“A HIGHER SPHERE OF THOUGHT”:

EMERSON’S USE OF THE *EXEMPLUM*

AND *EXEMPLUM FIDEI*

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

AW	*Emerson's Antislavery Writings*. Ed. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995).
EL	*Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 3 vols. Ed. Stephen E. Whicher, Robert E. Spiller, and Wallace E. Williams. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964-72).
JMN	*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vols. I-XIV. Ed. William H. Gilman, Alfred R. Ferguson, George P. Clark, Merrell R. Davis, Harrison Hayford, Ralph Orth, J. E. Parsons, Merton M. Sealts, and A. W. Plumstead. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960-78).
L	*The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Ralph L. Rusk, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1939).
W	*The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols. Ed. Edward W. Emerson. (Boston: Houghton, 1903-1904).
Y	*Young Emerson Speaks, Unpublished Dissertations on Many Subjects.* Ed. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr. (Boston: Houghton, 1938).

Introduction

Each man has his own vocation.
The talent is the call. There is one
direction in which all space is open
to him. He has faculties silently inviting him thither to endless exertion.
He is like a ship in a river; he runs
against obstructions on every side
but one, on that side all obstruction
is taken away and he sweeps serenely
over a deepening channel into an
infinite sea.
-- “Spiritual Laws,” 1841

Ralph Waldo Emerson likely seldom lived a day in which his works were not subject to review. From the moment he could put pen to paper, his parents, his Aunt Mary Moody, and his brothers were available to offer their criticism of the thoughts and the words he put forth. His teachers, his professors, and other mentors chimed in, and later, clerics, colleagues, and members of his congregation. As time went on, orators, editors, and authors added their voices, as did publishers, activists, other writers, and friends. Emerson’s was a life saturated with external input; from his earliest days as a minister’s son and student at Boston’s Latin School, he received tutelage and indoctrination from a variety of disparate sources from both within and beyond the limits of prescribed curricula. When combined with a natural curiosity and interests in a wide range of subjects, these and other factors converged to create a mind alive with activity and prone to intense periods of contemplation, correspondence, and creativity. The mature Emerson became a prolific writer whose body of works spanned six decades of his own life and continue to be reprinted and studied within the historical distance of our own.

When a writer continues to generate criticism and interest two centuries removed from the initial production of his work, questions of influence invariably arise, as they have in the case of Emerson. Emerson scholarship has enjoyed numerous studies devoted to the many influences upon his work, including historical factors such as Puritanism, neoPlatonism, and democracy, and the literary effects of other writers such as Shakespeare, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Goethe. The criticism and scholarship of more than a century and a half has revealed a wide variety of Emersons (the theologian, the visionary, the philosopher, the Transcendentalist, and the American) who have played a variety of public roles (the minister, the essayist, the orator, the poet, and the patriot). The essential expansiveness of the character in question precludes convenient pigeonholing: all of these Emersons, and many others as well, can be readily identified and explored within the contexts of his biography, works, and career. Although critical studies of Emerson's philosophy enhance our ever-expanding knowledge of the man and his material, very few make more than a passing acknowledgment of the influence of Emerson's first career. Despite the availability of works such as Jonathan Bishop's *Emerson on the Soul*, Evelyn Barish's *Emerson: The Roots of Prophecy*, and David M. Robinson's *The Spiritual Emerson: Essential Writings*, critical focus remains primarily on influences other than that of Emerson's time as a clergyman. Although Emerson continues to inspire inquiry that reenergizes interest in his life and work and attests to the vitality of his words and the enduring veracity of his message, the fact remains that scholars are still trying to determine exactly who Emerson was.

Not that Emerson himself necessarily knew. As he acknowledges in "Experience," Emerson "accept[ed] the clangor and jangle of contrary tendencies" (*W* 3: 62). Having dutifully followed family tradition by becoming a Unitarian minister, he resigned his position with Boston's Second Church after only three years in the pulpit. His departure from the church, which closely coincided with the death of his first wife, Ellen Tucker, initiated a period of intense introspection that culminated in Emerson's redefinition of many of his personal perceptions as well as his goals for his life and career. The Emerson who published *Nature* was not the intellectually restless cleric who had questioned the need for sacraments and fallen passionately in love with Ellen; in 1836, Emerson had a new wife, a new profession, and a significantly transfigured approach to articulating the wide range of philosophical concepts he elected to engage. Freed from the intellectual restraints of ritual and dogma, Emerson reconsidered a variety of subjects and recast them within the frameworks of friendlier and more flexible media. Emerson the essayist and humanistic lecturer emerged as a result of this process.

For many scholars, this period in Emerson's life allows his transcendentalist philosophy to evolve; the implication of the "death" of the minister unfortunately, but perhaps inevitably, accompanies the notion of the "birth" of Emerson the writer and speaker. A customary emphasis on the apparent secularization of Emerson's message in *Nature* and subsequent publications effectively, if not necessarily intentionally, reinforces this assumption by dividing his career into "before" and "after" segments that frequently fete the transcendentalist philosopher while relegating the former minister to the realm of honorable mention. Combined with long-established pedagogical structures that initiate students of American literature with the Emerson of *Nature* and the *Essays*, such arguments often obscure a fundamental facet of Emerson by implicitly suggesting that he renounced religious faith as he embraced transcendentalism. However understandable such a conclusion appears, categorization replaces an in-depth study of Emerson and forges consideration in favor of oversimplification.

Emerson's redirection of his career away from the ministry and toward the pen and the podium did not signal an abandonment of God, or faith, or even his own practice of religion. His writings offer abundant evidence that each of these components remained a vital and significant factor within his life and work and that they played integral roles within his exploration and articulation of transcendentalist philosophies.[1] As Lawrence Buell has recently concluded, Emerson throughout his life maintained his strong belief in the “’deep interior life’” of Christianity but also believed that “’[i]ts institutions should be as flexible as the wants of men’” (16). Emerson was convinced that religious institutions, not religious beliefs themselves, inhibited intellectual exploration and thereby impeded the emergence of a faith rooted within the unique experiences of human individuals. Far from extinguishing his own faith, Emerson’s resignation from the ministry effectively enabled him to expand his religious thought and other philosophical beliefs and to disseminate them freely within the contexts of broader and less-constraining venues.

The body of Emerson’s work offers ample evidence that many of the beliefs of the minister persisted well into his presentation of the tenets of transcendentalism that commenced with the publication of *Nature*. Although *Nature* and the lectures which followed, including “The American Scholar” and the “Divinity School Address,” are notable for signaling clear departures from many of the prevailing theosophical assumptions, much has been overlooked that reveals both consistency and continuity within the substance of Emerson’s post-ministerial message. Although Emerson extends to man a more powerful and proactive role in the areas of intellectual pursuit and self-determination, he nevertheless adheres to established Christian beliefs in many of his discussions concerning morality, contemplation, spirituality, self-sacrifice, and heroism. Far from repudiating religious faith or excluding God from the process of intellectual exploration, Emerson presents in *Nature* and subsequent works a system of belief that continues to acknowledge God’s roles as Creator and Supreme Being and makes frequent reference to His continuing presence as a vital force within the universe. He also utilizes many of the minister’s rhetorical tools both to convey his arguments and to illuminate many of the philosophical complexities that frequently arise within their substance.

One topic that appears frequently throughout the body of Emerson's works is that of the individual exemplar or "great man." Although the great man can be readily identified in Emersonian terms by virtue of his self-reliance, the characteristics Emerson ascribes to the exemplary individual predate the first series of *Essays* and can be traced to earlier works such as *Nature* and "The Philosophy of History." The notion of the presence of the moral sentiment within nature and the ability of each individual to access it through his exercise of autonomous thought establish the foundation upon which Emerson constructs his paradigm of the heroic exemplar, but as David M. Robinson has shown, this concept of the "moral sense" is one Emerson derived from the tenets of Unitarian theology (*Apostle* 50-55). Although the post-ministerial Emerson continued to stress the "noble humanity" of Jesus by including him among the ranks of his "great men,"[2] many aspects of the character of Jesus continually resurface within Emerson's depictions of heroic exemplars. As Reynolds has pointed out, Emerson continued throughout his career to "search for a hero or great man who embodied in one way or another the moral perfection universally available to man" (60).

Although many individuals would personify the great man as the concept evolved throughout his career, Emerson continued to adhere to the example of Jesus when defining the traits the heroic exemplar embodies.[3] Whether consciously or not, Emerson drew upon religious precedents both in defining heroic characteristics and in selecting individuals to illustrate these traits in practice. In works beginning as early in his literary career as *Nature*, Emerson's heroic exemplars exhibit signs of the *imitatio Christi* from both medieval hagiography and its subsequent Protestant transfigurations. Elements of both the Catholic *exemplum* and the Reformed *exemplum fidei* appear within the lives of Emerson's heroes and in his paradigm of the heroic exemplar.[4] Although Emerson's focus upon "the spirit rather than the letter of the [heroic] deed" (Bercovitch 9) places his version of *imitatio* closer to Luther's notion of the *exemplum fidei*, his high regard for self-sacrifice, most notably in cases of individual martyrdom, reveals a lingering reverence for the literal life of Christ that appears within the traditional Catholic *exemplum*. Perhaps most prominent in Emerson's earlier essays, these notions remain consistent throughout his works and are apparent in his depictions of heroic individuals as late as the 1860s.

None of this suggests that Emerson truly "broke" with religion even after he left the ministry. Buell has observed the presence of "Protestant spirituality" within the concept of self-reliance and credits it with creating "the pietistic strain" that frequently surfaces in Emerson's writings (60). Despite the appeal of highly individualized, humanistic perceptions of Emerson's work that over-secularize his message and thereby dismiss the overtones that appear there, Emerson continued to incorporate religious principles into many of his Transcendentalist philosophies and to acknowledge the roles of God as the creator of the universe and the source of the moral sentiment. Despite his decision to cease to preach professionally, Emerson remained a very spiritual individual, and even if he did not "[consider] himself chiefly a religious teacher" (Huggard 30), he remained a professor of an idealism punctuated with conspicuous religious components. If no longer a "man of God," he continued to believe in God and to feature Him prominently in his speeches and essays. Although many other influences can be discerned within Emerson's works, beliefs carried forward from his years as a minister contributed significantly both to the tenets of Transcendentalist philosophy and to their concrete expression as manifested in heroic exemplars.

Nature and the Post-Ministerial Message

> The aspect of Nature is devout.
> Like the figure of Jesus, she stands
> with bended head, and hands
> folded upon the breast. The
> happiest man is he who learns
> from nature the lesson of worship.
> -- *Nature* (1836)

If Emerson's career can be divided into "before" and "after" periods that divorce the minister from the writer and speaker, then 1836 would mark the year of this supposed severance. *Nature* was published on September 9, and the first meeting of what would become the Transcendental Club would be held just ten days later. Although Emerson had resigned his pastorate at Boston's Second Church nearly four years earlier, he had continued to work as a supply preacher and was still often addressed as "Reverend" (Buell 22). His two careers actually overlapped for several years, and he remained in demand as a part-time minister until the period following the "Divinity School Address." As the philosopher had once fueled the minister, the minister now influenced the philosopher, and the writings of the period that began with the release of *Nature* exhibit a clear convergence of both secularized and religious ideas. Although Emerson's entrance into the realm of philosophical inquiry can be perceived as intellectual distancing from his first career as a clergyman, this distance is not, in fact, as great as it might at first appear. Despite being freed from many of the formal restraints that had been imposed upon him by the church, many of Emerson's beliefs remain consistent with those he had earlier advocated as a minister.

An example of theological consistency that combines with philosophical departure can be seen in the opening paragraph of the Introduction of *Nature*, which criticizes reliance upon received knowledge and calls for a critical, firsthand reconsideration of traditional personal, professional, social, and religious assumptions. Complaining that “[o]ur age is retrospective” and that “[i]t builds the sepulchres of the fathers” in its “writ[ing] [of] biographies, histories, and criticism” (*W* 1: 3), Emerson observes that “[t]he foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we through their eyes” and asks, “Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?” (3). Emerson’s designation of the age as “retrospective” represents neither a denunciation or denial of God nor a wholesale dismissal of belief in the power of the past to instruct. Instead, it conveys a request for perpetual critical reexamination of prevailing ideologies and reconsiderations of basic philosophical assumptions within the context of the present day. In querying, “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?” (3), Emerson seeks to subordinate the vestiges of centuries of inherited thinking imported by European forebears to a fresh, original evaluation of art, ideology, and spiritual matters from the standpoint of the world that exists in the present. His emphatic reminder that “[t]he sun shines today also” (3) evidences his acceptance of the veracity of many of these ideas within the context of earlier times even as it simultaneously rejects the notion of their wholesale applicability to the conditions of contemporary men. This call to reconsideration reverberates throughout Emerson’s works and represents a direct appeal to individuals; beginning with *Nature*, Emerson implicitly rejects the notion that fundamental change can, or should, germinate within the strictures of the church or the state. The power to redirect human behavior towards a more favorable course resides within the individual who finds the courage to think and act for himself and to approach the world on the unique terms that he himself has determined.

The historical distinction between received knowledge and knowledge that is gained through independent intellectual exploration appears many times throughout the course of Emerson’s subsequent writings and represents a critical facet of his transformed transcendentalist philosophy. Emerson’s argument does not fault the practice of religion itself but rather the practice of a religion rooted in the transmission of belief between men and their institutions in place of one that proceeds from individual introspection, contemplation, and insight. The locus of power and the impetus for greater improvement of both self and society reside within the individual who seeks the faith and knowledge that proceed from his independent intellectual exertions. Emerson explains:

> In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout, and devotion is thought. Deep calls unto deep. But in actual life, the marriage is not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers, but their sense of duty has not yet extended to the use of all their faculties. And there are patient naturalists, but they freeze their subject under the wintry light of the understanding. Is not prayer also a study of truth,--a sally of the soul into the unfound infinite? No man ever prayed heartily without learning something. But when a faithful thinker, resolute to detach every object from personal relations and set it into the light of thought, shall, at the same time, kindle science with the fire of the holiest affections, then will God go forth anew into the creation. (*W* 1: 74)

Emerson’s use of the word *innocent* implies an absence of knowledge that impedes the course of the individual who seeks a genuine insight, or faith, or both. The man who attends worship services out of a “sense of duty” derived from tradition instead of the depth of his own consideration voluntarily restricts his innate ability to engage his own intellectual faculties by ceding the power of independent thought to his forebearers. Like the scientist who limits his perception of his subject to the material and thereby closes his mind to any possibility of transcendent devotion, the innocent follower of a shallow faith precludes his own intellectual discovery and thereby stifles the range of his thought. The innocent follower fails even to rise to the point of being able to critically examine the materials of faith and doctrine; Emerson presents the ideal here in the fusion of the faithful thinker who employs his higher faculties in a firsthand pursuit of higher truths. The "kindl[ing of] science with the fire of holiest affections" invests the faithful thinker with the understanding that thought and devotion must merge within himself in order to send "God . . . forth anew into the creation" (74).

Emerson avoids privileging either science or religion within this example and elects to place them side by side in his definition of the faithful thinker. Both contemplation and prayer represent "stud[ies] of truth" and "sall[ies] of the soul into the unfound infinite" and are, therefore, powerful as well as empowering. The faithful thinker's ability to send "God . . . forth anew into the creation" resides in his willingness to proceed on the strength of his own thoughts rather than to accept without review the findings of other men's thinking. "Innocent men" surrender potential power in their overreliance upon society's institutions; the soul "sall[ies] . . . into the unfound infinite" only when the mind travels alone and unhindered. Emerson echoes his call for an "original relation to the universe" (3) when he emphasizes the solitary nature of this quest for knowledge and points to the intellectual inadequacy of receiving such learning second hand. Individual introspection invests the faithful thinker with the power of creation and thereby creates a direct connection to God through the strength of autonomous thought.

This concept of thought and its concomitants--faith, ideas, and actions--becomes central in the works of Emerson and is fully explored in *Nature*. Emerson creates complementary and frequently overlapping arguments in defining the noble, moral, and religious sentiments and connecting them to the power men derive when they publish these sentiments through persuasive language or virtuous acts. Asserting that the "relation between mind and matter is not fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men" (*W* 1: 33-34), Emerson contends that "picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it is a man in alliance with truth and God" (30). By freeing his thoughts from the constraints of institutionalized learning and the limitations of traditional belief, the faithful thinker expands his intellectual range and thus enables new possibilities through his willful exercise of the power he makes available. Emerson reasons that "[t]he laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass" (32-33) and that "the memorable words of history and the proverbs of nations consist usually of a natural fact, selected as a picture or parable of a moral truth" (33). Because his motivation is moral and proceeds from virtuous thought, the actions of the thinker become inherently noble, potentially heroic, and implicitly sanctioned by God.

Emerson locates the seed of active power in the presence of the moral sentiment. This power remains latent within the individual until his thoughts combine with the needs of external conditions to release it for his use. Emerson explains:

> We know more from nature than we can at will communicate. Its light flows into the mind evermore, and we forget its presence. The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been nourished by their fair and appeasing changes, year after year, without design and without heed,--shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar of cities or the broil of politics. Long hereafter, amidst agitation and terror in national councils,--in the

> hour of revolution,--these solemn things shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which the passing events shall awaken. At the call of a noble sentiment, again the woods wave, the pines murmur, the river rolls and shines, and the cattle low upon the mountains, as he saw or heard them in his infancy. And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power, are put in his hands. (*W* 1: 31-32)

The power of the autonomous thinker to perceive the appropriate occasion to act upon his intellectual conclusions derives from nature itself; when a fitting cause manifests itself, nature conspires with historical conditions within society and politics to release the power of persuasion in the publication of virtuous thoughts through language. This passage makes clear that the noble sentiment accompanies the potential for “agitation,” “terror,” and “revolution”; Emerson counsels that a noble course may compel the individual to confront opposition once the need for a stand has been awakened. However, the “light [of nature] flows into the mind evermore”; its power is thereby rendered both regenerative and revolutionary. Persuasion and its power remain readily available to the thinking individual who finds its application within an appropriate moral purpose. Action also allies the thinker and his Creator; Emerson concludes that “picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it is a man in alliance with truth and God” (*W* 1: 30).

The exercise of thought that holds inherent dangers even as it empowers the individual represents one of the many good-news, bad-news arguments to be found within Emerson’s works that can sometimes appear self-contradictory. However, Emerson recognized that few philosophical tenets could be reduced to simple terms and that “contrary tendencies” form the foundation of much intellectual inquiry. In emphasizing the potential of thought to counterindicate prevailing assumptions, Emerson simply enjoins the thinker to anticipate external opposition in response to his published thought—a situation with which he himself was doubtlessly familiar. However, having issued the warning, Emerson encourages his reader to proceed with the assurance that his virtuous thought will be supported by the power of God as expressed through the medium of nature. He contends:

> The exercise of the Will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event. From the child's successive possession of his several senses up to the hour when he saith, "Thy will be done!" he is learning the secret that he can reduce under his will not only particular events but great classes, nay, the whole series of events, and so conform all facts to his character. Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is 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. Man is never weary of working it up. He forges the subtile 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 last only a realized will,--the double of a man. (*W* 1: 39-40)

Emerson's allusions to the Savior, kingdoms, and angels seem hardly accidental; by using these images in conjunction with the power of the human will, he employs the minister's rhetoric to invest his philosophical argument with a subtle religious undertone. The combination further elevates the individual whose exercise of will is celebrated with metaphors of strength: "the lesson of power" releases the secret that the thinker can "reduce under his will" and "so conform all facts to his character"; he "may mould" the materials of nature "into what is useful" and "command" his thoughts to "[reduce]" the world to his "realized will." By subordinating fear to the exercise of his will, the thinker is enabled by nature and sanctioned by God; the defining hour "when he saith, 'Thy will be done!'" liberates his self-expression and assures him that his thought proceeds from a legitimate and intrinsically righteous source.

Emerson could clearly have made this argument concerning the exercise of the will without the religious references, but his choice to include it suggests a purpose beyond the merely rhetorical. Throughout *Nature* and beyond, Emerson maintains a close alliance between man and God that uses nature as its intermediary. He makes frequent reference to nature's "ministry to man," and he encourages his reader to consider the essay itself on a symbolic level when he observes that "the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind" (*W* 1: 32). Emerson observes that

> day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali, preëxist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of preceding affections in the world of spirit. A Fact is the end or last issue of spirit. The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world. "Material objects," said a French philosopher, "are necessarily kinds of *scoriæ* of the substantial thoughts of the Creator, which must always preserve an exact relation to their first origin; in other words, visible nature must always have a spiritual and moral side." (34-35)

Far from creating a division between God and nature, Emerson instead reinforces the connection in this and other passages. His capitalization of the words "Ideas" and "Facts" draws attention to these notions and to their origins in the invisible world of the spirit. The allusion to the Creator surrenders potential

Deistic interpretation with its proximity to “the mind of God”; mind and matter are thus effectively allied, as are spiritual and moral nature. Emerson continues to place God at the center of the moral universe and to view His interaction with nature and mankind as necessary, positive, powerful, and productive.

Just as spiritual and moral nature occupy the same metaphysical space, they share a similar origin at the center of the visible creation. The “’substantial thoughts of the Creator . . . always preserve an exact relation to their first origin’”; in other words, the divine thoughts and purposes that precipitated the creation itself survive and remain evident within it. Emerson observes that “every natural process is a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process. All things with which we deal, preach to us. What is a farm but a mute gospel?” (*W* 1: 41-42) By employing the metaphor of a widening circle, Emerson discourages the perception of a simple linear relation between cause and effect and suggests the expansive nature of the connections between morality, nature, and God. Far from detaching itself from its Creator, the noble sentiment pervades “every substance, every relation, and every process” of nature, which offers itself as a visible extension of the underlying divine purpose. The notion of “[a]ll things with which we deal” preaching a “mute gospel” provides a religious overtone that cements the moral relationship that Emerson has established between God and His creation. He concludes that it cannot “be doubted that this moral sentiment which thus scents the air, grows in the grain, and impregnates the waters of the world, is caught by man and sinks into his soul. The moral influence of nature upon every individual is that amount of truth which it illustrates to him” (42).

