

"A New World': Philosophical Idealism in America, 1700 to 1950"¹

Lecture III

(Draft. Please do not quote without permission.)

Riding one September day near his home in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1748, Jonathan Edwards ran into a young minister, Joseph Emerson, from the eastern part of the state. Emerson, who was twenty four, was returning home from the commencement of the college in New Haven.² Jonathan invited Joseph to spend the night at his home. There Joseph fell deeply in love with Esther, Jonathan's sixteen-year-old daughter. He returned to Northampton two months later to court her, but he was disappointed. "I could not obtain from the young Lady the least Encouragement to come again I hope the disappointment will be sanctified to me, and that the Lord will by his Providence order it so that this shall be my companion for Life," he wrote in his diary.³ I tell this touching story—touching in part because of young Joseph's determination that his rejection should teach a religious lesson—to indicate how close, in one way, the New England transcendentalists of the nineteenth century were to the New England Puritans of the eighteenth. The Joseph of my story was Ralph Waldo Emerson's great uncle.

Seventy five or a hundred years, measured in generations, is not that long a time. Jonathan Edwards sold many of his books by subscription. Joseph Emerson of Pepperell was on board for the *Life of David Brainerd*, *Freedom of the Will*, and *Original Sin*, as was his father, Ralph Waldo's great grandfather, Joseph Emerson of Malden. In Edwards's day, the great leader of the Puritan churches in eastern Massachusetts, which were even then more liberal—in, for example, their view of the prerequisites for full church membership—than their sister congregations in the west, was Charles Chauncy, minister of the First Church in Boston. Chauncy's great work was a defense of universal salvation.⁴ William Emerson, Ralph Waldo's grandfather, was minister in that same church, and Ralph Waldo's younger brother, Charles Chauncy Emerson, who died of tuberculosis in his twenties, was named after him.⁵ (Charles is memorialized in chapter five of *Nature*, the work by Emerson that I will mainly be discussing in this lecture.)

More important than these external marks of closeness, of course, were the internal ones, inhabiting the consciousness of later generations. Colm Tóibín, in his novel of the life of Henry James, explains what these inward marks were like for some. Henry's Aunt Kate is describing the struggles of Henry's father.⁶ Henry Sr. was the Swedenborgian author of *Substance and Shadow* and a member, with his friend Emerson, of Boston's Saturday Club. When Emerson visited Henry Sr.'s home, he stayed in what the James brothers and their sister called "Mr. Emerson's room."

There was a battle going on, Aunt Kate used the same words each time, between his own sweetness and the heavy Puritan hand which his father, old William James of Albany, had placed on his shoulder. Everywhere he went, she said, Henry James Senior saw love and the beauty of God's plan, but the old Puritan teaching would not let him believe his eyes. Daily, within him, the battle went on. He was restless and impossible, but he was also, in his searching, innocent and easily enraptured.

Jonathan Edwards was one of the few religious writers of whom Henry Sr. approved.⁷

Looking over Ralph Waldo Emerson's own shoulder was his aunt Mary Moody Emerson.⁸ This is from an entry, composed three years after her death, in Emerson's journal for 1866:⁹

Read M.M.E.'s mss yesterday—many pages. They keep for me the old attraction They make the best example I have known of the power of the religion of the Puritans in full energy, until fifty years ago in New England. The central theme of these endless diaries, is, her relation to the Divine Being; the absolute submission of her will, with the sole proviso, that she may know it is the direct agency of God, (& not of cold laws of contingency &c) which bereaves and humiliates her. But the religion of the diary, as of the class it represented, is biographical: it is the culture, the poetry, the mythology, in which they personally believed themselves dignified, inspired, judged, & dealt with, in the present & in the future. And certainly gives to life an earnestness, & to nature a sentiment, which lacking, our later generation appears frivolous.

In the long list of resolutions made by the young Jonathan Edwards, the following still stirs me—and would have stirred Emerson: "Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live."¹⁰ Emerson's great uncle Joseph also lived by resolution, as we've seen, and though he may never have stated it, he lived by this resolution in particular. Here is the conclusion of his diary for 1748:¹¹

read some & studied some. the year is now concluded and I may well finish my Journal as *Ames* does his Almanack Another year now is gone, but ah! how little have we done. alas! how little have I done for God, for my own soul, for the souls of my people committed I find a great deal Amiss, I would fly to the grace of Christ to pardon my defects and to his strength to enable me to do more for him this year if he should please to spare my Life.

In lectures he gave in Boston in 1839-40, Emerson asked his audience a broad question that he could have been asking about the diaries of his own Puritan ancestors: "Who can read the pious diaries of the Englishmen in the time of the Commonwealth and later without a sigh that we write no diaries today?"¹² (Emerson actually kept a diary, from 1820 until 1877, though it is usually called a "journal," and it is, by present-day standards, more journal-like than diary-like. On first meeting Thoreau, Emerson asked him, do you keep a journal? Thoreau answered no, and started his journal that evening.)¹³ "How richly this old stream of antique faith descended into New England," Emerson says later in the lecture, "the remembrance of the elder portion of my audience I am sure will bear witness" (p. 194). He continued:

The depth of the religious sentiment as it may still be remembered in individuals imbuing all their genius and derived to them from hoarded family traditions, from so many godly lives and godly death of sainted kindred was itself an Education. It raised every trivial incident to a celestial and religious dignity. (p. 194)

Reading the diary of his great-grandfather inspired similar reflections:

In reading last night this old diary of Joseph Emerson of Malden ending in the year 1726, one easily sees the useful egotism of our old puritan clergy. The minister *experienced* life for his flock. He gave prominence to all his economy & history for the benefit of the parish. All his haps [his son's later romantic disappointment, for example] are providences. If he keeps school, marries, begets children, if his house burns, if he buys a negro, & Dinah misbehaves, if he buys or sells his chaise, all his adventures are fumigated with prayer & praise, he preaches next Sunday on the new circumstances and the willing flock are contented with his consecration of one man's adventures for the benefit of them all, inasmuch as that one is on the right level & therefore a fair representative.

Emerson concludes the recollection with the kind of down-to-earth turn of speech—"piquant," he would have called it—that is one of his greatest charms as a writer:

His cow & horse & pig did duty next Sunday (*Selected Journals 1841-1877*, p. 384)

"If his house burns" is an allusion to the following story about his great-grandfather told to Emerson by his aunt and shared with the audience I mentioned earlier: "One of this venerable line, the minister of Malden, Massachusetts, whilst his house was burning, stood apart with some of his church and sang, 'There is a house not made with hands'" ("The Present Age," p. 193).

So much for signs of closeness.¹⁴ The signs of distance are more obvious and more dramatic; to turn one's gaze from western Massachusetts in the middle of the eighteenth century to eastern Massachusetts in the first quarter of the nineteenth century is to whip through one of the greatest transformations in American history. The biographer Megan Marshall calls it a "revolution [that] would transform the nation from a parochial theocracy, in which governors still declared statewide 'Fast Days' for religious observance and towns taxed their citizens to support a parish minister, to a modern, secular democracy, in which the lecture platform replaced the pulpit as the source of wisdom and revelation."¹⁵ Emerson did more than anyone else to give the lecture platform its prestige. He became the junior pastor in Boston's Second Church in 1829, but he resigned in 1832. He began lecturing the next year, giving his final sermon in 1839. It isn't surprising that when he addressed the graduates of Harvard Divinity School in 1838, the faculty was shocked by his serene repudiation of historical Christianity. What is surprising is that most of the dismayed faculty, its dean included, though they were only two generations removed from the young Joseph Emerson, were Unitarians. (When Emerson met him in 1833, Coleridge declaimed, pausing only to take breath, on "the folly and ignorance of Unitarianism." Emerson "interposed that, 'whilst I highly valued all his explanations, I was bound to tell him that I was born and bred a Unitarian' [*English Traits*, p. 771 in *Essays*].) In Lecture I we encountered Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.'s condescending assessment of Edwards. Elsewhere in the same essay, Holmes states that Edwards, for any ordinary person, would now—in the nineteenth century—be impossible to listen to, much less to follow: "It is impossible that people of ordinary sensibilities," he writes, "should have listened to his torturing discourses without becoming at last sick of hearing of infinite horrors and endless agonies." Emerson himself, after telling the stories of his great-grandfather and others like him, testifies that divines such as Edwards could no longer be read by most of his contemporaries. "In the departure of this faith a vast body of religious writing which came down to this generation as an inestimable treasure—the whole body I mean of English and early American sermons and practical divinity," he laments, "have been suddenly found to be unreadable" ("The Present Age," p. 194). There is a story about young Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, testifying to that unreadability. Harriet's father was Lyman Beecher, an "Old Calvinist" who had studied at Yale with Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards. One evening, Lyman was reading to his children from Edwards's terrifying sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Harriet turned redder and redder as the reading went on. She finally rushed from the room, saying that she could not bear staying to hear her God slandered. In the end, all of Lyman's children left his Calvinism behind. They became liberal reformers. Harriet's sister Catherine became not only a prominent writer on household management but a philosopher, author of a respected refutation of Edwards on freedom of the will.

Was is the American Revolution that accounted for this dramatic change in attitude, as Holmes surmised? Perhaps so, but if we consider what nineteenth-century reformers actually said about Edwards, we'll see that the freedom they were saving from Calvinism was, in the first place, not political but metaphysical. (This was true not only of Catherine Beecher, but of another

prominent reforming critic of Edwards, Rowland G. Hazard.)¹⁶ I can't say that anyone in the nineteenth century cast Edwards aside because they discerned all of the consequences I tried to draw in my last lecture. But their impression of Edwards, allowing for its lower degree of resolution, was very much the same as mine. In Edwards they saw someone who, in exalting God, had too much diminished man.

William Ellery Channing, probably the most influential Unitarian minister of the first quarter of the nineteenth century (and one of the founders, in 1816, of Harvard Divinity School), provides an instructive example. Channing was an idealist. He acknowledged the Diminished Reality of Body, the Subordination of Time to Eternity, and the Displacement of the Senses. It was, he told Elizabeth Peabody, Richard Price's *Dissertations on Matter and Spirit* that had "saved [him] from Locke's philosophy."¹⁷

He gave me the Platonic doctrine of ideas, and like him I always write the words Right, Love, Idea, etc. with a capital letter. His book, probably, moulded my philosophy into the form it has always retained, and opened my mind into the *transcendental depth*. And I have always found in the accounts I have read of the German philosophy in Madame de Stael, and in these later times, that it was cognate to my own.

Channing was repelled not by Edwards's idealism but by his diminishment of man—more particularly, by his occasionalist denial that we share in causal power.¹⁸ Occasionalism, Channing argued, carries one inevitably to pantheism:¹⁹

Calvinism will complain of being spoken of as an approach to Pantheism. It will say that it recognizes distinct minds from the Divine. But what avails this, if it robs these minds of self-determining force, of original activity; if it makes them passive recipients of the Universal Force; if it sees in human action only the necessary issues of a foreign impulse. The doctrine that God is the only Substance, which is Pantheism, differs little from the doctrine that God is the only active power of the universe. For what is substance without power? It is a striking fact that the philosophy which teaches that matter is an inert substance, and that God is the force which pervades it, has led me to question whether any such thing as matter exists: whether the powers of attraction and repulsion which are regarded as the indwelling Deity, be not its whole essence. Take away force, and substance is a shadow, and might as well vanish from the universe. Without a free power in man, he is nothing. The divine agent within him is every thing. Man acts only in show. He is a phenomenal existence, under which the One Infinite Power is manifested: and is this much better than Pantheism?

One of the greatest of all errors is the attempt to exalt God, by making him the sole cause, the sole agent in the universe, by denying to the creature freedom of the will and moral power, by making man a mere recipient and transmitter of foreign impulse.

This is, in essentials, the verdict on Edwards that I urged you to accept in Lecture II. It is, I think, a verdict that Emerson seems to share—a verdict, you may suppose, that *must* be shared by America's great promoter of self-trust, self-dependence, and self-reliance. But whether Emerson has a *right* to share it is actually a delicate question, to which I hope to return as this lecture concludes.

1. Nature: *introduction and chapter one*

This afternoon I will be giving you a reading of Emerson's first book, *Nature*, published in 1836. It is, by far, the most overtly idealist of his works. In later writings, his idealism is by many accounts chastened or transformed. As I conclude, I hope I can consider how significant that transformation was.

You should by now have in your hands a detailed floorplan of *Nature*. Emerson said of one of his essays that after completing the house, he realized too late that he had omitted the stairs. In *Nature* a stairway is included, in the form of a four-paragraph introduction. It is followed by eight "chapters," all of them quite brief. (*Nature* is always called a book, because it was originally published in a single volume. The first edition came to 95 uncrowded pages. Thrown onto the densely packed sheets of the Library of America edition of Emerson's *Essays and Lectures*, it comes down to a forty-two page essays: Emerson's longest by a fair measure, but still an essay.) Chapter one, which is entitled "Nature," is a second stairway—one that belongs, in the opinion of some, to a different house—and I will discuss it in some detail. The most prolonged argument of the book (David Van Leer calls it "the lower argument") begins in chapter two and runs through chapter five.²⁰ "Commodity," the subject of chapter 2, is the first of four "ends" or human "uses" of nature that Emerson identifies. The others are "Beauty" (the subject of chapter three), "Language" (the subject of chapter four), and "Discipline" (the subject of chapter five). Chapter six, "Idealism," will be, for us, the first floor's focal room. We'll linger there for some time. We'll then be climbing upstairs to the second story, and if the essay has its intended effect, we'll soon be climbing even higher than that, with the help of chapters entitled "Spirit" (chapter seven) and "Prospects" (chapter eight).

On the handout, I've given you generous excerpts from the introduction and each of the eight chapters. My expectation is that most of you won't be familiar with Emerson. One of my aims in today's lecture is to communicate my love for his writing, and the best way of arranging for that is to let you hear him speak. Emerson was greatest as a writer of essays, and my love for his writing has something to do with the freedom or unconfinement of the essay form. We philosophers are, of course, very familiar with the essay. It's been our standby genre for a long time, and some of us—Locke comes to mind—have made good use of the freedom of permits. But even in Locke, and even more so in the professional essays or "articles" of today, there is always an external purpose, definable independently of the performance. In Emerson's case that isn't true. An Emerson essay is a materialization of "man thinking," and what the man thinks can't be defined in independence of it. Within this spacious form—unconfined by plot or character, or by the narrow rules of verse he (who looked forward to a freer kind of poet) had internalized—Emerson creates, out of raw material that any one of us could quarry from a dictionary, something altogether unexpected. There are unfamiliar words, familiar words used in unfamiliar ways, prepositions that seem to lie between their usual use and the usual use of some other one (producing in me, at least, something like the effect, simultaneously grating and pleasant, of a double-bowing fiddle), startling metaphors, rangings from high to low, and abrupt, even wrenching, transitions. (We suffer the kind of "perpetual suggestions and provocations" that come to us when we read a foreign language that we imperfectly understand.²¹ But we are reading English.) The essays thereby become *enactments* of idealism; their material (which is, I admit, only words) is worked up by a sovereign mind into something greater than its parts and wholly new. Yet despite this strangeness and novelty, and despite the fact that the reader's mind is often made to oscillate between interpretations whose differences are strongly felt, even though their competing contents can't easily be verbally articulated (not, at least, without repeating Emerson's very words, in which case a single yet shifting embodiment ends up serving for them all), *everything seems to be as it should be*. Emerson says somewhere that a genius is someone able to discern, within his private self, a public or universal truth. His essays are works of genius in exactly this sense. Despite their "character of illimitable freedom" (*Journals*, 1: 590 in the

Rosenwald edition)—their strangeness and idiosyncrasy—they strike me (often enough) as universally just or true. William James was responding to much the same thing when he told his brother Henry that reading "the divine Emerson[,] volume after volume"—he was preparing lecture to celebrate Emerson's centenary—"has done me a lot of good, and, strange to say, has thrown a strong practical light on my own path. The incorruptible way in which he followed his own vocation, of seeing such truths as the Universal Soul vouchsafed to him from day to day and month to month, and reporting them in the right literary form, and thereafter kept his limits absolutely, refusing to be entangled with irrelevancies however urging and tempting, knowing both his strength and its limits[,] . . . seems to me a moral lesson to all men who have any genius, however small, to foster" (letter of May 3, 1903). That means it is a moral lesson to all of us, because Emersonian genius, as Stanley Cavell says, isn't "something certain people are" (not usually, anyway), but "something each person has."²²

I'll be giving Emerson's *Nature* the kind of meticulous attention we usually reserve for poetry. I'll be assigning numbers to chapters and paragraphs as if they were stanzas and lines. Throughout, I'll be trusting that what Emerson said of your forbears a century and a half ago—that "a stanza in the song of nature the Oxonian has no ear for, and . . . does not value the salient and curative influence of intellectual action, studious of truth, without a by-end"—is no longer true, if it ever was.²³

I'd like to make two preliminary comments. The first is that Emerson's idealism was not an innovation of his post-pastoral—and, at least in my view, emphatically post-Christian and "unChurched"—transcendentalism.²⁴ It was, at first, part and parcel of his Christianity. It is present, for example, in Emerson's very first sermon, where he says that

it has been one of the best uses of the Christian religion to teach, that the world of spirits is more certain and stable than the material universe. Every thoughtful man has felt, that there was a more awful reality to thought and feeling, than to the infinite panorama of nature around him.²⁵

To suppose otherwise, he warns—to assign "greater fixture and certainty to the material world"—is "a great practical error." Here you may be reminded of Hylas's surprise at Philonous's declaration of idealism—"What! this is no more than I and all Christians hold" (Second Dialogue, *Works* 2: 212)—but even if Hylas is right so to generalize, we have no reason to trivialize what Emerson is saying here. He accepted the Diminished Reality of Body and the Displacement of the Senses before he became a transcendentalist.

My second preliminary comment is a warning: do not expect, even in Emerson's most overtly idealist work, the kind of patient analysis and rigorously linear argument presented to us by Edwards. Very early on, Emerson recognized that his talents did not lie in this direction. "A logical mode of thinking & speaking," he confessed to his journal in 1824—he was not yet twenty-one—"I do not possess, & may not reasonably hope to attain" (*Journals* [Library of America], volume 1, p. 110). "My reasoning faculty is proportionately weak, nor can I ever hope to write a Butler's Analogy or an Essay of Hume" (1: 110). Nine years later there had been no change (or, if you prefer, no improvement): "my comprehension of a question in technical metaphysics [is] very slow" (1: 223). It is the judgment of many of his readers that Emerson excelled most as a writer of sentences, and that he was less successful at putting them in order—this despite the fact that putting them in order, after culling them from his journals, may have been his most arduous labor as a writer for publication.²⁶ His friend Bronson Alcott said of his essays, "you may begin at the last paragraph and read backwards."²⁷ Of *Nature* in particular, Elizabeth Peabody, who admired it, observed that "it wants connection," to which Emerson replied, "I thought it resembled the

multiplication table"—a remark that has always left me wondering whether he was confirming Peabody's verdict or repudiating it.²⁸ His last book of essays (published in 1876) was really put together not by him (his capacities as a lecturer and writer had been declining for at least six years), but by his daughter Ellen and his amanuensis (and literary executor) James Eliot Cabot. One reviewer noticed that the essays had more of a plan than usual, and wondered whether someone else—"a daughter, perhaps?"—had a hand in them.²⁹ "Expect nothing more of my powers of construction," Emerson wrote to Thomas Carlyle: "no shipbuilding, no clipper, smack, nor skiff even, only boards and logs tied together" (from the correspondence with Carlyle, quoted in Rosenwald, p. 72). Worse, Emerson seems to doubt the imperative value of consistency. He advised Charles Woodbury not to "concern yourself about consistency. The moment you putty and plaster your expressions to make them hang together, you have begun a weakening process. Take it for granted that the truths will harmonize; and as for the falsities and mistakes, they will speedily die of themselves. If you must be contradictory, let it be clean and sharp, as the two blades of scissors meet."³⁰ He cherished ellipticality. "The most interesting writing is that which does not quite satisfy the reader. Try and leave a little thinking for him A little guessing does him no harm, so I would assist him with no connections" (quoted in Richardson, p. 36). An author's proper aim is not to tell the truth but to suggest it (*Journals* 1: 415). "The unsaid part is the best of every discourse" (1: 416).

