also think it is valuable to have philosophers engaging in discourse that speaks more directly to the larger concerns of the body politic. Although I think there is more than just homiletic work to be done, I do recommend this text as a worthy contribution to what I hope will be a revival of the Liberal ethos

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When one reflects on the history of transcendentalism in the United States, the figures who immediately come to mind are Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. In Transcendental Utopias, Richard Francis focuses upon those who attempted to put into practice transcendental ideals. Although Thoreau is an integral part of this group, his utopian experiment is treated only briefly at the end of the book. A substantial portion of Francis' text is devoted to Brook Farm and Fruitlands.

Francis states his main purpose this way:

My overall intention is to establish the depth and intensity of social concern felt by members of the transcendentalist movement, and to shed light on the belief that underlies and unifies its apparent eclecticism, contradictoriness, and obscurity: he doctrine of repetitive order, of the consistency of consistency, of the universal law of series... All these thinkers shared the belief that we have to address ourselves to and perfect the microcosm, thought they disagreed about what that might be; and that when we have done so, a new social order will crystallize around it. (34)

The central issue the transcendentalists sought to resolve was the relationship between an essentially fixed nature governed by immutable law and a flowing historical process. By seeing history as itself governed by the universal law of series, George Ripley and Bronson Alcott were able to bring together the forces of history and nature.

Francis devotes three chapters to the experiment at Brook Farm. Brook Farm came into being in 1841 and lasted almost six years. Francis asserts that the founder of Brook Farm, George Ripley, was the central figure in the American transcendentalist movement. "But the person who, more than anybody else, gave it [transcendentalism] coherence and provided it with a succession of institutional manifestations was George Ripley." (pp. 39-40) Ripley was committed to the project of establishing a community that would concretize the ideas of Charles Fourier about the law of series and the best of transcendentalism. The common tendency to see transcendentalism as a form of individualism misses the mark in terms of Ripley's utopian experiment. After establishing the connection between Fourierism and transcendentalism, Francis points to such features
as the implicit determinism in Fourierism which run counter to the transcendentalist concern for individual creativity.

The short-lived utopian experiment known as Fruitlands is the subject of two chapters. For Bronson Alcott, its founder, this was an attempt to work together with Charles Lane to develop a model for the transformation of society. Francis discusses the critical difference in their viewpoints about the ground for historical convergence.

Lane's view was that the individual provided the environment in which the forces of matter and spirit could achieve a synthesis. Once this synthesis had been accomplished, harmony could radiate outward and transform society. . . Alcott does not appear to have argued with this view, at least at first; it is, however, clearly incompatible with his belief that the nuclear, indeed the biological, family in itself provided the instrument for the reconciliation of the polarities of the universe. (p. 147)

The final chapter considers Thoreau's experiment at Walden Pond as another failed attempt on the part of the transcendentalists to reconcile history and nature.

Francis has provided the reader with a carefully researched account of the development of American transcendentalism, seen from the perspective of those who sought to translate their ideals into living realities. Anyone who seeks a deeper understanding of this movement will find this book to be an excellent addition to the literature. It is interesting to note, as Francis does, that the adoption of a Darwinian point of view undercuts the philosophical basis for these utopian experiments. American thought has progressed beyond the historical moment of these transcendental utopias and so it is easy to misread the intentions of their founders. Francis does us a great service by putting these utopian experiments in their proper historical perspective.

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This delightfully compact yet penetrating volume is an excellent introduction to John E. Smith's philosophy. The four essays contained within this volume were presented to Professor Smith during a conference at Fordham University held in his honor on December 13, 1993. His response to each of these papers is also to be found in this book. These interpretations of Smith's thought are sympathetic, although not uncritical, ones given by students and colleagues.

Merold Westphal, who provides a short yet informative introduction, reminds us that Professor Smith's thought is to be located, "at the intersection of German idealism,