Emerson depicts the moral sentiment as a spiritual reality that can be readily accessed by the thoughtful individual who seeks it within the abundance of nature that surrounds him. He then expands the reach of the moral sentiment by linking to the religious when he contends that

> Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience. All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature. Therefore is nature glorious with form, color, and motion, that every globe is the remotest heaven, every chemical change from the rudest crystal up to the laws of life, every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf, to the tropical forest and antediluvian coal-mine, every animal function from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, and Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature as to seem the end for which it was made. Whatever private purpose is answered by any member or part, this is its public and universal function, and is never omitted. Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for ulterior service. In God, every end is converted into a new means. Thus the use of commodity, regarded by itself, is mean and squalid. But it is to the mind an education in the doctrine of Use, namely, that a thing is good only so far as it serves; that a conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of an end is essential to any being. (*W* 1: 40-41)

In this passage, Emerson confirms the coexistence of the physical and spiritual worlds and reaffirms the connection between God and His creation, again through the medium of nature. “Sensible objects” within the purview of Reason “reflect the conscience” and thus function as physical manifestations of underlying moral truth. Emerson’s unequivocal assertions that “[a]ll things are moral” and that they “have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature” fuse the natural to the spiritual as he proceeds to juxtapose concrete images of globes, chemical changes, vegetation, tropical forests, and coal mines with the more abstract concepts of “remotest heaven,” “the laws of life,” and “the laws of right and wrong.” Concluding that spiritual nature variously “hint[s]” or “thunder[s]” the moral sentiment directly to man through the objects of nature, Emerson immediately allies nature with faith in his definition of the religious sentiment. “The laws of right and wrong” that “echo the Ten Commandments” represent moral and spiritual truths concurrently expressed in both natural and religious terms.

Emerson expands this equation of natural with the spiritual as he defines the religious sentiment. By “lend[ing] all her pomp and riches” to it, Nature celebrates her partnership with Religion and offers herself freely as a source of inspiration for practitioners such as David, Isaiah, and Jesus. The physical proximity of these “prophets and priests” to the reference to the Ten Commandments solidifies Emerson’s alliance of Nature and Religion as it illustrates examples of the religious sentiment in practice. The former minister uses his audience’s awareness of Biblical allusions to create a connection between divine legal pronouncement and those who exemplify its precepts. The “ethical character” that these individuals share with Nature “penetrates” its “bone and marrow” to the extent that it “seems the end for which [Nature] was made”; Nature thus becomes both the visible expression of divine creation and its perpetual source of recognizable moral exemplars. Through the religious sentiment, Nature provides a conduit to unite men with God in the perpetual revelation of moral truth.

The ethical character that pervades Nature stirs the religious sentiment within certain individuals who then channel its potential energy in their publication of moral sentiments. When he observes that “[w]hatever private purpose is answered by any member or part, this is its public and universal function, and is never omitted,” Emerson privileges the overt expression of Nature’s moral influence in his choice of non-ambiguous Biblical exemplars. David, Isaiah, and Jesus share the “public and universal function” of Nature through their individual illustrations of “draw[ing] deeply” from the religious sentiment; each responds to its call by publishing his thoughts through his actions. In these examples, Emerson subordinates the “private purpose” of these “member[s] or part[s]” to the “public and universal” influence of their publication of the moral sentiment; as moral exemplars, David, Isaiah, and Jesus become commodities to be utilized by God in the furtherance of higher purposes. They represent the raw material through which He works, supplying the means to His divine ends and extending His reach to man through Nature.

Emerson’s argument emphasizes the serviceability of commodity and creates additional philosophical parallels between physical and moral nature. Emerson alludes to Nature’s regenerative power when he contends that “[n]othing in nature is exhausted in its first use” and concludes that “[w]hen a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for ulterior service.” However recognizable these concepts may appear to the human understanding of physical nature, they assume an alternative significance when they are harnessed to divine purpose. When a human exemplar becomes commodity, he becomes the “end” that is “converted to a new means” by God. When he embodies the “thing” that “is good only so far as it serves,” his corporeal existence overlaps the realm of philosophical abstraction: he becomes, like Nature itself, a medium through which God communicates. As such, he functions as a segment of a process, a portion of the "conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of an end."

Emerson's philosophical progression in the passage from moral nature to spiritual nature and finally to religious sentiment culminates in his definition of the doctrine of Use. In his assertion that "the use of commodity, regarded by itself, is mean and squalid," he subordinates the means of conveyance to the parcel the vehicle delivers. Emerson explains that in the doctrine of Use, "a thing is good only so far as it serves" and "that a conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of an end . . . is essential to any being." When the commodity is a moral exemplar, this relationship assumes even greater significance. The individual himself becomes increasingly valuable as the representation of the means to God's end, in this case, as a manifestation of spiritual nature. In his emphasis on the alliance of Nature and the religious sentiment, Emerson selects for illustration the Biblical heroes David, Isaiah, and Jesus before launching into an essentially philosophical discussion of divine ends and means. His rhetorical strategy invites the reader to complete the analogy he has initiated by inserting familiar figures into his definition of commodity. The exercise subordinates the individual to the moral purpose he personifies; David, Isaiah, and Jesus proffer their greatest significance as symbols of how "[i]n God, every end is converted into a new means." The divine end finds its means in the natural world, where the message eclipses its messenger.

As a former minister, Emerson would have recognized the value of the moral exemplar in creating a concrete embodiment of the moral sentiment; his doctrine of Use connects this commodity to the "conspiring of parts and efforts" that work towards "the production of [divine] end[s]." Reasserting the need for publication of the moral sentiment through persuasive language and virtuous acts, Emerson contends that

> Beside the relation of things to virtue, they have a relation to thought. The intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God, and without the colors of affection. The intellectual and the active powers seem to succeed each other, and the exclusive activity of the one generates the exclusive activity of the other. (*W* 1: 22)

Emerson again equates individual contemplation and insight with the furtherance of divine purpose by placing the "mind of God" on a parallel plane with the human intellect and tying the intellectual to the active powers. The "absolute order of things" evidences God's continuing presence within nature, which provides both the means and the opportunity for further substantial creation. Emerson elaborates:

> Therefore does beauty, which in relation to actions, as we have seen, comes unsought, and comes because it is unsought, remain for the apprehension and pursuit of the intellect; and then again, in its turn, of the active power. Nothing divine dies. All good is eternally reproductive. The beauty of nature re-forms itself in the mind, not for barren contemplation, but for new creation. (22-23)

Emerson's explanation clarifies the purpose of contemplation as regenerative; the beauty of the human intellect resides in its potential through the power of individual acts to renew the process of creation that God Himself has initiated. The argument emphasizes the call to action; creative power necessitates movement beyond "barren contemplation" and from the intellectual to the active realm. To perpetuate the creative cycle, the faithful thinker must then act upon the implications of his thoughts.

In *Nature,* Emerson considers physical, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of "Beauty" and identifies action as a critical component of its spiritual constituent. In one of the lengthiest passages to be found within his works, Emerson equates action with nobility and heroism and allies the actor to God Himself by virtue of the noble sentiment his actions publish. The passage celebrates the moral exemplar who acts upon the implications of his virtuous thought, even to the point of martyrdom. Emerson explains:

> The presence of a higher, namely, of the spiritual element is essential to [Beauty's] perfection. The high and divine beauty which can be loved without effeminacy, is that which is found in combination with the human will. Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue. Every natural action is graceful. Every heroic act is also decent, and causes the place and the bystanders to shine. We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it. Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate. It is his, if he will. He may divest himself of it; he may creep into a corner, and abdicate his kingdom, as most men do, but he is entitled to the world by his constitution. In proportion to the energy of his thought and will, he takes up the world into himself. "All those things for which men plough, build, or sail, obey virtue," said Sallust. "The winds and the waves," said Gibbon, "are always on the side of the ablest navigators." So are the sun and moon and all the stars of heaven. When a noble act is done—perchance in a scene of great natural beauty; when Leonidas and his three hundred martyrs consume one day in dying, and the sun and moon come each and look at them once in the steep defile of Thermopylæ; when Arnold Winkelreid, in the high Alps, under the

shadow of the avalanche, gathers in his side a sheaf of Austrian spears to break the line for his comrades; are not these heroes entitled to add the beauty of the scene to the beauty of the deed? When the bark of Columbus nears the shore of America;--before it the beaches lined with savages, fleeing out of their huts of cane; the sea behind; and the purple mountains of the Indian Archipelago around, can we separate man from the living picture? Does not the New World clothe his form with her palm-groves and savannahs as fit drapery? Ever does natural beauty steal in like air, and envelope great actions. When Sir Harry Vane was dragged up the Tower-hill, sitting on a sled, to suffer death as the champion of the English laws, one of the multitude cried out to him, “You never sate on so glorious a seat!” Charles II., to intimidate the citizens of London, caused the patriot Lord Russell to be drawn in an open coach through the principal streets of the city on his way to the scaffold. “But,” his biographer says, “the multitude imagined they saw liberty and virtue sitting by his side.” In private places, among sordid objects, an act of truth or heroism seems at once to draw to itself the sky as its temple, the sun as its candle. Nature stretches out her arms to embrace man, only let his thoughts be of equal greatness. Willingly does she follow his steps with the rose and the violet, and bend her lines of grandeur and grace to the decoration of her darling child. Only let his thoughts be of equal scope, and the frame will suit the picture. A virtuous man is in unison with her works, and makes the central figure of the visible sphere. Homer, Pindar, Socrates, Phocion, associate themselves fitly in our memory with the geography and climate of Greece. The visible

> heavens and earth sympathize with Jesus. And in common life whosoever has seen a person of powerful character and happy genius, will have remarked how easily he took all things along with him,--the persons, the opinions, and the day, and nature became ancillary to a man. (*W* 1: 9-22)

Emerson opens the passage by distinguishing spiritual from physical beauty and privileging the "high and divine" over the simple perception of natural forms. He defines Beauty as "the mark God sets upon virtue," a notion that resounds throughout the essay in various forms that also include his conceptions of the ethical character, moral nature, and the noble and religious sentiments. This "high and divine beauty" again combines with "the human will" to publish virtuous thoughts through "graceful" natural actions; the moral exemplar thereby serves God's higher purposes by conveying the substance of His will to other men.

Emerson characterizes virtuous action as expansive; correlative benefits accompany heroic action and elevate the spectators and the site of action as well as the actor himself. The decency of the heroic act causes "the place and the bystanders to shine"; heroes are therefore "entitled to add the beauty of the scene to the beauty of the deed." With his contention that "[e]ver does natural beauty steal in like air, and envelope great actions," Emerson reasserts the interrelationship among Nature, God, and men in the historical examples he provides. The "sun and moon come each and look at" Leonidas and his martyrs at Thermopylæ; "the high Alps, under the shadow of the avalanche," provide a majestic backdrop for Arnold Winkelreid; and "beaches lined with savages" with "the sea behind; and the purple mountains of the Indian Archipelago around" greet Columbus in the New World, which "clothe[s] his form with her palm-groves and savannahs as fit drapery." Location becomes identified with the exemplars who act within it: "Homer, Pindar, Socrates, Phocion, associate themselves fitly in our memory with the geography and climate of Greece," and "[t]he visible heavens and earth sympathize with Jesus."

Heroic occasions provide supporting characters as well as settings and scenery. In the example of Sir Henry Vane being dragged up the Tower-hill on a sled, "one of the multitude" declares that Vane "'never sate on so glorious a seat!'" In the illustration of Lord Russell traveling through the streets of London on his way to his execution, "'the multitude imagined they saw liberty and virtue sitting by his side.'" The role of "the multitude" within these examples is to provide human acknowledgement of the virtue of the noble act and the heroic individual who summons his courage to publish it. It also creates a clear contrast between the multitude who admire the act and the individual who distinguishes himself by performing it. Emerson privileges the role of the heroic individual in his differentiation of the spectator and the spectacle: the exemplars he names attain their heroic status as a direct result of the exercise of human will that culminates in their publication of virtuous thoughts through persuasive language or actions. The noble act sets these individuals apart from "the multitude," and Nature and God ally themselves with men who direct their thoughts and actions toward the furtherance of a higher, divine beauty.

Despite the presence of the place and the bystanders, Emerson's emphasis remains fixed upon the actor who delivers the substance of the divine message for the consideration and benefit of others. In his declaration that "[a] virtuous man is in unison with [Nature's] works, and makes the central figure of the visible sphere," Emerson situates the heroic individual at the center of his metaphor of the widening circle, a movement which parallels the placement of the moral law at "the centre of nature" and "radiat[ing] to the circumference" (*W* 1: 41-42) in the "Discipline" portion of the essay. Again discouraging the perception of a linear relation between cause and effect and suggesting the expansive nature of the interrelationships among morality, nature, and God, the circle recalls the image of the “natural beauty” that “steal[s] in like air” to “envelope great actions” by focusing attention to the figure at its center. Within the doctrine of Use, the moral exemplar functions as the physical embodiment of the noble sentiment and the catalyst of the “conspiring of parts and efforts” that work towards “the production of [divine] end[s]” (41).

The heroic individual distinguishes himself from the common man by recognizing his call to serve and then taking appropriate action to fulfill this higher purpose. Although “[e]very rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate,” Emerson contends that most men “creep into a corner, and “abdicate [their] kingdoms.” The potential for definitive thought and action remains unrealized within those who “divest [themselves] of it” and decline to act for themselves; such men elect to remain mere spectators to the thoughts and activities of greater men as they occur on the stage before them. According to Emerson, man “is entitled to the world by his constitution,” yet few individuals perceive their own innate ability to further the human cause by answering the call to action. The universe belongs to each man: it “is his, if he will,” and “[i]n proportion to the energy of his thought and will, he takes up the world into himself.” The moral exemplar is he who perceives the potential power the universe proffers and acts in conjunction with Nature and God to realize the purposes that time and circumstances dictate. He can anticipate their support, for “’[a]ll those things for which men plough, build, or sail, obey virtue,’” and “’[t]he winds and the waves . . . are always on the side of the ablest navigators.’” Heroic individuals exhibit mankind’s greater inclinations; Emerson concludes that “[w]e are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it.”

The heroic exemplar draws strength from the forces that surround him;

Emerson maintains that “an act of truth or heroism seems at once to draw to itself the sky as its temple, the sun as its candle. Nature stretches out her arms to embrace man, only let his thoughts be of equal greatness. Willingly does she follow his steps with the rose and the violet, and bend her lines of grandeur and grace to the decoration of her darling child. Only let his thoughts be of equal scope, and the frame will suit the picture.” Placing the heroic actor at the center of the circle and enveloping him with the sanctions of God and Nature, Emerson further empowers this individual by suggesting that a part of his fate resides within the analyses of memory and the shifting judgments of history. However, a note of caution appears in the notions of “equal greatness” and “equal scope”: the perfection of Nature requires the presence of virtue within the thoughts of “her darling child.” “Truth” and “heroism” coexist within Emerson’s definition; therefore, the blessing of Nature is neither capricious nor unconditional. But the heroic individual who acts upon the noble sentiment in his publication of a truly virtuous thought enjoys the pomp of Nature, the prescience of God, and the proclamations of history combined.

Emerson’s choices of moral exemplars are instructive: each individual within the passage considered his unique thoughts, published them through noble acts, pursued these actions through to their completion, and ultimately withstood the judgments of Nature, God, and history. Columbus believed that passage to the East could be attained by sailing west; he dismissed dire warnings that found their basis in faulty science and persisted in seeking funding for his venture despite years of rejection by European monarchs. King Leonidas of Sparta believed in the defense of Greece and in the power of a Delphic prophecy; despite being vastly outnumbered and the prospect of almost-certain defeat, he stood with a small army against a Persian onslaught at Thermopylae Pass in 480 B.C. Arnold von Winkelreid believed in Switzerland and in the ability of a single solider to determine a battle's outcome; he devised a plan to disrupt a superior force of Austrians that led to a surprise Swiss victory over Leopold III in 1386. Sir Henry Vane believed in freedom of religion and speech and the power of constitutional government; he courageously served England throughout the period of intense upheaval that included the reigns of Charles I, Cromwell, and Charles II. William Russell believed in a Protestant England free from external allegiances and worked diligently to mitigate Catholic influence. Phocion believed in democracy and conciliation; Socrates espoused ethics and independent thinking; and Homer and Pindar believed in the instructive power and beauty of the spoken word. Each of these individuals answered the calling of the noble sentiment and published his unique thoughts through the visible medium of his heroic words or actions.

They also followed the implications of these thoughts and actions through to their completion. Columbus received credit for "discovering" the New World, but his four expeditions were plagued with hardship, disorder, mutiny, charges of abuses of power, and a loss of reputation within his lifetime. He died alone and in virtual obscurity, his early achievements long eclipsed and the vision that had spawned them supplanted by the everyday business of commerce and colonization. Leonidas and his men held off the Persians long enough to permit the Greeks to escape, but he and his entire contingent perished in the process. Arnold von Winkelreid led the wedge formation that enabled the Swiss to penetrate the battle line and disperse the Austrian enemy, but he had to throw himself upon the points of ten spears in order to initiate the victory. Sir Henry Vane and Lord Russell acted bravely within the context of their troubled times but were both ultimately beheaded on charges of treason; Phocion and Socrates took action in defense of democratic precepts but were finally compelled to take hemlock; and Jesus, who acted as God's emissary solely for the benefit of humankind, was placed on trial for his “crimes” and crucified. Each of these men demonstrates his heroic character through the focus of the actions he carries through to the point of victory, even at the cost of the sacrifice of himself and others.

Emerson’s selection of heroes in this example illustrates the implication of his definition of the moral exemplar: with the exceptions of Columbus and the poets Homer and Pindar, each of the individuals he lists ultimately became a martyr. Each summoned the courage, at the point at which the decision became necessary, to surrender himself completely to the cause of the noble sentiment. In each case, the noble act eclipses the heroic actor by virtue of his martyrdom, and “natural beauty steal[s] in like air” to “envelope” his “great actions.” At the end of the passage, Emerson muses, “in common life whosoever has seen a person of powerful character and happy genius, will have remarked how easily he took all things along with him,--the persons, the opinions, and the day, and nature become ancillary to a man” (*W* 1: 21-22). In his fearless embrace of the call of the noble sentiment, the heroic exemplar satisfies the concurrent demands of Nature, God, and his fellow man by serving as the personification of the specific need the sentiment manifests at that particular time. Whether the need is for a soldier, a statesman, an educator, an explorer, or a savior, the heroic individual perceives the requirements of his unique place and time and acts in accordance with the calling he hears. He even subordinates his own needs, when necessary, to the furtherance of this higher purpose. And in more cases than not, he inspires followers who celebrate his memory and record his deeds for posterity.

The unusual length of this passage and the number of examples provided within it suggest that Emerson’s motivation in writing it transcends mere definition. In his use of *so many* various exemplars, most of them martyrs, all of them pursuing a higher moral purpose, Emerson again illustrates how Nature provides the raw material for heroism in the heart of the individual thinker. Working in alliance with truth and God, the faithful thinker becomes the commodity through which "God go[es] forth anew into the creation" (*W* 1: 74). He demonstrates how "[w]hilst the abstract question occupies your intellect, nature brings it in the concrete to be solved by your hands" (75) and, more significantly, that "[a]n action is the perfection and publication of thought" (45). Emerson perceived the value of the historical example in clarifying philosophical concepts and draws very widely from this source in developing his discussion of the beauty of great actions. He relies upon his audience's awareness of the historical significance of each character to which he alludes to complete the analogies his argument initiates. No single example completely serves this purpose; only when the figures are considered together does Emerson's didactic intention become apparent. With their disparate military, religious, philosophical, democratic, adventurous, patriotic, and literary motivations, all of these exemplars point to the role of the individual in realizing the heroic potential of a specific moment in time.

Emerson underscores the historical role of the heroic exemplar by populating the passage with spectators. While the "bystanders" offer contemporary commentary on the acts that they observe, they also provide analyses of these events and therefore function, either in part or in whole, as historians. The citizen who calls out his support of Sir Henry Vane and the uncited biographer of Lord Russell record the moral significance of their subjects' martyrdom and thereby transcend the historical moment by publishing these deeds for posterity. Emerson refers directly to the historians Sallust and Gibbon and thereby invites his reader to apply their observations concerning Nature's assistance of "virtue" and "the ablest navigators" to the examples he then supplies. He also mentions by name the poets Homer and Pindar, who by virtue of their art preserve the ancient exploits of (fictitious?) Greek actors including the heroes Odysseus, Achilles, and Agamemnon. And he alludes implicitly to the authors of the New Testament, which serves, among other purposes, as the biography of the life of Jesus. The presence of so many traditional and non-traditional historians within the passage surrounds Emerson's exemplars with the eyes of human history. Like Nature and God, who combine with the commodity of the hero in the "conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of [a] [divine] end" (*W* 1: 41), these biographers and historians play their own part in trumpeting the virtue of the heroic deed and preserving it for the instruction and edification of others. During the time in which *Nature* was published, each of Emerson's exemplars had effectively withstood the judgments of his own contemporaries as well as history and therefore securely occupied the exclusive realm reserved for society's heroes. He had also inspired followers who admired his example and perceived his actions as worthy of celebration, emulation, and acknowledgment.

Columbus, Leonidas, Arnold Winkelreid, Sir Henry Vane, Lord Russell, Homer, Pindar, Socrates, Phocion, and Jesus each serve humankind's, and consequently Emerson's, purposes by personifying the active power that consistently recreates the divine Beauty of the moral sentiment that remains ever-present within the forces of Nature. Like the Biblical exemplars David, Isaiah, and (once again) Jesus in the subsequent "Discipline" portion of the essay, these essentially secular historical heroes function publicly as ends that are converted to new means in the production of higher ends. Each shares in the "eternally reproductive" (23) process of new creation as the commodity within the doctrine of Use that is "good only so far as it serves" (41). But their roles, however laudable and heroic, are transitory; within Emerson's paradigm, commodity, unlike spirit, is frequently short-lived. Emerson observes that

> [w]hen much intercourse with a friend has supplied us with a standard of excellence, and has increased our respect for the resources of God who thus sends a real person to outgo our ideal; when he has, moreover, become an object of thought, and, whilst his character retains all its unconscious effect, is converted in the mind into solid and sweet wisdom,--it is a sign to us that his office is closing, and he is commonly withdrawn from our sight in a short time. (*W* 1: 46)

Emerson's exemplars follow a similar pattern: once the noble sentiment has been published and the needs of the historic moment have been fulfilled, the heroic actor has then served his higher purpose and becomes essentially dispensable. Although his legacy of self-sacrifice, which frequently includes his martyrdom, remains as an inspiration and example to others, the need for his physical presence has been obviated. The abundance of the resources of God to be found within Nature will provide the raw material to fulfill the requirements of subsequent calls of the noble sentiment as new circumstances arise.