All this makes it natural to wonder whether Emerson can fairly be called a philosopher. (At least at times, Emerson himself had no doubts: "I was," he writes, comparing himself to several contemporaries, all of them Harvard professors, "the true philosopher" [*Journals* 1: 321]). Wilfrid Sellars defined philosophy as the attempt "to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term." Emerson's own definition of philosophy is remarkably similar. It is, he writes in his character study of "Plato, or, the Philosopher," "the account which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world" (*Essays* [Library of America], p. 637). Many of us would be inclined to stipulate, though, that to qualify as philosophical, any understanding of how things hang together—any synoptic vision of the world's constitution—must be achieved by argument, and therefore by cultivating allegiance to the *virtues* of argument (coherence, consistency, a readiness to distinguish and to render explicit) of which Emerson seems to be so careless.³¹ "Plato is philosophy," he says, "and philosophy, Plato" (*Essays*, p. 633), but Plato makes Socrates identify argument as the "philosopher's instrument most of all" (*Republic* 582d). Stanley Cavell is the greatest present-day advocate of Emerson-as-philosopher, and even he admits that "no one should rest easy at the idea of philosophy abandoning the business of argument."³²

Emerson's standing as a philosopher was not, in mid-nineteenth-century America, the debatable matter that it is (for some at least) today.³³ For many educated people in those times, Emerson was the very model of a philosopher.³⁴ It was the professionalization of philosophy, which began in the late nineteenth-century and came to perfection in the twentieth, that made Emerson's standing a concern; in 1903, when the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth led some of the recently-founded journals to meditate on his importance, the question became a natural one for perhaps the first time.³⁵ Emerson was not, to be sure, a "technical scholar," Hugo Munsterberg admitted, but in lending his name to what he described as Harvard's "noble" and "monumental . . . home for philosophy" (p. 3), its "house of wisdom" (p. 5), Harvard had, in his view, done just the right thing.³⁶ By "choosing the name of Ralph Waldo Emerson," Munsterberg suggested, Harvard was indicating that "the philosophy of our time ought to be guided by the spirit of idealism." "No one," he continued, "stood more warmly, more luminously, more whole-heartedly for the deepest convictions of idealistic philosophy: he believed in the freedom of man and in the absolute value of man's ideals" (pp. 5-6).

Present-day philosophers aren't the only ones who hesitate to classify Emerson as a philosopher. Harold Bloom writes that Emerson "is not a transcendental philosopher. This obvious truth always needs restating."³⁷ But if he is not a transcendental philosopher, it's hard to see him as a philosopher of any other kind.³⁸ I myself want to count Emerson as a philosopher, simply because he satisfies Sellars's (and his own) definition, but it must be acknowledged that what Plato regarded as philosophy's foremost instrument is one that Emerson leaves unused, unhandled, and very nearly untouched.³⁹ I think nonetheless that we can find things of philosophical interest in Emerson, and that is my reason for taking him—and *Nature* in particular—up in these lectures. In *Nature*, as Charles Eliot Norton (Harvard's first professor of the history of art and the son of Divinity School professor Andrews Norton, Emerson's fiercest early critic) informed an audience in Concord in 1903, there is "no systematic philosophy," yet we find there "an . . . interpretation of the universe, and of the life of man as a part of that universe."⁴⁰ Although it skims too easily over the surface, ignoring the sometimes turbulent currents beneath, Norton's rendering of that interpretation is not a bad place to begin:

The essence of his spiritual teaching seems to me to be comprised in three fundamental articles,—first, that of the Unity of Being in God and Man; second, that of the creation of the visible, material world by Mind, and of its being the symbol of the spiritual world; and third, that of the identity and universality of moral law in the spiritual and the material universe.

Nature appeared in two editions, the first in 1836 and the second in 1849, some years after both *Essays: First Series* (published in 1841) and *Essays: Second Series* (published in 1844). Although Joel Porte describes the second edition as "heavily revised," the changes strike me as rather slight.⁴¹ The most obvious is the substitution of a new motto. The original, displayed on the title page (which did not include the author's name), ran as follows:⁴²

"Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know."

PLOTINUS

One of Emerson's customs was to put quotation marks around words that don't actually appear in the writings of the author (or any respectable translation of the author) he names. We may see other examples later on. In this case, the quoted words aren't taken directly from Plotinus, but from his seventeenth-century inheritor, Ralph Cudworth:⁴³

How doth wisdom differ from that which is called nature? Verily in this manner, that wisdom is the first thing, but nature the last and lowest; for nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul, which hath the lowest impress of reason shining upon it; as when a thick piece of wax is thoroughly impressed upon by a seal, that impress, which is clean and distinct in the superior superficies of it, will in the lower side by weak and obscure; and such is the stamp and signature of nature, compared with that of wisdom and understanding, nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know.

That nature acts without knowledge was a prominent theme in Cudworth's *System*. He saw matter as altogether passive.⁴⁴ The active principle in nature wasn't matter itself, but a "plastic" power or form (or set of such forms), a sort of go-between that brought God's will to bear on the material creation. "The plastic reason or form acts or works in matter," Cudworth wrote, "and that which acts naturally is not intellection nor vision, but a certain power of moving matter, which doth not know, but only do."⁴⁵ We tend to suppose that nature (or its animating power) acts from intellection or vision, but this is, Cudworth warns, a projective error:

That in the works of nature there is neither prudence nor understanding, but only it seems so to our apprehensions, who judge of these Divine things of nature according to our own arts and faculties; and patterns borrowed from ourselves; as if the active principles of nature did produce their effects in the same manner as we do our artificial works.— Wherefor we conclude, agreeably to the sense of the best philosophers, both ancient and modern, that nature is such a thing, as, though it act artificially, and for the sake of ends, yet it doth but ape and mimic the Divine art and wisdom, itself not understanding those ends which it acts for, nor the reason of what it doth in order to them; for which cause also it is not capable of consultation or deliberation, nor can it act electively, or with discretion. (p. 224 in the Birch edition)

Although it's a mistake to suppose that nature is an understanding or reasoning agent, in which case it would be capable of free choice or "election," it's not a mistake—it is, in fact, necessary—to interpret it teleologically. Nature acts for the sake of ends, even if it doesn't—and can't—have those ends in view. This teleological conception, which pervades Cudworth's *System*, also pervades the opening chapters of Emerson's *Nature*. It gives Emerson's work a starting point that can might be described as idealistic. The ultimate reason why things in nature proceed as they do, according to the opening chapters, is that a guiding spirit of unfailing efficacy intended that they go that way. Efficient causation rests on final causation, and there would (in the view of the opening chapters) be no final causation if some spirit did not conceive of the ends towards which natural agents blindly fly.⁴⁶

Emerson's teleological conception rises to the surface in the second paragraph of *Nature*, but let me begin with the first. Here Emerson is doing what he does so often: joyfully anticipating new worlds, and the new men and women who will occupy them. (I do not agree with Barbara L. Packer, for whom the paragraph brims with "satire and scorn."⁴⁷)

Our age is restrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to actions proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship. (*Essays and Lectures* [Library of America], p. 7)

This passage has a broad philosophical background, in the doctrine of continuous creation of which Edwards made so much. According to the doctrine, our relation to the universe is no less original than Adam's, because our world is as much a new creation as his was. As Emerson wrote to his aunt, ten years before he published *Nature*:

It is one of the *feelings* of modern philosophy, that it is wrong to regard ourselves so much in a *historical* light as we do, putting Time between God & us; and that it were fitter to account every moment of the existence of the Universe as a new Creation, and *all* as a revelation proceeding each moment from the Divinity to the mind of the observer.⁴⁸

I will pursue this doctrine and its consequences—which caused trouble for Emerson, as they did for Edwards—later. For now I want to remain with Emerson's teleology, which, as I've said, reveals itself in paragraph two:

Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature? (p. 7)

We are asked here to trust in the perfection of creation, and to conceive of its perfection as a perfection of *design*. Its design, moreover, is centered upon us. The parts of any good design must be mutually adjusted; in this case, the whole of nature must be arranged to satisfy our curiosity. This is a version of Correspondence, as I called it in Lecture I. And when our curiosity moves us to ask the grandest question we can, a question so grand that Emerson can introduce it without, at first, specifying its content—the first question that would occur to anyone who is blankly "interrogating" nature, and a question whose answer would give us the kind of satisfaction that no other answer could—Emerson frames the question teleologically. If we know the end of nature, he suggests, we'll know by far the most important thing about it.

In the fourth paragraph of *Nature*, the concluding paragraph of its brief introduction, nature is defined:

Philosophically considered, the universe ["universe" being Emerson's most general word for all of being] is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguished as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. (p. 8)

When nature is opposed to art, it is being used in what Emerson goes on to call "the common [as opposed to the "philosophical"] sense" of the word, in which it "refers to essences unchanged by man." Art, by contrast, is "the mixture of his will with the same things." "His operations taken together are so insignificant," Emerson explains, "a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result."

So the introduction concludes. It's been declared beyond our power to disturb nature in the philosophical sense, but even if our operations are in that way insignificant, *we* are not. Emerson is seeking the end or purpose of nature, and that end or purpose is its end or purpose *for us*, as chapters two, three, four, and five, to which I'll soon turn, make clear.⁴⁹ Chapter two, which begins the lower argument, opens as follows:

Whoever considers the final cause of the world, will discern a multitude of uses that enter as parts into that result. They all admit of being thrown into one of the following classes; Commodity; Beauty; Language; and Discipline. (p. 12)

To consider the final cause of the world is to ask, with paragraph two of the introduction, "to what end is nature?" Against this background, chapter one, which is entitled "Nature," at first appears an interruption. David Van Leer goes farther. He thinks that the introduction and chapter one at "at odds." The introduction, he writes,⁵⁰

pretends to ask the purpose the nature but actually depicts a world so "grand" that it is largely intransigent, indifferent to the minor influences man might have upon it. A parallel tyranny is depicted in the experiential first chapter, "Nature," where man's feeling of relationship to the natural world collapses into a subjectivism so total that the world becomes wholly phenomenal.

I find myself disagreeing with pretty much everything Van Leer says here. Nature's intransigence is no direct objection to its servitude: it may serve us by being intransigent. And although the world of *Nature* eventually becomes "phenomenal" (it does so in chapter six, "Idealism"), it does not become phenomenal in chapter one, whose theme, as the introduction anticipates, is the *adjustment* between human beings and the nature they are powerless to change.

Chapter one begins by explaining, in paragraph one, how nature serves us in our solitude.

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and what he touches. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. (p. 9)

We are told in paragraph two that "the stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible." Yet "all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance" (p. 9). "When we speak of nature in this manner," Emerson explains in the third paragraph of the chapter, "we have a distinct but most poetical sense in the mind"—a sense Emerson had passed over when, in the introduction, he distinguished (exhaustively, it had seemed) between the common and philosophical senses of "nature." In the third, poetical sense, "we mean the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects" (p. 9).⁵¹ Here, the manifold natural objects are "natural" in the philosophical sense, as the rest of paragraph three, which counts farms as natural objects, indicates:

It is this [the integrity of impression] which distinguishes the stick of timber of the wood-cutter, from the tree of the poet. The charming landscape which I saw this morning, is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title. (p. 9)

The man whose eye can integrate the landscape is the poet. But does that make everyone a poet, since each of us has an integrating eye? The eye, for Emerson, is indeed an integrating organ, and therefore a poetic one. Echoing Cudworth yet again, Emerson explains in chapter three that "such is the constitution of all things, or such the plastic power of the human eye, that the primary forms, as the sky, the mountain, the tree the animal, give us a delight *in and for themselves*, a pleasure arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping" (p. 14). Emerson's "or" isn't a sign of uncertainty, but of correction or clarification. The achievement of delight or pleasure, he concludes in the very next sentence, "seems partly owing to the eye itself. The eye is the best of artists. By the mutual actual of its structure and of the laws of light, perspective is produced, which integrates every mass of objects, of what character soever, into a well colored

and shaded globe, so that"—returning us now to the treatment of the landscape in chapter one—"where the particular objects are mean and unaffecting, the landscape which they compose, is round and symmetrical" (p. 14). The eye may be the best of artists (or, as he says a bit later, "the best composer"), but in integrating such elements as outline, color, motion, and grouping into what Emerson calls "primary forms"—forms that are, of course, secondary in the perceptual process, though they are primary *as forms*—the eye, like Cudworth's plastic power, acts without knowing.⁵² The eye, which as part of the body falls within the philosopher's NOT ME, acts mechanistically or automatically, without either freedom or discretion. Is it true, then, that each of us is a poet? Emerson, in the fourth paragraph of chapter one, answers no:

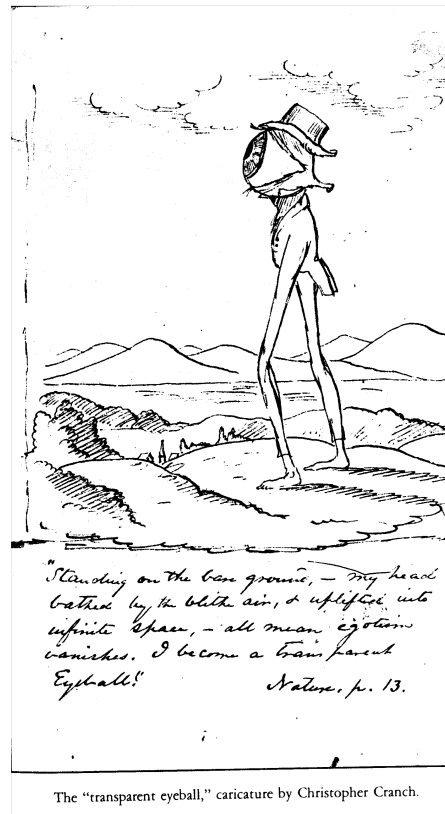
To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. (p. 10)

To my ear, Emerson's talk of "persons" has a stilted and awkward ring. I suspect that he speaks awkwardly because he is taking care not to confuse the organic eye (part of the NOT ME; in chapter six, Emerson calls it "the animal eye" [p. 33]) with the spiritual I (the ME or "person"). Joel Porte declares that "the 'eye' is the 'I,'" but this identity can only be figurative.⁵³ In the terms Emerson lays down in chapter four of *Nature*, the eye is a natural fact emblematic of a spiritual one (p. 20). Its seeing is therefore emblematic of our seeing, but its seeing is, ironically, bereft of what Cudworth called "intellection or vision." The eye no more *sees* than a camera sees. Its seeing is a superficial seeing, and it is not our own. The eye is indeed a poetic organ, but few of us become poets, because few of us see with what Emerson calls "the heart."

The poet achieves more integration than the bare eye, as Emerson affirms in what has become the most notorious passage in his book.

Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake its slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances,—master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

In a contemporary cartoon by fellow-transcendentalist Christopher Cranch, Emerson's eyeball is a long-legged, barefoot, top-hatted dandy in bespoke morning coat. I appreciate the



joke ("a perennial festival is dressed," and the well-turned-out eyeball is ready for it), but for me , Emerson's image hasn't lost its power.⁵⁴ The eye, as I proposed before, is a sign or symbol of the person—the I or ME. The organic eye lies, as always, outside the visual field, but by making it transparent, Emerson assures us that it was never the sort of thing that could be seen. The visual field is thereby rendered total—nothing visible escapes it—and so comes to signify the unlimited field of the poet's heartfelt vision, and the absolute integration of which the poet is, at least in theory, capable.⁵⁵

The following paragraph, number five in the first chapter, gives us what Lawrence Buell describes as an "equally freakish image"—that of a secret accord between man and plant:⁵⁶

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm, is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet it not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right. (p. 11)

The image may be freakish, but it is practically demanded by all we have been told so far. The tree and its boughs are "primary forms"; their "integrity of impression," which makes them

natural objects in the poetic sense, is at least to some extent our work. When (in chapter three) Emerson analyzes the integrating power of the eye, he is tentative in deeming it responsible for our delight, which "*seems*," he says, "partly owing to the eye itself" (p. 14, my emphasis). But in the sixth and final paragraph of chapter one, he is in no doubt about the personal I's centrality in generating the greatest delight that nature can occasion. He declares it "*certain* that the power to produce *this* delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both" (p. 11, my emphasis). There is no tyrannical subjectivism here; Emerson's preferred hypothesis is one of harmony between subject and object.⁵⁷ There is an occult relation—previously hidden and now exposed—between the personal I and the integrated objects in its purview. These objects exist at every level of organization (bough, tree, woodlot, landscape), up to that of nature itself. At every level, these objects, all of them inhabitants of nature in the poetic sense, depend on the integrating or unifying activity of the mind. There are no wholly natural individuals, and no wholly natural kinds. But these kinds and individuals also depend on what is given, on what Emerson calls, in chapter three, the "mass" or "constitution" of all things (p. 14). Nature in the poetic sense is poetized or *made*, but it is not made from nothing. It is worked up out of the NOT ME. We do not yet have idealism, because our making, though it penetrates far, does not reach "all the way down." It hasn't been shown that the reality of body depends on mind. Had Emerson argued that there are no pre-existing grounding elements—that even outline, color, motion, and grouping depend on us for their existence—a case for idealism would already have been made. But he makes no such argument.

It might reasonably be objected that when Emerson speaks of "the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects" (p. 9), he has in mind something mental, an integrity of *impression* rather than of an object natural or real. If so, nature in the third sense is not objective, but there is still an occult relation between objective nature and man, because objective nature complies with our impression-forming tendencies. When we form an impression of a tree, the NOT ME—the tree—nods in assent, or at any rate raises no objection. (The word "impression," in Emerson's writing, doesn't always convey passivity, as it does for example in Hume's.) In writing about both Thoreau and Emerson, Stanley Cavell calls attention to a pregnant sentence from *Walden*: "The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions."⁵⁸ What is true of Thoreau's universe is also true of Emerson's nature. In a moment, we'll see in more detail how nature cooperates with our attempts to unify or integrate it.

2. *Nature's uses (the "lower argument")*

There is a world of fascinating detail in chapters two through five of *Nature*, on the ends or human uses of nature, but I will have to pass most of them by, so that we can arrive before too long at "Idealism" (chapter six). "Commodity" (chapter two) is Emerson's first general heading; under it falls "all those advantages which our senses owe to nature" (p. 12), meaning everything in nature that meets our material needs, as well as our desires. Emerson devotes a scant few pages to it. Thoreau considers it at much greater length, with particular reference to the difference between needs and desires, in the longest chapter of *Walden*, under the telling heading of "Economy," and we'll hear more about it next week.

Nature's material benefits are "temporary and mediate," not "ultimate" (p. 12). The beauty of nature, the subject of chapter three, serves a "nobler want of man," performing a "service" not to the body but "to the soul" (p. 12). The rewards of beauty are "ultimate" in a psychological sense: there is nothing else for the sake of which we love what beauty gives us.

Emerson identifies three aspects of beauty: "natural forms," whose "simple perception" is "a delight" (p. 14); beautiful settings that enhance or heighten spiritual or moral beauty ("are not . . . heroes," he asks, "entitled to add the beauty of the scene to the beauty of the deed?" [p. 17]); and the beauty of nature's "absolute order," as it becomes an object of the intellect (p. 18). In our response to nature's beauty in each of these three aspects, it is "Taste" that is at work (p. 18). Some have this taste or "love of beauty" in abundance. "Not content with admiring, they seek to embody it in new forms." This creation, says Emerson, is "Art," in which "nature work[s] through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works" (p. 19).

The desire of beauty is an "ultimate end" in the psychological sense of which I've already spoken (p. 19). "No reason can be asked or given why the soul seek beauty." But beauty is not ultimate in the ethical sense. "It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good. It must stand as a part, and not as yet the last or highest expression of the final cause of Nature" (p. 19).

"Language," Emerson writes in chapter four, "is a third use which Nature subserves to Man" (p. 20). It is, he explains, "the vehicle of thought," and that in three ways: words are signs of material facts (indeed, "every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance" [p. 20]); "every natural [or material] fact is a symbol of some spiritual [or moral] fact" (p. 20) (for example, "the blue sky in which the private earth is buried, the sky with its eternal calm, and full of everlasting orbs, is the type of Reason" [p. 21]); and "the whole of nature,"—"the entire circuit of natural forms—the totality of nature" (p. 18)—is a metaphor—the aptest metaphor—"of the human mind" (p. 24).⁵⁹

"Through Nature," Emerson had written in a journal entry plotting the course of his book, "there is a striving upward," and there is an upward movement throughout all of these early chapters. "Commodity points toward a greater good," the entry continues. "Beauty is not until the spiritual element. Language refers to that which is to be said." "Finally, Nature is a discipline"—an education—"& points to the pupil & exists for the pupil. Her being is subordinate; his is superior. Man underlies Ideas. Nature receives him as her god."⁶⁰

In this journal entry, Emerson frankly announced his idealism. In the actual version of chapter five, entitled "Discipline," he is more cautious. "In view of the significance of nature," he begins, "we arrive at once at a new fact, that nature is a discipline" (p. 26). In the first edition he had said "this significance of nature," making it clear that the chapter's starting point isn't nature's importance in general, but its signifying power (or semiotic potential) in particular. This fourth "use of the world"—the kind of ameliorating use to which Joseph Emerson tried to turn his rejection by Esther Edwards—"includes the preceding uses, as parts of itself," because nature, as commodity, beauty, or language, imparts lessons.

