends to be exogamous (i.e., outside the kinship group). John Hajnal has established that the simple household type based on a single married couple and their children is typical of Northwest Europe.¹⁵⁹ It contrasts with the joint family structure typical of the rest of Eurasia in which the household consists of two or more related couples, typically brothers and their wives and other members of the extended family. An archeological excavation of a 4600-year old site in modern Germany found evidence for monogamy and exogamy, both strong markers of individualism.¹⁶⁰

The data thus show that Europeans, and especially Northwest Europeans, tend toward individualism. These societies were relatively quick to abandon extended kinship networks and collectivist social structures when their interests were protected with the rise of strong centralized governments. There is indeed a general tendency throughout the world for a decline in extended kinship networks with the rise of central authority.¹⁶¹ But in the case of Northwest Europe this tendency quickly gave rise long before the industrial revolution to the unique Western European 'simple household' type described by Hajnal.

Egalitarianism is a notable trait of hunter-gatherer groups around the world. Such groups have mechanisms that prevent despotism and ensure reciprocity, with punishment ranging from physical harm to shunning and ostracism.¹⁶² David Hackett Fischer emphasizes the egalitarian ethic that developed in New Zealand and Australia during the "Second Empire" in the nineteenth century: the "Tall Poppy Syndrome" (envy and resentment of people who are "conspicuously successful, exceptionally gifted, or unusually creative"¹⁶³). "It sometimes became a more general attitude of outright hostility to any sort of excellence, distinction, or high achievement—especially achievement that requires mental effort, sustained industry, or applied intelligence. ... The possession of extraordinary gifts is perceived as unfair by others who lack them."¹⁶⁴

This egalitarianism enforced by shunning is entirely reminiscent of the Jante Laws of Scandinavia which "mandate" that no one can rise above the others in the group. In my experience, the 10 commandments of Jante Law are well-known among Scandinavians as an aspect of self-identity. 1. Don't think you are anything; 2. Don't think you are as good as us. 3. Don't think you are smarter than us. 4. Don't fancy yourself better than us. 5. Don't think you

¹⁵⁸ M. L. Burton, C. C. Moore, J. W. M. Whiting, & A. K. Romney, "Regions based on social structure," *Current Anthropology* 37 (1996), 87–123.

¹⁵⁹ J. Hajnal, J. "Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system," in *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, R. Wall, J. Robin & P. Laslett (eds.) (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁶⁰ Haak, Wolfgang et al., Ancient DNA, Strontium isotopes, and osteological analyses shed light on social and kinship organization of the Later Stone Age. *PNAS* 104[47] [2008], 18226–18231

¹⁶¹ Richard Alexander, *Darwinism and Human Affairs* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979); Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800*.

¹⁶² Christopher H. Boehm, *Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁶³ Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom*, 386.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 486–487.

know more than us. 6. Don't think you are greater than us. 7. Don't think you are good for anything. 8. Don't laugh at us. 9. Don't think that anyone cares about you. 10. Don't think you can teach us anything.¹⁶⁵

Reflecting this pattern, Scandinavian society in general has a history of relatively small income and social class differences, including the absence of serfdom during the Middle Ages. A recent anthropological study of hunter-gatherers found that the economic inequality approximated that of modern Denmark.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, socialist economic practices (including national health care) and women's rights came relatively easily to Scandinavia as well as to "Second Empire" societies such as New Zealand.¹⁶⁷ The movements discussed in here may be seen as the beginnings of the trend toward the far more advanced social welfare practices of twenty-first-century Western societies.

Christopher Boehm describes hunter-gatherer societies as *moral communities* in which women have a major role.¹⁶⁸ In such societies people are closely scrutinized to note deviations from social norms; violators are shunned, ridiculed, and ostracized. Decisions, including decisions to sanction a person, are by consensus. Adult males treat each other as equals.