Although Emerson's conception of the heroic exemplar exhibits many of the individualistic characteristics of secular humanism,[5] it also contains a religious significance that draws upon the Protestant notion of the *exemplum fidei*. According to Sacvan Bercovitch, the *exemplum fidei* represents Martin Luther's Reformed reconfiguration of medieval Catholic accounts of saints' lives and "the *imitatio Christi*, through which believers made their sainthood manifest" (8). Moving away from Catholicism's focus upon the "'external events'" of miracles, Luther and his followers contended that "the true import of [Christ's] miracles was spiritual, not literal, and as such they could be repeated by all believers" (9). The *exemplum fidei,* therefore, "emphasize[s] the spirit rather than the letter of the deed"; as Bercovitch explains, "In this view, the miraculous pattern of Christ's life unfolded in organic stages of spiritual growth. The anomaly did not matter, only the common truths which the anomaly signified in context: the process of calling, temptation, and salvation shared by all believers" (9). Although Luther's model of *imitatio* eliminates the need for miracles and martyrdom, it offers "Protestant equivalents for the miracles of Catholic hagiography" in the form of its pattern of "calling, conversion, temptation resisted, and regenerate living" (24).

Despite the potential for "regenerate living" apparent within the Reformed paradigm, the heroic exemplars Emerson uses in *Nature* more closely follow the broader pattern of the *exemplum fidei* that centers upon the "organic stages of spiritual growth" and "the common truths" manifested within "the process of calling, temptation, and salvation shared by all believers" (*W* 1: 9). His historical exemplars Socrates, Phocion, Leonidas, Arnold Winkelreid, Sir Henry Vane, Lord Russell, Columbus, and Jesus, his literary exemplars Homer and Pindar, and his Biblical exemplars David, Isaiah, and (again) Jesus each hear the call of the moral sentiment and respond to it accordingly. As Bercovitch points out, Protestant theology proffers a "twofold concept of calling" that includes "the inward call to redemption and the summons to a social vocation, imposed on man by God for the common good" (6); this dual purpose becomes evident in the case of each of Emerson's heroic exemplars. Although the "vocational" aspect varies considerably, "Faith . . . was crucial to the proper execution of [the exemplary individual's] duties. As his vocation was a summons from God, so his belief led him to do well in public office" (6). Whether his office was as a philosopher, a military leader, a statesman, an explorer, a poet, a king, a prophet, or even a savior, Emerson's *exemplum* perceived the alliance between moral and spiritual nature as well as his own role as Nature's (and therefore God's) commodity.

The commonalities among Emerson's heroes are also apparent in the transitions they make between the private thoughts of the noble sentiment and the *visibilia* of public activity. The actions that Emerson's exemplar takes in the service of the moral sentiment subject him to the temptation stage of *exemplum fidei*, the point at which he must encounter the afflictions and tests of faith that illustrate how "every believer must endure conflict and temptation, as Christ did" (Bercovitch 8). According to Bercovitch, this "journey of the soul . . . provides a guide for every man—of any age, any culture, indifferently past, passing, or to come—in the choices he must face, the war he must engage in between the forces of evil and good in his heart" (8). For Emerson's exemplary hero, these forces frequently confront one another at the critical juncture at which he faces the decision of whether to publish his thoughts through his actions.

The dilemma of decision presents practical considerations as well as ideological ones. Private thoughts are generally safe and autonomous; public exhortations can be dangerous and incendiary. The implications of the moral sentiment can lead the faithful thinker into uncharted or even forbidden waters; his ideas can frequently be unexpected, unpopular, unorthodox, or illegal. The test of his faith resides within the temptation to preserve his personal privacy by resisting the inherent commitment of the transformation from thinker to actor or by retreating from his position in the face of external challenge or adversity. In many of his subsequent works, Emerson cautions the thinker to anticipate objections to his self-published thoughts; in *Nature*, however, he issues this warning implicitly. His heroic exemplars encounter many obstacles along their paths to redemption: Columbus contends with scientific skepticism, tight-fisted sponsors, and the turmoil of colonial expansionism; Leonidas faces Greek treachery and a determined Persian army; Arnold von Winkelreid stands against Hapsburg greed and Austrian spears; Sir Henry Vane and Lord Russell confront tyranny and the rapid shifts of the tides of human history. David withstands the challenge of Goliath and the perils of absolute monarchy; Isaiah resists Assyria and widespread religious dissention. In each of these cases, the heroic exemplar succeeds in surmounting the obstacles he encounters and thereby vanquishes any temptation he might have to retreat from his position or desist.

Within Luther's model of the *imitatio*, this victory over temptation would then lead to the exemplar's salvation in the reward of regenerate living. Emerson's heroic exemplar, however, seldom survives his experience. In the process of pursuing his noble actions through to their completion, Emerson's exemplar frequently martyrs himself in his singular defense of the moral sentiment. At this final stage of the soul's journey, Emerson frequently departs from the Reformed model of *exemplum fidei* and borrows from the Catholic hagiographical tradition of depicting the lives of the saints.[6] In keeping with the Catholic emphasis upon "the extraordinary and the unique" (Bercovitch 8), Emerson's delineation of his hero's courage and martyrdom separates the exemplary individual from the ranks of the common man. Bercovitch asserts that the Catholic hagiographies "impress us not as models for emulation but as objects of veneration, intended (in the words of one medieval writer) as a means between God and man" (8). Emerson, it seems, would have it both ways. He fashions the exemplars he employs in *Nature* to inspire his reader as individuals worthy of both veneration *and* emulation.

It is the act of martyrdom, of course, that renders the *exemplum* venerable. Emerson draws from the elegiac tradition in his depiction of heroic death scenes;[7] his portraits of Leonidas, Arnold Winkelreid, Sir Henry Vane, and Lord Russell each capture the hero's glory at the moment of his ultimate sacrifice. Emerson equates "the beauty of the scene" with "the beauty of the deed" (*W* 1: 20) and thereby suggests an inherent, transcendent beauty within the act of martyrdom. He does not, however, celebrate self-sacrifice as a virtue within a vacuum: his account of each of these *exempla* includes clear reference to the cause for which the hero was willing to die. While this tightly focused devotion of the hero to his moral purpose makes his example emulous, his willingness to carry his cause to its conclusion, even to the extent of surrendering his own life, renders it implicitly venerable. Both characteristics serve Emerson's didactic purpose by setting his exemplar above the common individual by virtue of his courage and his publication of his unique thoughts and actions. Within either the Catholic or the Reformed model of the *exemplum*, the hero ultimately attains his divine reward of salvation.

As a former minister, Emerson would certainly have acknowledged the value of the exemplary individual in the presentation of religious instruction;[8] however, many of his heroic exemplars also exhibit characteristics derived from the concept of *imitatio hominis* from secular humanism (Bercovitch 10).[9] The religious and secular models share certain similarities: according to Bercovitch, "Both humanism and Protestantism shift the grounds of private identity from the institution to the individual; and it has been said of each movement that its concept of *imitatio* makes every man his own church. But the humanists considered the true church to be a macrocosm of the self-fulfilled individual" (11). Although Emerson would have rejected a paradigm of the exemplary individual that "justifies . . . self-study on its intrinsic merits, without pretense at religious or even moral instruction" (11),[10] he would likely have accepted one of the beliefs of many humanists who "exulted in the Christ-event as an emblem of human magnificence" (12). Bercovitch explains that "the leading figures of the Italian Renaissance proclaimed Jesus to be the epitome of 'our undeniable glorification,' a cosmic *ecce homo* that consecrated our 'unconstrained and limitless freedom.' In the pattern of His life they found the proof-text that each of us, by nature, is potentially ‘a certain God’” (12).

Although Emerson explores this notion more thoroughly in subsequent works, the concept of man as “a certain God” appears in the “Spirit” portion of *Nature* and remains connected to Nature as well as to God. Emerson observes that

> many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. 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 plant 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,”[11]
>
> carries upon its face the highest certificate of truth, because it

> animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul. (*W* 1: 63-64)

The souls of men possess the ability to perceive the "highest" truths by virtue of a "universal essence" that combines the discrete components of wisdom, love, beauty, and power to form the spiritual force which pervades the body of nature. Emerson directly equates this spirit with "the Supreme Being" and situates it within a very broad context: the universal essence, which he characterizes as "that for which all things exist," resides "behind nature," "throughout nature," "in space and time," and "through ourselves." Emerson alludes to a regenerative cycle of growth and renewal by employing the metaphor of a tree that "puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old" and connecting this "plant upon the earth" to the image of "man rest[ing] upon the bosom of God." He extends the metaphor to create a symbolic symbiosis between man and God, who "nourishe[s]" the individual at his bosom with "unfailing fountains" from which "he draws at his need inexhaustible power." Although man remains fundamentally subordinate within this relationship, Emerson places him within easy reach of God through the abundantly accessible medium of spirit.

The relationship with God elevates the individual; having "inhale[d] the upper air" and "[been] admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth," he "learn[s] that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator" and "is himself the creator in the finite." This access, of course, is metaphysical; man's ability to connect with God through spirit rests within the "recesses of consciousness" to be found in the individual human mind. The "'golden key'" of virtue invites him to "where the sources of wisdom and power lie," and "the highest certificate of truth . . . animates [him] to create [his] own world through the purification of [his] soul." Although this ability of man to perceive the world as "a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious" suggests a humanist influence in its focus upon the individual's ability to attain the status of "a certain God" (Bercovitch 12), Emerson maintains his emphasis upon the moral component of spiritual nature and, therefore, does not, in the humanist tradition, concentrate his efforts upon "the autonomous secular self" or proffer heroic examples "without pretense at religious or even moral instruction" (11).[12] Instead, he continually returns to the notion of the "universal essence" of spirit, which reaches forth through Nature to offer man "access to the mind of the Creator."

Nature exists as man's willing enabler; whether it energizes him with "the ineffable essence which we call Spirit" (*W* 1: 61), or "this moral sentiment which thus scents the air" (42), or "the call of a noble sentiment" at which "the woods wave, the pines murmur, the river rolls and shine, and the cattle low upon the mountains" (31-32), or "lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment" (41), Nature provides the visible source of man's inspiration, the force behind his potential for individual greatness. Its alliance with God is absolute; when Emerson contends that "[t]he world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man" and "is a remoter of inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious" (64-65), he is asserting a perpetual, renewable relationship with God that elevates the individual who summons the faith and intellectual courage to reach to attain it. "[T]horoughly mediate" and "made to serve" (40), Nature invites men to commune with God and to peer into the possibilities that his knowledge of "the divine mind" (65) makes available. Emerson asserts that "the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead the individual to it" (62). He concludes that "[t]he happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship" (61), a notion that aligns individual happiness with personal faith and equates worship with each man's willingness to access the mind of God through nature.

The Dominion of the Orator: The Philosophy of History

This is the dominion of the orator
over his countrymen, that he speaks
that which they recognize as part
of them but which they were not yet
ready to say.
-- "Literature," "Philosophy of
History" series, 1837

Despite the undisputed primacy and relevance of *Nature* to the student of Emerson and his works, it is imperative to consider that five years passed between its publication and that of *Essays, First Series*. Following his resignation from the Second Church and subsequent pilgrimage to Europe, Emerson commenced his second career as a speaker on the New England lecture circuit. The recent advent of the lyceum offered the former minister both a means for generating income and an unrestricted medium for articulating his continually evolving system of moral ideology. As Mary Kupiec Cayton has noted, this new venue "offered an escape from the opprobrium attached to the promotion of partisan causes precisely during the years when it became clear that both party politics and religious denominationalism would be permanent fixtures on the American scene" (150). In Emerson's case, it enabled the expression of religious and moral ideology released from the external constraints and controversies of prevailing doctrine and no longer as immediately answerable to the uneasiness or concerns of theologians and parishioners.

The lyceum presented an ideal opportunity for Emerson and other disaffected clergymen to respond to the growing public demand for more "secularized" systems of belief that moved them even further away from the Calvinist traditions of their New England ancestors. As Cayton observes,

> If the church seemed to endorse the divisions that were occurring within society as a whole, the lyceum, on the other hand, shared

> many of the features of the old church ideology. It was dedicated to the spread of a common culture. Though this common culture was now based on secular rather than sacred knowledge, Emerson's predisposition to imbue all knowledge with religious implication meant that he could look on this new cultural institution as a platform from which to preach a new sacred culture capable of replacing the defunct system of meanings. The lyceum was "freer," imposing few prescriptions on the speaker other than that he hold his listeners' attention. "It is the new pulpit," Emerson came to believe, and "the true church of today." (150-51)[13]

Emerson's vocational shift should not suggest that Emerson had abandoned his faith or had ceased to perceive the spiritual value of genuine religious beliefs. Scholars disagree significantly on the point of the extent to which Emerson sought to distance himself from the traditions of established Christianity; for example, in his explanation of Emerson's interest in the metaphysical writers of the seventeenth century, F. O. Matthiessen contends, "The close subordination of man to God, the desire of 'making humility lovely in the eyes of all men,' which animated Herbert's work, have little counterpart in Emerson's expansive purpose. . . . [The] imaginative myth of man as the creative center whose power must now again be renewed possesses some of the energy of Blake and of Lawrence; it is mystical, but no longer Christian" (108). Similarly, in his account of Emerson's use of "the new secular sermon style" in the "Divinity School Address," David S. Reynolds asserts that Emerson "was taking to a new extreme the imaginative, secular ethos of American public orators" and "[i]n doing so, he was choosing artistry and humanity above Christianity" (23). Taking a more centrist position, Lawrence Buell examines Emerson's career in the "secularized ministry" of the lyceum and concludes that "it made a huge difference to have exchanged commitment to a restrictive institution in which he no longer believed for a flexible one whose emerging form he could bend to his liking" (22). Shifting slightly to the right, David M. Robinson refers to the "Divinity School Address" as "a message of awakening" but insists that "it was not a call to abandon the ministry or the church, or to work toward the establishment of a new religious denomination" ("Emerson and Religion" 161). Even further to the right, William A. Huggard concludes, "In colorful language we receive a simple and plain fact: Emerson considered himself chiefly a religious teacher" (30), but that "Emerson did not offer the Bible as a pre-eminent indication that God exists. . . . The whispering of the pine tree, the devotion to virtue, man's sense of God within himself—such evidences were for Emerson the truer ones" (39-40). The remarkable disparity among Emerson scholars suggests that the actual distance between Emerson's post-ministerial ideology and formal Christianity remains far from definitively established.

Although distinctions between the content of the minister's message and the lecturer's can clearly be discerned, they do not lead directly or unambiguously to a conclusion that Emerson's work in the period between the publication of *Nature* and *Essays, First Series* sought to rebuff or rebut Christianity or to subordinate traditional religious faith to a wholly secularized spiritual philosophy. The evidence of the lectures indicates that while Emerson represents a part of the general cultural shift away from Calvinist beliefs, his work retains its initial religious emphasis while it encourages the firsthand experience of a revitalized personal faith. The spirituality Emerson advocates remains essentially Christian in content and does not "[choose] artistry and humanity above Christianity" (Reynolds 23). Instead, it redirects the seat of religious authority away from religious institutions and towards the unique experiences of the thinking individual who elects to experience an original relation with the universe.

Emerson's continuing concern with the necessity of the original relation becomes apparent in his first self-produced lecture series, "The Philosophy of History," which was held at the Masonic Temple in Boston between December 8, 1836, and March 2, 1837.[14] As Whicher, Spiller, and Williams have written, Emerson "saw himself as a product of history and wrote explicitly of and for his times"; however, "the whole trend of his thought, once he set about building his personal philosophy, was to cut loose from the past in order to emphasize the timeless present" (*EL* 2: 2). Although Emerson considered the alternate titles "One Mind," "Intellectual Culture," and "Omnipresence of Spirit," the "Philosophy of History" series he ultimately brought to the podium represents his own choice of subject matter and reflects the general tenor of his moral philosophy during the post-*Nature*, pre-*Essays* period.[15] This placement alone makes it worthy of further consideration: as an initial public statement as well as a critical source for the subsequent *Essays*, it is crucial to our understanding of the continuing evolution of Emerson's philosophy in the post-ministerial period.

At the historical point at which "The Philosophy of History" series appears, Emerson was four years removed from the Second Church and fresh from the publication of *Nature*. Although these facts might suggest to contemporary readers that Emerson came to the lyceum with an established reputation as a published author, it is important to note that *Nature* had gone to press only three months prior to the first lecture and that Emerson continued throughout the 1830s to work as a supply preacher and to produce "'lay sermons.'"[16] As Buell acknowledges, "After 1832, Emerson did not cease being a minister, though he tried to break people of the habit of addressing him as 'Reverend'" (22). Despite the appeal of the increasingly secularized message that he and other former ministers brought to the "clerisy" (Coleridge's label for "the intelligentsia"),[17] he was still widely regarded more as a minister than a lay philosopher during the decade of the 1830s. Though it can be safely assumed that many in Emerson's lyceum audience were aware of *Nature* and perhaps had even read it, there is little basis for concluding that the majority of listeners approached the lectures with the degree of familiarity with its content that is typical of literary scholars today. In fact, many members of Emerson's lyceum audience would likely have been hearing much of the substance of his post-ministerial philosophy for the very first time in the lectures.   It therefore becomes imperative to consider them both within and beyond the shadow cast by *Nature*.

As Whicher, Spiller, and Williams note in their introduction to the series, Emerson recorded the "'common principles'" that appear in "The Philosophy of History" in his journal before he completed the series (4). The entire passage merits inclusion by virtue of its excellent summary of the primary assumptions of the series as a whole. Emerson argues:

> "1. There is one mind common to all individual men.
>
> 2. There is a relation between man and nature so that whatever is in matter is in mind.
>
> 3. It is a necessity of the human nature that it should express itself outwardly and embody its thought. As all creatures are allured to reproduce themselves, so must the thought be imparted in speech. The more profound the thought, the more burdensome. What is in will out. Action is as great a pleasure and cannot be foreborne.
>
> 4. It is the constant endeavor of the mind to idealize the actual, to accommodate the shows of things to the desires of the mind. Hence architecture and all art.
>
> 5. It is the constant tendency of the mind to unify all it beholds,

> or to reduce the remotest facts to a single law. Hence all endeavor at classification.
>
> 6. There is a corresponding unity in nature which makes this just, as in the composition of the compound shell or leaf or animal from few elements.
> 7. There is a tendency in the mind to separate particulars and in magnifying them to lose sight of the connexion of the object with the Whole. Hence all false views, sects.
> 8. Underneath all appearances and causing all appearances are certain eternal laws which we call the Nature of Things."[18]

Since the lectures within "The Philosophy of History" series have historically been studied primarily in terms of furnishing source material for the *Essays*, their specific content remains largely unfamiliar, even to many Emerson scholars. The current study will make no attempt to offer new findings on the topic of these vital but neglected works and will instead focus upon the specific ways in which the series illustrates, within a separate and equally viable context, many of the same moral arguments found in the pages of *Nature*. It grants that the summary above provides an accurate overview, in Emerson's own words, of the philosophical concepts addressed within the series, and offers its agreement with the finding of the editors of the *Early Lectures* that "the dynamic center of this series and that of the subsequent ones as well, no less forceful for being superficially a paradox, . . . comes into prominence at once: the great fact of 'modern history' is the emerging discovery in every department of life of 'certain eternal laws'" (5). These "eternal laws" represent the basis of Emersonian morality as it would be elucidated throughout the remainder of the decade.

Much of the core moral philosophy defined in *Nature* reasserts itself in this series, including the need for an original relation to the universe, the connection of men to God through the strength of autonomous thought, the virtue of the call of the noble sentiment, the need for publication of thought through the power of individual actions, the heroic potential of great men, and the intrinsic value of self-reliant actors as moral and historical *exempla*. In his "Introduction," Emerson declares his overriding theme of the primacy of the One Man as he disparages established formal approaches that limit the reach of their scopes and thereby dehumanize the study of history. He observes that in his own age, "[e]ven scholars, whose business it is to read, complain of [History's] dulness" and that "[t]his fact may suggest that it is not rightly written" (7). Questioning whether "the form in which we have it from antiquity" is, in fact, "the faithful record of man" (8), he determines, "This is not history. This is the shell from which the kernel has fallen. History is the portraiture in act of man, the most graceful, the most varied, the most fertile of actors" (9).

For Emerson, an accurate approach to History would chronicle the scientific, artistic, literary, political, religious, social, and moral dimensions of the One Man, variously depicted throughout the series in terms of the Universal Man, the Universal Mind, the Universal Soul, and the Universal One. As he explains in the "Introduction":

> We are compelled in the first essays of thought to separate the idea of Man from any particular men. We arrive early at the great discovery that there is one Mind common to all individual men; that what is individual is less than universal; that those properties by which you are man are more radical than those by which you are Adam or John; than the individual, nothing is less; than the universal, nothing is greater; that error, vice and disease have their seat in the superficial or individual nature; that the common nature

> is whole. (*EL* 2: 11)

“The true History,” he continues, “will be commensurate” (9), and

> It will gladly and lovingly behold what is godlike in [man’s] nature and deeds.   It will testify the universality of his homage to the good; it will show him from zone to zone, through every color and form, climate and polity, rearing altars and instituting worship to the invisible and supernatural and will show him overpowered by this Idea in his languages and usages. (10)

The individuals who represent the components of the One Mind share an interdependence with Nature; Emerson contends that

> [t]his relation of the human mind to the world is not an abstract truth merely but is the reason of all man’s dominion. The Creator has composed the world of innumerable material substances which correspond to the spiritual powers of man. Each demands the other: the faculty the object, and the object the faculty. What can the marble do without the architect? (18)

Like *Nature* before it, the “Introduction” to “The Philosophy of History” series alludes to the presence of a Creator behind the visible medium of Nature and suggests the heroic potential of the individuals who reside within it. In a similar manner, passages within the little-known “The Present Age,” a lecture Emerson gave only once,[19] seek to subordinate the tendency toward idealization of the past in favor of the possibilities of the present moment. In one such passage, Emerson insists that

> The best use of History is to teach us to value the Present. In ordinary [*sic*] nothing is so disesteemed as the present moment. Men’s eyes seem bewitched. They blink the present. They look back or they look forward. They forget, that the finest moments of

> fame were once the unregarded beat of the household clock; that the dull sunshine of the moment is the torch of glory to the great; that Time, and nature and the mind hold out the same courteous invitation at this hour to the race of man, as in the Augustan or the Italian or the elder English periods; that the men then alive resisted the same overpowering us. (*EL* 2: 157)

Emerson's language and tone recall his reminder in *Nature* that "[t]he sun shines to-day also," as does his criticism in "The Present Age" of the "Reflective character" of his time. He laments the prevalence of a potentially disabling reverence for the past, contending that "there is an immense inertia always resisting the act of Reflection. The slumber of centuries weighs down the iron lids of Reason and until they are open, that is, until we can judge anew, we cleave to the old form, fondly hoping that it may keep some of the virtue which in its history recommended it first to our respect" (157-58). As he did in *Nature*, Emerson emphasizes the need for the firsthand correspondence of an original relation with the universe.