It also educates or disciplines the faculties. At first, Emerson mentions only two such faculties: "the Understanding and the Reason" (p. 26). In distinguishing between understanding from reason, he follows Samuel Coleridge. Coleridge conceives of the understanding as a discursive faculty. It moves to conclusions from premisses, and its premisses are referred, as Coleridge explains, "to some other faculty as its ultimate authority." Characteristically, that authoritative faculty is sense. "The Judgments of the Understanding," he writes, "are binding only in relation to the objects of the Senses, which we *reflect*"—that is, recover or reproduce—"under the forms of the Understanding," those forms being nothing more than images of what the senses first deliver. Reason, by contrast, is a self-sufficient power of insight. Its forms or "ideas" are not derived from any other faculty—certainly not from sense. They are innate, and the truths they embody are not inferred, but immediately known. "In all its decisions [reason] appeals to itself as

the ground and *substance* of their truth," writes Coleridge. Reason is "a direct Aspect of Truth, an inward Beholding, having a similar relation to the Intelligible or Spiritual, as Sense has to the Material or Phenomenal."⁶¹ When Emerson writes that a true theory of nature "will be its own evidence," he's looking forward to the kind of self-dependent validation that only reason can provide. (Sense too can provide self-dependent validation, but only within a severely limited domain, as we will see.) Reason's recognition of truth is what Emerson calls *intuition*.

Chapter five is divided in two numbered parts, the first on the discipline of the understanding, the second on the discipline of reason. Nature, we're told in part one, is "a discipline of the understanding in intellectual truths." It is an opportunity for "constant exercise in the necessary lessons of difference, of likeness, of order, of being and seeing, of progressive arrangement; of ascent from particular to general; of combination to one end of manifold forces" (p. 26). Among its fruits are the sciences of "Light, Heat, Electricity, Magnetism, Physiology, [and] Geology" (p. 27). Nor is "the interest of natural science . . . likely to be soon exhausted" (p. 28).

With this promise of a continuing education of the understanding, we seem ready to move on to reason. But in the last two paragraphs of the first numbered part of chapter five, Emerson introduces a new and unexpected division. "Passing by many particular of the discipline of nature," he says, "we must not omit to specify two" (p. 28). The second is the discipline of reason, the topic of the second numbered part. Number one is the discipline of the will. "The excise of the Will or the lesson of power is taught in every event" (p. 28). "Nature," Emerson continues,

is thoroughly mediate. It I made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode. It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful. Many is never weary of working it up. He forges the subtle and delicate air into wise and melodious words, and gives them wing as angels of persuasion and command. One after another, his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes, at least, only a realized will—the double of the man. (p. 28)

This is a puzzling passage on several counts, and I'm doubtful I can unravel all its mysteries. If nature is as docile and compliant as the passage suggests, is it imposing much of a discipline at all? And why is the will being brought in here, under the heading of the understanding? I can do better with the second question than with the first. Emerson takes up the will here because he cannot fairly take it up in the section he's assigned to reason. Reason, as the early Emerson understands it, has no real commerce with the will. Intuitions, even moral intuitions, are, in Emerson's view, non-voluntary and impersonal.⁶² Descartes taught that every judgment is a collaboration between the understanding (construed broadly, so as to include what Emerson calls reason) and the will. The understanding, like a chief executive introducing a bill to a legislature, puts forward a proposition for the will's consideration. The will, like the legislature, votes up or down, yea or nay. In the case of what Descartes called clear and distinct perceptions, the will's assent is extorted. It *chooses* to say yes, but it cannot help but do so. In intuition, as it was understood by the early Emerson and many of his contemporaries, the will—the individual or personal will—is not involved at all. The perception of the truth *is* its affirmation. This is made especially clear by Emerson's cousin, George Ripley, in his *Discourses on the Philosophy of Religion*, published in the same year as *Nature* (and by the same Boston publisher):⁶³

Reason . . . gives us the immediate perception of Truth. It is the ultimate standard, in judging on all subjects of human inquiry. . . . There are certain points on which the judgment of all men is alike—certain propositions, which every one would pronounce true, certain others which all would declare false. We are compelled to this by the nature

of our Reason. It is not subject to the control of our will. We cannot say, that we choose to have two and two appear equal to five, and therefore they are so in the sight of Reason; but this faculty exercises its own judgment, announces its own decisions, enforces its own authority, from which there is no appeal.

Emerson places the will beneath the understanding because they are educated together. Space and time teach the understanding lessons in difference. They exist so that "man may know that things are not huddled and lumped, but sundered and individual" (p. 27). The understanding learns that "a bell and a plough have each their use, and neither can do the office of the other. Water is good to drink, coal to burn, wool to wear; but wool cannot be drunk, nor water spun, nor coal eaten." These lessons all make reference to action and the will. The sheer perception of difference may not call upon the will, but when the understanding advances farther—when it begins to order, arrange, ascend, and combine (p. 26)—the will is again implicated. Reason, by contrast, offers the will neither instruction (except insofar as it reminds the will of its limits) nor opportunity for exercise. In an outburst recorded by Emerson during his first trip to England, Coleridge proposed that "the *will* [is] that by which a person is a person"—that by which each of us differs from every other—because "if he should put me in the street & so I should force the man next me into the kennel I should at once exclaim to the sufferer 'I did not do it sir,' meaning it was not done with my will" (*Journals* 1: 390; later incorporated in *English Traits*, p. 771). When I affirm the laws of mathematics, the laws of nature, or the laws of right and wrong, I am the same with every other man or woman, because my individuating will has been suppressed. The lessons of reason are lessons in radical unity—lessons the will cannot easily apply.

These lessons are spelled out in the second numbered part of chapter five. The same laws run through all of nature. In this, nature's unity is "especially apprehended":

All the endless variety of things make an idential impression. Xenophanes complained in his old age, that look where he would, all things hastened back to Unity. He was weary of seeing the same entity in the tedious variety of forms. The fable of Proteus has a cordial truth. A leaf, a drop, a crystal, or moment of time is related to the whole, and partakes the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world. (pp. 29-30)

In this first passage, a report of fable and pre-Socratic science, it's not yet clear that nature's unity is nomological. That point is made plainer in the following passage, where the unity apprehended by reason is extended beyond nature to the "universe," which sometimes serves as Emerson's term for absolutely everything:⁶⁴

The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it; the air resembles the light which traverses it with more subtle currents; the light resembles the heat which rides with it through Space. Each creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than difference, and their radical law is one and the same. A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true throughout nature. So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit. For, it pervades Thought also. (p. 30)

Emerson's step from nature to spirit is of utmost importance. The contrast between nature and spirit is implicit in the motto of the first edition: blind nature acts, but only spirit thinks or knows. It is implicit also in Emerson's definition of nature in the philosophical sense ("[p]hilosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul" [p. 8]), but its official introduction is postponed until chapter four, and left to a passage I haven't yet quoted:

"That which, intellectually considered, we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator" (p. 21). "Spirit," Emerson adds, "hath life in itself," implying that whatever life we find in nature is secondary or derived. In a later essay entitled "Nature," published in 1844 in *Essays: Second Series*, Emerson marks the same distinction with scholastic vocabulary.⁶⁵ Spirit is *natura naturans*, "the quick cause" that "publishes itself in creatures" ("Nature," p. 546). Nature is *natura naturata*, or "nature passive" (p. 545). When reason recognizes that all of nature is united by a single set of laws, its vision achieves a high degree of integration. When it recognizes that spirit is united to nature by the same laws—when it "transfers all these lessons into its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind" (p. 26)—that integration radiates outward to everything there is. The laws binding the universe are simultaneously natural and moral ("every natural process," we are reminded in chapter five, "is a version of a moral sentence" [p. 29]), and the perception of unity is, in its impersonality, an instance of both mathematical insight and poetic inspiration.

We are now on the threshold of "Idealism." In truth, we're already there. Nature and spirit are officially united in the paragraphs just reviewed, but priority is given to spirit—the "quick" or genuinely active cause. As chapter six begins, though, Emerson at first turns away from spirit, and redirects our attention to nature.

3. "A noble doubt": Emerson's conception of idealism

The argument of chapter six begins by insinuating a "noble doubt" about the end of discipline, to which (it has been shown) "all parts of nature conspire" (p. 32):

A noble doubt perpetually suggests itself, whether this end be not the Final Cause of the Universe; and whether nature outwardly exists. It is a sufficient account of that Appearance we call the World, that God will teach a human mind, and so makes it the receiver of a certain number of congruent sensations, which we call sun and moon, man and woman, house and trade. In my utter impotence to test the authenticity of the report of my senses, to know whether the impressions they make on me correspond with outlying objects, what different does it make, whether Orion is up there in heaven, or some god paints the image in the firmanent of the soul? The relations of parts and the end of the whole remaining the same, whether land and sea interact, and worlds revolve and intermingle, without number or end,—deep yawning under deep, and galaxy balancing galaxy, throughout absolute space,—or, whether, without relations of time and space, the same appearances are inscribed in the constant faith of man? Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the apocalypse of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me. Be what it may, it is ideal to me, so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses. (p. 32)

"The frivolous," he immediately adds, "make themselves merry with the Ideal theory, as if its consequences were burlesque; as if it affected the stability of nature. It surely does not." And it does not, Emerson explains, because the permanence of nature's laws is, even on the ideal theory, "sacredly respected." "The wheels and springs of man," he continues,

are all set to the hypothesis of the permanence of nature. We are not built like a ship to be tossed, but like a house to stand. It is a natural consequence of this structure, that, so long as the active powers predominate over the reflective, we resist with indignation any hint that nature is more short-lived or mutable than spirit. (pp. 32-3)

But "whilst we acquiesce entirely in the permanence of natural laws, the question of the absolute existence of nature still remains open. It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena, . . . but to lead us to regard nature as a phenomenon, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect" (p. 33).

I've quoted these paragraphs at some length (though somewhat selectively) because I want to take issue with what seems to be a standard reading of them. David Van Leer contends that the arguments of chapter six are "clearly" Kantian (*Emerson's Epistemology*, p. 27), and that the "noble doubt" paragraph in particular ("a sophisticated Kantian formulation," he calls it [p. 46]) expresses Emerson's "essentially Kantian orientation" (p. 29). In this it seems he has been often followed.⁶⁶ My own feeling is that up to this point in chapter six, the terms of Emerson's discussion are not Kantian but Berkeleyan. Indeed, as I'll now try to show, they are *deliberately* Berkeleyan.⁶⁷ Emerson is responding not to Kant (which isn't to say that Emerson's reading in Kant—or, more likely, Kant's expositors—did *nothing* to shape the quoted paragraphs I've quoted; it may have led to a little chipping here and a little patching there), but to Berkeley and the Scottish philosophers who replied to him. (When he detects what might be Berkeleyan "overtones," Van Leer steers us away from them. See p. 35.)

My reasons are several.⁶⁸

(i) First, Emerson tells us that the frivolous make merry with the ideal theory. It was Berkeley who had, by then, become a figure of fun, not Kant. As Stephen Spender observes when he recalls, in *World within World*, his Oxford education in philosophy (an "Obstacle Race," he calls it, in which "the whole field of human thought is set out with logical obstructions and the students watch the philosophers race around it"), "Kant was wrong, but he was also so difficult that no one could be sure of catching him out."⁶⁹ For the same reason, no one could safely make him the butt of any jokes.

(ii) The topics of the paragraphs are thoroughly Berkeleyan.⁷⁰ That our discipline or education is the final cause of nature is one of Berkeley's greatest themes. It is Berkeley who insists that God's will to instruct us is a sufficient account of the appearance of the world. That God makes us receive congruent sensations we call sun and moon is Berkeley's theory of the physical world. It is Berkeley who argues, in sections 18-20 of the *Principles*, that we can't prove that sensations are caused by mind-independent objects. And it is Berkeley who, above all, insists that this makes no difference whatsoever. As he says, the books are in the study, the horse is in the stable as before. The noble doubt paragraph does mention absolute space, as Van Leer points out, but Berkeley discusses absolute space at great length. "Whether nature enjoy[s] a substantial existence without, or is only an apocalypse of the mind" is a florid way of stating Berkeley's central question. That the laws of nature are stable is another Berkeleyan theme. He does not say (and perhaps denies) that we have an instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature, but that we have such a belief was a point made against him (in different tones and for different purposes) by Hume, Thomas Reid, and Dugald Stewart.

(iii) Later in chapter six, Emerson *names* Berkeley (he never names Kant):

[Religion and ethics] both put nature under foot. The first and last lesson of religion is, "The things that are seen, are temporal; the things that are unseen, are eternal." It puts an affront upon nature. It does that for the unschooled, which philosophy does for Berkeley and Viasa. (p. 38)

And now does philosophy, for Berkeley, put nature under foot? By suggesting the noble doubt.

(iii) The paragraphs are not at all Kantian. (I admit that at this point, my quarrel with Van Leer becomes, as Emerson might say, lubricious, and I don't like lubricity any more than Emerson did [for his low opinion, to which I may return, see "Prudence," p. 357 in *Essays*]. We're asking about a Kant who's at work beneath Emerson's paragraphs. But is it the historical Kant, a Kant who has first passed through the hands of Coleridge, or an invention of Emerson's own mind?) Kant himself thought that the "noble doubt" was ignoble: a scandal to be done away with, rather than an attitude to be celebrated or an insight on which we might build. The paragraphs all lead to the conclusion that "the absolute existence of nature still remains open" (p. 33). Later, in chapter seven, Emerson repeats the point: "Idealism," he says there, "acquaints us with the total disparity between the evidence of our own being, and the evidence of the world's being. The one is perfect; the other, incapable of any assurance" (pp. 40-1). This was, for Emerson, a lasting lesson, to which he returns in a lecture on "Love" that he delivered in both 1839 and 1840, as well as in *English Traits*, where it is *explicitly* traced to Berkeley.⁷¹ "In strict philosophy," Emerson says in the lecture,

there is a quite infinite distance between our knowledge of our own existence and the evidence we have for the existence of nature including that of persons. In Logic the position of the Idealist is inexpugnable who persists in regarding men as appearances and phantoms merely which represent to him his own ideas in the masquerade of forms like his own.

Kant emphatically denies these claims of disparity, distance, and imperturbability. He does so in a stretch of his *Critique of Pure Reason* actually emphasized by Van Leer, the "Refutation of Idealism." There, as Van Leer explains, "Kant attacks the . . . argument that the existence of objects in space is indemonstrable," contending that "empirical self-consciousness requires the existence of objects in space" (p. 30). "[P]lace Descartes and Berkeley," Van Leer asserts on Kant's behalf, "the consciousness of self is necessarily bound up with the existence of things" (p. 30). If so, Emerson is either ignorant of Kant's argument or unimpressed with it. In deeming the mind better known than the body, Emerson sides not with Kant, but with Descartes and Berkeley.

There are many other anti-Kantian elements in the noble doubt paragraph and the rest of chapter six, but I'll quickly mention two. First, a Kantian physical object is not a "certain number of congruent sensations," passively received (*Emerson's Epistemology*, p. 32). Second, a Kantian appearance does not exist "without relations of time and space" (*Emerson's Epistemology*, p. 32). My worry in each of these cases isn't just that Kant fails to say these things, but that he labors long and hard to establish just the opposite. (Will it be said that Emerson is simply making use of Kant as he understood him? This takes us back to the kind of question I raised above. If Van Leer isn't saying something about the historical Kant, I don't know how to evaluate his contentions. He's given me no way of understanding them.)

(iv) There is no foundation in the text of chapter six for the distinction between transcendental idealism and empirical realism that Van Leer attributes to Emerson. Emerson can accept a "quite specific 'transcendental idealism'" (*Emerson's Epistemology*, p. 29) only if he accepts an equally specific empirical realism. For Van Leer, Emerson is an empirical realist simply because he affirms the stability of nature and loves it as a child (*Nature*, p. 38). But Berkeley or Hume can do the same.⁷² Later in chapter six, Emerson writes that

"The problem of philosophy," according to Plato, "is, for all that exists conditionally, to find a ground unconditioned and absolute." (p. 36)

This is actually a quotation from Coleridge, as Van Leer notes (pp. 3, 210; for further discussion see Wellek, "Emerson and German Philosophy," p. 42). According to Van Leer, in the quoted passage Emerson "attributes to Plato the explicitly Kantian definition of philosophy as the attempt to find a conditioned ground for the conditional" (p. 3). This is a Kantian definition, insofar as it makes use of Kantian vocabulary, but it is not Kant's. It's Kant's definition of *dogmatic* philosophy. But Emerson treats it as a definition of philosophy, and after attributing it to Plato, *he accepts it himself*. For the evidence see pp. 36-7 of *Nature*, where the Platonic aim of "the true philosopher" is made to coincide with that of "the true poet." Like Berkeley, and like Fichte as Van Leer portrays him (p. 29), Emerson is simply not a *Kantian* (that is, a critical) transcendental idealist. He is, throughout chapter six (and in chapter seven as well), an unapologetic dogmatist.

(v) Van Leer never explains why, in chapter seven, Emerson characterizes idealism as "a useful introductory hypothesis" (p. 41). I think he has no good way of doing so. My reading permits as very natural explanation, as I'll try to show later. As an illustration of nature's role in signifying spiritual facts, Emerson writes at one point that "broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams" (p. 15). I'll argue that there is, in chapter six, a subtle but crucial shift from noon to night. It is a shift from England to Germany, or from the introductory idealism of Berkeley to the deeper spiritualism of Fichte or Schelling.

(vi) I should consider two possible objections. The noble doubt paragraph and the two that follow it are succeeded by another, which does not seem particularly Berkeleian:

To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. In their view, man and nature are indissolubly joined. Things are ultimates, and they never look beyond their sphere. The presence of Reason mars this faith. The first effort of thought tends to relax this despotism of the senses, which binds us to nature as if we were a part of it, and shows us nature aloof, and, as it were, afloat. Until this higher agency intervened, the animal eye sees, with wonderful accuracy, sharp outlines and colored surfaces. When the eye of Reason opens, to outline and surface are at once added, grace and expression. Those proceed from imagination and affection, and abate somewhat of the angular distinctness of objects. If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. The best moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before God. (p. 33)

A good deal of this is, perhaps, unBerkeleian. But it is *far* more remote from Kant than it is from Berkeley, who had this to say in *Siris*:

The perceptions of sense are gross: but even in the senses there is a difference. Though harmony and proportion are not objects of sense, yet the eye and the ear are organs, by means whereof she may apprehend both the one and the other. By experiments of sense we become acquainted with the lower faculties of the soul; and from them, whether by a gradual evolution or ascent, we arrive at the highest. Sense supplies images to memory. These become subjects for fancy to work on. Reason considers and judges of the imaginations. And these acts of reason become new objects to the understanding. In this scale, each lower faculty is a step that leads to one above it. And the uppermost leads to the Deity, which is rather the object of intellectual knowledge than even of the discursive faculty, not to mention the sensitive. There runs a chain throughout the whole system of

beings. In this chain one link drags another. The meanest things are connected with the highest. The calamity therefore is neither strange nor much to be complained of, if a low sensual reader shall, from mere love of the animal life, find himself drawn on, surprised, and betray'd into some curiosity concerning the intellectual. (303)

There is according to Plato properly no knowledge, but only opinion concerning things sensible and perishing, . . . because they do not in strict truth exist at all, being always generating or *in fieri*, that is, in a perpetual flux, without any thing stable or permanent in them to constitute an object of real science. . . . And indeed nothing is more evident, than the apparent sizes and shapes, for instance, of things are in a constant flux, ever differing as they are view'd at different distances, or with glasses more or less accurate. As for those absolute magnitudes and figures, which certain Cartesians and other moderns suppose to be in things, that must seem a vain supposition, to whoever considers, it is supported by no argument of reason, and no experiment of sense. (304; see also articles 255 and 264)

I cannot say with certainty that Emerson read *Siris*.⁷³ But I do think that familiarity with *Siris* is the easiest way of accounting for Berkeley's appearance in this appreciative paragraph from *English Traits*:⁷⁴

The influence of Plato tinges the British genius. Their minds loved analogy; were cognisant of resemblances, and climbers on the staircase of unity. 'Tis a very old strife between those who elect to see identity, and those who elect to see discrepancies; and it renews itself in Britain. The poets, of course, are of one part; the men of the world, of the other. But Britain had many disciples of Plato;—More, Hooker, Bacon, Sidney, Lord Brooke, Herbert, Browne, Donne, Spenser, Chapman, Milton, Crashaw, Norris, Cudworth, Berkeley, Jeremy Taylor. (*English Traits*, p. 896 in *Essays*)

(vii) Emerson asks (p. 32) what difference it would make whether, "without relations of time and space, . . . appearances are inscribed in the constant faith of man?" Berkeley's appearances, it seems fair to say, exist without relations of space, but do they also exist without relations of *time*? Here I have several observations to offer. First, Emerson is setting the ideal theory off against a view in which worlds revolve and intermingle "throughout absolute space." When he says that the appearances of the idealist exist apart from time, he probably means that they exist apart from *absolute* time. Berkeley agrees: we have, he says, no idea of time, "abstracted from the succession of ideas in my mind, which flows uniformly, and is participated by all beings" (*A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, section 98).⁷⁵ Second, Dugald Stewart, one of Emerson's most trusted sources on the ideal theory, reports that Berkeley denied "the independent existence both of *space* and of *time*."⁷⁶ (Stewart points out that this would "put an end at once to [Samuel Clarke's] celebrated argument *a priori*, for the existence of God."⁷⁷) So Emerson's saying that the idealist's appearances exist "without relations of time and space" marks no departure from Berkeley, as Emerson is likely to have understood him.⁷⁸

4. *Motives of idealism*

"It is not metre, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem," Emerson says ("The Poet," p. 450 in *Essays*). "But where," asks John Jay Chapman of Emerson's poetry, acknowledging the reliable excellence of its prologues and overtures, "is the argument?" (*Emerson and Other Essays*, p. 91).⁷⁹ After the prologue of the noble doubt paragraph and the overture of the paragraphs on the earnest vision of the eye of Reason, the argument of chapter six commences.⁸⁰

But it doesn't provide us with the reasons—the evidence—you're like to be expecting. Instead, Emerson draws our attention to "the effects of culture" (p. 33). He's interested less in what we *should* believe, than in what culture *makes* us believe. His concerns (almost without exception) aren't normative but causal.⁸¹ As he's already informed us, "it is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena, as of heat, water, azote; but to lead us to regard nature as a phenomenon, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect" (p. 33). In the argument of "Idealism," this effect is documented and its motives identified.