All of these features are characteristic of the Quakers and other groups discussed here. The hunter-gatherer ethic implies that one's moral character becomes the most important aspect of ingroup status. Individuals maintain their position in society by subscribing to its moral norms. Fundamentally, the movement to end slavery operated by defining abolitionism as a moral ingroup psychologically analogous to the situation in a hunter-gatherer ingroup. Just as Quakers and Puritans shunned those who dissented from the moral community of "visible saints" who were the most prominent members of the congregation, those who continued to advocate the slave trade and slavery were shunned as moral pariahs. The moral basis of the anti-slavery ingroup was firmly grounded in genuine empathic responses to the suffering of the slaves. These natural reactions to the suffering of others by a substantial percentage of the population meant that the moral ingroup was far more than an artificial or arbitrary creation; that is, an arbitrary ingroup would not be emotionally compelling. It is interesting in this regard that, as noted above, proponents of slavery routinely paid homage to the moral imperative of abolitionism. Unable to create a plausible moral ingroup, they opted for arguments based on necessity or the good of the Empire.

The logic connecting these tendencies to the individualist hunter-gather model is that like all humans in a dangerous and difficult world, hunter-gatherers need to develop cohesive, cooperative ingroups. But rather than base them on known kinship relations, the prototypical egalitarian-individualist groups of Northwest Europe are based on moral reputation and trust. Rather than being based on known kinship relations or ingroup/outgroup relations based on ethnicity, they are open to other reputable and trustworthy individuals. Egalitarian-individualists create moral-ideological communities in which those who violate public trust and other manifestations of the moral order are shunned, ostracized, and exposed to public humiliation—a fate that would have resulted in evolutionary death during the harsh ecological period of the Ice Age.

¹⁶⁵ The Jante Laws originate in a novel by Aksel Sandemose (1899–1965), *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* (*A fugitive crosses his tracks*, 1933).

¹⁶⁶ Eric A. Smith, Kim Hill, Frank Marlowe, D. Nolin, Polly Wiessner P, M. Gurven, S. Bowles, Monique Borgerhoff-Mulder, T. Hertz, & A. Bell., "Wealth Transmission and Inequality Among Hunter-Gatherers," *Current Anthropology*.51(1) (2010), 19–34.

¹⁶⁷ Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom*, *passim*.

¹⁶⁸ Boehm, *Hierarchy in the Forest*, 8.

Ethnic Origins. As David Hackett Fischer notes in *Albion's Seed*, the Puritans and Quakers both originated mainly from groups that had immigrated from Scandinavia in pre-historic times, and their cultures reflect the strong egalitarian universalist tendencies of Scandinavia described above and apparent in the antislavery movement.¹⁶⁹ Puritanism originated in East Anglia, which was settled by Angles and Jutes (both from the Jutland peninsula) in pre-historic times. They produced “a civic culture of high literacy, town meetings, and a tradition of freedom,” distinguished from other British groups by their “comparatively large ratios of freemen and small numbers of *servi* and *villani*.”¹⁷⁰ East Anglia continued to produce “insurrections against arbitrary power”—the risings and rebellions of 1381 led by Jack Straw, Wat Tyler, and John Ball, Clarence’s Rising in 1477, Robert Kett’s rebellion of 1548, which predated the rise of Puritanism. President John Adams, cherished the East Anglian heritage of “self-determination, free male suffrage, and a consensual social contract.”¹⁷¹ Thomas Clarkson, the principle activist in opposition to slavery, was from East Anglia. As noted above, although Puritanism ceased to be an important factor in religious dogma, the Puritan tradition of creating morally-based ingroups was a prominent feature of the “Age of Benevolence.”

There was a strong strand of moral universalism and concern with fairness apparent in the Puritan-descended intellectuals who dominated American intellectual life in the nineteenth century and formed the intellectual force behind the American abolitionist movement.¹⁷² In the nineteenth century, these intellectuals placed a high value on fairness—for example, strongly opposing slavery on moral grounds. They tended to pursue utopian causes framed as moral issues—a phenomenon noted above with respect to the British antislavery intellectuals as well. Opposing sides were painted in stark contrasts of good versus evil. Whereas in the Puritan settlements of Massachusetts the moral fervor was directed at keeping fellow Puritans in line, in the nineteenth century it was directed at the entire country and focused on the evils of slavery and capitalism. For example:

- An important 19-century intellectual and orator, Orestes Brownson (1803–1876) admired the Universalists’ belief in the inherent dignity of all people and the promise of eventual universal salvation for all believers. He argued for the unity of races and the inherent dignity of each person, and he was fiercely opposed to Southerners for trying to enlarge their political base.” Like many New Englanders, he was morally outraged by the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case that required authorities in the North to return fugitive slaves to their owners in the South. For Brownson the Civil War was a moral crusade waged to emancipate the slaves. Writing in 1840, Brownson claimed that we should “realize in our social arrangements and in the actual conditions of all men that equality of man and man” that God had established but which had been destroyed by capitalism¹⁷³ According to Brownson, Christians had to bring down the high, and bring up the low; to break the fetters of the bound and set the captive free; to destroy all oppression, establish the reign of justice, which is the reign of equality, between man and man; to

¹⁶⁹ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁷⁰ Kevin Phillips, *Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, Civil Warfare and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 26.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷² Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007

¹⁷³ In *Ibid.*, 138–39.

introduce new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein all shall be as brothers, loving one another, and no one possessing what another lacketh.

• Ralph Waldo Emerson and other Transcendentalists were outraged by the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. For Emerson, “the very landscape seemed robbed of its beauty, and he even had trouble breathing because of the ‘infamy’ in the air.” After the militant abolitionist John Brown failed in his violent uprising to free the slaves, Emerson was “glad to see that the terror at disunion and anarchy is disappearing,” for the price of slaves’ freedom might demand it.¹⁷⁴ This is a paradigmatic example of what evolutionists label ‘altruistic punishment’—the willingness to right perceived wrongs even at enormous cost to self. No cost was too high to free the slaves. In the event, recent estimates of the Civil War dead put the figure at 750,000 men.¹⁷⁵

• Both Emerson and Henry David Thoreau commented on John Brown’s New England Puritan heritage. Emerson lobbied Lincoln on slavery, and when Lincoln emancipated the slaves, he said “Our hurts are healed; the health of the nation is repaired.”¹⁷⁶ He thought the war worth fighting because of it.

The East Anglian model for cohesion was the creation of moral and ideological bases of group cohesion.¹⁷⁷ The Puritans famously imposed penalties on people who departed from the moral/ideological strictures of the society. They were also willing to incur great costs to impose their moral/ideological version of truth. Puritan “ordered liberty” was the freedom to act within the confines of the moral order.

Like the Puritans, the Quakers stem from a distinctive, ethnically based British sub-culture originating in Scandinavia.¹⁷⁸ The predominant region for Quakers in England was the North Midlands colonized by Viking invaders who prized individual ownership of houses and fields; they spoke Norse into the twelfth century. They were seen by others as independent and egalitarian, dressing alike and eating together. “Their houses were sparsely furnished, and their culture made a virtue of simplicity, hard work, and plain speech in a harsh environment.”¹⁷⁹ They tended to be relatively poor farmers working poor, rocky soil.¹⁸⁰

Historically, they were dominated by an oppressive foreign elite—a few powerful families controlled the land Feudalism remained longest in the North; the Church was also seen as oppressive since tithes were required, although the tithes typically ended up in the hands of the gentry rather than the Church.¹⁸¹ The Church was thinly staffed in the North, often with corrupt clergy which also added to the general disaffection felt by the people: “The people of the region had learned to regard all their clergy as ‘cruel oppressors, greedy devourers, Caterpillars, who have done no good at all, but kept the People in blindness and ignorance.’ ... Few of the hearers of Quaker preachers had known vital religion in any form, unless they had made it so

¹⁷⁴ In *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁷⁵ “New Estimates Raise Civil War Death Toll,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/03/science/civil-war-toll-up-by-20-percent-in-new-estimate.html?pagewanted=all>

¹⁷⁶ In *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁷⁷ Kevin MacDonald, “Diaspora Peoples,” (Preface to the paperback edition of *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy*) (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2002), xxix–xlii.

¹⁷⁸ Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*.

¹⁷⁹ Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 448.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 75.

themselves.”¹⁸² The areas where Quakerism was strongest were the same areas that had rebelled against Henry VIII in the sixteenth century.¹⁸³

It is important to notice that the precise areas in which the Pilgrimage of Grace [i.e., the rebellion against Henry VIII in 1536] was basically a tenants’ revolt were almost the only areas in which Quakerism became strong in the North. Many of the 1536 issues were echoed by the Quakers one hundred years later: the regional pride and the bitterness of the tenants toward noblemen, clergy, and tithes. Conversely, it is significant that when the great earls did finally revolt against Queen Elizabeth, the tenants of the dales took no part.¹⁸⁴