The call for an original relation with the universe is found, in varying forms, within each of the individual essays in the "Philosophy of History" series. In the "Introduction," this notion applies to history in general; Emerson contends:

> Under the light of these two facts, that the mind is one and that nature is its correlative, history is to be read and written. Civil History, Natural History, and the history of art and of letters are to be explained from individual history or must remain words. There is nothing but is related to me; no mode of life so alien and grotesque but by careful comparison I can soon find my place in it; find a strict analogy between my experiences and whatever is real in those of any man. (*EL* 2: 19)

In Emerson’s view, the experience of the individual typifies that of all men and therefore suggests a means towards historical insight into the collective thoughts and experiences of the One Mind. The only historical perspective of value is one that regenerates itself within the successive experiences of thinking individuals living in a perpetual present. Emerson claims that “[o]ut of the heart of the past comes a voice to the present. In the place of the great and the good and the evil, we stand. The present hour will be inquired after with no less solicitude a century hence, and in ourselves are the elements of all that heroism and wisdom we admire in the antique” (19-20).

The concept of the intrinsic value of individual experience confirms the need for an original relation with the universe through its persistent focus on the relevance of present events. In “Literature,” it suggests a significance to individual thought that transcends the actor’s awareness of the potential historical implications of his present actions. Emerson reasons:

> The new value which a common incident in our history has, when thus made an object of thought, is greatest in this, that it advertises us of the worth of the present moment. It apprises us of our wealth, for, if that hour and object can be so valuable, why not every hour and event in life, if passed through the same process? I learn, (such is the inherent dignity of all intellectual activity), that my being is of more worth than I knew. It admonishes us of the high destiny of the mind that calls it forever out to the pursuit of truth and to the conversion of the world of events into ideas of the mind. (*EL* 2: 59)

In “The Present Age,” Emerson asserts that “[t]he Present and the Past are always rivals” (158) and argues, “Reason exists in an eternal Now; it creates evermore; it exists only whilst it creates; the stark and stiffened corpse is the emblem of the Past; to Reason all things are fluid, plastic, and new” (158).

Similarly, in “Society,” he contends that

> every man has an individual nature. He is differentiated both in person and in nature from every other man that ever existed, by having the common faculties under a bias, or determination of character altogether new and original. In him, under him, is the same world as another beholds; but it is the world seen from a new point of view; the more deeply he drinks of the common soul, the more decided does his individuality become. He sees what no other ever saw. If he make report of what he sees his record will contain that which no other witness could supply. (*EL* 2: 100)

The life experiences that designate a man as a part of the One Mind concurrently distinguish him as an individual apart from it; inasmuch as each person’s thoughts and actions represent particular aspects of the human totality, his perspective and place remain unique by virtue of the physical limitations of space and time. As a consequence of his original relation to the universe, the individual relates in a firsthand manner to the world that he engages, declining to accept the conclusions of other men and setting out instead to seek and find his own. A perpetual present emerges when this approach is multiplied by the experiences of many individuals, and a vital, regenerative Present ensures that new opportunities for intellectual and creative energy will perpetually manifest themselves.

In addition to the concept of the original relation, *Nature*’s notion of the connection of men to God through the strength of individual thought is mirrored in “The Philosophy of History.” Like *Nature*, the lectures acknowledge the continuing presence of God and the potential of men to aspire to divinity. As Merton Sealts has observed, passages in “Art” and “Literature,” reveal “the powerful religious element in his view of the creative process” (101). “Literature,” for example, defines God as “pure mind” (62) and observes that “[l]iterature being thus the public depository of the thoughts of the human race . . . becomes a true history of man. Religion is his best hour” (63). Illustrative references to the omnipresence of God also appear in “Humanity of Science,” in which Emerson contends that

> The best studies of modern naturalists have developed the doctrines of Life and of Presence, of Life conceived as a sort of guardian genius of each animal and vegetable form which overpowers chemical laws, and of Presence whereby in chemistry atoms have a certain restraining atmospheric influence where they do not chemically act. Behind all the processes which the lens can detect, there is a *Life* in a seed, which predominates over all brute matter, and which irresistibly forces carbon, hydrogen, and water, to take shape in a shaft, in leaves, in colors of a lily, which they could never take themselves. More wonderful is it in animal nature. Above every being, over every organ, floats this predetermining law, whose inscrutable secret defies the microscope and the alembic. The naturalist must presuppose it, or his results are foolish and offensive. As the proverb says, “he counts without his host who leaves God out of his reckoning,” so science is bankrupt which attempts to cut the knot which always spirit must untie. (*EL* 2: 30).

As in *Nature*, the Life found in nature presupposes the existence of a Creator and higher power that determine its form, condition, and creation, and ultimately, its survival. Emerson’s final lecture on the topic of science (Whicher 22), “Humanity of Science” assumes spiritual as well as moral components to scientific study and concludes that “the history of the highest genius will warrant the conclusion that, in proportion as a man's life comes into union with nature, his thoughts run parallel with the creative law" (*EL* 2: 36). As Emerson elaborates, "The presence and antecedence of Spirit are impressively taught by modern science. Step by step with these facts, we are apprised of another, namely, the Humanity of the Spirit; or that nature proceeds from a mind analogous to our own" (33). That mind belongs to the Creator, a fact that Emerson clarifies when he observes, "The great men, the heroes of science, are persons who added to their accuracy of study a sympathy with men, a strong common sense; and an earnest nature susceptible of religion, as Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Linnaeus, and in our days Davy, Cuvier, Humboldt" (37). Far from separating the scientific from the spiritual, Emerson asserts their fundamental correspondence and suggests the potential for heroism within the individual who combines them in his work.

This notion of the nobility of work, a familiar idea from the later "Man the Reformer" (1841), appears within the "Trades and Professions" and "Ethics" lectures and is connected to the concept of calling. Although Emerson's specific context in these works emphasizes the vocational, this concept coincides with the "twofold concept of calling" within Protestant theology that includes "the inward call to redemption and the summons to a social vocation, imposed on man by God for the common good" (Bercovitch 6). In "Ethics," Emerson contends:

> All men are but several porches into one mind. Each man has his own calling, which is determined by his peculiar reception of the Common Reason. There is one direction to every man in which unlimited space is open to him. He has faculties silently inviting him thither to endless exertion. He finds obstructions on all sides but one. On that side all obstruction is taken away and he sweeps serenely over God's depths into an infinite sea. His call to do any

> particular work, as to write poems, to invent models, to go supercargo to Calcutta, or missionary to Serampore, or pioneer to Michigan, is, his fitness to do that thing he proposes. And this results from his peculiar organization, or the mode in which the general soul is incarnated in him. Therefore, whoever is genuine, his ambition is exactly proportioned to his powers. The height of the pinnacle is determined by the breadth of the base. (*EL* 2: 147-48)

The reference to the Common Reason rearticulates the series' theme of the One Mind and equates individual abilities with the needs of the greater good. Although these faculties are innate, Emerson connects the call to a vocation to an individual's "fitness" to perform the work; in other words, each man must actively pursue his unique calling in order to "incarnate" the "general soul" within himself. The application of action to calling enables his fulfillment of his higher purpose and opens him to the potential to receive recognition for his work.

Emerson's definition of calling creates no organizational hierarchies; in "Ethics," poets, engineers, sailors, missionaries, and pioneers contribute their individual talents and thereby satisfy disparate needs that appear within the corporate society. Emerson's examples suggest that human needs include artistic, mechanical, commercial, spiritual, and exploratory components, and that each man who contributes his gift possesses the potential to elevate himself through his work. He echoes this sentiment in "Trades and Professions," where he notes:

> To the endless variety of substances is a match in the endless variety of faculty. To each man is his calling foreordained in his faculty. If today you should release by an act of law all men from their contracts and all apprentices from their indentures and pay all

> labor with equal wages, -- tomorrow you should find the same contracts and indentures withdrawn: for, one would choose to work in wood; another in stone; a third in iron; a fourth in dough; one would go to a farm; one would paint and one sing; one survey lands, another deal in horses, another project adventures. The brain and the body of man is adapted to the work that is to be done in the world. (*EL* 2: 113-14)

Emerson's suggestion that each man would again choose the same profession in which he currently labors connects vocation to the idea of "foreordination" and underscores his equation of vocation with calling. His examples once again allude to the disparity of human needs and the ability of each individual to contribute to the overall well-being of the Universal One. By hypothetically levelling wages, Emerson effectively emphasizes his point that all professions share equal value within the greater context of the common need.

These notions of vocation and calling carry over to the final lecture in "The Philosophy of History" series, "The Individual," wherein Emerson declares that "[t]he Individual learns that his place is as good as any place; his fortunes as good as any. When he looks at the rainbow he is the center of its arch. He stands on the top of the world; and with him if he will is the Divinity" (*EL* 2: 185). The potential of the individual to aspire to this divinity is connected to his calling, whether it manifests itself through his vocation or appears in the form of a noble or moral sentiment. "The Philosophy of History" series echoes Emerson's assertion in *Nature* that "every natural process is a version of a moral sentence" and that "[t]he moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference (*W* 1: 41-42). Buell has noted that "the inner strength of 'character and insight' . . . for Emerson was the substance of 'the moral sentiment'" (19). Moral thoughts and causes abound in nature; the task of the potentially heroic individual becomes one of perceiving nature's call and then responding with appropriate action. Emerson refers to the moral sentiment throughout the lecture series and ties it, as he does in *Nature*, to a corresponding need for definitive action.

The moral sentiment is neither subtle nor ambiguous; it draws attention to itself at an opportune moment to those who are receptive to its call. In "Society," Emerson queries:

> What is it that brings the blood in an instant to a thousand faces? Not appeals to mean passions; not the promise of plunder or any present advantage; for if this gratified one it would rouse the indignation of another. No — but the announcing of a great and general principle; the utterance of a lofty sentiment; the determination to be free; the determination to abide by the right – this knits into one all the discordant parts of that living mass, in a breathless silence, or a thunder of acclamation. An assembly of man is searched by principles as an assembly of angels might be. A principle seems to swell to a sort of omnipotence, so slender a creature is man. (*EL* 2: 110)

Emerson heightens the notion of a higher purpose with his careful inclusion of words that supply a subtle religious undertone: the "lofty" sentiment, the determination to "abide by the right," the "assembly of angels," and the "omnipotence" of a principle serve to elevate the "great and general principle" and to assign its receivers to a worthy, desirable, and decidedly spiritual realm. His approach in other lectures in the series appears less dramatic but shares a similar psychological approach; in "Religion," he observes that

> The charm of this sentiment is inexpressible, whenever it presents itself to the mind with an original freshness. It cannot be named

> without a feeling of self-gratulation, for, it is a capacity of unmeasured satisfactions to be shared by every human being without the furtherance of any other person and in spite of the hindrance of all other persons. Quite independent of the favor or spite of fortune through this sentiment, though I am poor, or deformed, or mutilated, or ill-bred, I may be wise and beautiful, and therefore strong and beloved, wherever in the universal family of beings the Divine Providence may call me. Taught by it, I scorn appearances, I learn to *be* great. I mock at fortune. I teach fever and famine to dance and sing. No man, no power can harm me, for I rest on the soul of the soul. (*EL* 2: 89)

The passage again suggests elevation of the individual who answers the call of the moral sentiment, but in this instance, Emerson alludes to a potential for conflict that does not appear within the previous example. The "unmeasured satisfactions" appear before a host of potential afflictions that could conceivably accompany a positive response to the call. Although an ability to "mock at fortune" and to "teach fever and famine to dance and sing" hint at a modicum of relief, Emerson's implication remain clear: the path to which Divine Providence calls may be strewn with "hindrances," and not all of the consequences of supporting a higher cause will necessarily be pleasant or desirable. The individual who responds to the call of the moral sentiment may "rest on the soul of the soul" and enjoy the acknowledgment of Providence, but he could also suffer serious personal setbacks in his pursuit of a higher purpose.

In "The Philosophy of History" as in *Nature*, the call of the moral sentiment remains tied to the need for action. Although many examples offer themselves, one of the clearest appears in "Religion," where Emerson argues:

> I know not what is of so public and universal a nature as virtue.

> The universe is guarantee for every right action. He that speaks the truth executes no private function of a slender individual will, but the world utters a sound by his lips. He who doth a just action, seeth therein nothing of his own, but an inconceivable nobleness attaches to it, because it is a dictate of the general mind. We have no idea of power so simple and so entire as this. It is the basis of thought – it is the basis of being. Compare all that we call ourselves, all our private and personal venture in the world, with this deep of moral nature in which we lie, and our private good becomes an impertinence, and we take part with hasty shame against ourselves. "We find sweetness even in remorse."
> (*EL* 2: 86-87)

As virtue celebrates the just actor who speaks out in defense of the moral sentiment, his action ennobles the selfless individual, once again in a manner that transcends his "private and personal venture in the world, with this deep of moral nature." Emerson's observation that "private good becomes an impertinence" when it confronts "the dictate of the general mind" once again subordinates the actor to the higher cause he elects to represent. However, Emerson also cautions that

> A man must not speak the truth because it is profitable to all but because it is the truth. And this profit needs to be viewed on the largest scale. The act which serves the most persons and for the longest time and in the surest way may be fatal to the fortunes and life of the doer. On the contrary the most profitable act of the doer for the benefit of his personal health and animal comfort may be deeply hurtful to the country or to the race of man. For example suppose Socrates had truckled to the times and saved himself a

> prison and a poison; or St. Peter and St. Paul had obeyed the voice of interest and the magistrate, rather than the awful *I ought*. If Luther had been silent; if Sir Thomas More had bent a little; if Lord Russell, if Sidney, if Vane, had yielded to the advice of prudent friends, and not held themselves so stiffly to their own sense – there had been health, and venison, and long and easy life to these gentlemen, but the race of mankind would indeed be impoverished of its lofty friends, the driers of the tears and the strengtheners of the heart. The mounds would be broke that kept out the inundation of evil and every heartless fool would loll out his tongue unchecked before whatsoever is holy in the world. (*EL* 2: 87)

The utilitarian focus of the passage directly corresponds with Emerson's definition of the doctrine of Use in *Nature*, in which he explains that "a thing is good only so far as it serves" (41); hence, the greatest possible use of each individual resides in his potential to fulfill the requirements of a higher moral purpose. The critical element of impending self-sacrifice again alludes to the moral economy of human activity: the "profit" of the heroic act frequently accompanies circumstances that "may be fatal to the fortunes and life of the doer." The distinction between heroism and "health, and venison, and long and easy life" lies in the individual's receptivity to the dictates of "the awful *I ought*," or the call of the moral sentiment.

Although Emerson portrays the potential of the individual's response to the call in economical terms of profit and loss, the implications of the decision to act heroically transcend the limitations of a purely secular conception of morality. Many of Emerson's exemplary heroes in "The Philosophy of History" series are, as they are in *Nature*, historical martyrs or near-martyrs who devoted their lives to, or offered them for, the furtherance of a moral purpose. In the passage above, Socrates, Sir Thomas More, Lord Russell, Sidney, and Vane represent genuine martyrs; in fact, with the exceptions of More and Sidney, they are among the same martyrs that Emerson uses as heroic *exempla* in *Nature*.[20] The near-martyrs, or those whose vocation or life's purpose compelled unusual degrees of personal sacrifice, call attention to themselves by virtue of a common thread: each of their purposes involved a sustained commitment to a religious cause. Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and Martin Luther confronted tremendous opposition to their transmission of the Christian faith; each sacrificed "personal health and animal comfort" to serve in a noble capacity as "driers of the tears and strengtheners of the heart." Emerson makes clear that the individual investments of these heroic exemplars produced definitive moral returns: their actions "kept out the inundation of evil" and prevented "every heartless fool" from "loll[ing] out his tongue unchecked before whatsoever is holy in the world." The actions of our "lofty friends" thus elevate both themselves and "the race of mankind" through the example of the moral power of their individual heroic actions.

A striking array of heroic exemplars appears in "The Philosophy of History." In "Literature," Bacon, Phidias, Homer, Milton, Shakespeare, and Michelangelo illustrate Emerson's belief that "it always must happen that the true work of genius should proceed out of the wants and deeds of the age as well as of the writer, and so be the first form with which his maiden genius combines" (*EL* 2: 61). In "Politics," Socrates, Saint Paul, Luther, Milton, and Burke embody the notion that "we find in all times and all countries every great man" is "full of reverence. He is by inclination, (how far soever in position) the defender of the grammar school, the almshouse, the holy day, the church, the priest, the judge, the legislator, the executive arm. Throughout his being is he loyal, even when by circumstances arrayed in opposition to the actual order of things" (*EL* 2: 78). In "Trades and Professions," Goethe, Humboldt, Cuvier, Kant, Byron, and Scott show that “it is almost of no importance *how* a man serves the world; that is predetermined in his gift and in his circumstances; but only the fidelity of his service” (*EL* 2: 125). In “Manners,” the “Idea of the hero” embodies itself in the examples of the “Man of honor” as varied as the Duke of Buckingham, Pitt, Fox, Canning, “Aristides, Phocion, Pericles in Athens; Epaminondas, Timoleon, Scipio; St. Louis, Richard I, Saladin, Henry IV, Bayard, Sidney, Milton, Lord Falkland, Clarendon, Chatham, and Burke, and Washington” (140). As representatives of the categories of their respective essays, each individual appears by virtue of the appropriateness of his action within the context of his specific place and time.

Although not all of Emerson’s examples of great men fall into the classification of martyrs, each exhibits an uncommon commitment to the common good and a clear connection to the demands of a higher moral purpose. However, despite the prevalence throughout his work of distinctively historical exemplars, Emerson continually refocuses attention upon the need for an original relation and the moral concerns that can be discerned within the light of the present moment. He asserts in “Ethics”:

> The law of all action which cannot yet be stated, it is so simple, of which every man has glimpses in a lifetime and values that he knows of it more than all knowledge, which whether it be called Necessity or Spirit or Power is the law whereof all history is but illustration, is the law that sits as pilot at the helm and guides the path of revolutions, of wars, of emigrations, of trade, of legislation. And yet private life yields more affecting examples of irresistible nature of the human spirit than masses of men or long periods of time afford us. (*EL* 2: 144)

Although historical examples can be instructive, Emerson continually directs his message toward the potential for heroism within the experiences of individuals living in a perpetual present. Moral law in the form of “Necessity or Spirit or Power” pervades the universe and resides within the purview of “every man,” who has “glimpses” of it during his lifetime. Like *Nature*, “The Philosophy of History” series discourages the perception of individual heroism as a phenomenon of the past and encourages individuals to seek spiritual inspiration as well as opportunities for individual expression within the context of their own lives. Another passage in “Ethics,” one which appears later in the better-known “Self-Reliance,” restates Emerson’s conception of the great man in more familiar terms:

> To believe your own thought, -- to believe that what is true for you, in your private heart, is true for all men, -- that is genius. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton, is, that they set at nought [*sic*] books and traditions, and spoke not what other men, but what they thought. – Yet this principle, in practical life as arduous in the intellectual, may serve for the whole distinction betwixt men. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it yourself. It is easy to live after the world’s opinion. It is easy in solitude to live after your own. But the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.[21] (*EL* 2: 152)

The sentiments of the passage look simultaneously forward and backward: the focus on the original relation expressed in terms of the original thoughts of Moses, Plato, and Milton again points to the individual’s need to “set at nought” the findings of other men’s thinking and to seek instead a knowledge that derives solely from his unique intellectual exploration. As in *Nature*, each man must then act upon the implications of his thoughts; this publication, however potentially detrimental to his personal comfort or well-being, creates “the whole distinction betwixt men” in its differentiation between the ordinary individual and the exemplary “great man.” Only the “great man” possesses the power to aspire to something more: however “easy” it may be “in solitude to live after your own,” the great man is he who looks beyond the present moment to perceive the needs of the greater good. He effectively serves “the crowd” even as he rises above it; the moral sentiment elevates his thoughts and actions and relocates them—and him--within a higher spiritual realm.

As much as the passage looks back to the sentiments expressed in *Nature*, it also anticipates much of the substance of the material that created Emerson’s literary legacy. Both literally and figuratively, it belongs to “Self-Reliance” in its emphasis upon the individual’s need to know himself; the “[n]e te quæsiveris extra”[22] of Emerson’s epigram reverberates within the admonition to “believe your own thought” and to “[keep] with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” The passage establishes a foundation for *Essays, First Series* by linking thematic patterns established within both *Nature* and “The Philosophy of History” to those of Emerson’s later, better-known works. Specifically, the characteristics of the hero, presented similarly within *Nature* and “The Philosophy of History,” would remain fundamentally consistent as Emerson moved beyond the natural scientific and historical contexts of his initial post-ministerial works into the focused abstractionism that appears within the *Essays*. They would retain their moral and spiritual emphases even as they began to extend their reach into the aspects of the relationship of the individual to the One Mind. And whether Emerson’s reader approached the *Essays* with a familiarity with *Nature*, “The Philosophy of History,” or both, he or she would perceive that Emerson continually cast his great men, or heroic exemplars, into the same philosophical mold.

The Vision of Principles: The American Scholar and the Divinity School Address

> By trusting your own heart, you shall gain more confidence in other men. For all our penny-wisdom, for all our soul-destroying slavery to habit, it is not to be doubted that all men have sublime thoughts; that all men value the few real hours of life; they love to be heard; they love to be caught up into the vision of principles.
>
> --"Divinity School Address," 1838

The call for an "original relation" to the universe would be echoed throughout many of Emerson's subsequent lectures delivered throughout the late 1830s, including "The American Scholar" and the "Divinity School Address." In "The American Scholar" address delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard nearly a year after *Nature*'s publication, Emerson contends that Americans "have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe" and asserts that "confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar" (*W* 1: 114). Drawing as he did in *Nature* and "The Philosophy of History" upon his conviction that the present offers ample intellectual material and stimuli for original thoughts, Emerson decries over-reliance upon knowledge received from books and distinguishes "the mere thinker" from the scholar's "right state" of "*Man Thinking*" (*W* 1: 84). The capitalization and italicization of *Man Thinking*, which would not likely have been readily apparent to the audience for the speech, are unmistakable in print and point immediately to Emerson's concern with intellectual activity as a fluid, contemporary process.[23] It represents a part of what Emerson refers to as "the active soul," which he labels "[t]he one thing in the world, of value" (*W* 1: 89). This conception of the role of the American

Scholar builds upon the call for an original relation to the universe Emerson articulates in *Nature* and "The Philosophy of History" and then offers a practical outline to enable the scholar to manage the disparate influences upon his mind and to mold his individual experience into thoughts and actions fit for his present use.