Why does Emerson give us what is largely a study in causes? I think there is a clue in the sentence I've just quoted, where he acknowledges, as he does elsewhere, the dogmatic tendencies that instilled in us by nature. Nature's sway over our opinions is the core of the Scottish reply to Berkeley, as it appears not only in Reid and Stewart but in Hume, who concludes that Berkeley's arguments, though they admit of no answer, produce no conviction. "Their only effect," he states, "is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism" (*Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 12). Emerson disagrees. He thinks Berkeley's argument has a lasting result. The Scottish case against Berkeley has been made, and in chapter six of *Nature*, Emerson sets out to level the field. Somewhat as a skeptic might, he sets pro and con in opposition, but the forces going toe to toe are causal rather than evidential. Nature may take a stand against idealism, but culture stands united with it, and neither is content with second place. If nature is driving us in one direction and culture in another, what is the resultant? I hope eventually to answer this question, but let me first look at the five motives that Emerson uncovers. To each he devotes a numbered section.

The first he calls a "hint from nature herself" (p. 33), but it is actually imparted by nature and culture in collaboration:

Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us. Certain mechanical changes, a small alteration in our local position apprizes us of a dualism. We are strangely affected by seeing the shore from a moving ship, from a balloon, or through the tints of an unusual sky. The least change in our point of view, gives the whole world a pictorial air. A man who seldom rides, needs only to get into a coach and traverse his own town, to turn the street into a puppet-show. The men, the women . . . are unrealized at once, or, at least, wholly detached from all relation to the observer, and seen as apparent, not as substantial beings. . . .

In these cases, by mechanical means, is suggested the difference between the observer and the spectacle,—between man and nature. Hence arises a pleasure mixed with awe; I may say, a low degree of the sublime is felt from the fact, probably, that man is hereby apprized that, whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable. (p. 34)

The terms are reminiscent of arguments from perceptual relativity, but Emerson isn't arguing that we immediately perceive only our own ideas, or that surrounding objects—men and women included—are nothing but ideas. He is pointing to the *effect*, no less affective than intellectual, that objects have on us as we (for example) rush past or see them at a distance. (Why does this apparently "natural" effect fall under the heading of "culture"? I think it's because the coach, the ship, and the balloon—as well as the *camera obscura*, which he mentions in lines I've omitted—are artifacts. Nature and culture collaborate in bringing about the effect he mentions. But I don't know what to do with the tints of the sky. They are altogether natural.)

The second force belongs to the poet, who can "dwarf the great" and "magnify the small" (p. 35).⁸² Like movement or distance, but by imagination rather than by mechanism, poetry makes us aware "that magnitude of material things is relative, and all objects shrink and expand" to serve the poet's passion. The concluding paragraph of this second numbered section of chapter six indicates that idealism is not defended here but presupposed. Emerson has just quoted lines of Shakespeare in which the understanding of frenzied men begins to swell, filling "the reasonable shores / That now lie foul and muddy" (p. 36).

The perception of real affinities between events (that is to say, of *ideal* affinities, for those only are real), enables the poet thus to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world, and to assert the predominance of the soul.

In the third numbered section Emerson quotes Plato's statement of the problem of philosophy, as formulated by Coleridge. Philosophy proceeds, Emerson explains, "in the faith that a law determines all phenomena, which being known the phenomena can be predicted. That law, when in the mind, is an idea. Its beauty is infinite. The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both. A "spiritual life" is imparted to nature by both poetry and philosophy (which now includes science). "The solid seeming block of matter has been pervaded and dissolved by a thought." "This feeble human being has penetrated the vast masses of nature with an informing soul, and recognized itself in their harmony, that is, seized their law" (pp. 36-7). "Thus even in physics, the material is degraded before the spiritual. The astronomer, the geometer, rely on their irrefragable analysis, and disdain the results of observation. The sublime remark of Euler on his law of arches, 'This will be found contrary to all experience, yet is true;' had already transferred nature into the mind, and left matter like an outcast corpse." A similar view can be found in Schelling:⁸³

The highest consummation of natural science would be the complete spiritualizing of all natural laws into laws of intuition and thought. The phenomena (the matter) must wholly disappear, and only the laws (the form) remain. Hence it is, that the more lawfulness emerges in nature itself, the more the husk [like Emerson's corpse] disappears, the phenomena themselves become more mental, and at length vanish entirely. . . . Nature's highest goal, to become wholly an object to herself, is achieved only through the last and highest order of reflection, which is none other than man; or, more generally, it is what we call reason, whereby nature first completely returns into herself, and by which it becomes apparent that nature is identical from the first with what we recognize in ourselves as the intelligent and the conscious.

The considerations offered here do take us beyond Berkeley, for whom the laws of nature are empirical.⁸⁴ Emerson makes a series of points: that nature, considered in itself, is formless; that it is nonetheless lawful; that its lawfulness, generally considered, is satisfying to the mind; that its particular laws are not only satisfying, but beautiful and just; and their beauty and justice gives us an *a priori* reason to accept them. As Emerson writes much later in *English Traits*, the mind's sudden response to these laws is an evidence "superior . . . to empirical demonstrations" (*Essays*, p. 898). It is also *suggested*—though not said—that the best explanation of nature's compliance is to suppose, with Kant, that nature is formed after a plan laid down by the mind: that the mind lends form to nature, thereby asserting its ontological privilege over it. Cudworth's plastic powers were intended to mediate between matter and God, his thought being that brute and inactive matter could not heed God's laws. That matter is dead—a mere corpse or husk—is not, perhaps, reason to question its existence. But it can certainly cause us to doubt we have a need for it.

This doubt is pursued under Emerson's fourth heading. "Intellectual science," he writes, "has been observed to beget invariably a doubt of the existence of matter. Turgot said, 'He that has never doubted the existence of matter, may be assured he has no aptitude for metaphysical inquiries'" (p. 37). Intellectual science "fastens the attention upon immortal necessary uncreated natures, that is, upon Ideas; and in their presence, we feel that the outward circumstance is a dream and a shade. Whilst we wait in this Olympus of gods, we think of nature as an appendix to the soul. We ascend into their region, and know that these are the thoughts of the Supreme Being" (p. 37).

"Intellectual science" seems to be the science of morals. (Later, on p. 38, it is set off against "physical" science.)⁸⁵ As Emerson writes in the second and final paragraph of section 4,

Whilst we behold unveiled the nature of Justice and Truth, we learn the difference between the absolute and the conditional or relative. We apprehend the absolute. As it were, for the first time, *we exist*. We become immortal, for we learn that time and space are relations of matter, that, with a perception of truth, or a virtuous will, they have no affinity. (pp. 37-8)

Intellectual science seems to be a matter of vision or perception only. Under his fifth heading Emerson turns to religion and ethics, which he defines as "the practice of ideas" or their "introduction . . . into life." (Religion, he says, "includes the personality of God; Ethics does not.") These have "an analogous effect with all lower culture, in degrading nature and suggesting its dependence on spirit" (p. 38).

Emerson concludes that "motion [which is most compelling as a motive of idealism when technologically assisted; section 1], poetry [section 2], physical and intellectual science [sections 3 and 4], and religion [section 5], all tend to affect our convictions of the reality of the external world" (p. 38). The Scottish philosophers are perhaps right to say that nature instructs us to believe in matter, but a formidable array of cultural forces imparts a different lesson.

With his next breath, though, Emerson confesses that "there is something ungrateful in expanding too curiously the particulars of the general proposition, that all culture tends to imbue us with idealism." I have, he confesses,

no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother, nor soil my gentle nest. I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man, wherein to establish man, all right education tends; as the ground to which to attain is the object of human life, that is, of man's connection with nature. Culture inverts the vulgar views of nature, and brings the mind to call that apparent, which it uses to call real, and that real, which it uses to call visionary. (p. 38)

There is an apology of sorts in these sentences, but it is carefully qualified. The earlier sentences make persistent reference to childhood and untutored growth. (I have a child's love; I expand like a melon; I wish neither to insult my mother nor to soil the nest she has created for me.)⁸⁶ But when takes up nature's "true position," it is in regard to the man rather than the child. And so the paragraph concludes with the suggestion that childhood may have been left behind:

Children, it is true, believe in the external world. The belief that it appears only, is an afterthought, but with culture, this faith will as surely arise on the mind as did the first. (pp. 38-9)

In the final paragraph of chapter six, Emerson suggests that there are reasons for accepting idealism, though he does not present them. He also restates idealism so as to harmonize it with Berkeley, rather than with Kant:

The advantage of the ideal theory over the popular faith, is this, that it presents the world in precisely that view which is most desirable to the mind. It is, in fact, the view that Reason, both speculative and practical, that is, philosophy and virtue, take. For, seen in the light of thought, the world always is phenomenal; and virtue subordinates it to the mind. Idealism sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul. (p. 39)

5. *Idealism (introductory) and spiritualism (intermediate or advanced)*

Nature, says Emerson in chapter seven, puts three questions to the mind, and idealism answers only to the first:

Three problems are put by nature to the mind; What is matter? Whence is it? and Whereto? The first of these questions only, the ideal theory answers. Idealism saith: matter is a phenomenon, not a substance. Idealism acquaints us with the total disparity between the evidence of our own being, and the evidence of the world's being. The one is perfect; the other, incapable of any assurance; the mind is a part of the nature of things; the world is a divine dream, from which we may presently awake to the glories and certainties of day. Idealism is a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry. Yet, if it only deny the existence of matter, it does not satisfy the demands of the spirit. It leaves God out of me. It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end. Then the heart resists it, because it balks the affections in denying substantive being to men and women. Nature is so pervaded with human life, that there is something of humanity in all, and in every particular. But this theory makes nature foreign to me, and does not account for that consanguinity which we acknowledge to it. (pp. 40-1)

Here Emerson papers over some distinctions worth making: between disclosing the nature of matter and denying its existence; and between denying its existence and discerning that its existence is merely less certain than my own. But Emerson's carelessness doesn't have to cause us much concern. To exhibit the nature of matter as phenomenon is to deny its existence as substance. And to deny its existence as substance is, perhaps, the best way of accounting for the evidential disparity that is the most secure deliverance of idealism. If we accept, as Emerson seems to, Benjamin Peirce's anthropocentric principle of Correspondence, we can infer that if matter's foothold in the world were as firm as our own—if matter were substance, as we are—its existence would be known as well as ours is. Since matter's existence is more doubtful, matter is not substance but phenomenon.

In documenting his passage beyond idealism, Emerson relies on variously shaded denominations of subjectivity or personhood. He begins by speaking, sparsely and abstractly, of "the mind." When, for the first time, this abstract subject proclaims the truth of idealism, Emerson's verb of choice is not an everyday "says" but an oracular "saith." A moment later, though, Emerson's subject is rendered more concrete: *we* are now acquainted with an evidential

disparity, leaving us expectant, or at least hopeful, that we may soon awaken from a dream that is our own. When a complaint is first lodged against idealism, it is on behalf of an abstract subject: idealism, Emerson tells us, fails to meet the demands of "the spirit." But the concrete subject is restored in the next sentence, now singular rather than plural ("it leaves God out of me"), its singularity reminding us that nature, speaking strictly or philosophically, is opposed not to US but to ME.⁸⁷ "The heart," third in a succession of abstract subjects, then beats in protest against idealism, but when its protest is verbally articulated, the concrete subject returns, this time in the plural: idealism, says the heart, denies "substantive being to men and women." At first this accusation comes as a surprise, but it is, we should recall, perfectly in accord with Emerson's initial terminological resolutions: as he had stipulated in the introduction, "all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE" (p. 8). Hence any man or woman (including even my own self, considered as a man or woman) is, for idealism, as phenomenal and insubstantial as the air, a river, or a leaf. As the paragraph concludes, the concrete I is alienated from what had been its humanity.

Emerson (or that concrete I) is being threatened here with something like the loss that threatened Edwards: everything, or everything other than the ME, who no longer takes up space in the world of body, is now in God. And God, as Emerson stresses, is not me. I quoted much earlier from Emerson's first sermon. Here is a second passage from that sermon, in which the threat of pantheism takes a familiar form:

Do you not know that . . . the minds of men are not so much independent existences, as they are ideas present to the mind of God; that he is not so much the observer of your actions, as he is the potent principle by which they are bound together; not so much the reader of your thoughts, as the active Creator by whom they are aided into being; and, casting away the deceptive subterfuges of language, and speaking with strict philosophical truth, that every faculty is but a mode of his action; that your reason is God, your virtue is God, and nothing but your liberty, can you call securely and absolutely your own? (*The Shaking Tent*, pp. 29-30)

According to the idealism of Emerson's *Nature*, the I, strictly understood, is immune to the dangers enumerated here. I remain an independent existence, a substance to which (or to whom) a world is represented. But everything else (including my own humanity) is now part of my representation.

It is for this reason, I think, that Emerson classifies idealism not as the final truth, but as "a useful introductory hypothesis, serving to apprise us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world" (p. 41).⁸⁸ Notice the return of the abstract subject: it is now "the soul" that is set off against the world—a point to which I will return.

In the penultimate paragraph of chapter seven, Emerson faces the questions that idealism left unanswered. It is precisely here, in my view, that we move from a largely Berkeleyan idealism—from the "broad noon" that is Emerson's "England of the senses and the understanding"—to an idealism more akin to Schelling's. Only now do we inhabit "the night" that shall be our "Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams" (p. 15):

But when, following the invisible steps of thought, we come to inquire, Whence is matter? and Whereto? many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. [The word "recesses" is itself a clue that we have moved from daylight into night.] We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all

things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound, it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plan upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws, at his need, inexhaustible power. Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man? Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite. This view, which admonishes me where the sources of wisdom and power lie, and points to virtue as to

"The golden key
Which opes the palace of eternity,"

carries upon its face the highest certificate of truth, because it animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul. (pp. 41-2)

The truths intuited here are not argued for. They are self-certifying. The idealist distinction between "the world" and "the soul" is preserved, but the soul is no longer the ME. It is God—a God who is, after all, NOT ME. This God is Emerson's "Over-Soul" or "central soul" (*Journals* 1: 469). It is the "Self"—the word's capital letter, as Whicher says (*Freedom and Fate*, p. 51), always understood—on which we are urged (in "Self-Reliance") to rely. Its perpetual influence upon us is what Emerson, in one of the last pieces he prepared for publication, called "the central fact"—"the superhuman intelligence pouring into us from its unknown fountain, to be received with religious awe, and defended from any mixture of our will" (Introduction to Plutarch's *Morals*, p. xv).

In the closing paragraph of chapter seven, Emerson gives us what appears to be his final account of nature:

The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subject to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us. It is, therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind. (p. 42)

But then the paragraph takes a sudden and alarming turn. Nature is at first described, somewhat neutrally, as "a fixed point whereby we may measure our departure." So far, so good: to say we may measure our departures by nature is not to say that any departures have occurred. But in the very next sentence we learn that they have:

As we degenerate, the contrast between us and our house is more evident. We are as much strangers in nature, as we are aliens from God. We do not understand the notes of birds. The fox and the deer run away from us; the bear and the tiger rend us. We do not know the uses of more than a few plants, as corn and the apple, the potato and the vine. Is not the landscape, every glimpse of which hath a grandeur, a face of him? Yet this may show us what discord is between man and nature, for you cannot freely admire a noble landscape, if laborers are digging in the field hard by. The poet finds something ridiculous in his delight, until he is out of the sight of men. (p. 42)

This is a description of fallen man, laboring outside the garden, at odds with nature and with God.

We can soften the shock by noticing that what I described as Emerson's apparently final account of nature is in fact his account only of its *whence*. He's yet to take up its *whereto*, but he is telling us, as chapter seven concludes, what that *whereto* isn't: he's telling us it isn't *this*—the life we life now. Emerson doesn't prepare the way for this verdict because he thinks it goes without saying. His positive account of the *whereto* comes in chapter eight, "Prospects."

6. Prospects

"A guess," Emerson writes in the first paragraph of chapter eight, "is often more fruitful than an indisputable affirmation, and . . . a dream may let us deeper into the secret of nature than a hundred concerted experiments" (p. 43). In the next paragraph, the optimism of earlier chapters seems restored. Instead of a "discord" between man and nature (as in the concluding paragraph of chapter seven, p. 42), there is now a "wonderful congruity" between man and the world, "of which he is the lord" (p. 43). Emerson quotes from George Herbert's "Man":⁸⁹

For us, the winds do blow,
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow;
Nothing we see, but means our good,
As our delight, or as our treasure;
The whole is either our cupboard of food,
Or cabinet of pleasure.

. . . .

More servants wait on man
Than he'll take notice of . . .
Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him. (pp. 44-5)

Emerson then concludes with "some traditions of man and nature, which a certain poet," later described as "Orphic" (p. 46), "sang to me" (p. 45). "A man is a god in ruins," the poet sings. "When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and pass into the immortal" (pp. 45-6). "Man is the dwarf of himself. . . . If his law is still paramount, if still he have elemental power, if his word is sterling yet in nature, it is not conscious power, it is not inferior but superior to his will. It is instinct" (p. 46). Emerson now interprets the poet's song, as follows:

At present, man applies to nature but half his force. He works on the world with his understanding alone. . . . [Yet] there are not wanting gleams of a better light,—occasional examples of the action of man upon nature with his entire force,—with reason as well as understanding. (p. 46)

[There are] examples of Reason's momentary grasp of the sceptre; the exertions of a power which exists not in time or space, but an instantaneous in-streaming causing power. The difference between the actual and the ideal force of man is happily figured by the schoolmen, in saying, that the knowledge of man is an evening knowledge, *vespertina cognitio*, but that of God is a morning knowledge, *matutina cognitio*. (p. 47)

The problem of restoring the world original and eternal beauty, is solved by the redemption of the soul. . . . The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself. (p. 47)

The poet then sings a final time:

[We shall, says Emerson, speaking for a moment in his own voice] come to look at the world with new eyes. It shall answer the endless inquiry of the intellect,—What is truth? and of the affections,—What is good? by yielding itself passive to the educated Will. Then shall come to pass what my poet said; 'Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, mounts, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature, is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit, it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient. Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world; and beyond its world, a heaven. Know then, that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house, heaven and earth; Caesar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours, a cobbler's trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line and point for point, your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build, therefore, your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit. So fast will disagreeable appearances, swine, spiders, snakes, pests, madhouses, prisons, enemies, vanish; they are temporary and shall no more be seen. The sordor and filths of nature, the sun shall dry up, and the wind exhale. As when the summer comes from the south; the snow-banks melt, and the face of the earth becomes green before it, so shall the advancing spirit create its ornaments along its path, and carry with it the beauty it visits, and the song which enchants it; it shall draw around its way, until evil is no more seen. The kingdom of man over nature, which cometh not with observation,—a dominion such as now is beyond his dream of God,—he shall enter without more wonder than the blind man feels who is gradually restored to perfect sight.' (pp. 48-9)

It's hard to know what to make of these audacious promises. They will seem less audacious if we suppose that the fluid, cleansed, and compliant nature being described here is nature in Emerson's third, poetic sense. (It is being described, after all, by a poet.) I'm far from sure we should suppose this, but I'd like to see what follows if we do. We should then expect that "after the revolution," the objective world will have the same familiar face that it has now. This expectation is in harmony with the scriptural source for the book's final sentence. The kingdom of man, the poet advises, "cometh not with observation." He is recalling Luke 17:20: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."⁹⁰ This answer receives its explication in the verse that follows: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!, for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Thus in Jeremy Taylor's influential paraphrase, "cometh not with observation" becomes "cometh without outward significations."⁹¹ If the same is true of the poet's kingdom of man, its coming will be an inward or interior event, like the restoration of a blind man's sight.