In summary, the self-sustaining farmers and shepherds of the Northwest of England, where Quakerism took rise and gathered its special flavor, felt disinherited by their landowners and gentry, by the church, and by the schools. Knowing all these at their worst, they considered them outright evils. In religion, in learning in moral and business practices they knew that they themselves could do better than their supposed superiors. They were individualists, with no abstract doctrines about equality, much less about socialism or class struggle, but they were thoroughly radical in their instinctive reactions to all the claims of the highborn and mighty. When this radicalism was focused and deepened by the religious experience of Quakerism within their own lives, it made them react explosively against the evils in the social order wherever they found them.¹⁸⁵

Early Friends were, in general, farm people or town craftsmen, often from poor areas or trades; few were either outright proletarians or gentry. ... Geographically, Quaker roots grew strongest in just those areas where schools, landlords, and all other religious movements had given least: The English Northwest and Southwest and the American frontier.¹⁸⁶

Like the original Puritans, the Quakers formed a group apart, where group membership was based on moral/ideological conformity. Membership was not based on kinship but was open to anyone who accepted the moral/ideological basis of the group. Marriages were within the group and exogamous: marriages closer than second cousins were prohibited.¹⁸⁷ Quakers could be identified by their dress, and an ethic of austerity and non-frivolousness prevailed. There was

a watchful regard for morals of the society, and a strict determination to bring all misdemeanors to account. Friends were regularly appointed to examine into and to report on the state of the society. Did a member neglect to attend on the means of grace, or was he guilty of “disorderly walking,” he was exhorted in a brotherly way.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 82–83.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 83–84.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), 126.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 132–133.

The Decline of the Aristocratic Ethos. Finally, while a hunter-gatherer ethic became firmly entrenched in the eighteenth century, prior to this time aristocratic elites dominated British society with elitist, hierarchical values; this system was still largely entrenched politically, with the result that popular attitudes on slavery did not result in passage of legislation until 1807. The decline of this social structure began in the seventeenth century with the rise of the Puritans; the purpose of this paper has been to describe the rise of the egalitarian consciousness and morally defined ingroups in the eighteenth century. The aristocratic culture that was in the process of being displaced also appears to also have its roots in a distinctive ethnic subculture of the German West Saxons.¹⁸⁹ This group immigrated to Southwestern England in the sixth century where they became an endogamous, intermarried elite. This group had large estates with lower-middle class *servi* and *villani* — essentially slaves, dating from the 9th century in England. They reproduced this aristocratic culture in America: It was characterized by “deep and pervasive inequalities, by a staple agriculture and rural settlement patterns, by powerful oligarchies of large landowners with Royalist politics and an Anglican faith.”¹⁹⁰ Relationships were relatively egalitarian within the group but the society as a whole was highly hierarchical.

CONCLUSION

There is a clear continuity between the moral communities that emerged in the eighteenth century and the contemporary world. The logic of moral universalism based on empathic concern is now ubiquitous, rationalizing everything from wars of liberation against oppressive dictators to alleviating the suffering of animals. It is a lynchpin for immigration and refugee policy, ethnic relations, poverty, and much else.

Although these tendencies toward egalitarianism and moral universalism were presumably adaptive within small hunter-gatherer groups in the Northern European EEA, they may not be adaptive in the modern world where empathy and altruism may be manipulated by powerful elites to serve their material interests. A particular feature of the modern world bears mentioning: although the anti-slavery movement beginning in the late eighteenth century certainly took advantage of the available media (newspapers favored abolition at least by 1792¹⁹¹), the reach and power of the mass media are far greater today. Because of the power of explicit processing, media messages can be used to frame events in a way that evokes empathy and therefore rationalizes actions that may cynically serve other interests. For example, in the run-up to the war in Iraq, those favoring the war presented Saddam Hussein as an evil villain, oppressing his own people, gassing the Kurds, and engaging in bloody reprisals against the Shiites. The empathy evoked may have been real, but it is highly doubtful that empathy was the guiding emotion of those most responsible for promoting the war.

The manipulation of the culture of empathy to attain goals of power and money is certainly always a real possibility. But the evidence presented here is that the antislavery movement as it developed in the late eighteenth century certainly did not in general have such ulterior motives—that it was genuine altruism motivated by empathy and ideologies of moral universalism.

¹⁸⁹ Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 448. .

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁹¹ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 236.