Emerson defines the scholar as society's "delegated intellect" and identifies the three main influences upon his mind as nature, "the mind of the Past," and an essential need for definitive action. Emerson argues that Nature "solicits [*Man Thinking*] with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites" (*W* 1: 84). Nature remains in "The American Scholar," as it does in *Nature*, a renewable, regenerating force. "The scholar," Emerson contends,

> is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he can never find,--so entire, so boundless. Far too as her splendors shine, system on system shooting, like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference,--in the mass and in the particle. Nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. . . . It presently learns that since the dawn of history there has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts. But what is classification but the perceiving that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also the law of the human mind? (*W* 1: 85-86)

Emerson's conception of the role of nature privileges the perpetual revelation of the universe as it is continually experienced anew through the unique efforts of the individual human mind. Nature's expansiveness suggests intellectual boundlessness even as it lends itself to the classifying instincts to be found within human nature. This seemingly paradoxical tendency finds its mirror image in the infinitude to which Emerson relegates the human spirit. He implies that Man Thinking is limited not by his innate nature but rather by the restrictions he would elect to place upon his own intellectual explorations. Emerson's contention that "Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments" (*W* 1: 91) encourages a *tabula rasa* approach to education, one that subordinates prescription and preconception to the scholar's original relation with the source material that he engages.

Emerson's advocacy of an essentially solitary sojourn along the path of knowledge acquisition hearkens back to *Nature* and assumes a spiritual as well as an intellectual significance.   Emerson maintains his earlier view of nature as the visible expression of God and his faith in the ability of man to apprehend his soul in his empirical study of the world around him. He explains:

> to him, to this schoolboy under the bending dome of day, is suggested that he and it proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy stirring in every vein. And what is that root? Is not that the soul of his soul? A thought too bold; a dream too wild. Yet when this spiritual light shall have revealed the law of more earthly natures,--when he has learned to worship the soul, and to see that the natural philosophy that now is, is only the first gropings of its gigantic hand, he shall look forward to an ever expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator. (*W* 1: 86)

Emerson's analogy of the pursuit of knowledge as a growth process symbolized by the root, the leaf, and the flower alludes to his conception of the cyclical and self-perpetuating nature of active intellectual evolution. The “spiritual light” essential to the life and furtherance of the plant connect curiosity and learning to the well-being of the material organism as well as to the health of the soul. The soul, in fact, pervades both the individual and his natural environment, and through unbridled introspection, the scholar ultimately perceives that “earthly natures” reflect the substance of spiritual laws. The “natural philosophy” at which the scholar finally arrives encourages his further exploration toward “an ever-expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator.” It places him intellectually within the province of creation and connects freedom of perception to the potential for original thought and action.

Emerson’s equation of knowledge and creation is far from accidental. The natural philosophy of the scholar results from his having learned to “worship the soul,” a notion that removes him from the realm of received knowledge and places him, as a creator, on a level approaching God. Although Emerson halts this particular analogy at the point of “a becoming creator,” his implication that the scholar can aspire to the realm of divinity remains clear. He who seeks truth comes to appreciate that

> nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind he does not yet possess. And, in fine, the ancient precept “Know thyself,” and the modern precept, “Study nature,” become at last one maxim. (*W* 1: 86-87)

In inviting the scholar to know himself by studying nature, Emerson can initially appear to be deflecting potential opposition to the idea of aspiring to divinity by advocating a more secular approach to the process of human learning. This connection, however, has already been firmly established within the substance of the essay's argument. Emerson's earlier reference to "the inexplicable continuity of this web of God" as a "circular power returning into itself" remains one that "resembles [the scholar's] own spirit" in its boundlessness and potential. And nature continues, as it does in *Nature*, to function as the visible expression of God. As "Nature becomes the measure of [the scholar's] attainments," so it reveals the degree to which he has achieved a knowledge of himself and the universe in which he resides. The symbiotic relationship between nature and the soul confirms this connection: once the scholar "has learned to worship the soul," he then gauges "the measure of his attainments" through his appreciation and understanding of nature. As he worships the soul, he comes to know himself; as he comprehends nature, he comes to know God.

In "The American Scholar" as well as in *Nature* and "The Philosophy of History," Emerson takes pains to emphasize that higher knowledge can not be achieved through means other than each man's original relation with the universe. He then describes the second influence upon the mind and spirit of the scholar as "the mind of the Past,--in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions" (*W* 1: 87). The deliberate capitalization of the word *Past* marks another instance of what Whicher, Spiller, and Williams refer to as Emerson's use of "emphatic abstractions" (xviii); in this case, Emerson distinguishes between the human experience of the past, as perceived through the mind and soul of the individual, and the traditional, "official" historical record of the agreed-upon "Past," the History that is depicted in books. Over-reliance upon the printed knowledge available in libraries represents an undesirable limitation upon intellectual exploration; however, as Buell maintains, Emerson's "pronouncement [in *Nature*] that books 'are for nothing to inspire' (*W* I: 56) means to warn against fetishing them, not against taking them seriously" (201). Emerson insists that "a fatal disservice is done" to the scholar when too much of his time is "wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings" (*W* 1: 89). He labels "The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, [that] is transferred to the record" as "a grave mischief" (88) and explains:

> The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit; henceforward it is settled the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious; the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursion of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books. (88)

In this passage, Emerson avoids faulting the writings of Cicero, Locke, and Bacon even as he criticizes formal approaches to higher learning as proceeding "from accepted dogmas" rather than from the scholar's "own sight of principles." He suggests that intellectual possibilities commence at the point of departure from the less-than-desirable status of "young men in libraries" to the higher and more distinctive realm of Man Thinking. Emerson contrasts Man Thinking and the mere thinker with his use of the symbols of the hero and his statue: Man Thinking constitutes the vital, living force of the hero, while the thinker, or "bookworm," confines himself to perpetual residence within the statue, a fixed, cold, and essentially dead relic from a remote, inaccessible Past.

Emerson's conception of Man Thinking remains tied to the need he perceived for an original relation with the universe. Although he acknowledges that "[t]he theory of books is noble" (*W* 1: 87), he also points out that "[t]he scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. It came to him short-lived actions; it went out from him immortal thoughts" (87). The "scholar of the first age" enjoys the original relation essential to a higher perception of truth: just as the seeker remains unable to perceive nature second-hand, so he is prevented from achieving knowledge of himself and his world through the limiting medium of books. Emerson explains:

> As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity, as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books, or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this. (*W* 1: 87-88)

Although Emerson argues that "[b]ooks are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth,--learn the amount of this influence more conveniently,--by considering their value alone" (87), his statement undercuts itself by suggesting that such sources ultimately reveal themselves as inadequate to the true scholar's task. The need for new books for each age of man represents a function of the perpetual revelation that is critical to Emerson's notion of the original relation. Man Thinking must distance himself from the restrictive influence of the Past; Emerson insists that “Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments” and asserts that “[b]ooks are for the scholar’s idle times” (89). He concludes that “[w]hen [the scholar] can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men’s transcripts of their readings” (89).

Emerson contends in “The American Scholar” that “the right use” for books is “for nothing but to inspire” and proclaims, “I had better never see a book than to be warped out of its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system” (*W* 1: 88). His use of planetary symbols alludes once again to the wider universe and the need for an original relation to it, as does his definition of “the active soul,” which he distinguishes as “[t]he one thing in the world, of value” (88). Emerson argues the study of books must be subordinated to the scholar’s quest for the genius of the active soul when he reasons:

> This [the active soul] every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed and as yet unborn. The soul active seeks absolute truth and utters truth, or creates. In this action it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they,--let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead: man hopes: genius creates. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux of the Deity is not his;--cinders and

> smoke there may be, but not yet flame. (*W* 1: 88-89)

Although each man possesses a unique potential for genius, Emerson maintains that this trait lies dormant within the individual who would restrict himself to the types of knowledge available from reading books. Emerson identifies the nature of truth as progressive and relegates the relevance of “past utterances” to the ages from which they issued. He connects genius to the individual act of creation and then creation to the province of the Deity. Man Thinking becomes capable not only of reading God directly but of experiencing the creative energy that emanates from Him. The self-reliant scholar learns not only to perceive truth but how to convert this flame of knowledge into intellectual power and the ability to create for himself. Such traits elevate Man Thinking above the mere thinker and position him firmly on a level with God.

Emerson would not confine the scholar to his thoughts or to his library; his examination of the influences upon Man Thinking characteristically concludes with a call to definitive action. Emerson argues that “[a]ction is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth. . . . The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not” (91-92). This notion of the need to publish thoughts, the action which precipitates an individual’s elevation to heroic status, carries forward from *Nature* and “The Philosophy of History”; it also appears in the subsequent “Divinity School Address,” where Emerson contends that “The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life,--life passed through the hour of thought” (*W* 1: 117). Although thought necessarily precedes action, the scholar’s task, like the minister’s and the hero’s, remains incomplete when his knowledge does not proceed from a genuine, firsthand experience of life.

Emerson's concern with the need to limit books to their "right use," therefore, relegates received knowledge to a lesser realm wherein it becomes mere inspiration or stimulus for original thought. Within this paradigm, the original relation combines individual introspection with real-life experience to yield a creative force that gains additional strength through its eventual publication. Emerson makes true intellectual power the preserve of the heroic actor who takes the necessary steps into the potentially divine region of personal creativity. "We hear," he concludes, "that we may speak" (89).

Emerson emphasizes the need for action with his contention that "[i]naction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind" (91). He underscores the call to action with an analogy most likely drawn from thoughts and experience obtained from his own life. He explains:

> There goes in the world a notion that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian,--as unfit for any handiwork or public labor as a penknife for an axe. The so-called "practical men" sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing. I have heard it said that the clergy,--who are always, more universally than any other class, the scholars of their day,--are addressed as women; that the rough, spontaneous conversation of men they do not hear, but only a mincing and diluted speech. They are often virtually disenfranchised; and indeed there are advocates for their celibacy. (*W* 1: 91)

This distinction between "speculative" and "practical" men surfaces in various forms throughout the body of Emerson's work: it differentiates the Knowers and the Doers in "The Poet," the "men of study" and the laborers in "Man the Reformer," and the Idealists and the Materialists in "The Transcendentalist." In "The American Scholar," Emerson points to a perceived gulf between the "spontaneous conversation of men" and the "mincing and diluted speech" of a remotely contemplative—and conspicuously feminized—clergy. The analogy implies that higher learning socially emasculates the scholarly individual, an idea that Emerson sharpens with his corresponding allusion to those who would find the solution to the situation in an enthusiastic advocacy of ecclesiastical celibacy. However, an alternative interpretation can also be discerned, one that argues for a moratorium on the reproduction of an impressively educated but socially irrelevant class that would sequester itself in its libraries. Emerson's argument here is with neither education nor the clergy per se but with the unnatural encumbrances imposed upon the serious student by himself as well as his society and its institutions. The requirement to publish thoughts through action necessitates an assertion of moral courage on the part of the individual that opens him to criticism and potentially casts him in the role of social or political outsider. Such dangers can represent formidable challenges to the scholar's autonomy and resolve and therefore require him to be prepared to defend his beliefs. Hence, Emerson echoes the warnings of *Nature* and "The Philosophy of History" and cautions the true scholar that he must be "free and brave" (*W* 1: 97).

Emerson equates the intellectual courage required of the scholar with individual strength and power. Observing that "[t]hinking is a partial act" (94), he explains the necessity of action as a complement to scholarly pursuits when he elaborates:

> The mind now thinks, now acts, and each fit reproduces the other. When the artist has exhausted his materials, when the fancy no longer paints, when thoughts are no longer apprehended and books are a weariness,--he has always the resource to *live*. Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreats to its source. A great soul

> will be strong to live, as well as strong to think. (94)

The interconnectivity of thoughts and actions assumes a moral dimension as Emerson links the active soul to the spiritual potential and power that can be ascertained within the superior human character. The individual's claim to greatness resides in his willingness not only to think independently but to act, both privately and publicly, in accordance with his own beliefs. Contending that "[t]he true scholar grudges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power" (*W* 1: 92), Emerson concludes that "he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions has the richest return of wisdom" (93). The true scholar transcends the marginal realm of book learning as a result of his election to embrace his original relation to the universe and to employ it as a practical tool for determining the course of his unique thoughts and actions. However, the act of being "free and brave" necessarily, and perhaps inevitably, opens the individual to criticism from the practitioners of established institutions as well as from those who recognize (and perpetuate) their perceived authority. Although Emerson advises that "a man shall not for the sake of wider activity sacrifice any opinion to the popular judgments and modes of action" (95), he also appreciates the inherent danger of standing in defense of beliefs that run contrary to prevailing thoughts and popular opinions. Even so, he defines the "duties" of the scholar as "such as become Man Thinking" and determines that "[t]hey may all be comprised in self-trust" (95). This self-trust can reward the scholar in unexpected ways; as John E. Hart has illustrated, "The process of becoming which Emerson described was not new; it was the timeless adventure of the discovery of self, and what that adventure had always meant . . . the rediscovery of the creative and redemptive powers that have been within man all the time. It is the adventure usually reserved for the warrior hero, but Emerson clearly indicates that self-trust anywhere in any role is heroism" (102).

Emerson devotes a substantial portion of “The American Scholar” address to his delineation of these duties of the scholar and their significance to both the scholar and his society. As he does in *Nature*, Emerson connects the potential for superior insight to the individual’s ability to fuse his innate capacity for unique perception with his unfettered experience of the original relation. As in *Nature*, Emerson’s metaphors are those equated with active firsthand vision: the scholar, initially the “transparent eyeball” who “see[s] all” and has “all the currents of the Universal Being circulat[ing] through [him]” (*W* 1: 10), must ultimately be willing to publish his discoveries for the benefit, edification, and use of others. Arguing that “[t]he office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances” (95), Emerson contends:

> He is the world’s eye. He is the world’s heart. He is to resist the vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism, by preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse, and the conclusions of history. Whatsoever oracles the human heart, in all emergencies, in all solemn hours, has uttered as its commentary on the world of actions,--these he shall receive and impart. And whatsoever new verdict Reason, from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of to-day,--this he shall hear and promulgate. (96)

Action remains here, as it does in *Nature*, “the perfection and publication of thought” (61). Although it proceeds from the individual’s original relation, such action moves beyond a simple “firsthand experience of day-to-day living among one’s contemporaries” (Sealts 105). The scholar acts upon his thoughts by “preserving and communicating” through his works his own unique conclusions, which Emerson characterizes as “heroic,” “noble,” and “melodious.” The true judge of the veracity of these findings becomes neither man nor his institutions but the abstracted Reason, which reaches beyond present-day people and events to relegate individual perceptions to more exclusive addresses within the realm of the recondite. Privileging the scholar and his conclusions over a fluctuating public and its fleeting intellectual opinions, Emerson's reasoning effectively elevates the thinker himself along with the act and publication of his thought.

Although Emerson clearly appreciated the inherent beauty of thought for its own sake, he also recognized the practical difficulties of elucidating and maintaining positions that run contrary to prevailing public sentiment. Acknowledging "the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed; and the state of virtual hostility in which he seems to stand to society, and especially to educated society" (*W* 1: 96), Emerson nevertheless encourages his scholar "to find consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature" and proclaims him "the one who raises himself from public considerations and breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts" despite "all this loss and scorn" (96). Emerson's advocacy of such a stalwart public position compels the scholar, like any potential hero, to stand behind his own conclusions in the face of contradiction, ridicule, or contempt. Although such conviction does not constitute an antisocial action on its surface, Emerson clearly perceived the potential for conflict in the defense of unpopular beliefs when he warned that

> fear is a thing which a scholar by his very function puts behind him. It is a shame to him if his tranquillity, amid dangerous times, arise from the presumption that like children and women his is a protected class; or if he seek a temporary peace by the diversion of his thoughts from politics or vexed questions, hiding his head like

> an ostrich in the bushes, . . . as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. So is the danger a danger still; so is the fear worse. Manlike let him turn and face it. (*W* 1: 97)

Once again employing metaphors of gender, Emerson steers the scholar beyond the perceived timidity and relative powerlessness of women and children that represent the meager harvests of spiritual reticence towards the more masculine purview of the intellectually self-reliant. The self-trust that characterizes Man Thinking reflects a heroic, masculine assertion of superior strength that empowers the individual who confronts external conflict with the forces of knowledge and personal conviction. Although this posture projects strength and self-assurance, it falls short of an actual "state of battle"[24] and suggests instead a sort of battle-readiness: Emerson asserts that "it becomes [the scholar] to feel all confidence in himself, and to never defer to the popular cry" (96). By remaining steadfast in his defense of his own thoughts, the scholar frees himself from the doubts and constraints of the crowd and thereby enables his own transference to the more desirable sphere of intellectual and spiritual autonomy. He also creates his own opportunity both to serve a higher moral purpose and to elevate himself to the level of the exemplary hero.

For Emerson, self-trust constitutes the prelude to the self-reliance that enables the scholar or other hero to operate as the master of his universe. Emerson makes clear that this self-knowledge can be its own reward when he contends that "[s]uccess treads on every right step. For the instinct is sure, that prompts him to tell his brother what he thinks" (*W* 1: 96-97). However, he also asserts that self-trust elevates the individual to heroic status by offering him as an example to educate and inspire others. In his fearless publication, the scholar

> learns that in going down into the secrets of his own mind he has descended into the secrets of all minds. He learns that he who

> has mastered any law in his private thoughts, is master to that extent of all men whose language he speaks, and of all into whose language his own can be translated. The poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that which men in crowded cities find true for them also. The orator distrusts at first the fitness of his frank confessions, until he finds that he is the complement of his hearers;--that they drink his words because he fulfills for them their own nature; the deeper he dives into his privatest, secretest presentiment, to his wonder he finds this is the most acceptable, most public, and universally true. The people delight in it; the better part of every man feels, This is my music; this is myself. (*W* 1: 97)

This passage elaborates upon the notion of the One Man that Emerson introduces at the beginning of the essay when he explains, "The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is One Man,--present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man" (84). This concept appears over and over again, in various forms, throughout the body of Emerson's work: the One Man is the cause, country, and age of "Self-Reliance," the individual component of the universal mind in "History," and the foremost watchman who acts as "the unerring voice of the world for [his] time in "The Poet." Within these and many other contexts, the One Man functions essentially as a microcosm of all men who live, think, and act within the constraints of linear time. Publication places the scholar on a parallel plane with the heroic poets and orators who cast aside their initial misgivings to tap into the universal truth residing within the recesses of each individual mind.

The scholar who acknowledges the sanctity of his unique thoughts illuminates the innate character of the human mind, which Emerson describes as “one light which beams out of a thousand stars” and “the central fire,” “the one soul which animates all men” (100). Self-trust invests him with the power to lead through his ability to inspire, raising the hero above the “no account” men who make up “’the mass’ and ‘the herd” and who subordinate their own capacity for thought for the presumed safety of “[rejoicing] in the glory of [their] chief” (99). Observing that “[t]he day is his who works in it with serenity and great aims” (*W* 1: 98), Emerson contends that “[t]he world is his who can see through its pretension” (98). Labeling those who follow others as “the cowed” and “the trustless” (98), he proceeds to explain that

> [i]t is a mischievous notion that we are come late into nature; that the world was finished a long time ago. As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever so much of his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin, it is flint. They adapt themselves to it as they may; but in proportion as a man has any thing in him divine, the firmament flows before him and takes his signet and form. Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind. They are the kings of the world who give their color to the present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men by the cheerful serenity of their carrying that matter, that this thing which they do is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest. The great man makes the great thing. . . . The day is always his who works in it with serenity and great aims. (98)

In this passage, Emerson defines the “great” man as the one who courageously publicizes his thoughts and who invites others, through the conspicuousness of the example he sets, to fearlessly follow suit. The "kings of the world" metaphor, combined with the repetition of the word "great" and the correlative implication of "greatness," invests the heroic individual with a regal endorsement that symbolizes the attainment of a higher and more laudable position atop the scale of human potential. Man is once again connected to God through the "attribute" of creativity: Emerson builds upon his earlier equation of genius and creation in the quest for the active soul and recalls "the pure efflux of the Deity" present within the man for whom the world becomes "plastic and fluid," as it was "in the hands of God." Through his creativity and courage, Man Thinking achieves the power and autonomy that represent the rewards of leadership and enjoys a deified, heroic status that elevates him to the purview of divinity.

Although the individual's purposeful self-promotion remains a commendable goal in its own right, Emerson takes care to emphasize the importance of the "great" man as both a symbol of the potential of human aspirations worthy of emulation and the embodiment of the higher traits of the human soul present within the exemplary One. In contrast to sheepish followers who "sun themselves in the great man's light, and feel it to be their own element" (*W* 1: 99), the self-trusting, heroic individual "must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future" and recognize that within himself "slumbers the whole of Reason" (103-04). Much of his heroic quality resides within his ability to serve as an example of the higher thoughts and actions of men living within his unique historical moment. Even as Emerson points to the need for an original relation and the inability of the intellectual findings of one period to suit the needs of another, he continually returns to this conception of the interconnectivity of men and nature and the notion of the whole of humanity as perceived within the example of the representative individual. The One Man's exemplary qualities anchor him to the thinking men of his own time even as they allow him to transcend historical boundaries through the unifying medium of the single human soul.

Emerson's frequently-expressed conception of events as restricted to their unique historical context and concurrently connected beyond these limits completes his enumeration of the duties of Man Thinking. Again employing metaphors of monarchy and conquest, he explains the significance of the One Man and his relationship to other men in terms of message, time, and purpose. Emerson declares:

> The main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the upbuilding of a man. Here are the materials strewn along the ground. The private life of one man shall be a more illustrious monarchy, more formidable to its enemy, more sweet and serene in its influence to its friend, than any kingdom in history. For a man, rightly viewed, comprehendeth the particular natures of all men. Each philosopher, each bard, each actor has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself. . . . we have come up with that point of view which the universal mind took through the eyes of one scribe; we have been that man, and have passed on. First, one, then another, we drain all cisterns, and waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily, and now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is

> one soul which animates all men. (*W* 1: 99-100)

The components of a concept that can seem inherently contradictory coexist quite peacefully within this beautifully-written passage. Freed from external constraints upon his intellectual explorations, the self-reliant individual ultimately bypasses traditional barriers of time and place to reside within an "unbounded, unboundable empire" of his own definition and making. The light of the "central fire" perpetually relocates itself to accommodate to the needs of men; the subtle yet powerful metaphor of illumination connects thought to sustenance as it recalls Emerson's long-established relationship between light and vision, the power of their influence in determining human perceptions, and the role individual perception plays within the processes of thinking and acquiring knowledge.