There *may* be support for this modest reading in the motto Emerson used for the second edition of *Nature*, published in 1849. It's a poem of his own composition:

A subtle chain of countless rings
The next unto the farthest brings;
The eye reads omens where it goes,
And speaks all languages the rose;

And, striving to be man, the worm,
 Mounts through all the spires of form.
 (*Essays and Lectures*, p. 5)

Generations of commentators on *Nature* have, perhaps, overestimated the significance of this new motto. I do not see, in either the new poem or the 1849 text of *Nature*, a retraction of the distinction between nature and spirit that was implied in the 1836 motto. Chapter four continues to say that "Reason, considered in relation to nature, [is] Spirit," and that this spirit is both the Creator and life itself (p. 21). There's no more to the Cudworth motto than this. In the new motto, and especially its last two lines, many commentators find a doctrine of organic evolution. "Here," writes William Torrey Harris, "is the doctrine of evolution substantially set forth" (p. 354).⁹² Harris endows the alleged doctrine with religious significance—"if nature is so constituted that left to its own laws it does evolve and can evolve only rational creatures as the fittest, evidently the absolute Being must be rational" (p. 355)—and then wonders how this "thoroughly optimistic" doctrine, in which nature begets "new spirits, [thereby] increasing the number of blessed beings" (p. 357), can be reconciled with the theory of "Lapse," or "Descent of the Soul," put forward in chapter eight (p. 356). (The theory of the lapse is akin to the doctrine of the fall. Harris finds the lapse in a passage I haven't quoted, where Emerson says that after filling nature with "his overflowing currents," man's "waters retired," reducing him "to a drop" [p. 46]. Here too I prefer an interior interpretation, in which our lost glory isn't an actual past state, but a figure for our highest aspirations.) Harris knew Emerson fairly well, I think, so I realize I should tread carefully here, but this reading strikes me as a fantasy.⁹³ Richard Lee Francis is more cautious than Harris, but he also seems to me to go too far.⁹⁴ "The spires of form," Francis writes, "if they make sense at all,"

relate more specifically to an evolutionary concept rather than some Platonic model. To that extent Emerson shifted the emphasis of the essay as he now confronted it from the static focus of the original motto to the dynamic dimensions of the present one. . . . The dynamism of the original essay is man-centered. The thrust of the new model is to suggest that man is the paradigm for vast activity within other sensate forms like the worm. Thus the new model reflects the enlarged, more complex structure that had emerged in the evolving essays [that is, in the *Essays* of 1841 and the *Essays: Second Series* of 1844], with their concerns for the sphere of daily existence and the politics and reform of society.

My concern here lies with the opposition between "an evolutionary concept" and the "Platonic model." What no one has noticed is that Emerson's second motto also has a precedent of sorts in Cudworth, who writes that "as well . . . might a worm complain that he is not a Man, as Man that he is not an Angel, or Creature of the very highest order."⁹⁵ Cudworth doesn't want us agitating for a higher place in the Great Chain of Being. Emerson does. (Emerson's omissions from Herbert's poem suggest exactly that.) But Cudworth's remark reminds us of a simple Emersonian truth (as clear to Emerson in 1836 as it was in the 1840's, when he came under the influence of works such as *Vestiges of the History of Creation*) that the new motto may be meant to convey. The motto doesn't state the truth but takes us to the very brink of it. The truth is that it's *man* who strives to mount through all the spires of form. (The worm, a caterpillar I suppose, is then a metaphor for the man—the dwarf—who is striving to become man.) Nineteenth-century theories of evolution and progress are a murky sea into which I cannot wade this afternoon.⁹⁶ My suggestion is simply that it needn't be the evolution of lower organisms that is Emerson's concern in the second edition of *Nature*, but the spiritual evolution of men and women—their striving towards lives of "the very highest order."⁹⁷ This is Emerson's *explicit* theme throughout "Prospects," in both the first and second editions. The new motto, then, fits the text of 1836 very well. (If it

didn't fit 1836 it wouldn't fit 1849, as Whicher is perhaps acknowledging in his remarks on the mottoes in *Selections*, p. 472.) In 1836 and again in 1849, Emerson is writing about a human evolutionary process, one that is, I believe, inward or interior rather than organic or biological.⁹⁸

7. After *Nature*⁹⁹

Robert D. Richardson, Jr. observes that Emerson's *Nature* is "intended to be self-validating. We are not asked to take it on faith, or on authority, or in a historical context. It is not argued or defended, just presented."¹⁰⁰ I sympathize with everything that Richardson is saying here, but I wonder whether he has things exactly right. The author of *Nature* does refuse to argue, but it isn't clear that his truths are actually "presented" to the reader. Emerson may think that they can't be presented, because an author can do no more than *provoke* readers into sharing his perceptions. "Not thanks, not prayer seem quite the highest or truest name for our communication with the infinite,—but glad and conspiring reception" ("The Method of Nature," p. 116). If Emerson receives his truths from the infinite, can the rest of us receive them from a finite, second-hand source? "I cannot,—nor can any man—speak precisely of thing so sublime It is beyond explanation. When all is said and done, the rapt saint is found the only logician. Not exhortation, not argument becomes our lips, but paens of joy and praise" ("The Method of Nature," pp. 116-17).

This presents a daunting challenge to a writer. As a perceiver of truth, a writer is receptive. And if he's at his receptive best, he'll be restraining his will. But the act of composition is an act of will, as Emerson acknowledges in "Intellect":

The thought of genius is spontaneous; but the power of picture or expression, in the most enriched and flowing nature, implies a mixture of will, a certain control over the spontaneous states, without which no production is possible. It is a conversion of all nature into the rhetoric of thought, under the eye of judgment, with a strenuous exercise of choice. (p. 423)¹⁰¹

Composition seems to be the understanding's work. Writing is a discursive task (from the Latin *discurre*, a "running to and fro") that calls for planning, arranging, and the calculation of effect. Does it follow that writing might damage one's powers of perception? "I would not quite forget," Emerson writes in "Man the Reformer," "the venerable counsel of the Egyptian mysteries, which declared that 'there were two pairs of eyes in man, and it is requisite that the pair which are beneath should be closed, when the pair that are above them perceive, and that when the pair above are closed, those which are beneath should be opened'" (p. 142). Such counsel leads Emerson to wonder whether he might not be better off without the drudgery of composition. "It often, perhaps usually, happens, that where there is a fine organization apt for poetry and philosophy, that individual finds himself compelled to wait on this thoughts, to waste several days that he may enhance and glorify one; and is better taught by a moderate and dainty exercise, such as rambling in the fields, rowing, skating, hunting, than by the downright drudgery of the farmer and the smith" ("Man the Reformer," p. 142).

I think the fairest way of meeting these difficulties is to admit that the writer is striving willfully for effect, his aim being to prepare the reader for reception. "The aim of the author is not to tell the truth—that he cannot do, but to suggest it. He has only approximated it himself, and hence his cumbrous embarrassed speech: he uses many words, hoping that one, and not another, will bring you as near to the fact as he is" (quoted in Richardson, *First We Read*, p. 50). "The thing uttered in words is not therefore affirmed. It must affirm itself, or no forms of logic or of oath can

give it evidence" ("Spiritual Laws," p. 316). In a corresponding journal entry, he says that the thing set down "must affirm itself or no forms of grammar & no verisimilitude can give evidence; & no array of arguments" (1: 412; see also 1: 220). Given this, it makes perfect sense for Emerson to steer clear of argument, at least up to a point. I say "up to a point" because there are two different claims of authority that reason might make against the understanding. Reason might say, on the one hand, that the understanding can't dispute the truth of its declarations. As Emerson asks in "Worship," "why should I give up my thought, because I cannot answer an objection to it?" (p. 1070). I take it that objections are products of the understanding, as it makes a willful effort to dissuade. To say that the perceptions of reason are self-validating is to say that any such objection can be safely brushed aside. But the understanding might be less aggressive. Instead of objecting to the deliverances of reason, it might try to make them comprehensible. It might accept that they are true and simply ask how this is possible. Emerson tells us that spirit or *natura naturans* "publishes itself in creatures." Here I quote from his 1844 essay "Nature" (p. 546), but he says the same, as we've seen, in his book of 1836, and the thought is repeated in every other book he published. "I get no further," he wrote in a journal of the following year, "than my old doctrine that the Whole is in each man" (1: 549 in Rosenwald). "In all my lectures," he reflected in 1840, "I have taught one doctrine, namely the infinitude of the private man" (1: 735 in Rosenwald). "The central fact," he wrote in an 1870 introduction to Plutarch that I've already quoted, "is the superhuman intelligence pouring into us from its unknown fountain, to be received with religious awe, and defended from any mixture of our will" (p. xv). It is, then, a truth of reason that the infinite published or expresses itself in the finite. Let's suppose that a docile understanding elects not to contest this teaching. Can the understanding still be curious about it? Can it wonder how to reconcile this perception with other things it knows or thinks it knows? The second and more radical demand that reason might place on the understanding is that it extinguish all such curiosity. "Not only must you accept every truth I deliver," reason may say, "but you must also refrain from asking how these truths hang together with whatever you may accept on other grounds."¹⁰²

We're now circled back to the generous definition of philosophy that I took from Wilfrid Sellars, which suddenly seems less capacious.¹⁰³ Often Emerson *doesn't* seem to be asking how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term, because he places the truths of reason so far above the others that they needn't hang together with them at all. I realize that I may be understanding "hanging together" in too narrow a sense. And I understand that the truths of reason must, in Emerson's view, be truths that we can live by: that "the true romance which the world exists to realize, [is] the transformation of genius into practical power" ("Experience," p. 492). But the understanding is part of life, and the transformation Emerson hopes for may be impossible if the understanding isn't encouraged to exercise the kind of non-disruptive curiosity I've been trying to describe.

Emerson says that the infinite expresses itself in the finite. Does he mean to say that it expresses itself *only* in the finite? (It's hard to say, but the answer may be yes. In a journal entry for 1845 he writes that "the *necessity* by which Deity rushes into distribution, into variety & particles, is not less divine than the unity by which all begins. Forever the Demiurgus speaks to the junior gods as in the old tradition of the Timaeus, 'Gods of gods that mortal natures may subsist & that the Universe may be truly all, convert (or distribute) yourselves according to your nature to the fabrication of animals' &c &c" [2: 232 in Rosenwald].) This is the sort of curious question that the understanding finds itself wanting to ask. Emerson writes that "Heaven is the name we give to the True State, the World of Reason not of the Understanding, of the Real, not the Apparent. It exists always It is, as Coleridge said, another world but not to come" (*Journals*, 1: 414 in the Rosenwald edition). He had quoted Coleridge in a journal entry of the year before: "'The world in which I exist is another world indeed but not to come.' Coleridge" (1:

358). It follows (though the journals themselves do not connect this conclusion with Coleridge) "that Within and Above are synonyms" (1: 374). "A pert and flippant orator remarked to the meeting last Sunday, that the World could stand without linch pins & that even if you should cut all the ropes & knock away the whole underpinning, it would spring & poise perfectly for the poise was in the globe itself. But this is Transcendentalism" (1: 688). In "Essential Principles," a lecture delivered in 1862 (but based on a journal entry of 1842, 2: 76 in Rosenwald), Emerson is even more blunt:

Other world! there is no other world. God is one and omnipresent: here or nowhere is the whole fact. All the universe over, there is but one thing,—one Creator, one mind, one right. (*Selected Lectures*, p. 276; see also 2: 76 in Rosenwald.)

He returns to this in a journal entry of 1861:

Other world! there is no other world. The God goes with you,—is here in Presence. What is here, that is there. & it is by his only strength that you lift your hand. (2: 756)

But if the infinite expresses itself *only* in the finite, how is this to be understood? Has the finite always existed? If so, is the infinite even *capable* of separate existence? If it is, what form does its separate existence take? And what about us? We are relatively recent arrivals. "The fossil strata show," as Emerson reports in his essay "Culture" (p. 1033 in *Essays and Lectures*), "that Nature began with rudimental forms, and rose to the more complex, as fast as the earth was fit for their dwelling-place; and that the lower perish, as the higher appear." Were our pre-existing souls injected into fitly organized bodies at just the right moment, or was there an abiding central soul from which particular souls were derived? And is there now a separate central soul, or does it exist only in and through ourselves?

In Emerson these questions are never squarely faced. Indeed they're hardly raised. He supposed, I think, that their answers were beyond him.¹⁰⁴ But if his writings after *Nature* don't provide us with answers, they do convey, ever more intensely, the lived experience of which these questions are, arguably, the intellectualized expressions. The thesis of Whicher's influential book is that over time, Emerson's early, optimistic transcendentalism "gave way" to a more realistic "basic empiricism" (*Freedom and Fate*, p. 97). This has been called "Whicher's paradigm,"¹⁰⁵ and it's proven very durable. It's been retained even by some of the recent writers who've given us portraits of a "pragmatist" or "de-Transcendentalized" Emerson.¹⁰⁶ According to the paradigm, as his empiricism became more assertive, Emerson felt more oppressed by the B side—the materialist side—of various dualisms. I list some those dualisms here, with the idealist or A side in first place: infinite *v.* finite; one *v.* many; God *v.* nature; *natura naturans v. natura naturata*; spirit *v.* nature; mind *v.* matter; absolute *v.* relative; form *v.* matter; law *v.* fact; freedom *v.* fate; power *v.* circumstance; principle *v.* whim; principle *v.* mood; principle *v.* temperament (which is itself opposed to whim, at least at times); impersonal *v.* personal; Self *v.* self; potential self *v.* actual self; reason *v.* sense and understanding. Yet as Whicher contends, the mounting pressures of the B side were never enough to crush the A side. "I am *Defeated* all the time," Emerson wrote in a journal entry that Whicher quotes more than once (for example on p. 168), "yet to Victory I am born."¹⁰⁷ *Emerson's idealism persisted.*¹⁰⁸ It never gave way entirely. As doctrine, in fact, it never gave way at all.¹⁰⁹

This returns us to the question of whether the A and B sides can be reconciled. I feel sure that Emerson would disapprove, but I'll hastily assemble a very rough answer, using material from Emerson's essays and journals.¹¹⁰

My general outline will also be borrowed, from Mark Johnston's contrast between panentheism and pantheism. Panentheism, he explains,

should be carefully distinguished from the *pantheistic identification* of God and the natural realm. Against such a pantheistic identification, the panentheist will assert that God is partly *constituted* by the natural realm, in the sense that his activity is manifest in and through natural processes *alone*. But his reality goes beyond what is captured by the purely scientific description of all the events that make up the natural realm. Nothing in the natural realm lies outside God, and God reveals himself in the natural realm by disclosing in religious experience an ultimate form of the world, one that is in no way at odds with the form of the natural realm disclosed by science: that is, a causal realm closed under natural law. (*Saving God* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009], pp. 119-20)

If we allow for "unChurched" readings of both "God" and "religious," this may fit Emerson fairly well. It's not yet a trim fit, but a few quick alterations might make it right.

According to the panentheistic schema,

God is constituted by Nature + x,

where the *x* is what James called "the overlapping thing." Now what, for Emerson, might *x* be? "What is there," as Johnston asks, "in addition to the natural realm, such that when we put it together with the natural realm then we have something whose overarching form could motivate serious talk of God?" (p. 128)—or talk of God as serious as Emerson is willing to accept? A possible Emersonian answer is one that Johnston himself takes to be a dead end (p. 127). It is that

God is constituted by Nature + mind.

For Johnston, this is a dead end partly because "the concept of a nonnatural mental realm is bankrupt" (p. 127). But let's not assume that mind is non-natural. Let's understand nature simply as the NOT ME—or, better, the NOT US. This leaves us with

God is constituted by Nature + finite minds,

where sum's second term isn't really a new addition, but a spelling out of something already contained within the first. We're now getting close, I think, to what Emerson describes in his *Journals*:

As a spiritual truth needs no proof but is its own reason, so the Universe needs no outer cause but exists by its own perfection and the sum of it all is this, God is. (1: 458)

But we aren't yet finished, because we've left no place for law. There's a place for what Emerson calls the "law-receiver," but there's not yet a place for the law-giver. "Nature is good," Emerson writes in "Plato," "but intellect is better: as the law-giver is before the law-receiver" (*Essays and Lectures*, pp. 645-6). But the law-giver can no more be ourselves than it can be nature, which hummed along perfectly well before we arrived. An obvious remedy is to say that

God is constituted by Nature + finite minds + an infinite mind.

But now it seems that the infinite mind popping up at the end of the formula should *be* God, rather than one among many constituents *of* God. I however think (with Emerson's friend and Unitarian critic Henry S. Ware) that the infinite mind, as Emerson understands it, is impersonal.¹¹¹ It is not a person with understanding and will who lays down the law, but the law itself, natural as well as moral. In that case the panentheistic schema can be filled out as follows:

God is constituted by Nature + finite minds + law, natural and moral.

Finite minds will remain "special," on this view, because even if they are (like bare matter) obedient to natural law, they are uniquely capable of *knowing* the law. When, if ever, these minds come to know the law in full, history will, in a sense be at an end, because law will have at last been brought to consciousness. (In the infinite mind, the laws do not abide as objects of consciousness—as things known—but merely as operative principles.) It's in our perception of law—a joyful or loving perception that's no less affective than intellectual—that our inwardness consists.¹¹² We also avoid the kind of pantheism Channing saw in Edwards. Emerson himself saw something similar in the views of Henry James, Sr. "The logical basis of his book [is] a certain pure & absolute theism:—there is but one Actor in the Universe,—there is no self but devil;—all must be surrendered to ecstasy of the present Deity" (2: 819). In an earlier entry Emerson has said that "it is by magnifying God, that men become Pantheists; it is by piously personifying him, that they become idolaters" (1: 409). It may remain true that nature (ourselves included) is "constant creation" (*Early Lectures*, volume 3, p. 22), and that we live therefore "in succession, in division, in parts, in particles" ("The Over-Soul," p. 386), as Edwards believed. So long as God is not a person, Emerson needn't conclude that we are unfree, or that we have no persisting identities, even if he is unable to explain how it is that identity or freedom is achieved. Each person's life will be a "perpetual revelation" (1: 647).

Here, are some of the many passages exhibiting the panentheistic tendencies I've tried to describe:

In "Nature" (1836): p. 36 (on myself as part and particle of God); p. 43 (on the universal soul "within or behind" individual life); p. 57 (on law, mind, matter, and soul); p. 59 (on idealism); p. 61 (on the Supreme Being); p. 62 (on the world as an incarnation of God); and p. 67 (on the kingdom of man over nature).

In the Divinity School Address: pp. 131-2 (on man as Providence to himself); p. 132 (on the law of laws); p. 138 (on man as an infinite soul); p. 142 (on the infinitude of man, and on man and deity); and p. 145 (on a new revelation).

In "Self-Reliance": p. 225 (on being one with God).

"The Method of Nature":

p. 118: "In the divine order, intellect is primary; nature, secondary; it is the memory of the mind. That which once existed in intellect as pure law, has now taken body as Nature. It existed already in the mind in solution; now, it has bene precipitated, and the bright sediment is the world. We can never be quite strangers or inferiors in nature."

"Lecture on the Times:

p. 168: "The law and the perception of the law are at last one."

"We are . . . immortal with the immortality of this law."

"History":

p. 237: "There is one mind common to all individual men."

"Of the universal mind each individual man is one more incarnation."

p. 255: "The mind is One, and . . . nature is its correlative."

"The Over-Soul":

pp. 385-6: "that Unity, the Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart."

p. 386: "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE."