The notion of "the upbuilding of a man" as "the main enterprise of the world" for "splendor" and "extent" confirms mankind's place within the universe as well as the significance of the individual actor within this larger framework. The potential for greatness resides not within an inherited position of advantage but in one that has been gained through introspection and insight; the "private life of one man" offers its ultimate benefit as an example of how an individual thinker "comprehendeth the particular natures of all men" and thus illuminates the nature of the One Mind. No individual retains this ability indefinitely: the idea that "[t]he man has never lived that can feed us ever" recalls *Nature*'s doctrine of Use and alludes to the finite character of an individual's heroic propensity. As an "unbounded, unboundable empire," the human mind demands that new heroes continually surface as the embodiments of the thoughts of their respective ages. Such a need can only be fulfilled as each individual arrives at his own unique thoughts through his original relation with the universe. The scholar or other actor must free himself from intellectual restraints if he is to produce anything to further the cause of humankind. The mechanism by which man aspires to divinity resides within his spirit; it is his if he summons the courage to think and act for himself. In “The American Scholar,” Emerson seeks nothing less than to emancipate the human intellect.

The call for an original relation appears again in the “Divinity School Address” of 1838. In this lecture, Emerson alienated clergymen as well as scholars by appearing “to question not only Unitarianism but Christianity and religion itself, at least as they understood them” (Cayton 169) and by explaining to divinity graduates, among other things, that “the religious sentiment,” which he characterizes as “divine and deifying,” “cannot be received at second hand,” but only as “an intuition” (*W* 1: 21-25). As he had done in *Nature* and other earlier lectures, Emerson connects the call of a noble sentiment to the requirements of the One Mind when he asserts that

> the world is not the product of manifold power, but of one will, of one mind; and that one mind is everywhere active, in each ray of the star, in each wavelet of the pool; and whatever opposes that will is everywhere balked and baffled, because things are made so, and not otherwise. Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute: it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity. Benevolence is absolute and real. So much benevolence as a man hath, so much life hath he. For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes. All things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, or auxiliaries. (123-24)

The passage may not seem particularly subversive on its surface, especially to contemporary readers, but it would likely have appeared so to many theologians and would-be clergymen by virtue of its essential reconfiguration of several traditional Christian beliefs. Although good and evil feature prominently, Emerson deprives them of their absolute quality and diminishes the potential power of evil by reducing it to a mere negation. The perpetual war between opposing forces for possession of the human soul disappears, as do the corresponding images of hellfire and brimstone associated with the expression of evil as sin. Good and its correlative benefits proceed from man rather than from the power of God; strength and power result from the "benevolence" of the individual spirit rather than from adherence to the principles of religious indoctrination. The "one mind" to which Emerson alludes may suggest that it applies to God, but no direct reference to God or to the Supreme Being appears within the passage.

The moral sentiments that Emerson describes in the Address correspond with the religious sentiment of *Nature* and are essentially similar yet variously labeled. Emerson defines the "virtuous sentiment" as "a reverence and delight in the presence of certain divine laws" and claims that "in the game of human life, love, fear, justice, appetite, and God, interact" (*W* 1: 121). He contends that when man opens his heart and mind to virtue,

> he is instructed in what is above him. He learns that his being is without bound; that to the good, to the perfect, he is born, low as he now lies in evil and weakness. That which he venerates is still his own, though he has not realized it yet. *He ought*. He knows the sense of that grand word, though his analysis fails to render account of it. When in innocency or when by intellectual perception he attains to say,--"I love the Right; Truth is beautiful within and

> without for evermore. Virtue, I am thine; save me; use me; thee will I serve, day and night, in great, in small, that I may be not virtuous, but virtue;"—then is the end of the creation answered, and God is well pleased. (120-21)

The passage privileges virtue and the individual who perceives it: man receives "instruction in what is above him" from the virtuous sentiment as opposed to the Bible, the clergy, or the church. No intermediary is required; the individual attains higher knowledge directly through either his innate ability or his independent use of his own intellect. The call one receives requires service to the abstracted virtue instead of to God, a distinction that would not have been lost on an audience composed of clergymen, as would the subordination of the notion of representing virtue to embodying virtue itself. Emerson's contention that "God is well pleased" with the individual's love of Right and Truth departs from many of the teachings of historical Christianity not in the substance of the sentiment but in its source: in Emerson's view, the virtuous sentiment arises as a result of an individual's private thoughts and intellectual engagement rather than from God, the Bible, or the guidance and teachings of the clergy. Although God is pleased with the individual's reception of the virtuous sentiment, the passage implies that He functions as a spectator to man's call to service rather than its direct origin or stimulus.

The religious sentiment proceeds from the virtuous, or moral, sentiment, which Emerson defines as "an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul" (122). He elaborates that the religious sentiment "makes [man] illimitable. Through it, the soul first knows itself. It corrects the capital mistake of the infant man, who seeks the great by following the great, and hopes to derive advantage *from another*" (*W* 1: 125). In emphasizing the gulf between an active, firsthand experience of faith and the passive, intellectual acceptance of received doctrine, Emerson echoes the original relation to the universe theme previously identified in *Nature*, "The Philosophy of History," and "The American Scholar" while creating even firmer distinctions between the personal experience of spirituality and the practice of established religion. He also distinguishes the "divine" individual from the "infant man" who dutifully follows a roadmap drawn by others instead of navigating a course for his own life. In these ways, Emerson removes the religious sentiment from the realm of received dogma and relocates it within the spirit of the individual who would seek it for himself. However, his movement is not one away from God per se but rather toward an original, personal, and perpetual experience of Him within the framework of individual experience and insight.[25]

In addition to its definition of the religious sentiment, the "Divinity School Address" remains significant as one of the few sources that articulate part of the actual substance of Emerson's post-ministerial religious faith. Contending that "[t]he spirit only can teach" (*W* 1: 135), Emerson points out that "[p]reaching is the expression of the moral sentiment in application to the duties of life" (136) but cautions that "[w]e have contrasted the Church with the Soul" (144). Emerson recognized the diminution of faith that had resulted in many New England parishioners electing to "*sign off*" by actively avoiding religious services. But he departed from the majority of clerics by placing the primary responsibility for this decline on ineffective ministers "who, sometimes accept[ed] with too great tenderness the tenet of the elders" (141) and continued to preach without having learned to "convert life into truth" (138). Noting that "[m]en have come to speak of the revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead," Emerson characteristically concludes that "the need was never greater of new revelation than now" (135).

Emerson attributes the prevailing decline in religious faith to two specific failures of historical Christianity: its overemphasis on the physical versus the spiritual in the treatment of Jesus Christ and a neglect of the "open soul" as the basis for religious instruction (130-34). With regard to the latter, Emerson believed that "[p]reaching is the expression of the moral sentiment in application to the duties of life" (136), but in order to achieve this purpose, the minister must be able to demonstrate that he, himself, has lived it. In a revealing passage, Emerson contends that "[w]henever the pulpit is usurped by a formalist, then is the worshipper defrauded and disconsolate. We shrink as soon as the prayers begin, which do not uplift, but smite and offend us" (137). He elaborates:

> I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no soul entered the temple in the afternoon. A snow-storm was falling around us. The snow-storm was real, the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession, namely, to convert life into truth, he had not learned. Not one fact in all his experience had he yet imported into his doctrine. This man had ploughed and planted and talked and bought and sold; he had read books; he had eaten and drunken; his head aches, his heart throbs; he smiles and suffers; yet was there not a surmise, a hint, in all the discourse, that he had ever lived at all. Not a line did he draw out of real history. The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his

> life,--life passed through the fire of thought. (137-38)

The passage recalls the need for the original relation as well as the importance of publishing individual thoughts through actions. The formalist minister fails to inspire faith in others because his lesson represents a second-hand knowledge that derives from books and a tired legacy of theological indoctrination instead of from a genuine experience of life. Emerson emphasizes the breadth of the gulf between the minister's message and its applicability to the needs of his audience; the words fall short of the minister's "capital secret" of "convert[ing] life into truth," and as a result, the minister himself becomes "spectral." Emerson's imagery underscores his distinction between the vitality of the snowstorm and the virtual lifelessness of the minister and his message: while the snowstorm is depicted as tangible and real, the minister is rendered remote and ghostlike. Neither the substance nor its source appear real to the observer; both the minister and his message are symbolically consigned to a realm of negation and death.

Emerson's second argument with historical Christianity concerns its less-than-inspiring treatment of the figure of Jesus. He observes that

> Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus. The soul knows no persons. It invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe, and will have no preferences but those of spontaneous love. But by this eastern monarchy of a Christianity, which indolence and fear have built, the friend of man is made the injurer of man. The manner in which his name is surrounded with

> expressions which were once sallies of admiration and love, but are now petrified into official titles, kills all generous sympathy and liking. All who hear me, feel that the language that describes Christ to Europe and America is not the style of friendship and enthusiasm to a good a noble heart, but is appropriated and formal,--paints a demigod. (*W* 1: 130-31)

This passage provides substantial insight into Emerson's beliefs as they existed six years following his resignation from the ministry as well as part of the basis of his argument with historical Christianity. In it, he questions not the worthiness of belief in Jesus but rather the historical emphasis upon expressions of Christ's divinity at the expense of those of humanity. Emerson perceived that over time, "[t]he idioms of his language and the figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of his truth; and churches are not built on his principles, but on his tropes. [As a result,] Christianity became a Mythus, as the poetic teaching of Greece and of Egypt, before" (129). As with the need for ministers to preach from the experiences of life, Emerson's second concern with historical Christianity reveals his ongoing preoccupation with emphasizing life and the need of ministers to address the present needs of the living.

Emerson's complaint was therefore not with Jesus himself but rather with historical Christianity's depiction of Jesus as "not glad" (133). The "Divinity School Address" carefully delineates the differences between what Emerson believed to be the true significance of the life of Christ and the erroneous emphasis of theologians upon miracles and the need to subordinate human nature to the strictures of sanctioned belief. He perceived that centuries of Christian dogma had succeeded in separating Christ from the intellectual reach of humankind and thus had made him spiritually inaccessible to his nineteenth-century followers; as Sherman Paul contends, "By divorcing the miracle from an immediate sense of the presence of God in the process of nature, only known by man by sharing that process, the miracle that remained applied only to past events credited by historical testimony" (88). Emerson understood that when spirituality becomes lost in tradition and ritual, it ceases to remain a vital force. In contrast to the distant, ephemeral presence that was being depicted in many pulpits, Emerson argues that Jesus "[a]lone in all history . . . estimated the greatness of man" and "saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his World" (128). In creating clear distinctions between particular events in the life of Christ and the spirit of his life as a whole, Emerson again underscores the spiritual dichotomy between the practice of religious dogma and the exercise of genuine faith. He also places man on a level with God and recenters this relationship within the context of a vital, living present.

Although many of his contemporaries would likely have disagreed, Emerson's criticism of the clergy's handling of the lesson of Christ neither "demotes" nor "promotes" Jesus, as Richard O'Keefe has argued (*Mythic Archetypes* 110);[26] neither does it diminish Jesus in its elevation of man to the sphere of the "divine." Emerson contends, "The injustice of the vulgar tone of preaching is not less flagrant to Jesus than to the souls which it profanes. The preachers do not see that they make his gospel not glad, and shear him of the locks of beauty and the attributes of heaven" (133). The debate here is not with the subject but with the tone and substance of the message being delivered. In his contention that "[w]e have contrasted the Church with the Soul" (144), Emerson points out that "[t]he stationariness of religion; the assumption that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man;-- indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake" (144).

The "Divinity School Address" illustrates that Emerson perceived a living, immediate significance to the life of Jesus that he felt was being obscured by contemporary approaches to religious indoctrination. He appreciated the example of Jesus as a lesson in the expansive potential of the human character and the ability of individual men to experience firsthand the spirit of the religious sentiment. He explains his belief that Jesus "felt respect for Moses and the prophets, but no unfit tenderness at postponing their initial revelations to the hour and the man that now is; to the eternal revelation of the heart. Thus he was a true man. Having seen that the law in us is commanding, he would not suffer it to be commanded. Boldly, with hand, and heart, and life, he declared it was God. Thus is he, as I think, the only soul in history who has appreciated the worth of man" (129-30). In contrasting Jesus to Moses and other prophets, Emerson symbolically subordinates historical Christianity to a perpetual experience of faith and its application to the lives of everyday people existing within the present. "The eternal revelation of the heart" represents the human experience of the religious sentiment, which Emerson portrays as a contemporary event rather than a mechanical exercise in a stale tradition. He also equates Jesus with both men and God and thus enables the "deification" of man through his individual experience of the sentiment.

The notion of Jesus as a "true man" alludes to Emerson's continuing awareness of one of the ongoing theological debates of his time: the question of whether Jesus was God or a man, and whether his role was to mediate between men and God or simply to teach by inspiration and example (Huggard 98). As William Huggard has written, Emerson, like his father before him, wavered somewhat between the two positions during his youth, but by the time of the "Divinity School Address," he had settled upon a conception that emphasizes the “noble humanity” of Jesus (100). Huggard explains that “[t]hough Emerson himself was truly unitarian in theology, he could understand why multitudes of Christians have elevated so noble a being a Jesus to the stature of divine saviour” (101). He also believed that Jesus would have been disturbed by the harsh divisions between various religious sects and the bitter infighting over issues of theology and doctrine (102-03). Huggard insists that “in Emerson’s view what distinguished Jesus from other human beings, and exalted him above all others, was the lofty quality of his religious insights and the surpassing goodness of his life” (100). Huggard concludes that “[w]hatever Jesus’ office was, Emerson did not believe that Jesus’ mission was to act as mediator between man and God” (105).

Despite the apparent movement towards secularization of traditional religious doctrine articulated within his arguments for the religious sentiment, Emerson the philosopher departs only slightly from basic precepts that in an earlier period would have been acknowledged and endorsed by Emerson the minister: within both systems, Jesus occupies a unique position that connects man to the realm of the divine through the medium of virtuous (and potentially heroic) thoughts and actions. In declaring Jesus “a true man,” Emerson also points to Jesus’s understanding that “the law in us is commanding.” This curiously-phrased passage invites the interpretation that Jesus, as a man living among other men, appreciated the power and pull of human nature and the natural instincts which propel it. But Emerson also observes that Jesus rejected the imposition of external restraints upon this intuitive will by “not suffer[ing] it to be commanded.” By “boldly declar[ing] it was God,” Emerson’s Jesus embraces the commanding law of human nature “with hand, and heart, and life.” He also enables his (humanized) self to reach out to God as a result of, rather than in spite of, the condition of his own humanity. It is perhaps to this action that

Emerson attributes the fact of Jesus being “the only soul in history who has appreciated the worth of man.” Having experienced humanity firsthand in a primary, original relation to his universe, Jesus could perceive that men intuitively seek God even as they resist limitations or restrictions upon their native human instincts. Emerson argues that through Jesus’s example, all men illustrate their potential not only to perceive God, but essentially to *be* God.

One of the difficulties of the minister’s task arises in the conversion of centuries of tradition and dogma to the daily needs of contemporary individuals. Traditional theological approaches, however energetic or evolved, seldom succeed in separating Jesus, however exemplary or heroic, from the strictures of linear time. Emerson understood that the immediacy of a moral lesson inevitably becomes muted when the exemplary figure from which it proceeds remains an historical personage centuries removed in time. The challenge for the minister becomes one of releasing Jesus from the hold of the first century and then relieving his example of the encumbrances of theological history. Emerson’s argument concedes the need for faith (“[W]hat greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship?” he queries. “Then all things go to decay.”), but he also perceived that contemporary approaches to imparting it were falling conspicuously short of their marks. He argues that

> We have contrasted the Church with the Soul. In the soul then let the redemption be sought. Wherever a man comes, there comes a revolution. The old is for slaves. When a man comes, all books are legible, all things transparent, all religions are forms. He is religious. Man is the wonderworker. He is seen amid miracles. . . . The stationariness of religion; the assumption that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man;--indicate with

> sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity,--a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man,--is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man or person old and departed. (*W* 1: 144)

The remedy for "a decaying church and a wasting unbelief" lies within the spheres of individual courage and self-trust. Emerson clarifies this point when he tells the divinity graduates:

> Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation Wesleys and Oberlins, Saints and Prophets. Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I also am a man.' Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity. (145)

In this example, Emerson does not fault the history of theology itself but rather the reliance upon it with which the lesson of Jesus has historically been conveyed.[27] Neither does he criticize the theologians of the past, thanking God for Wesley, Oberlin, and the Saints and Prophets who came before. Emerson's injunction seeks to infuse Biblical lessons with a spirituality and immediacy that arise organically from an individual's firsthand relation with the subject. Emerson's argument represents a simple encouragement to perceive the example of Jesus as it pertains to the present and to illustrate these findings for the benefit of others. In his refusal to imitate, the self-reliant minister raises the potential for genuine spiritual faith in both himself and his parishioners.

Emerson's promotion of the teaching of a vital, living spiritual presence also addresses his concern with prevailing depictions of Jesus as "not glad." His view of Jesus subordinates the image of the sacrifice upon the cross to the more expansive, optimistic Christ who distributed loaves and fishes and communed with society's outcasts. Emerson's emphasis encourages a fundamental shift in focus away from death and mythos in favor of life and spiritual awareness. His Jesus becomes more significant for the lessons of his life than for the tragedy of his betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. Emerson perceived that Jesus would not have lived solely for the purpose of dying, and that significant spiritual meaning could also be derived from the thirty-three years of life that preceded these final days. It could also be seen in the courage with which Jesus faced his accusers and in his appreciation of the profundity of events as they occurred before him. But most importantly, Emerson recognized that Jesus did not view his own death as an idle or empty sacrifice.

This notion of self-sacrifice recalls Emerson's conception of the heroic exemplar and the actions he undertakes in his furtherance of the moral sentiment. Although some criticism has suggested that "the Teacher" to whom Emerson alludes at the close of the speech is Emerson himself,[28] there is little, if any, reason to believe that Emerson regarded himself as anything other than a former minister who appreciated the figure of Jesus as an ideal ethical role model and consummate moral exemplar. "The Teacher" represents the philosophical manifestation of the principles Emerson has previously described; the heroes of the "Divinity School Address" are the ministers and other men who perceive the calling of the religious sentiment and combine it with their own experience of life. The solution to "[t]he evils of the church that now is" (149) lies in a reconsidered approach to religious teaching that acquaints men with God directly and illustrates how to access the "inner light" for themselves.[29] The minister who hears the call of the noble sentiment to teach others responds by offering his own life as an example of virtue embodied: his actions convey the heroic tendency in their demonstration of self-trust and willingness to depart from the intellectual limitations of traditional theological indoctrination in pursuit of a higher moral path.

The need for self-sacrifice surfaces within the expectation of external opposition which accompanies the minister's decision to go it alone. Like the scholar who must be "free and brave" when he publishes his unique thoughts, the independent minister must depend solely upon himself and the strength of his inner convictions. Although Emerson does not state them overtly, the inherent dangers of holding positions in direct opposition to the leadership of established churches would have been readily apparent to his audience. Regardless of the potential for the elevation of the individual or the victory of spirit or faith, the minister who strays too far beyond the limits of tradition and prescription essentially commits career suicide, but as Emerson reasons, "The man who renounces himself, comes to himself" (122). The individual's potential for divinity resides within this movement towards self-trust; as Emerson argues:

> in the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire. He who does a good deed is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed is by the action itself contracted. He who puts off impurity, thereby puts on purity. If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice. If a man dissemble, deceive, he deceives himself, and goes out of acquaintance with his own being. A man in the view of absolute goodness, adores, with total humility. Every step so downward, is a step upward. The man who renounces himself, comes to himself. (122)

Emerson understood from his own experience that the "safe" road of acquiescence to tradition seldom leads to nobility, self-fulfillment, or even faith; his argument confirms the need to forego the teachings of historical Christianity in order to experience the spiritual joys of genuine religious faith. The decision to depart frees the individual to receive these higher experiences in an uncorrupted, firsthand manner. His courageous renunciation of his fear brings him closer to God and simultaneously renders him both exemplary and heroic.

The exemplary figure Emerson offers as illustration of these principles in practice is no less than Jesus, the *exemplum exemplorium* behind the notion of *exemplum fidei*.[30] As Bercovitch reports, within the Reformed conception of *exemplum fidei*, "The way to salvation lay in an internalized, experiential reliving of [Jesus's] life" (10). Martin's Luther's "principle of *sola fides* . . . removes the center of authority from ecclesiastical institutions and relocates it within the elect soul" (10); Emerson takes a similar approach, but he extracts from the process the idea of election as well. Throughout the Address, Jesus represents the example behind the example, the Hero whose life parallels that of the heroic minister, or scholar, or any man who elects to act upon the implications of a moral sentiment. Jesus-- who lived as a man in an original relation with the universe, felt the calling of a virtuous sentiment, took decisive action in his publication of this sentiment, stood in direct opposition to established religious leadership, faced trial in a Roman court for what amounted to heresy, was executed for refusing to relinquish his moral position, and sacrificed his own life for the benefit of others—"alone in all history . . . estimated the greatness of man" (128). As a Hero among heroes, Jesus serves Emerson's didactic purposes by embodying virtue itself and by demonstrating that Emerson's paradigm of the exemplary hero applies equally to both religious and secular figures.

Although the value of the "Divinity School Address" in articulating Emerson's post-ministerial religious views for the benefit of the literary scholar can hardly be understated, the response it generated within the context of the audience of Emerson's contemporaries remains uniquely instructive. Despite evidence from scholars such as Clarence Gohdes that the address "had better be regarded as one of the concrete manifestations of a general attitude among the transcendentalists, and not as an extraordinary bit of spiritual pioneering" (31), its arguments caused considerable outrage among many theologians and other non-Transcendentalists within Boston's conservative community. Even though, as Gohdes contends, "the utterances of the Concord lecturer were mere notes in a general discord" (28) that manifested itself within the writings of Orestes A. Brownson, George Ripley, and other participants within the so-called "New School," many within the Unitarian church leadership decried Emerson's address and sought to distance it from any appearance of "official Unitarian sanction" (Cayton 171) by publishing several counterarguments in venues like the *Christian Examiner* and the *Boston Daily Advertiser*.[31] Despite the fact that Emerson's use of "the new spiritual 'doctrine' of natural organicism" and scant use of scriptural evidence denoted a characteristic that dated back to his early sermons (170), the theological community, if not necessarily the divinity school graduates themselves,[32] responded to the ideas Emerson expressed very quickly, negatively, and publicly.

The distaste with which members of the Boston clergy greeted Emerson's address lay not so much in the message itself but in its suggestion of nonconformity; as Burkholder has established, in Emerson's time, "charges of atheism or infidelity implied not only an anti-establishment religious stance but also similar anti-establishment social and political views, and those who challenged accepted religious views and practices were thought to be attacking social and political stability as well" (2). Although many of his ideas would have been considered liberal, Emerson himself was still a member of Boston's conservative community (7), and he did not likely enter the Divinity Hall that Sunday evening in the summer of 1838 seeking to generate offense. Burkholder posits that Emerson "was motivated to take great care in tailoring his ideas and his rhetoric to his audience" and therefore the resulting "rejection was all the more baffling because he had intended those ideas to be the salvation of *his* religion, offered out of concern and friendship" (9). For the first time since his resignation from the ministry, Emerson himself faced the practical implications of his injunction to the scholar that he must be "free and brave" in maintaining his own thoughts and articulating his intellectual position.

Accounts of Emerson's personal response to the "Divinity School Address" controversy vary. According to Rusk, Emerson "seems to have turned the matter over calmly in his mind, warning himself against acquiring a persecution complex" (272); in contrast, Cayton contends that the negative reaction "knocked Emerson off balance" and as "[t]he chorus of opposition grew," Emerson "pretended to be indifferent to it, but clearly he was not" (181-82). The address, Cayton concludes, "made Emerson a controversial figure" and "left him less optimistic about his ability to make an impact on institutions and more skeptical about organized reform efforts" (191). Rusk counters with his assertion that "[t]he only Emerson who suffered serious eclipse after the divinity address was Emerson the preacher" (273). Emerson preached only two more sermons following the Address, and by January 20, 1839, all remaining physical connections to his career as a minister had been effectively terminated (273). With his last official tie to his first profession severed, it remained to be seen whether religious ideology would continue to play a major role in Emerson's ongoing articulation of the tenets of transcendentalist philosophy.

The Seen to the Unseen: *Essays, First Series*

> We are always reasoning from the seen to the unseen. Hence the perfect intelligence that subsists between wise men of remote age.
>
> -- "Spiritual Laws," 1841

Although the "Divinity School Address" debacle caught Emerson off guard and caused him no small concern over his ability to continue to draw an audience for his lectures, the episode strengthened his reputation, despite the fact that, for a while at least, "the popular view was that Emerson was a dangerous man" (Allen 321-22). The prevailing religious climate within Boston in 1838 at least partially accounts for this negative response: in his biography of Emerson, Gay Wilson Allen reports that the Harvard Divinity School, although "officially" nondenominational, was in fact "the stronghold of Unitarianism," and "[e]xcept for eastern Massachusetts, most of the churches of the state were still Congregationalist, in which a modified Calvinism still survived" (317). Objections to the Address were raised by several notable clergymen, including Emerson's predecessor Henry Ware, Jr. and Andrews Norton, who condemned Emerson as a "naughty heretic" in the Boston *Daily Advertiser* and charged him in a sermon with "following 'the celebrated atheist Spinoza, and while claiming to be Christian, den[ying] Christianity in a denial of its miracles'" (321-23). Allen notes that Emerson responded in his Journal by referring to Norton as "a coward who had no faith in God" and asserting that "'[a] believer, a mind whose faith is consciousness, is never disturbed because other persons do not yet see the fact which he sees'" (323). Although initially Emerson "was deeply hurt, though defiant," Allen concludes that "in the long run the controversy only stiffened [Emerson's] determination to speak his mind without any regard for the consequences" (319).

The furor following the “Divinity School Address” is singularly significant to Emerson studies, as is Emerson’s response to it. The episode illustrates what for a period would become a pattern of negative reaction to Emerson’s work on the part of theologians who had once been his colleagues and Emerson’s reassertion of his intellectual right to diverge from the perceived majority. According to biographer Ralph L. Rusk, “Emerson himself felt that his position as ‘merely an observer, a dispassionate reporter,’ not a partisan, would guarantee him the scholar’s perfect freedom” (270) to “breathe new life into the old” by articulating his proposal “to dare to love God without mediator and to cleave to the spiritual, rejecting the formal religion” (268-69). Although many of the ideas expressed within the “Address” were not entirely new,[33] they were delivered by a former minister who had never fully embraced mainstream Unitarianism and had elected to leave his church over a conscientious objection to the practice of a traditional rite. Despite Emerson’s hope that he would be regarded by his divinity school audience in his lay capacity of scholar, it seems logical to conclude that the theologians who had once been his colleagues would have been more likely to view him as a minister who had not only questioned established doctrine but had ultimately defected from the church. This perception would have contributed to their misunderstanding a message that called for a proactive approach to reenergizing the religious sentiment as a dangerous denunciation of Christianity and its dedicated proponents. Within this context, their contentious accusations that “’he is a dangerous man; the church is in danger; Unitarianism is disgraced; the party is broken up’” (Rusk 272)[34] should make much more sense to Emerson’s twenty-first-century readers.

The de facto Unitarian theology of Boston and Harvard in the late 1830s, whose most vocal proponents had responded to Emerson’s rhetoric with such shock and outrage, was primed for conflict and, indeed, was under its own tension at the time of the “Divinity School Address.” As Allen has acknowledged, established doctrine “still rejected the Trinity, but many [Unitarians] could not give up belief in the divinity of Christ, or in the New Testament account of miracles” (317). Emerson’s essential humanization of Jesus and his references to the “falsehood” of a theology that fears “degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man” (144) would have appeared alarmingly antithetical to orthodox practitioners, as would his injunction to future ministers to “go alone” and “to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men” (145). What seems like intellectual self-reliance in contemporary terms would have been received as outright subversion by many of the religious conservatives of the time; as Allen observes, “all institutions tend to guard their own power, and complete individual freedom of conscience challenged the authority of the clergy” (317). Although Emerson’s actual purpose in the Address was to advocate a more vital, immediate spirituality that would have made religious faith more directly accessible to all Christians, this objective was naturally lost upon those who perceived that Emerson’s position diminished or dismissed the roles of both tradition and the established clergy. Emerson’s attackers failed to appreciate that he was, in fact, promoting a reenergized, if reconfigured, approach to Christianity rather than attempting to denigrate or replace it.

For his part, Emerson continued to recognize that formalist approaches to religious indoctrination frequently failed to produce significant numbers of new converts and thus in effect served as impediments to the continued progress of the Christian cause. Within the doctrine of Use he identified in *Nature*, “a thing is good only so far as it serves” (*W* 1: 41), and in Emerson’s view, prevailing practices were continuing to create the undesirable effect of causing parishioners to “sign off” by choosing to avoid religious services. Contending in the “Divinity

School Address" that "the priest's Sabbath has lost the splendor of nature; it is unlovely; we are glad when it is done" (137), Emerson sought to unburden the human soul of the shackles of historical Christianity and to replace them with a more vital and compelling spirituality that could lead to a genuine experience of faith. As William A. Huggard has written in his account of Emerson's religious teachings, even while he was still a practicing minister, Emerson "had come to believe that any religious rite, form, or tenet derives its ultimate authority from the inner approval of the person's own convictions. The form stands or falls as the person's own conscience and intelligence either esteem or retain it, or disapprove and discard it" (23). Although the sanctity of the individual conscience had served as the radical cornerstone of the Protestant church since the time of Martin Luther, most theologians remained reluctant to completely release this power of discernment to the individual who departed significantly from the path of prescribed doctrine. Emerson, who had demonstrated his proclivity for straying even while he was still a minister, felt no similar compunction, and the currents of religious history would ultimately prove to be sympathetic to his position. Although many within his divinity school audience remained "under the control of Christian and Enlightenment thinking" (Steele 187),[35] Emerson continued to focus upon the shifting present, and in doing so, he allied himself more with the intellectuals of a future age than with the majority of his own contemporaries.

Despite the virulence of the response to the "Divinity School Address," Emerson declined to retreat from his ideology and continued to reaffirm many of his philosophical positions within the context of his public works. He also avoided digging in his heels and assuming an even more antagonistic position in response to his critics' attacks. Although an occasion to appeal directly to Christian ministers would not present itself again, Emerson did not balk at raising the issue of religion within either his lectures or his written works. As early as the period of the "Philosophy of History" series, he had been compiling material for his first collection of *Essays*, a book that Glen Johnson contends Emerson "conceived as his 'book of Genesis'" ("Emerson on 'Making'" 65).[36] Maintaining his "allegiance to the spirit" (65), Emerson produced a collection of twelve essays that both expand many of his earlier philosophical conceptions and reflect the enthusiastic character of the age in which they were written. Robert D. Richardson, Jr. has aligned the decade of the 1840s with the 1790s and 1960s and characterized them as "decades of utopian euphoria fueled by a widely shared and wildly exciting conviction that the structure of society could be fundamentally and rapidly changed" (341). At this point, Emerson was "living as intensely as he ever would; his expressive channels were all wide open" (342). The result of this unique combination of factors was *Essays, First Series*, a comprehensive volume that reasserted many of Emerson's earlier philosophical precepts and clarified or recast them within alternative or more particular contexts.

In 1841, Emerson was nearly a decade removed from the Second Church, but his distance from the ministry did not diminish his conviction that traditional approaches to religion were causing many would-be adherents to turn away from a dedicated practice of Christianity. The criticisms of historical Christianity he had outlined so controversially in the "Divinity School Address" resurface throughout the *Essays*, which confirm the limitations of prevailing theology and call for a redirection of the religious impulse away from historical institutions and toward the unique experience of the individual soul. In "Circles," for example, Emerson insists:

> We can never see Christianity from the catechism:--from the pastures, from a boat in the pond, from amidst the songs of wood-

> birds we possibly may. Cleansed by the elemental light and wind, steeped in the sea of beautiful forms which the field offers us, we may chance to cast a right glance back upon biography. Christianity is rightly dear to the best of mankind; yet there was never a young philosopher whose breeding had fallen into the Christian church by whom that brave text of Paul's was not especially prized: "Then shall also the Son be subject unto Him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Let the claims and virtues of persons be never so great and welcome, the instinct of man presses eagerly onward to the impersonal and illimitable, and gladly arms itself against the dogmatism of bigots with this generous word out of the book itself. (*W* 2: 313)

Religious rituals represent the tired remnants of rote learning rather than internalized manifestations of authentic faith; in this passage, Emerson selects the catechism, a particularly mechanical exercise, to juxtapose with the "sea of beautiful forms" in an effort to "cleanse" Christianity with the "elemental" powers to be found within the natural world. The image recalls nature's role as intermediary between God and man as first identified in *Nature*; in the *Essays*, Emerson once again removes the locus of faith from the strictures of the pulpit and resituates it within the broader and more accessible realm of nature. As Eduardo Cadava notes in his study of Emerson and the climates of history, Emerson perceived "the necessity to remain vigilant toward any form of authority that threatens to tyrannize us and reduce all our actions to empty repetition" (116). Characteristically, Emerson does not criticize Christianity itself; although it remains "rightly dear" to "the best of mankind," men instinctively seek the philosophical expanse of "the impersonal and illimitable" rather than the intellectual restriction that characterizes "the dogmatism of bigots." The directness of Emerson's denouncement underscores his belief that men both seek and revere a religious impulse but that churches fall sadly short of providing a satisfactory means to realizing this laudable end. His reference to the scriptural words of Paul encourages the perception of God in nature by alluding to his own belief in God as the "all in all," the divine presence behind the phenomenon of the visible universe. Perhaps most significantly, it also provides a direct Biblical sanction for refusing to accept a secondhand knowledge of God.

Mediation becomes unnecessary within Emerson's conception of faith; clergymen become fundamentally useless or function merely as unwitting obstacles to genuine religious conversion. Although Emerson hints at the superfluous character of theological intervention with his description of the faithful thinker in *Nature* and declares the need for clergymen to teach from life in the "Divinity School Address." his criticisms of organized religion and its designated trustees become more direct and especially pronounced within the arguments of *Essays*. His critique does not limit itself to Boston's Unitarians; by employing the example of the catechism, an initially Catholic ritual that had been adopted by the early Congregationalists, Emerson implicates the whole of historical Christianity in his charge that the inculcation of dogma actually impedes the emergence of faith. Echoing this indictment in "Spiritual Laws," Emerson declares that "[o]ur Sunday-schools and churches and pauper-societies are yokes to the neck" (*W* 2: 136). He points to the commencement of instruction in early childhood and the compulsory nature of religious indoctrination when he asserts:

> why drag this dead weight of a Sunday-school over the whole of Christendom? It is natural and beautiful that childhood should inquire and maturity should teach; but it is time enough to answer questions when they are asked. Do not shut up the young people against their will in a pew and force the children to ask them

> questions for an hour against their will. (136)

Although the situation Emerson describes will likely resonate with any individual who was ever compelled to attend worship services as a child, his example emphasizes that religious instruction frequently precludes intellectual apprehension of the tenets of faith by posing and responding to complex metaphysical questions long before they would naturally arise within the course of cognitive development. Children subjected to mechanical exercises in rote learning receive lessons in doctrine instead of access to faith, and church attendance borne out of tradition or a sense of duty, as Emerson observed in *Nature*, inhibits the individual's ability to fully engage his intellectual faculties in a firsthand pursuit of higher truths.[37] The resulting shallow faith creates an unnatural reliance upon religious authority and effectively precludes the ability (and the will) of the individual to discover true faith on his own. He emerges adept at mechanical recitation but frequently remains distanced from God and removed from the joys of spiritual enlightenment.

Emerson felt that the guardians of Christianity could, and should, do better by their adherents. He particularly believed that "men are better than their theology" and that "men are wiser than they know" (*W* 2: 95-96). A religion that relies upon a reluctance to question, one which insists upon a wholesale acceptance of often illogical or unintelligible premises, fails to satisfy the natural demands of the intellect and thereby inhibits its access to the soul. One of Emerson's examples of the limitations of theology appears in "Compensation," where he deconstructs the notion that men should be willing to wait until the period after death to realize the rewards of living a moral life. Referring to a recent sermon he had attended, Emerson explains:

> The preacher, a man esteemed for his orthodoxy, unfolded in the ordinary manner the doctrine of the Last Judgment. He assumed

> that judgment is not executed in this world; that the wicked are successful; that the good are miserable; and then urged from reason and from Scripture a compensation to be made to both parties in the next life. No offence appeared to be taken by the congregation at this doctrine. As far as I could observe when the meeting broke up they separated without remark on the sermon. (*W* 2: 94)

In addition to appearing to confirm that Emerson continued to attend worship services long after he left the ministry,[38] this passage sets the stage for the argument that follows by alluding to the minister's message and what it does *not* proceed to accomplish. Although the sermon does not offend, neither does it inspire: the congregation departs the meeting without comment, either positive or negative, on the substance of the sermon or the logical implications of the traditional, sanctioned doctrine. Emerson's use of a minister "esteemed for his orthodoxy" supplies a subtle representative for historical Christianity, the actual target of the ensuing criticism and the oblivious source of the parishioners' passive response. Although the unresponsiveness of the congregation does not initially seem to question the doctrine itself, Emerson's exposition will return to the significance of their silence.

Emerson addresses both the intellectual and moral implications of the doctrine of the Last Judgment when he queries:

> what was the import of this teaching? What did the preacher mean by saying that the good are miserable in the present life? Was it that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised; and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them the like gratifications another day,--bank-stock and

> doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation; for what else? (94)

In addition to demonstrating the moral component of his argument by differentiating between unprincipled men and “saints,” Emerson’s inquiry initiates the intellectual dimension of the discussion by pointing to the need for individuals to question the substance of arguments they are handed as established truths. Although many theologians in Emerson’s audience would have received this response as an expression of skepticism and would therefore have discouraged it, Emerson understood that “[t]hat which [men] hear in schools and pulpits without afterthought, if said in conversation would probably be questioned in silence” (96), and that within the sanctuary of private thoughts, the doctrine of the Last Judgment fails to provide any substantial degree of spiritual comfort or satisfaction to the individual, his intellect, or his soul.

It also lacks credence as a moral treatise because, when taken as a case study of real people who prosper rather than as a mere abstraction, it can appear to actually reward the same individuals who most actively reject it. As David Jacobson has shown, in “Compensation,” “Emerson unmasks the supposed metaphysical truths of Christianity as human values” and “identifies Christian compensation as no more than a reactionary revaluation of the real power of the world” (“’Compensation’: Exteriority” 110). He exposes the underlying assumption of what had historically passed as sanctioned doctrine as the undeniably human motive of revenge and seeks to “return *innocence* to action, enabling it to overcome its ill will” (111-14). Emerson regarded the doctrine itself as cynical and believed that it overlooked much of the positive moral potential that resides within the human character. He argues that

> [t]he fallacy [of the sermon’s message] lay in the immense concession that the bad are successful; that justice is not done

> now. The blindness of the preacher consisted in deferring to the base estimate of the market of what constitutes a manly success, instead of confronting and convicting the world from the truth; announcing the presence of the soul; the omnipotence of the will; and so establishing the standard of good and ill, of success and falsehood. (*W* 2: 95)

The passage points to the flip side of Emerson's criticism of overreliance upon the past: just as he rejects the practice of accepting without review the secondhand assumptions of history, Emerson dismisses the notion of a deferral of moral judgment to some remote future beyond the reach of contemporary men. The presence of the soul within the context of the present moment precludes the premise that justice is somehow delayed, and "the omnipotence of the will" places the authority of each man within the purview of the individual mind. Like everything else in nature, men remain subject to "levelling circumstances" that "[put] down the overbearing, the strong, the rich, the fortunate, substantially on the same ground with all others" (98), but the choice of whether to live as an unprincipled man or as a saint ultimately resides within the intellectual processes of each individual.

The power of thought remains paramount in *Essays, First Series*, wherein Emerson connects the autonomous exercise of intellect to the soul, to the hero, and to God. He contends in "The Over-Soul" that "[t]he soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth" and that "[w]e know truth when we see it, let sceptic [sic] and scoffer say what they choose" (*W* 2: 279). Emerson refers to the "disclosure[s] of the soul" as "revelations," but he then divorces the term from its traditional theological connotations as he advocates the individual's pursuit of a higher spiritual road. He explains:

> The popular notion of a revelation is that it is a telling of fortunes.

> In past oracles of the soul the understanding seeks to find answers to sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, what their hands should do and who shall be their company, adding names and dates and places. But we must pick no locks. We must check this low curiosity. (283)

Emerson's explanation suggests that historical conceptions of revelation as fortune-telling appeal to baser human needs and to inquiries to which access has been logically and purposefully denied. The "low curiosity" that compels these "sensual questions" encourages the pursuit of a premature knowledge of future events, a condition that works against the individual's own self-interest as well as defies Emerson's long-established insistence that life must be consciously lived in the present. He contends:

> These questions which we lust to ask about the future are a confession of sin. God has no answer for them. No answer in words can reply to a question of things. It is not an arbitrary "decree of God," but in the nature of man, that a veil shuts down on the facts of to-morrow; for the soul will not have us read any other cipher than that of cause and effect. By this veil that curtains events it instructs the children of men to live in to-day. The only mode of obtaining an answer to these questions of the senses is to forego all low curiosity, and, accepting the tide of being which floats us into the secret of nature, work and live, work and live, and all unawares the advancing soul has built and forged for itself a new condition, and the question and the answer are one. (*W* 2: 284)

Emerson's equation of sensual questions with lust and his categorization of such inquiries as "a confession of sin" recall the rhetoric of the minister even as they endeavor to redirect conceptions of revelation beyond the limits of traditional religious doctrine. Emerson draws upon longstanding social and theological connections that align lust with sin as well as tie fortune-telling and other "low curiosities" to common assumptions concerning social disorder, religious decline, and heresy. He also manipulates his audience's awareness of the Biblical connotations associated with the word *Revelations*, including its ominous (and often inscrutable) pronouncements regarding the end of days. The symbolic veil that "shuts down the facts of to-morrow" derives from man instead of from God; the human soul welcomes "the tide of being" that compels it to live, unhindered by fears of the future, within the comfort of a perpetual present. Emerson's repetition of the phrase "work and live" reinforces the intentional duality of the roles of question and answer and of cause and effect, and the removal of the notion of "revelation" from its traditional theological context frees the individual soul to "advance" and to "forge" a "new," and more desirable, "condition." Emerson's argument seeks to liberate the soul from the historical constraints of superstition and doctrine and thereby to enable the individual to think of the present and future in an intellectually superior, more satisfying, and less constraining manner.

Emerson situates the source of the soul's innate knowledge within his notion of "Spontaneity or Instinct," which he identifies in "Self-Reliance" as "at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life" and "that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, [wherein] all things find their common origin" (*W* 2: 64). This "primary wisdom" exists as a part of all things, including time and space, and it "proceeds from the same source from whence their life and being also proceed" (64). Emerson observes that "[w]e denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions" (64); this distinction becomes critical to the individual's ability to perceive the inherently moral nature of his thoughts and to respond to their corresponding implications with the confidence and conviction of self-trust. Emerson characteristically subordinates received knowledge to the higher Intuition within both the substance of his argument and his use of upper- and lower-case letters; the individual, he maintains, possesses the instinctive capacity to transcend the limited level of knowledge deliverable by church or state. This primary wisdom, he emphasizes,

> is the fountain of action and of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which giveth man wisdom and which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of intense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. (*W* 2: 64-65)

Emerson's advocacy of the individual's innate ability to distinguish right from wrong usurps tuition's traditional claims to the inculcation of this moral knowledge and is significantly punctuated with the language of religious allusion. His use of King James English in reference to the "inspiration which giveth man wisdom" draws attention specifically to the phrase and subtly implies a Biblical sanction. The linguistically negative phrasing which declares that inspiration "cannot be denied without impiety and atheism" compels the reader's pause to consider the message that Emerson strategically intends: that instinctive inspiration derives from God and confirms the individual's authentic belief in both God and his own moral nature. A “perfect faith” attends man’s “involuntary perceptions”: “these things are so” and are therefore “not to be disputed.” Individuals, Emerson insists, possess the native capacity to discern justice and truth by virtue of the “intense intelligence” that “makes us receivers of truth and organs of its activity.” Although the individual “may err” in his “expression” of these “involuntary perceptions,” the inspirations themselves remain both intrinsically truthful and morally pure.