"I desire . . . to report what hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and energy of the Highest Law."

p. 390: "The third party or common nature is not social; it is impersonal; is God."

p. 393: "The nature of these revelations is the same: they are perceptions of the absolute law."

p. 400: "I am born into the great, the universal mind."

"Nature" (1844):

p. 546: "Let us not longer omit our homage to the Efficient Nature, *natura naturans*, the quick cause, before which all forms flee as the driven snows, itself secret, its works driven before it in flocks and multitudes."

"It publishes itself in creatures"

"Swedenborg":

p. 685: "I doubt not he was led by the desire to insert the element of personality of Deity. But nothing is added."

"Fate":

pp. 967-8: "Let us build to the Beautiful Necessity, which makes men brave in believing that he cannot shun a danger that is appointed, nor incur one that is not; to the Necessity which rudely or softly educates him to the perception that there are no contingencies; the Law rules throughout existence, a Law which is not intelligent but intelligence,—not personal nor impersonal,—it disdains words

and passes understanding; it dissolves persons; it vivifies nature; yet solicits the pure in heart to draw on all its omnipotence."

"Worship":

pp. 1065-6: "We owe to the Hindoo Scriptures a definition of Law, which compares well with any in our Western books. 'Law it is, which is without name, or color, or hands, or feet; which is smallest of the least, and largest of the large; all, and knowing all things; which hears, without ears, sees without eyes, moves without feet, and seizes without hands.'"

p. 1076: "The nameless Thought, the nameless Power, the superpersonal Heart,—he shall repose alone on that. . . . The Laws are his consolers, the good Laws themselves are alive, they know if he have kept them, they animate him with the leading of great duty, and an endless horizon."

In the *Journals*:

I say that I cannot find when I explore my own consciousness any truth in saying that God is a Person, but the reverse. I feel that there is some profanation in saying He is personal. To represent him as an individual is to shut him out of my consciousness. (1: 580)

I deny Personality to God because it is too little not too much. Life, personal life is faint & cold to the energy of God. (1: 588)

I see profound need of distinguishing the First Cause as superpersonal. . . . There is no passive reception: the receive to receive must play the God also. God gives, but, also, it is God, or, it takes God, also, to receive. (2: 815)

Finite minds or selves remain a mystery, because their individuation isn't *simply* the result of their embodiment.¹¹³ Other things, says Emerson, have no insides.¹¹⁴ We do.¹¹⁵ Our own existence—all existence—is an enigma. ("No power of genius has ever yet had the smallest success in explaining existence. The perfect enigma remains" ["Plato," p. 653; see also *Society and Solitude*, p. 161].) What of immortality? Emerson writes in "Experience" that "it is not what we believe concerning the immortality of the soul, or the like, but *the universal impulse to believe*, that is the material circumstance, and is the principal fact in the history of the globe" (p. 486). Could immortality be nothing more than the appreciative perception of timeless truth? Emerson suggests so at times, but his last published words on the subject, in his essay "Old Age," can't be dealt with so reductively. In one of the truest entries in his *Journals*, Emerson, who was then the age that I am now, writes that "Within, I do not find wrinkles & used heart, but unspent youth" (2: 829 in the Rosenwald edition). In "Old Age," the continued spending of these youthful energies—"hiving knowledge, hiving skill,—at the end of life just ready to be born" (p. 300)—gave him a kind of argument for immortality (see also *Journals* 1: 134 and 2: 299). "The mode of it baffles our wit," he wrote, "and no whisper comes to us from the other side" (p. 299). If my panentheistic story were the whole truth, our wit wouldn't have to be baffled, and there could be no real hope that whispers from the other side might tell us more than we know now.

Appendix: On "Experience"

I want to conclude with a few remarks about Emerson's essay "Experience." I'll simply lay them down here. I hope I can develop them later.

(i) Idealism is a central theme in "Experience." This is granted, I think, by the commentators I've read or glanced at: Packer, in *Emerson's Fall*, pp. 148-99; Porte, *Representative Man*, pp. 191-8; Van Leer, *Emerson's Epistemology*, pp. 143-87; and Cameron, *Impersonality*, pp. 53-78. Porte's take on the essay is the most optimistic of the lot. In this respect his reading resembles that of William Torrey Harris in "The Dialectic Unity in Emerson's Prose," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18 (1884), pp. 195-202. Harris sees the essay as thoroughly Platonic: as a record of what he elsewhere calls the soul's ascent. He also detects some significant similarities to *Nature*, as I do (see (iv) below).

(ii) One of those similarities is in the treatment of mood. In *Nature*, Emerson takes up the laws of the eye, but his physiology stops there. In "Experience" he carries these laws inward, to the core of the body or the brain. Our moods now have their laws, just as the perspectival visions of the eye have theirs. This certainly presents a more "pessimistic" picture of our operations. But it isn't altogether pessimistic. So far as I can see, our perceptions remain untouched—which isn't to say that Emerson has a firm way of drawing the line.

(iii) I think there's more to say about the manner in which grief will make us idealists (p. 473). I think Emerson is doing to grief (and to all our internal impressions) what he had earlier done to our external impressions. In *Nature* the idealism was introductory or preliminary. Here it seems more terrifying, for reasons I think I can explain. I wonder whether Emerson's discussion was influenced by Swedenborg or by his English translator, James John Garth Wilkinson. Emerson was filled with admiration for Wilkinson. He credits him with "a coequal vigor of understanding and imagination comparable only to Lord Bacon's" (*Essays and Lectures*, p. 670). His "admirable preliminary discourses" to his English translations of Swedenborg "throw all the contemporary philosophy of England into shade" (p. 671). (Henry James, Sr. was another admirer of Wilkinson. His son "Wilky" was named after him.) Wilkinson is celebrated by Emerson again in *English Traits*, where he's honored for the "native vigor" he brings to metaphysics and to physiology, "with a catholic perception of relations, equal to the highest attempts, and a rhetoric like the armory of the invincible knights of old" (p. 902).

Wilkinson's "Introductory Remarks" to Swedenborg's *The Philosophy of the Infinite; or, Outlines of a Philosophical Argument on the Infinite* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1848) is a blistering attack on what Wilkinson calls "Transcendentalism." The upshot of transcendentalism, he explains, was "to regard all sensation, knowledge, and thought, as subjective, and to make the individual believe all the manifestations of God, nature, or humanity, which are made to his mind, as so many presentations of his own being. In this way, each man becomes shut in the case of an opaque and impenetrable selfhood, which not only absorbs, and destroys all outward truth, but makes it impossible to have any confidence in the existence of our brother man" (p. 5). The most striking thing about Wilkinson's presentation is that he thinks this dangerous Kantian view, which "had the greatest influence in England, into which it was slowly introduced by Coleridge and others, long after it ceased to animate any particular school in Germany" (p. 5), is directed against the reality of the "inner" no less than the reality of the "outer" (p. 6). "The consequence is, that both spiritual and natural experience are shaken to the base, and all scientific vision of the deeper parts of nature, is set down as a dream" (p. 6). In Swedenborg's writings, by contrast, "the outward spiritual world itself, independent of our perceptions, like the natural world, becomes a direct object of human knowledge" (p. 6). (As has been said of Swedenborg, he described visits to heaven as if they were strolls down the avenues of Stockholm.) As Swedenborg conceives of them, "all the intellectual faculties are likewise senses," and their objects are "real, outward, forcible,

and impressive, like those of the visible world" (pp. 6-7). He thereby lifts that "dense, 'intellectual cataract'" that "prevents all direct contact between man and his field of alteration and improvement, viz., the outward and inward creations of God, in which he is a part, among parts, a body, among bodies, a spiritual form, among spiritual forms" (p. 7).

I'd like to consider the possibility that the early pages of "Experience" are giving voice to the same concern. Wilkinson says related things in his introduction to *The Animal Kingdom*, a work (published in 1843) to which Emerson refers. This was early enough to influence "Experience," and Swedenborg's texts were, in any case, available to Emerson in other editions long before that. I'm fairly confident that Emerson's word "angular," applied to corporeal appearances or body, derived from Swedenborg. It is, in early English translations, Swedenborg's word for the most basic, corporeal forms in his hierarchy of forms.

(iv) *Nature* and "Experience" are in some ways alike in structure. "Experience" is divided into eight parts, separated by white space (and in one case by asterisks). The first five "lords of life" (pp. 468, 491)—Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, and Surprise—pass by in the first five sections. Then comes Reality, in which Emerson reasserts his idealism (pp. 484-7). (I don't think it needs to be argued that idealism is reasserted here. Reality is the "unbounded substance," the "ineffable cause" that refuses to be named (p. 486). "In our more correct writing," Emerson writes on p. 486, "we give to this generalization the name of Being, and thereby confess that we have arrived as far as we can go." But he says a bit more: it is a "vast-flowing vigor," "the mighty Ideal" (p. 486), "a great and crescive self" (p. 487). In the poem that is the essay's motto, Reality is "the inventor of the game / Omnipresent without name (p. 469). Emerson says that he "dare[s] not give their order" (p. 491), but as inventor and cause, Reality comes first. In the seventh section comes "the Fall of Man" (p. 487), which turns out to be nothing more than "Subjectiveness," the existence of man as thinking subject. (The *cogito*, then, is itself a signal of the fall of man. But compare the *Early Lectures*, volume 3, p. 215: "A man may say *I*, and never refer to himself as an individual.") This is very much like the sudden fall that comes at the end of "Spirit." And the final section of "Experience" resembles "Prospects" in its optimism. "Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart!—it seems to say, there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power" (p. 492).

In the end I may not want to tackle "Experience." When I began work, I was under the impression that recent critics saw it as an abandonment idealism—as a work at odds with the benign image of the transcendentalist sage presented in the nineteenth century (or at the turn of the twentieth) by writers such as William Torrey Harris, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Charles Eliot Norton. But critics like Packer and Cameron don't dispute Emerson's idealism. (Indeed, Packer has especially good thing to say about it, on pp. 159-6.) These critics are simply—and very appropriately—interested in other things. In "Experience," the B side of things is more deeply felt than the A side. Its floating and mysterious prose is disorienting but convincing. We can't help but ask ourselves how someone so well acquainted with the B side could continue to affirm the A side. But it doesn't cause Emerson a moment's hesitation. He does it, and does it easily, even cheerfully. "I affirm the divinity of man; but, . . . I know how well how much is my debt to bread, & coffee, & flannel, & heated room" (*Journals* 2: 499; see also 2: 32-3).¹¹⁶

¹ This is the text of the third in a series of six lectures, honoring Isaiah Berlin, delivered at Oxford University in January and February, 2012. For the opportunity to give them, I'm grateful to the benefactors and electors of the Sir Isaiah Berlin Visiting Professorship in the History of Ideas, to the Faculty of Philosophy, and to Corpus Christi College. The present lecture was delivered on January 31. The present document is not transcript of my talk—it was prepared before I spoke and only lightly edited afterwards—but it is written as if to be spoken. It contains far more than I was actually able to cover in the lecture, it is more casually structured than a formal paper would be, and the notes and even the main text sometimes contain directions or reminders to myself. This text is more sprawling and less disciplined than the two I've already posted. It is very much a draft piece of work, and I hope that it won't be quoted or cited without my permission.

² He reports that "all things were carried on with the utmost decency, they came very little behind Cambridge its self" ("Joseph Emerson's Diary, 1748-1749," p. 266 in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 44 [1911], pp. 262-82). Joseph Emerson was a Harvard man. Yale audiences will be interested to see that before they were keeping score in football, the colleges competed in the decorousness or decency of their commencements. I suppose Emerson could have chosen the word "decency" in light of the notorious Yale commencement of 1722, the "Great Apostasy." That September, Timothy Cutler (the president of the college, who had replaced Samuel Johnson as Jonathan Edwards's tutor in philosophy), shocked his audience by concluding the Puritan ceremony with a form of words that came, as they knew, from the Anglican book of common prayer. Cutler had been studying with Johnson in the months leading up to the ceremony. After commencement, they and others announced that they would be joining the English church. Johnson and James Wetmore (who is mentioned in Berkeley's correspondence with Johnson) were among those who sailed to England for an indisputably valid ordination.

³ "Joseph Emerson's Diary, 1748-1749," p. 271. Esther later married Aaron Burr: not the famous Aaron Burr, third president of the United States, but the president of the College of New Jersey (Jonathan Edwards's predecessor in that office) who was the father of the famous Aaron Burr.

⁴ The full title gives an overview of his argument: *The mystery hid from ages and generations, made manifest by the gospel-revelation: or, the salvation of all men the grand thing aimed at in the scheme of God, as opened in the New-Testament writings and entrusted with Jesus Christ to bring into effect, in three chapters, the first, exhibiting a general explanation of this gloriously benevolent plan of God.—the second, proving it to be the truth of scripture, that mankind universally, in the final issue of this scheme, shall reign in happy life for ever.—the third, largely answering objections* (London: Charles Dilly, 1784). The title page identifies Chauncy simply as "one who wishes well to the whole human race." The contrast with the eschatology of Edwards couldn't be more plain. Edwards is never named, but on p. xi of the preface, Chauncy acknowledges a special debt to John Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740-1)—the book targeted on the title page of Edwards's *Original Sin*. In chapter three, intensifying the contrast with Edwards, Chauncy rejects determinism and affirms liberty of indifference. God, he speculates, "could, doubtless, in point of power, represent Hell to the view of sinners in such a striking light, even supposing the torments of it were not endless [as in Chauncy's view they are not], as that they should be irresistibly stopped in their wicked pursuits: But such a method of dealing with men would not comport with their free agency. No room, in this case, would be left for the trial of their virtue. The discouragement, that sin would carry with it, would so overpower the mind, as to give no opportunity for choice. The motive could not be withstood" (pp. 344-5). In his journal, Emerson reports an exchange that sets

Chauncy against the revivalism of Edwards and the itinerant preacher George Whitfield. (The passage is quoted by Porte in *Representative Man*, p. 118.) "Where are you going Mr. Whitfield?" said Dr. Chauncy. "I'm going to Boston, sir.—I'm very sorry for it," said Dr. C. "So is the Devil" replied the eloquent preacher."

⁵ John Jay Chapman aptly observes that the transcendentalists "were essentially the children of the Puritans" ("Emerson," in his *Emerson and Other Essays* [New York: Moffat, Yard, and Company, 1909; originally published in 1898], p. 58).

⁶ *The Master: A Novel* (New York: Scribner, 2004), p. 133.

⁷ Robert D. Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), p. 52.

⁸ Other Puritans may have been looking over Emerson's shoulders as he composed *Nature*. The following description of the study at the Old Manse, a family home where Emerson lived and worked in 1834, is by a later resident, Nathaniel Hawthorne:

There was, in the rear of the house, the most delightful little nook of a study that ever offered its snug seclusion to a scholar. It was here that Emerson wrote "Nature;" for he was then an inhabitant of the Manse, and used to watch the Assyrian dawn and the Paphian sunset and moonrise, from the summit of our eastern hill. When I first saw the room [which would have been in 1842, during Hawthorne's first visit to Concord], its walls were blackened with the smoke of unnumbered years, and made still blacker by the grim prints of puritan ministers that hung around. These worthies looked strangely like bad angels, or, at least, like men who had wrestled so continually and so sternly with the devil, that somewhat of his sooty fierceness had been imparted to their own visages. They had all vanished now; a cheerful coat of paint, and golden tinted paper hangings, lighted up the small apartment; while the shadow of a willow-tree, that swept against the overhanging eaves, attempered the cheery western sunshine. In place of the grim prints, there was the sweet and lovely hear of one of Raphael's Madonnas, and two pleasant little pictures of the Lake of Como. The only other decorations were a purple vase of flowers, always fresh, and a bronze one containing graceful ferns. ("The Old Manse," p. 3 in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, volume 1 [London: Wiley and Putnam, 1846]. See p. 28 for an interesting comment on Emerson as a philosopher.)

Unfortunately, it turns out that this charming account of the origins of *Nature* is probably untrue; the case against Hawthorne is made in Merton M. Sealts, Jr., "The Composition of *Nature*," in Sealts and Alfred R. Ferguson (eds.), *Emerson's Nature: Origin, Growth, Meaning*, second edition, enlarged (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 175-93. Even if Hawthorne's story is a fiction, my basic point stands: Emerson worked in that study with Puritan forbears overlooking him—a fitting metaphor for his relation as a writer to his local past.

⁹ p. 846 in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Journals 1841-1877*, edited by Lawrence Rosenwald (New York: The Library of America, 2010). Emerson said of his aunt's journal that it "marks the precise time when the power of the old creed yielded to the influence of modern science and humanity" (quoted by Perry Miller in "Jonathan Edwards to Emerson," *New England Quarterly* 13

[1940], pp. 589-617, p. 614). For another acknowledgment of nineteenth-century New England's debt to "that old religion," see Emerson's "The Method of Nature," p. 130 in *Essays and Lectures*.

¹⁰ p. 275 in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*. There are many echoes of this resolution in later American writing. They are probably clearest and most emphatic in Thoreau, but they can also be heard in William James: "Live energetically; and whatever you have to do, do it with your might" (quoted in Richardson, *William James*, p. 327).

¹¹ "Joseph Emerson's Diary," p. 275.

¹² "The Present Age," p. 192 in *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, volume 3, 1838-1842 (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1972). Check the corresponding passage in "Boston," *Works* 12, p. 194.

¹³ For the story behind Thoreau's decision to begin a journal see Robert D. Richardson, *First We Read, Then We Write* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), p. 20.

¹⁴ In the opinion of Stephen E. Whicher, Emerson's Puritan background is "the most important single thing about him." See his *Freedom and Fate: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1961; originally published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 1953), p. viii. Emerson's deeply ingrained Puritanism is a major theme in George Santayana's essay "Emerson."

¹⁵ *The Peabody Sisters*, p. xv.

¹⁶ This is Rowland G. Hazard (1801-88), grandfather of Caroline Hazard.

¹⁷ I'm quoting from Elizabeth Peabody's volume of Channing's recollections.

¹⁸ Channing was also repelled by what he saw as the moral consequences of Calvinism. His "Moral Argument against Calvinism" was widely read, even late in the nineteenth century.

¹⁹ This is from p. 4 of Channing's *Works*, in introductory remarks dated April 18, 1841. By this time, Channing may have known of Edwards's idealism, because Edwards's early manuscripts had been published a dozen years before by Sereno Edwards Dwight. (Could Channing have learned about it from Hopkins, Edwards's student, who was his summer neighbor in Newport?) On Channing's dissatisfaction with Calvinist pantheism see Miller, "Jonathan Edwards to Emerson," p. 610.

²⁰ David Van Leer gives the notion of a "lower argument" currency in his *Emerson's Epistemology: The Argument of the Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chapter two. He borrows the term "lower" from Stephen E. Whicher (ed.), *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson: An Organic Anthology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960). Whicher says that Emerson's "farewell" to his brother Charles, in the final sentences of chapter five, ends "the first or lower half of the book" (p. 474). Whicher suggests that that Emerson's customary method is "to begin 'low'" and "to carry the subject by stages as high" as his audience will allow (pp. 353-4).

²¹ The quoted words are from *Walden*, p. 97 in "Reading": "It is worth the expense of youthful days and costly hours, if you can learn only some words of an ancient language, which are raised out of the trivialness of the street, to be perpetual suggestions and provocations." Emerson is constantly raising words up in just this way. No youthful drilling is required, only tolerance and effort in the present.

²² *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, edited by David Justin Hodge (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 217.

²³ *English Traits*, p. 906.

²⁴ Joel Porte describes Emerson as "unChurched," in *Representative Man*. But the word "unchurch" is Emerson's, in *English Traits*, p. 889, where it's coupled (contrary to Porte's intention, at least) with unspiritualization.

²⁵ "Pray Without Ceasing," p. 24 in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Shaking Tent*, edited by Laurence A. Green (Waltham, Massachusetts: Back Pages Publishers, 2009). The following quotation appears on p. 25.

²⁶ I gather this from Richardson, *First We Read*, and from his biography *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

²⁷ Quoted in Lawrence Rosenwald, *Emerson and the Art of the Diary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 72. Rosenwald's source for Alcott's comment is Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism*, p. 160. It comes ultimately from Alcott's *Concord Days* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1872), p. 33 in "Emerson" (a diary entry dated April 1869), pp. 25-40. A grouchy further thought: in his opaque and opinionated "Emerson and a Poetry Yet to be Written," in *The Anatomy of Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 209-17, Harold Bloom repeats Alcott's joke (without citing Alcott) and then proceeds to spoil it, by dutifully taking note of an exception: "His essays (except for 'Experience') can be read back-to-front without too much loss" (p. 210). Now at last we have a serious interpretive thesis! Try reading *Nature* back-to-front, and you'll appreciate the wisdom in Alcott's lighter touch.

²⁸ Rosenwald, p. 72. I should probably look at the other letters Rosenwald cites there.

²⁹ The reviewer has been identified as J. B. Holland. See Ronald A. Bosco's "Historical Introduction" in volume eight of *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Letters and Social Aims*, edited by Glen M. Johnson and Joel Myerson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). The quoted words are taken from p. xxvii. Bosco surmises that Holland must have had some inside information on the text's manner of production.

³⁰ Robert D. Richardson, *First We Read*, pp. 36-7. John Jay Chapman makes some helpful remarks on Emerson's apparent inconsistency in "Emerson," in his *Emerson and Other Essays*, pp. 36 and 36-7. "From the point of view of Emerson there is no such thing as inconsistency. Every man is each day a new man. Let him be to-day what he is to-day. It is immaterial and waste of time to consider what he once was" (p. 36). "Emerson's method is, not to give a generalization and trust to our making the allowance, but to give two conflicting statements and leave the balance of truth

to be struck in our own minds on the facts. There is no inconsistency in this. It is a vivid and very legitimate method of procedure" (pp. 36-7). For a more exasperated response see Sharon Cameron, *Impersonality: Seven Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 54-5 and 221-3.

³¹ "All this polemics, syllogism, & definition is so much wastepaper & Montaigne is almost the only man who has never lost sight of this fact" (*Journals* 1: 419). "A systemgrinder hates the truth" (*Journals* 1: 426).

³² *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, p. 45.

³³ Partly for this reason, I find it hard to enter, with any joy, enthusiasm, or expectation of illumination or improvement, into the debate over Emerson as a philosopher. "Debate" is probably the wrong word. No one in philosophy is actively excluding Emerson. He is simply being ignored, as (for example—I've plucked the names almost at random), Montaigne, Henry More, Cudworth, Swedenborg, and Victor Cousin are being ignored. Emerson is, like Montaigne (but unlike More, Cudworth, Swedenborg, and Cousin) claimed by others—in Emerson's case, by critics and Americanists—which makes it easier to ignore him in good conscience. I doubt that the philosophers who ignore Emerson have developed reasons, or even developable reasons, for doing so. And not so long ago, for thinkers who are, even now, philosophers uncontroversially (James and Dewey, for example), Emerson was a philosopher—perhaps, even, a paradigmatic philosopher. I should look back at Bruce Kuklick's on the turn-of-the-century survey of Harvard graduate students in philosophy. My recollection is that several of them—Charles Hartshorne, for example—cite Emerson as an inspiration. These were, as I recall, students for whom the most urgent philosophical theme was the bearing of science on religion. (The indications are, incidentally, that in the early or mid-nineteenth century, Emerson was ruled out of philosophy by those who taught it at Harvard—Francis Abbott, for example. On this see Kuklick.)

³⁴ We have Josiah Royce's testimony for this. See his "William James and the Philosophy of Life," a Phi Beta Kappa oration delivered in 1911: "Fifty years since, if competent judges were asked to name the American thinkers from whom there had come novel and notable and typical contributions to general philosophy, they could in reply mention only two men—Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson" (p. 3 in *William James and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Life* [New York: Macmillan, 1912]). The thesis of Royce's essay is that they Edwards and Emerson have now been joined by James.

³⁵ See the opening paragraph of Charles M. Bakewell's "The Philosophy of Emerson" (*Philosophical Review* 12 [1903], pp. 525-36): "If to be a philosopher means to have a closely reasoned system of metaphysics, then doubtless Emerson was not a philosopher. But there is a far more general, and equally valid, sense in which we use the term in philosophy, where it implies an attitude, whether reasoned, intuitive, or instinctive, toward *life as a whole*" (p. 525). Emerson's standing as a philosopher is also the first question John Dewey addresses in his "Emerson: The Philosopher of Democracy," *Ethics* 13 (1903), pp. 405-13. Emerson himself would perhaps not agree that the professionalization of philosophy had to wait until the late nineteenth century. In his "Introduction" to Goodwin's edition of Plutarch's *Morals*, published in 1870, he compares Plutarch with his contemporary Seneca. "Plutarch is genial, with an endless interest in all human and divine things; Seneca, a professional philosopher, a writer of sentences, and, though he keep a sublime path, is less interesting, because less humane; and when we have shut his book, we forget

to open it again" (p. xviii). (William Watson Goodwin, a professor of classics at Harvard, was Emerson's neighbor in Concord.)

³⁶ Quotations are from Hugo Munsterberg, *Science and Idealism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906). The cornerstone of Emerson Hall was laid on Emerson's birthday, May 25, 1903.

³⁷ "Mr. America," *New York Review of Books* 31 (1984), section 1.

³⁸ Bloom proceeds to observe that Emerson is "the principal source of the American difference . . . in pragmatic postphilosophy." I'm not sure what this means, but it can't, by itself, make Emerson into a philosopher.

³⁹ Chapman—not very convincingly, to my mind—found argument only in Emerson's poetry. "He seeks in his verse to do the very thing which he avoids doing in his prose: follow a logical method" ("Emerson," in his *Emerson and Other Essays*, p. 92).

⁴⁰ The Social Circle in Concord, *The Centenary of the Birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Concord: The Social Circle and Riverside Press, 1903), p. 49.

⁴¹ "Note on the Texts," p. 1135 in his Library of American edition of *Essays and Lectures*. For a catalogue of the substantive differences between the two editions see Sealts and Ferguson (eds.), *Emerson's Nature: Origin, Growth, Meaning*, pp. 68-71.

⁴² I'm using the facsimile edition of *Nature* published in Boston by the Beacon Press in 1985, with an introduction by Jaroslav Pelikan.

⁴³ John S. Harrison, *The Teachers of Emerson* (New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1910), p. 34. The passage I go on to quote, from Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, is quoted as it appears in Harrison's book.

⁴⁴ This view was characteristic of Cambridge Platonism, which probably influenced Newton, who had been a student at Cambridge. In Newton's view, the only power that we can safely say is inherent in matter is inertial power, which is not active but passive. It is the passive power of a body to remain in its present state, so long as nothing external intervenes.

⁴⁵ I'm quoting from the Birch edition of the *System*, though I don't have the page reference at the moment.

⁴⁶ By the end of *Nature*, final causation is no longer thought to require a personal God.

⁴⁷ *The Transcendentalists* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), p. 47. This survey was first published as a chapter in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, volume 2, *Prose Writing 1820-1865*, edited by Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, volume 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 174. The letter is quoted in Whicher, *Freedom and Fate*, p. 18.

⁴⁹ *Nature* is a radically anthropocentric work, as Whicher for example observes (*Freedom and Fate*, p. 142). In this respect, it very much resembles Thoreau's *Walden*, as I'll argue next week.

⁵⁰ *Emerson's Epistemology*, p. 24.

⁵¹ My acquaintance with the literature on *Nature* isn't broad, but I have the feeling that this third sense of the word "nature" has gone unremarked. (For example, Kenneth Marc Harris, in his careful delineation of Emerson's understandings of "nature" [in "Emerson's Second Nature," pp. 33-48, in Joel Porte (ed.), *Emerson: Prospect and Retrospect*, Harvard English Studies 10 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982)], takes no notice of it.) Is that because the passage is read as saying that we have a distinct but most poetical *sentiment* (or sentimental susceptibility) in the mind? It seems quite clear that Emerson is talking about the sense of a word or verbal *expression*. He says that when we *speak* of nature in the manner described, we have a distinct sense in the mind, and that when we do, we *mean* the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects.

⁵² The primary forms are later called "the individual forms," of which Emerson offers a long list: "the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings and forms of most birds, the lions' claw, the serpent, the butterfly, sea-shells, flames, clouds, buds, leaves, and the forms of many trees, as the palm" (p. 14). Their primacy as forms has something to do with their "endless imitation" in our arts and crafts (p. 14).

⁵³ *Representative Man: Ralph Waldo Emerson in His Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988; original edition New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 3. See also Barbara L. Packer, *Emerson's Fall: A New Interpretation of the Major Essays* (New York: Continuum, 1982), p. 79, and Paul Grimstad, "Emerson's Adjacencies: Radical Empiricism in *Nature*," in Branka Arsić and Cary Wolfe (eds.), *The Other Emerson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 251-70, especially pp. 262-3.

⁵⁴ For less favorable views see Jonathan Bishop, *Emerson on the Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 10-15, and Packer, *Emerson's Fall*, p. 27.

⁵⁵ There are some remarks on landscape in George Santayana's *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe* (Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, volume 1 [Cambridge: Harvard University, 1910]) that recall this part of *Nature*. "To cry 'The All is One,' and to perceive that all things are in one landscape and form a system by their juxtaposition," he writes, "is the rude beginning of wisdom in natural philosophy" (p. 22). See also the remarks on Wordsworth on pp. 59-61. The similarities between Emerson's handling of landscape in *Nature* and the opening pages of Thoreau's "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," in *Walden*, are even closer. See pp. 78-9 in Walter Harding's annotated edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995).

⁵⁶ Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 94.

⁵⁷ Buell thinks Emerson's exploration of the occult relation terminates in a "shoulder-shrugging conclusion as to whether this impression comes from nature, from man, or from 'a harmony of both'" (*Emerson*, p. 94). I see Emerson's affirmation of the relation as an implicit embrace of the

third and final answer. For discussion of an important journal entry suggesting that Emerson was too absorbed by the mystery to shrug his shoulders, see Packer, *Emerson's Fall*, p. 41.

⁵⁸ "Thinking of Emerson," *New Literary History* 11 (1979), pp. 167-76, p. 168.

⁵⁹ Swedenborg and his theory of "correspondence" are often cited, probably with some justice, as a crucial influence on chapter three of *Nature*, but it should be remembered that a doctrine of correspondence was a settled piece of Puritan theology. Edwards (in *Images of Divine Things*, on p. 16 of *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*) observes, "that the things of this world are ordered [and] designed to shadow forth spiritual things, appears by the Apostle's arguing spiritual things from them. I. Cor. 15-36." The following quotations are from p. 17:

We see that even in the material world God makes one part of it strangely to agree with another; and why is it not reasonable to suppose he makes the whole as a shadow of the spiritual world.

The silkworm is a remarkable type of Christ, which, when it does, yields us that of which we make such glorious clothing.

Ravens that with delight feed on carrion seem to be remarkable types of devils who with delight prey upon the souls of the dead.

It is with many of these images as it was with the sacrifices of old. They are often repeated, whereas the antitype is continual and never comes to pass but once.

They are repeated often, but the antitype is but once.

The contrast between type and antitype, many and one, is straight Puritan doctrine, and it contributes to Samuel Johnson's eagerness to find a doctrine of archetypes behind Berkeley's theory of ideas. See William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 28: "The *Idea* or platform, as it is absolutely considered in God, is only one, but as it includes divers respects to the Creatures, it becomes manifold."

⁶⁰ The entry is from March 27, 1836. It is presented in Sealts and Ferguson, *Emerson's Nature*, p. 43.

⁶¹ All quotations from Coleridge are from p. 10 of Lawrence Buell (ed.), *The American Transcendentalists*. Buell is quoting from James Marsh (ed.), *Aids to Reflection* (Burlington: Chauncey Goodrich, 1829).

⁶² Hence they are exempt from what Stanley Cavell calls Emerson's "epistemology of moods." Intuition is moodless or unmodified. Its impersonality consists in that. I think it's clear that Emerson never let go of intuition. It remained his means of access to the "central fact" (Introduction to Plutarch's *Morals*, p. xv).

⁶³ (Boston: James Munroe, 1836), pp. 35-6. Ripley goes on to ask whether this does not show that "Reason though with us is not created by us; though belonging to human nature, originates in

a higher nature; though shining in the mind of man, is an emanation from the mind of God." The motto on Ripley's title page is from Coleridge, and on p. 11 he points out that "the word Reason is used . . . through these Discourses, not as the power of reasoning, of evolving derivative truth from admitted premisses; but in its highest philosophical sense, as the faculty of perceiving primitive, spiritual truth. I am justified in this use of the term by the authority of some of the older English writers, and by a similar use of the corresponding term in the philosophical literature of Europe." The sources to which he alludes here are also Emerson's.

⁶⁴ For this use of "universe" see p. 8 of the introduction: "Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul."

⁶⁵ It is fair to detect echoes of Spinoza in Emerson's use of *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, but Emerson himself attributes it to the "schoolmen" (*Essays*, p. 545), as Berkeley does when he makes use of the distinction in one of his letters to Johnson. Spinoza's *Ethics* may be our own likeliest source for the distinction, but it may not have been for Emerson and others in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is, in any case, misleading to say that in *Nature*, "Emerson explicitly refers to [a particular] type of expressionist philosophy by using Spinoza's distinction between *natura naturans* (creating infinite nature) and *natura naturata* (created finite modes)" (Branka Arsić, "Brain Walks: Emerson on Thinking," in Arsić and Wolfe, *The Other Emerson*, pp. 59-97, p. 95; see also her *On Leaving: A Reading in Emerson* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010], pp. 352-3).

⁶⁶ Or so I infer Grimstad's reaffirmation of Van Leer's findings in "Emerson's Adjacencies" (pp. 257-8 and 268 in *The Other Emerson*), and from the tone of David Greenham's brief remarks in "The Skeptical Deduction: Reading Kant and Cavell in Emerson's 'Self-Reliance,'" *ESQ* 53 (2007), pp. 253-81, pp. 259-60. I may be harking back to an older view, on which see John Michael, *Emerson and Skepticism: The Cipher of the World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 35-8, particularly his remarks on Gay Wilson Allen.

⁶⁷ The idealism of chapter six is not, however, steadfastly Berkeleyan. As I will acknowledge later on, the later argument of chapter six includes some non-Berkeleyan material. But I think chapter seven gives us reason to regard this as an intrusion into chapter six of considerations that more properly belong in chapter seven. Here it may be worth recalling a remark Emerson made in a letter to Margaret Fuller (quoted in Barbara L. Packer, *Emerson's Fall*, p. 159): "I know but one solution to my nature & relations, which I find in the remembering the joy with which in my boyhood I caught the first hint of the Berkleian philosophy, and which I certainly never lost sight of afterwards."

⁶⁸ My arguments line up well, in my view, with the facts adduced by René Wellek in "Emerson and German Philosophy," *New England Quarterly* 16 (1943), pp. 41-62. See in particular pp. 41-2 and 44-8. See also Stephen E. Whicher's way of sorting out the four meanings that idealism held for Emerson in his *Selections*, p. 487. Whicher thinks that these meanings are inconsistent; I am not so sure.

⁶⁹ (New York: The Modern Library), p. 44.

⁷⁰ They're worth comparing to the account of Berkeley in Josiah Royce's *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 92, where Royce falls naturally into talk of discipline: "Matter . . . is [God's] manifested will, his plan for our education, his voice speaking to us, warning, instructing, guiding, amusing, disciplining, blessing us, with a series of orderly and significant experiences."

⁷¹ p. 56 in Robert E. Spiller and Wallace E. Williams (eds.), *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, volume 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972). In *English Traits*, Emerson includes "the theory of Berkeley, that we have no certain assurance of the existence of matter" among "a few generalizations [that] always circulate in the world, . . . which astonish, and appear to be avenues to vast kingdoms of thought, and . . . are in the world *constants*, like the Copernican and Newtonian theories in physics" (*Essays*, p. 898).

⁷² Richardson tells the following story. "Once when a wagonload of firewood arrived at Emerson's Concord home while he was indoors talking with his usual gaggle of idealist friends, Emerson looked out the window and, rising from his chair, said, 'we must deal with this just as if it were real'" (*First We Read*, p. 23). In "Experience," Emerson gives makes a similar appeal on behalf of the belief in other people.

⁷³ There's is no documentary evidence that he did so, but I sometimes wonder whether we know too much about Emerson's reading for our own good. Our evidence is so extensive that we may not consider sources that haven't been documented by Kenneth Walter Cameron. But Emerson surely read more than we know of. I'm reminded of Emerson's rueful confession to an admirer: that if he'd read as much as Emerson had, he wouldn't think Emerson was so smart.

⁷⁴ Nowadays, Berkeley is seen as an empiricist rather than a Platonist. But Kant himself saw Berkeley as a Platonist (as I argue in "Berkeley and Kant," in Daniel Garber and Béatrice Longuenesse (eds.), *Kant and the Early Moderns* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008], pp. 142-171, 231-4), as did Emerson's friend Bronson Alcott. In Alcott's view, Berkeley's idealism is "the purest which the British Isles have produced." "Platonic as were Cudworth, Norris, Henry More," Berkeley's Platonism is, he suggests, more authentic and pristine: Berkeley "dealt face to face with ideas as distinguished from scholastic fancies and common notions, and thus gave them their place in the order of the mind; and this to exhaustive issues, as his English predecessors in thought had failed to do" (p. 236 in *Concord Days*). Cudworth, Norris, and More (whose prose was more clotted and scholastic than Berkeley's) all appear on Emerson's own list of Plato's disciples in Britain. There was a copy of Berkeley's *Siris* in Alcott's library. See <<http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou01478>>. Although we have no external evidence that Emerson read or borrowed *Siris* from his neighbor Alcott, it's hard to imagine that he didn't know about it. Berkeley's advocacy of tar-water was one of the best-known facts about him.

⁷⁵ Berkeley alludes here to Newton's *Principia*, where absolute time is said to flow uniformly (*aequabiliter fluit*).

⁷⁶ *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, volume 2 (New York: Eastburn, Kirk, & Co., 1814), p. 65.

⁷⁷ Interestingly, Emerson cites "Doctor Samuel Clarke's argument for theism from the nature of space and time" as another of the astonishing avenues of thought along which the world always runs, in a list that also includes "the theory of Berkeley, that we have no certain assurance of the existence of matter" (*English Traits*, p. 898 in *Essays*). This is perhaps at odds with my earlier suggestion that Emerson, late in his career, took Berkeley's lesson to heart. But the *possibility* that matter does not exist is compatible with the validity, and even the soundness, of Clarke's argument, just as it is compatible with another of the constants, "Spenser's creed" that the soul makes the body. The idealistic verses of "the wise Spenser" are quoted in "The Poet," p. 452 in *Essays and Lectures*.

⁷⁸ I'm also struck by Emerson's later description of the idealist's world as "not painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity, for the contemplation of the soul" (p. 39). This is a version of continuous creation. We live at the moment in a new world. In the next moment another will arise, also without a history.

⁷⁹ Chapman says a bit later that Emerson "seeks in his verse to do the very thing which he avoids doing in his prose: follow a logical method" (p. 92).

⁸⁰ I borrow the language of prologue, overture, and argument from Chapman, p. 91.

⁸¹ Because Emerson isn't arguing for idealism, he needn't worry about a criticism made by several of the book's reviewers. Francis Bowen for example complained that the author "has brought no positive arguments to disprove the existence of any thing exterior to mind. He has not shown, that the common opinion involves any repugnancy or inconsistency in itself. The bridge on which we relied for support may be broken down [because the usual arguments for the "outward and independent existence of matter" are indeed "inconclusive"], but we are notwhelmed in the waters beneath" (in *Nature*, edited by Sealts and Ferguson, p. 83, from a review originally published in *The Christian Examiner* 21 [1837], pp. 371-85). In a warm and capable review in *The Western Messenger* 2 (1837), pp. 385-93, Samuel Osgood gives voice to the same dissatisfaction. "We are unable to perceive the bearing of the writer's argument, in proof of idealism, or to allow the advantage, which he claims for his theory. All his arguments, it seems, prove merely the superiority of mind over matter. And all the advantage, which he claims for Idealism, is owned by that common spiritual philosophy, which subordinates matter to mind. We own there is much fine thought and good writing in this chapter, little as the sentiments agree with our Eclecticism" (p. 391). By the standard of these lectures, what Osgood calls the common spiritual philosophy is just another version of idealism. The content of Osgood's eclecticism, which derives I assume from Victor Cousin, is left unclear.

⁸² I feel as if this motive deserves more discussion than I give it. I suppose one can see the poetry, or the emphasis on symbol and imagination, as a way of meeting a difficulty—the stubbornness or stolidity of matter. We need some way of etherealizing it, some way of asserting the primacy of spirit. Poetry does that. (But science does it too.) At the very least we render the priority of spirit consistent with the stubborn persistence of matter. We needn't be grudging in our acknowledgement of matter. We can admit it genially. (Emerson would like that.) But then we assert ourselves. This certainly isn't a positive argument for idealism, certainly, but it's an promising idealist response to a difficulty. Sufficient reason may enter in as well, though at the moment I can't see exactly how.

⁸³ F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), translated by Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), p. 6. It's doubtful that Emerson read this work, which hadn't yet been translated into English, but it's mentioned and briefly described by Frederic Henry Hedge in a review of several works by Coleridge in *The Christian Examiner*, volume 14 (Boston: Charles Bowen, 1833), p. 125. Hedge quotes from the *System* again in an 1836 inaugural lecture at the Bangor Lyceum that I'll mention later on. (The lecture's themes overlap significantly with those of Emerson's *Nature*.) In a letter from 1845 quoted by Wellek ("Emerson and German Philosophy," p. 51), Emerson tells James Eliot Cabot that he had "never fairly engaged" with Schelling "until last week," when he studied Cabot's own translation of Schelling's *Philosophical Enquiries into the Nature of Freedom*.

⁸⁴ I need to consider whether this threatens my overall reading of the work. I think not, because topic three seems to me to represent an intrusion of the German "spiritualism" of chapter seven into the more arid idealist atmosphere of chapter six. According to topic three, the laws of nature aren't merely known *a priori* by the mind, but "imparted" to nature by an "informing soul."

⁸⁵ In volume 5 of the *Journals*, in a passage not included in the Rosenwald edition, Emerson speaks (p. 72) of a "cumulative moral & intellectual science," which seems to confirm my suspicion. "Intellectual science" is also linked with "ethical science" in volume 1 of the *Journals* (pp. 259, 258). When, in volume 1, Emerson rests his hopes for the advancement of intellectual science on the shoulder's of the clergy, it seems quite clear that it's ethics he has in mind. But "Intellectual science" may also be a synonym of "moral philosophy," as understood by such Scottish philosophers as Hutcheson, Hume, Reid, Stewart, and Thomas Brown. It will then be the science of human nature.

⁸⁶ There's a nice treatment of *Nature's* figure of the child in Joel Porte, "Nature as Symbol: Emerson's Noble Doubt," *New England Quarterly* 37 (1964), pp. 453-76. See pp. 465-6.

⁸⁷ That idealism "leaves God out of me" echoes a poem Emerson had written in 1832 (parts of which are included in Whicher, *Selections*, p. 11; the whole is in the *Journals*). "I will not live out of me. / I will not see with other's eyes; / My good is good, my evil ill. / I would be free; I cannot be / While I take things as others please to rate them." He resolves in these lines to follow his heart, which has, he says, never misled him. Where, he then asks, did the heart's "omniscient spirit" come from? His answer is, "From God it came. It is the Deity." If, in other words, I'm not to live "out of me," God himself must be within me.

⁸⁸ In *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892), Josiah Royce separates idealism into two moments that correspond almost exactly to Emerson's. The first of Royce's moments is Berkeleyan, and he describes it as "only preparatory." The second, "which gives us our notion of the absolute Self," is "the one which from Kant, until the present time, has formed the deeper problem of thought" (p. 351). I take up Emerson's influence on Royce in Lecture V. In *On Leaving*, p. 102, Arsić treats the *whole* of *Nature* is a vast introductory hypothesis. I see no basis for this in the text. I'm also perplexed by her suggestion that according to *Nature*, idealism "ruins" the world (p. 56), and by her sense of the work as enacting failure, disaster, double-dealing, and shipwreck (pp. 101, 102).

⁸⁹ Emerson omits several stanzas, but it is particularly telling that he drops the last, in which the poet prays that "as the world serves us, we may serve thee, And both thy servants be." In Emerson's more resolutely anthropocentric *Nature*, the buck passed up by servant nature ends with us. We are lord.

⁹⁰ Both Porte and Packer have helpfully discussed Emerson's allusion to this text, but I do not think either has given us the last word. See Porte, *Representative Man*, pp. 92-3, and Packer, *Transcendentalism*, p. 51.

⁹¹ "Of Baptizing Infants," p. 126 in *The Whole Works of . . . Jeremy Taylor*, volume 1 (London: Westley and Davis, 1835).

⁹² "Emerson's Philosophy of Nature," in *The Genius and Character of Emerson: Lectures at the Concord School of Philosophy*, edited by F. N. Sanborn (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1885), pp. 339-64. See also Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), pp. 105-6. In Holmes's view, Emerson prefigures Darwin.

⁹³ But see *Journals* 2: 232-3, where Emerson may be responding to the conflict that worries Harris.

⁹⁴ "Completing the Sphere: Emerson's Revision of the Mottoes of 'Nature'," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1979), pp. 231-7, p. 234. Francis goes on to say that Emerson's decision to omit the following first-edition sentence was another sign of his new conception of the natural world: "Thus nature is an interpreter, by whose means man converses with his fellow men." Francis hypothesizes that "the idea of Nature as an intermediary between men facilitating communications is, by 1849, not consistent with the complex concept of Nature that evolved in the essays. Man is the interpreter, as surely members of the Geologic Society impressed on Emerson. To conceive of Nature as interpreter is to insist on a limited role for Man and a proscribed role for Nature" (p. 234). I have several problems with this. The first is that the omitted sentence remains a perfectly fair summary of the important paragraph leading up to it. So omitting the sentence while retaining the paragraph doesn't meet the need that Francis identifies. The second is that Emerson may not have shared Francis's doggedly literal understanding of "interpreter." The third is that the motto's image of the multilingual rose comes very close—dangerously close, if Francis is right—to the forbidden image of nature as interpreter. Finally, the closing paragraph of chapter seven continues to call nature "the present expositor of the divine mind." It seems to me that being an expositor goes hand in hand with being an interpreter, on one perfectly legitimate understanding of that word.

⁹⁵ This is on p. 733 of chapter 11 in an abridgment of Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*. I need to locate the passage in the text of 1678. (Will it turn out to be in a different work by Cudworth?)

⁹⁶ For a useful initial guide to these waters see William Rossi, "Evolutionary Theory," pp. 583-96 in *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*, edited by Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petruionis, and Laura Dassow Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹⁷ I think I can do better with this than I do in the main text. The poem says that *the eye* reads omens where it goes. So the worm mounting through the spires of form may be a worm (a carterpillar) that we take to be a *type* of man: an "omen" of man's future possibilities.

⁹⁸ To describe it as inward or interior is not to deny that it has outward marks, or that its inward presence might even have outward "criteria" (in Wittgenstein's sense). For some passages in Emerson expressing something like the pragmatic conception of belief as a habit of action, see "Powers of the Mind" (p. 240 in *Selected Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005]), where Emerson declares that "thought exists to be expressed. That which cannot externize itself is not thought," and the following passages in the *Journals* (volume and page numbers are to the Rosenwald edition): "to think is to act" (1: 392); "making the abstractions of philosophers accessible & effectual" (1: 392); "any mind that *thought so* would have *acted so*" (1: 594); "the fish in the cave is blind; such is the eternal relation between power & use" (2: 377); "the scholar who abstracted himself with pain to make the analysis of Hegel is less enriched than when the beauty & depth of any thought by the wayside has commanded his mind & led to new thought and action" (2: 886). I'll say a bit more later on about the "pragmatic" or "de-Transcendentalized" Emerson.

⁹⁹ I've outworn the fiction that this manuscript is the text of a lecture. If I were delivering this, text, I'd now be somewhere between hour two and hour three. The remaining pages of this "lecture" will therefore be more clipped and declamatory than the preceding ones. I'll give as clear an outline as I can of my overall view, quoting many of the texts that have been rattling around in my head for the past month or two, but I'll avoid close readings, and spend less time quarreling with other commentators.

¹⁰⁰ *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*, p. 234.

¹⁰¹ There's another comment on willfulness in writing in a memorable journal entry quoted by Richardson in *First We Read*, p. 26: "Three or four stubborn necessary words are the pith and fate of the business; all the rest is expatiating and qualifying; three or four real choices, acts of will of somebody, the rest is circumstance, satellite, and flourish." Here the core choices are made (or so I assume) by an impersonal will, but the surrounding choices are the writer's. But see Arsić, "Brains Walks," p. 91 (as well as *On Leaving*, p. 165), for a different view.

¹⁰² C. S. Peirce is an instructive example of an idealist who gives the understanding a very wide berth. For him, intuition counts for nothing. The question is whether the idealist hypothesis has the kind of explanatory power that can gratify the understanding. "The one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws," he writes. "But before this can be accepted it must show itself capable of explaining the tri-dimensionality of space, the laws of motion, and the general characteristics of the universe, with mathematical clearness and precision; for no less should be demanded of every philosophy."

¹⁰³ Sellars's definition is foreshadowed by Santayana (p. 22 in *Three Philosophical Poets*): "[To speak of 'the world'] is to set the problem for all natural philosophy, and in a certain measure to anticipate the solution of that problem; for it is to ask how things hang together, and to assume that they do hang together in one way rather than another."

¹⁰⁴ I should cite or quote some texts to this effect.

¹⁰⁵ See Michael Lopez, "De-Transcendentalizing Emerson," *ESQ* 34 (1988), pp. 77-139, p. 116.

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence Buell, in his edition of *The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writings* ([New York: Modern Library, 2006], p. 565), criticizes Whicher for "discounting . . . Emerson's later 'pragmatic' phase," but I don't think this is altogether fair. In my view, Whicher quietly takes Emerson's pragmatism for granted. Emerson's pragmatism had already been acknowledged by Whicher's main secondary source (Henry David Gray, *Emerson: A Statement of New England Transcendentalism as Expressed in the Philosophy of Its Chief Exponent* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1917], pp. 13-14; see p. viii of *Freedom and Fate* for Whicher's acknowledgment of Gray's influence), and by Eduard C. Lindeman, in an essay ("Emerson's Pragmatic Mood," *American Scholar* 16 [1946-7], pp. 57-64) to which Whicher approvingly alludes on p. 172. Recent writers who foreground Emerson's pragmatism or proto-pragmatism include Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); David M. Robinson, *Emerson and the Conduct of Life: Pragmatism and Ethical Purpose in the Later Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism and Romanticism," pp. 105-19 in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Buell himself in *Emerson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 199-241. In *The Pragmatic Test: Essays on the History of Ideas* (San Francisco: Colt Press, 1941), Henry Bamford Parkes assesses Emerson as a pragmatic failure, but he does not read him as a pragmatist; see "Emerson," pp. 39-62. (Though he tests views by their consequences, Parkes himself disavows pragmatism. See his "Introduction," p. 4, and his essay "William James," pp. 72-94.) It was Buell who coined the term "de-Transcendentalization" (in "The Emerson Industry in the 1980's: A Survey of Trends and Achievements," *ESQ* [1984], pp. 117-36), but he grants (as does Lopez, "De-Transcendentalizing Emerson," p. 90), that Emerson never ceased to "transcendentalize"; in this respect, the label "de-Transcendentalization" is misleading. Emerson, it is often said, never called himself a transcendentalist, but I don't know how to interpret his forbearance. I'm not sure that he ever met a label that he liked. (Did Emerson ever call himself an abolitionist? He certainly was one.) Emerson does hold transcendentalism at arm's length in his 1842 essay "Transcendentalism," but that essay, intended as a Theophrastan character, maintains a steady neutrality and almost scientific even-handedness. In a briefer and less finely tuned note on "Transcendentalism," published that same year in the *Dial*, Emerson's transcendentalist allegiances are made quite clear, though the label is taken very broadly there, as standing for "the liberal thought of all men of a religious and contemplative habit" (*The Dial: A Magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion* 2 [1842], pp. 382-4, p. 382). I can't fairly examine the pragmatist Emerson here, but I sympathize with much of Stanley Cavell's "What's the Use of Calling Emerson a Pragmatist?," (*Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003], pp. 215-23). However we answer his title question, I think it's helpful to recall that decidedly "pragmatist" linkings of belief with action, or of truth with practical power, figure in the writings of several mid-century Unitarians and Unitarian renegades. See Frederic Henry Hedge, *An Introductory Lecture Delivered at the Opening of the Bangor Lyceum* (Bangor: Nourse and Smith, Duren and Thatcher, 1836), pp. 24 and 29, and Sampson Reed, *Observations on the Growth of the Mind* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1838), pp. 21, 63, and 89.

¹⁰⁷ *Journals* 8: 228. The entry was adapted in "New England Reformers," p. 608 in *Essays and Lectures*: "no matter, how often defeated, you are born to victory." See also *Journals* 5: 338: "A believer in Unity, a seer of Unity, I yet behold two," and p. 1052 in "Culture": "The chances seem infinite against success; and yet success is continually attained."

¹⁰⁸ Here I cite or exhibit *some* of the evidence of Emerson's lasting commitment to idealism. It includes "Literary Ethics," pp. 96, 97, 100 in *Essays and Lectures*; "The Method of Nature," p. 118, 130; "Lecture on the Times," p. 168; "History," pp. 237, 255 ("the mind is One, and . . . nature is its correlative"); "Compensation," p. 299; "Prudence," p. 357 ("the world of the senses is a world of shows; it does not exist for itself, but has a symbolic character"); the whole of "The Over-Soul," but especially pp. 385-6, 387, 390, 392, 393, and 399; "Circles," pp. 404, 405, 407-8 ("there are degrees in idealism . . . the idealism of Berkeley is only a crude statement of the idealism of Jesus, and that again is a crude statement of the fact, that all nature is the rapid efflux of goodness executing and organizing itself"); p. 412 ("while the eternal generation of circles proceeds, the eternal generator abides. That central life is somewhat superior to creation, superior to knowledge and thought, and contains all its circles."); "The Poet," pp. 447-8, 452, 453; "Nature" (1844), p. 548, 555 ("nature is the incarnation of a thought, and turns to a thought again"); "New England Reformers," p. 607; "Uses of Great Men," p. 631; "Plato; or, The Philosopher," p. 638 ("it is soul,—one in all bodies, pervading, uniform, perfect, preeminent over nature, exempt from birth, growth, and decay, omnipresent"), 639, 645-6, "Swedenborg; or, The Mystic," p. 668 ("in short, he was a believer in the Identity-philosophy, which he held not idly, as the dreamers of Berlin or Boston"); "Montaigne; or, The Skeptic," p. 709; *English Traits*, throughout chapter 14 (pp. 893-907; "Fate," p. 956 ("thought dissolves the material universe, by carrying the mind up into a sphere where all is plastic"), 967-8 ("the Blessed Unity which holds nature and souls in perfect solution, and compels every atom to serve an universal end"; "let us build altars to the Beautiful Necessity, which secures that all is made of one piece"); "Worship," p. 1065 ("the law is the basis of the human mind. In us, it is inspiration; out there in Nature, we see its fatal strength. We call it the moral sentiment."); "Beauty," p. 1112; *Society and Solitude* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1870), pp. 36, 43, 45, 114, 118, 263-4; Emerson's "Introduction" to Goodwin's edition of Plutarch's *Morals* (also published in 1870), pp. xv ("the central fact is the superhuman intelligence pouring into us from its unknown fountain . . ."), xvi; and his poem "Brahma," about which I'll say more in Lecture V. Similar sentiments flood Emerson's lectures and surface regularly in his *Journals*. Some typical example are 1: 449 in the Rosenwald edition of the *Journals* ("under the stupendous dominion of Ideas, individual interests, even personal identity, melt into the swelling surges of the Universal Humanity"), and 1: 450 ("I only aim to speak for the Great Soul; to speak for the sovereignty of Ideas"). (Ideas for Emerson are almost always Platonic rather than Cartesian or Lockean. Emerson dismisses Locke in a way that present-day students of philosophy would find surprising: for Emerson is he somehow "to whom the meaning of ideas was unknown" [*English Traits*, p. 899].) Emerson sometimes experiments with an "identity-philosophy" that he attributes to Schelling (as in the passage from "Swedenborg" quoted above; see also *English Traits*, p. 898, where his statement of the view—"all difference is quantitative"—is taken from Stallo's handbook; and *Journals* 2: 566). The identity-philosophy may well be form of neutral monism rather than a version idealism. Its status deserves more discussion than I can give it here, but my instinct is that at bottom, Emerson thinks of reality as law or lawfulness, and that for him, as for William Whewell, "law implies mind" (*Astronomy and General Physics, considered with reference to Natural Theology* [London: William Pickering, 1833], pp. 293-6), even if Emerson does not think of that mind as a person.

¹⁰⁹ It gave way, in my view, only as an object of feeling or poetic attention.

¹¹⁰ Here I'll resist asking how vigorously Emerson might oppose what I'm attempting, but I'll quote a few suggestive passages. The first is from "Nominalist and Realist": "We must reconcile the contradictions as we can, but their discord and their concord introduce wild absurdities into our

thinking and speech. No sentence will hold the whole truth, and the only way in which we can be just, is by giving ourselves the lie; Speech is better than silence; silence is better than speech;—All things are in contact; every atom has a sphere of repulsion;—Things are, and are not, at the same time;—and the like. All the universe over, there is but one thing, this old Two-Face, creator-creature, mind-matter, right-wrong, of which any proposition may be affirmed or denied" (p. 585 in *Essays and Lectures*). The second is from "Compensation": "An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as, spirit, matter; man, woman; odd, even; subjective, objective; in, our; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay" (p. 287). The third, from "Montaigne": "The astonishment of life, is, the absence of any appearance of reconciliation between the theory and practice of life. Reason, the prized reality, the Law, is apprehended, now and then, for a serene and profound moment, amidst the hubbub of cares and works which have no direct bearing on it;—is then lost, for months or years, and again found, for an interval, to be lost again. If we compute it in time, we may, in fifty years, have half a dozen reasonable hours." The fourth, from "Fate": "What to do? By obeying each thought frankly, by harping, or, if you will, pounding on each string, we learn at last its power. By the same obedience to other thoughts, we learn theirs, and then comes some reasonable hope of harmonizing them. We are sure, that, though we know not how, necessity does comport with liberty, the individual with the world, my polarity with the spirit of the times" (p. 943). The last is from *Society and Solitude*, pp. 161-2 in "Works and Days": "The world is enigmatical,—everything said, and everything known or done,—and must not be taken literally, but genially [from *genial*, meaning of or pertaining to genius]. We must be at the top of our condition to understand anything rightly. You must hear the bird's song without attempting to render it into nouns and verbs. Cannot we be a little abstemious and obedient? Cannot we let the morning be." See also *Journals* 1: 809.

¹¹¹ Ware was responding specifically to the Divinity School Address. See pp. 19, 20, 21, and 23 in *The Personality of the Deity* (Boston: J. Munroe, 1838). Ware was a professor of pulpit eloquence and pastoral care at the Divinity School, where his father was also a professor. Ware's sermon was delivered two months after Emerson's address. Sharon Cameron also notes that Emerson "disdained 'the personality of the deity'" (*Impersonality*, p. xv). She goes on to describe him as a pantheist.

¹¹² See "The Over-Soul," p. 392: "In these communications, the power to see is not separated from the will to do, but the insight proceeds from obedience, and the obedience proceeds from a joyful perception." See also "Prudence," p. 366 and 1: 508 in Rosenwald's edition of the *Journals*.

¹¹³ I should quote or cite some texts affirming the "antagonism" ("Fate," p. 953) and "double-consciousness" (p. 966) within the self, and the "amphibious" character of human beings ("Nominalist and Realist," p. 577). In "Plato," p. 641, Emerson recognizes a "union of impossibilities" in all things, and says that it is "transferred entire to the consciousness of a man." I regret that I can't take up the puzzles of Emerson's individualism (raised for example by 1: 145 in the *Journals*, where Emerson describes the finite self as occupying a patch of ground untenanted before). There's a stimulating discussion of some of these puzzles in Cameron, "The Way of Life by Abandonment: Emerson's Impersonal," pp. 79-107 in *Impersonality*. I think Emerson would have appreciated Josiah Royce's resolution "to become infinite in my own way" (quoted on p. 290 in John Clendenning, *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce*, revised and expanded edition [Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999]).

¹¹⁴ See "Experience," p. 481 ("the new molecular philosophy shows astronomical interspaces betwixt atom and atom, shows that the world is all outside; it has no inside"), and the corresponding journal entry at 2: 111. Emerson may have learned this from Coleridge, who writes in *Biographia Literaria* that "matter has no *inward*. We remove one surface but to meet with another. We can but divide a particle into particles; and each atom comprehends in itself the properties of the material universe" (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁵ I'm in sharp disagreement with Cameron on this. See her *Impersonality*, p. x. For passages affirming our interiority, conceived as the capacity for perception or consciousness, see *Journals* 1: 587 and 2: 190, 327, and 565.

¹¹⁶ In this lecture, I haven't addressed the possibility that Emerson's idealism is no more than ethical. This is the view Porte takes in *Representative Man*. I consider a strictly ethical idealism in connection with Thoreau in Lecture IV. For an attempt to draw out a long train of distinctively Emersonian consequences from a single ethical premiss—that the one thing of value is an active soul ("The American Scholar," p. 57)—see Russell Goodman's "Paths of Coherence through Emerson's Philosophy: The Case of 'Nominalist and Realist,'" pp. 41-58 in *The Other Emerson*.