Although Emerson’s notions of Revelation and Spontaneity or Instinct reflect much of the Romantic ideology characteristic of the age which produced them, they also represent departures from prevailing thought by virtue of the moral and religious dimensions Emerson assigns them. As David Vallins has argued in his comparison of individuality in Emerson and Coleridge, in “Self-Reliance,” Emerson describes “the revelatory nature of individual conviction as a universal phenomenon, rather than preserving Coleridge’s and Schelling’s emphasis on the exceptional nature of such insight” and identifies “the Coleridgean values of individuality and transcendence with a conception of ‘being oneself’ which subtly converts Romantic individualism to a willing acceptance of divine fate” (54). More Wordsworthian than Coleridgean, these notions of Revelation and Spontaneity or Instinct clarify the character of thought and connect it to Emerson’s earlier conceptions of the original relation and the moral sentiment. Man Thinking, as he wrote in “The American Scholar,” avoids the mistake of “men of talent” who “start out wrong” by “set[ting] out from accepted dogmas” rather than “their own sight of principles” (*W* 1: 88). The superiority of Intuition to tuition eclipses the substance of formal education and redirects the seat of moral authority from the establishment of the church or the state to the individual soul of the faithful thinker. Emerson asserts in “Intellect” that “[w]hatever any mind doth or saith is after a law, and this native law remains over it after it has come to reflection or conscious thought" (*W* 2: 327-28). Since this law proceeds from God, the individual may trust its innate moral character; because "[t]he soul's emphasis is always right" (115), he does not require additional confirmation of the validity of his thought or the approval of external authority. Just as the scholar cannot learn the truths of life from books as in *Lyrical Ballads*' "Expostulation and Reply," the faithful thinker cannot receive Revelation or Instinct from the tuition of others around him. He must rely solely upon his own original relation with the universe to access the moral depths of his soul and to the connection to God which resides there.

The conception of the moral sentiment reaches back to *Nature*, and Emerson continues both to reiterate and expand its implications within the pages of the *Essays*. His assertion in "Spiritual Laws" that "[a]ll things are moral" (*W* 2: 102) echoes his earlier contention that "the moral law . . . is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process" (*W* 1: 41-42), and it confirms Jonathan Bishop's conclusion that for Emerson, the moral sentiment represents "[t]he Soul's highest manifestation" in "[t]he power of the heart to discover within itself the highest good" (66).[39] But *Essays* also moves beyond mere definition to create even clearer distinctions between instinctive moral revelation and the extrinsic inculcation of moral ideology. In his discussion of "young people . . . diseased with the theological problems of original sin, origin of evil, predestination and the like" in "Spiritual Laws" (*W* 2: 132), Emerson asserts that "[t]he intellectual life must be kept clean and healthful if man will live the life of nature and not import into his mind difficulties which are none of his" (132). Just as the teachings of theologians may interfere with the individual's intuitive spiritual nature and thus impede the emergence of his faith, the processes of education themselves can create artificial barriers to human spiritual development which may cause the individual to stifle or circumvent the moral component of his thoughts.

The imposition of external factors that endeavor to compel the individual to question the output of his own mind places an unnatural check upon the intellect and subverts the inherently virtuous production of his organic intellectual processes. Emerson maintains that "[w]hat we do not call education is more precious than that which we call so," and since "[w]e form no guess, at the time of receiving a thought, of its comparative value," "education often wastes its efforts in attempts to thwart and balk this natural magnetism, which is sure to select what belongs to it" (*W* 2: 133). The primary wisdom of Intuition, he argues, offers no inherent doubt to accompany the issuance of thought; questions concerning value or validity arise only when the external forces of tuition are allowed to come into play. Such interference results in an ironic condition that inhibits rather than encourages moral expression by subjecting original thought to the scrutiny of institutional criteria. Since intuitive Revelation represents a manifestation of Spontaneity or Instinct and, therefore, itself derives from God, the notion of exposing it to the subjectivity of man-made inquiries becomes an exercise in the "impiety and atheism" Emerson identifies in "Self-Reliance."[40] Within this context, the very act of questioning the moral dimension of human thought expresses fundamental disbelief in the willingness of the faithful to receive direction from God and, therefore, in the ability of God to communicate it. Such acts represent both the lack of faith characteristic of impiety and the active denial of God consistent with actual atheism.[41]

Emerson confirms this interpretation when he concludes that

> our moral nature is vitiated by an interference of our will. People represent virtue as a struggle, and take to themselves great airs upon their attainments, and the question is everywhere vexed when a noble nature is commended, whether the man is not better who

> strives with temptation. But there is no merit in the matter. Either God is there or he is not there. (*W* 2: 133)

Although the concept of a struggle against temptation represents a religious commonplace and remains a characteristic of Emerson's conception of the exemplary hero, the argument regarding the moral sentiment precludes the historical need for conflict in its insistence that the sentiment proceeds from God. Following as it does the contention that education seeks to thwart the "natural magnetism" which seeks "to select that which belongs to it," this passage establishes even greater distinction between instinctive moral perception and externally-sanctioned alternatives, represented in this example in terms of the phrase "our will," a construct that serves to reject the instinct. But the will that interferes with the expression of virtue is not itself a noble trait: in this instance, the struggle between Intuition and will represents a failure of faith in the very act of questioning the origin of thought. Externally imposed and consequently removed from the divine realm of involuntary perceptions, the will becomes automatically subordinate to thought and therefore unworthy of its entry in a struggle. God communicates with men through the intellect and not the will; Emerson insists with ever-increasing clarity that the ability to accurately discern a moral truth resides within the active mind of the individual rather than behind the doors of traditional authority. His assertion that God "is [either] there or he is not there" confirms the moral connection between man and God within the individual's thought and cements *Nature*'s notion of man's instinctive ability to perceive the call of a noble sentiment.

In addition to the relationship of the individual soul to the furtherance of the moral sentiment, the capacity of the individual to receive and respond to its demands remains critical to Emerson's conception of the hero. Although he defines heroism in "Heroism" as the "military attitude of the soul," he also explains that it represents “an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual’s character” and that “[s]elf-trust is [its] essence”; “Heroism feels and never reasons, and therefore is always right” (*W* 2: 250-51). These characteristics suggest the hero’s unswerving allegiance to the principle of Intuition as well as the exemplary nature of his energy and courage;[42] his willingness to trust the moral basis of his unique call to serve the greater good allies him simultaneously with nature, God, and the needs of the Universal Mind. Although it is conveyed through the medium of nature, the sentiment itself proceeds from God and therefore reaffirms the moral relationship between the Creator and His creation Emerson initially establishes in *Nature*. *Essays*, however, recasts this conception of the noble or moral sentiment within an expansive variety of disparate contexts, including the intellectual, the active, and the spiritual. Each element constitutes a part of the hero’s unique motivation and can be viewed as a distinct component of the substance of his exemplary character.

In “Intellect,” Emerson distinguishes between “the intellect receptive” and “the intellect constructive,” which he contends that “we popularly designate by the word Genius” (*W* 2: 328, 334). Maintaining his faith-based connection between God and the moral sentiment, Emerson again reasons that “[o]ur thinking is a pious reception” and reasserts his claim from “Spiritual Laws” that an externally-driven will can compromise the integrity of the noble call when he observes that “[o]ur truth of thought is therefore vitiated as much by too violent direction as by too great negligence” (328). The potential for the pious individual to rise to the level of the hero commences with his willingness to actively receive his higher thoughts and to accept them as communications between his mind and God; however, too much haste or hesitation can debase the noble effort by either under- or overexposing it to the potential taint of external perusal. The immediate implications of this position are both intellectual and spiritual: in his belief in the inherent moral character of his thought, the individual spares himself undue critical debate concerning the virtue of the thought itself and thus frees himself to devote his mental energy to developing an appropriate response. It also acknowledges his intellectual acceptance of the notion that his virtuous thought derives from God and thereby illustrates the authenticity of his personal faith. This element of the hero's exemplary character illustrates the unmistakably religious quality of Emerson's idea of the moral sentiment: the individual who accepts his own thoughts concurrently acknowledges his genuine belief in God by virtue of the fact of his own self-trust.

Emerson's paradigm of the heroic individual continues to include the requirement to act as well as to think; in "Intellect," Emerson contends that "the active power seizes instantly the fit image, as the word of its momentary thought" (*W* 2: 334), and that "[t]o genius must always go two gifts, the thought and the publication" (335). Although the notion of the individual's need to publish his virtuous thoughts recalls similar assertions in Emerson's previous works and hearkens back to *Nature*, the concept of intellect constructive in "Intellect," which "produces thoughts, sentences, poems, plans, designs, systems" (334-35), clarifies these earlier conceptions by connecting them directly to higher truth. According to Emerson, thought

> is revelation, always a miracle, which no frequency of occurrence or incessant study can ever familiarize, but which must always leave the inquirer stupid with wonder. It is the advent of truth into the world, a form of thought now for the first time bursting into the universe, a child of the old eternal soul, a piece of genuine and immeasurable greatness. It seems, for the time, to inherit all that has yet existed and to dictate to the unborn. (*W* 2: 335)

Several established characteristics concerning the heroic character of the human intellect converge within this passage, including the individual’s receptiveness to the call of the moral sentiment, the applicability of the individual’s thought to the needs of the One Mind, and the historical character of thought as the revelation of a perpetual present. Emerson expresses thought in terms of both “revelation” and “miracle,” a movement that both recalls his definition in “The Over-Soul” of revelations as “disclosures of the soul” (279) and recasts the term beyond doctrinally-sanctioned conceptions of Catholic as well as Reformed notions of the “miracle.”[43] As Sherman Paul has observed, Emerson distinguishes between “traditional, linear” religious views of miracles as “departures from natural order” and “The Miracle of Our Being” (1834), in which he asserts that “’all our life is a miracle,’” and “’[o]urselves are the greatest wonder of all’ (*Y*, 122)” (88-89). Paul concludes that “[m]iracles were important to faith, because, as Emerson said, ‘a miracle is the only means by which God can make a communication to men, that shall be known to be from God’ (*Y*, 120). For this reason Emerson retained it as historical fact (although he modified the usual interpretation by making the miracle accord with the moral expectations of man)” (88-89). Within this context, the revelation itself represents the miracle that serves the greater cause of men by bringing “truth into the world” in the form of a thought “now for the first time bursting into the universe.” Simultaneously a communication from God and “the child of the old eternal soul,” the thought’s “genuine and immeasurable greatness” serves both God’s and man’s current needs and alludes to the potential for heroism within the “greatness” of the individual who expresses it. Its strategic placement between “all that has yet existed” and “the unborn” situates it firmly within the historical present, the established locus of Emersonian action and the perpetual site of heroic potential.

The miracle of revelation initiates the hero’s response to the call of the moral sentiment and compels him to consider the action appropriate to its implications. *Essays* acknowledges Emerson's earlier declarations of the need for the individual to publish his thoughts for the benefit of others and that the "duties" of the hero, as for the scholar, "may all be comprised in self-trust" (*W* 1: 95). Although the particular action by which to answer the call varies depending on the specific needs of a given situation, Emerson asserts in "Intellect" that "[o]ur spontaneous action is always the best" (*W* 2: 328) and that "the active power seizes instantly the fit image, as the word of its momentary thought" (334). The active component of the intellect constructive engages at this point to redirect the truth of individual's thought from the private to the public sphere; as Emerson explains:

> to make it available it needs a vehicle or art by which it is conveyed to men. To be communicable it must become picture or sensible object. We must learn the language of facts. The most wonderful inspirations die with their subject if he has no hand to paint them to the senses. The ray of light passes through space and only when it falls on an object is it seen. When the spiritual energy is directed on something outward, then it is a thought. (335)

This passage endorses Emerson's contention in "The American Scholar" that thinking represents only "a partial act" (*W* 1: 94); in order to complete the virtuous requirements of his call, the individual must then translate and transmit his thoughts to others through some compelling manner of publication. Emerson's use of visual imagery to emphasize his notion of illumination underscores his point that the receiver of the moral sentiment must then effectively illustrate his thinking in order to secure the understanding of others. The faithful thinker must enable other men to visualize what he himself has perceived; only when this "spiritual energy is directed on something outward" does it constitute a viable, completed thought.

The “language of facts” does not limit itself to a particular means of conveyance; transmission relies upon the unique gifts of the individual to determine an appropriate vehicle for communicating the higher truth of his thoughts. In *Essays,* Emerson moves beyond the abstract notion of “great actions” found in *Nature* and the injunction to be “free and brave” in ”The American Scholar” to recommend that the faithful thinker rely upon his particular talents to convert his thoughts to actions. Although the “great soul” remains “strong to live, as well as strong to think” (*W* 1: 94), Emerson expands range of access for publication to tools beyond those he previously provided to the minister or the scholar; the “hand” that “paint[s] [his thoughts] to the senses” now belongs to the artist as well as to the student. In “Intellect,” Emerson acknowledges that “all men have some access to primary truth, so all have some art or power of communication in their head, but only in the artist does it descend into the hand” (*W* 2: 336). This definition of “artist” includes poets and other writers as well as visual artists, all of whom possess the ability to incorporate their artistic gifts into “the rhetoric of thought” (336) that is made manifest through their works. Emerson concludes that “[t]he thought of genius is spontaneous; but the power of picture or expression, in the most enriched and flowing nature, implies of mixture of will, a certain control over the spontaneous states, without which no production is possible” (336).

The true test of an individual’s moral courage resides in its ability to withstand the test of time; the virtue of the individual’s thought, Emerson cautions, is not always immediately apparent to others beyond the hero himself. In “Spiritual Laws,” Emerson pointedly aligns heroic action with the currents of literary reputation when he argues that “[o]nly those books come down which deserve to last,” and that “[t]he permanence of all books is fixed by no effort, friendly or hostile, but by their own specific gravity, or the intrinsic importance of their contents to the constant mind of man" (*W* 2: 154-55). Although an individual must necessarily publish his thoughts and actions within the context of the physical present, they remain subject to external judgments that exist beyond the limited scope of their particular time and place. Emerson explains that

> the effect of every action is measured by the depth of the sentiment from which it proceeds. The great man knew not that he was great. It took a century or two for that fact to appear. What he did, he did because he must; it was the most natural thing in the world, and grew out of the circumstances of the moment. But now, every thing he did, even to the lifting of his finger or the eating of bread, looks large, all-related, and is called an institution. (155)

Like books that survive because they express the essence of something that remains constant within the minds of men, great thoughts and their corresponding actions run the inherent risk of failing to be recognized as heroic at the time of their initial publication. The depth of the moral sentiment which precipitates the heroic thought or act determines its ultimate judgment in the minds of men as well as its historical longevity; as Emerson contends in "Self-Reliance," "Greatness appeals to the future," and "[y]our genuine action will explain itself and will explain your other genuine actions" (*W* 2: 59). The heroic individual need not fear external criticism because self-trust, as Emerson contends in "Heroism," constitutes "the essence of heroism" (251), and "[t]here is somewhat in great actions which does not allow us to go behind them" (250). He elaborates:

> Heroism works in contradiction to the voice of mankind and in contradiction, for a time, to the voice of the great and good. Heroism is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual's character. Now to no other man can its wisdom appear as it does

> to him, for every man must be supposed to see a little farther on his own proper path than any one else. Therefore just and wise men take umbrage at his act, until after some little time be past; then they see it in unison with their acts. All prudent men see that the action is clean contrary to a sensual prosperity; for every heroic act measures itself by its contempt for some external good. But it finds its own success at last, and then the prudent also extol. (251)

Although this passage may initially appear to contradict Emerson's claim in "Compensation" that moral justice is not postponed, the fact of the hero's having heeded the call of the moral sentiment represents a fact of fidelity to his own soul and therefore functions as a positive assertion of his fundamental faith. The favorable judgment of men may be delayed, but the soul's knowledge of the righteousness of a moral act is both intuitive and instantaneous.

In his analysis of Emerson's argument in "Compensation," Roland F. Lee observes a similar implication when he identifies the inner and outer aspects of the doctrine and concludes that "the inner compensation is immediate and self-executing; the outer is slower but inevitable. Every secret is told, every virtue rewarded, every biter finally bit" (293).[44] Although Lee concludes that the doctrine ultimately fails as an argument, the exact opposite is true: the inner compensation that Lee grants enables the hero to perceive that his action, despite its being "contrary to a sensual prosperity" and exhibiting "contempt for some external good," in fact serves a higher moral purpose that benefits both man and God. As Henry F. Pommer argues, within Emerson's doctrine, "outward circumstances, pleasure, pain, and knowledge are justly distributed by powers of nature and of human psychology which are either an expression of God or a part of God" (250). Pommer adds that the manner in which an individual elects to view his particular experience may affect his perception of its compensatory character; he explains that "[o]ne possibility for controlling the kind of compensation one receives lies, therefore, in man's great capacity for deriving happiness and unhappiness from the most curious and seemingly inappropriate circumstances. A part of this capacity permits man to transcend himself either by accepting a state of mind in lieu of a state of outward affairs or by accepting a gain to society as compensation for a personal loss" (250). Such a position remains consistent with Emerson's conception of the heroic individual in terms of both the potential need for self-sacrifice and the capacity to carry the implications of the moral sentiment through to their ultimate conclusion.

The critical component that determines the willingness of the individual to act in accordance with the call of the moral sentiment reflects a two-fold conception of faith: faith in the presence of God behind his reception of a noble thought and a corresponding faith in himself and his ability to properly respond to its requirements with the strength of his virtuous action. The former falls within the purview of Emerson's evolving conception of the faithful thinker that continues throughout the *Essays*; the latter reflects the notion of self-trust most notably explained in "Self-Reliance," where noble action, although defined within an original context,[45] remains tied to the heroic character. As he did in "The American Scholar" and the "Divinity School Address," Emerson once again emphasizes the need for moral courage in publishing the moral sentiment when he insists that "God will not have his work made manifest by cowards" (*W* 2: 47). In "Self-Reliance," however, the appeals to inner strength he had earlier directed specifically to the scholar and the minister become more abstracted and generalized; courage and self-trust now represent "a time in *every man's* [my emphasis] education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better or worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till" (46). The passage underscores Emerson's ongoing emphasis on the necessity of action: although his universe is "full of good," the individual neither receives nor supplies sustenance for himself or for others until he makes a conscious decision in favor of a determined effort to act. Emerson's reference to "that plot of ground which is given to [the individual] to till" suggests the uniqueness of his each person's "plot of ground" by connecting action to the concept of ownership: every man learns that he must toil for his portion, in other words, to act, so that he may meet his own needs as well as those of others.

The individual's ability to act effectively, and potentially heroically, resides within his willingness to trust in the virtue that motivates his thoughts. Although contemporary readings can tend towards oversimplification of Emerson's doctrine by characterizing it, as David Jacobson has, as "pure expressivity" ("Vision's Imperative" 555) or, as Kenneth Marc Harris does (287), as an "apparent conflict between the selfishness and the selflessness," the lessons of self-trust remain primarily moral and spiritual rather than ideological and secular. As Jacobson has affirmed,

> Emerson is rightly read in the context of religious thought, as a writer who recognized the power of human will to manifest the world, and thus gave to human will the revelatory power displaced by Christian ideology to the otherworldly will of God. Emersonian skepticism serves this humanist thesis insofar as he conceives of it as the attitude of the will, the way of being in the world, that describes the central causality of human will, returning to it the capacity, not merely to act freely, but by doing so to bring the world to appearance, to speak the universal sense of the world. Emerson's purpose in "Self-Reliance," and in all his early lectures

> and essays, is to describe such infinite power of human will, and thereby to recognize the centrality of Man in the world, a centrality veiled behind myths of the omnipotence of God or nature.
> (“Vision’s Imperative” 558)

Although Jacobson accurately alludes to the religious implications of Emersonian self-reliance and the need of individuals to permit personal revelation to assume the traditional place of theological inculcation, his emphasis on the role of the will and the centrality of the human role in the world suggests perhaps a bit more of a humanistic purpose than Emerson actually intends. Despite his willingness to “shift the grounds of private identity from the institution to the individual” (Bercovitch 11), Emerson never fully aligned himself with the humanists who “considered the true church to be a macrocosm of the self-fulfilled individual” (11). Jacobson’s own comparison of “the practical imperative” of the essay’s first paragraph to “its most obvious precedent, Kant’s Categorical Imperative” (“Vision’s Imperative” 555), provides compelling evidence to refute this notion of a humanistic impulse: if “the practical imperative in Kant’s thought is finally no more or less than the command to be rational,” and “Emerson, on the other hand, resists this and all limitation” (556), no allowance has been made within the argument for the catalyst of the moral sentiment. Although Jacobson correctly concludes that Emerson “shares with Kant a faith in the efficacy of a unified transcendental will” (557), his emphasis on the relationship between self-reliance and skepticism neglects to include the critical components of thought and action as appropriate responses to the call of the moral sentiment.

The presence of the moral sentiment as a prelude to the hero’s actions necessarily subordinates the humanistic, individualistic quality of his response to the virtuous, spiritual, and fundamentally religious character of its initial motivation. Far from granting the individual a license in a “radical freedom” to circumvent “any definitive mediating structure, any antecedent criterion of value” (Jacobson, “Vision’s Imperative” 556), self-trust simply releases the faithful thinker specifically to pursue the particular thoughts and implications that arise by virtue of the noble or moral sentiment. “Self-Reliance” encourages the faithful thinker to

> trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark. (*W* 2: 47).

The passage confirms the divine origin of thought and action and attributes them to the guidance of God, connecting an individual’s place to the hero’s concurrent provinces of his own mind, his larger society, and the whole of human history. Divine providence, in fact, “[finds]” a role for each individual that suggests his potential to achieve a unique level of greatness both within and beyond himself. The equation of “great men” with “the genius of their age” situates individual acts of heroism within the context of a particular time and place and therefore reaffirms Emerson’s continuing conception of history as the unfolding of a perpetual present. The great men’s “perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated in their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being” evolves from their acceptance that their actions on behalf of the moral sentiment represent obedience to "the Almighty effort," an argument that further substantiates Emerson's claims throughout the *Essays* that the sentiment proceeds from God. The contention that obedience to the noble call makes us "men" rather than "minors and invalids in a protected corner" or "cowards fleeing before a revolution" creates clear distinctions between the concepts of power and powerlessness, courage and cowardice, and desirable and undesirable; only when individuals act decisively as "men" can they advance to the level of the "great men" who function as society's "guides, redeemers, and benefactors." Emerson's juxtaposition of "the Almighty effort" with the emphatic abstractions of "Chaos" and "the Dark" establishes a symbolic war between the forces of good and evil, verifying the traditional place of the "great man" or hero as the designated agent of good.[46]

The notion of "act[ing] decisively as men" represents one of the most frequently recurring themes in "Self-Reliance": before he can aspire to be "great," the individual must first demonstrate that he is, in fact, a man. In his declarations that "God will not have his work made manifest by cowards" (*W* 2: 47) and that "[y]our goodness must have some edge to it, --else it is none" (51), Emerson aligns individual courage with power as well as purpose; in his willingness to act publicly in his furtherance of the moral sentiment, the faithful thinker must expect to find himself frequently at odds with the thoughts and other impulses of those who surround him. Contending that "[s]ociety everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members" (49), Emerson equates the fear of external factors, including the "feminine rage" of the multitude (56), with a diminution of manhood and a corresponding absence of self-trust. Hesitation or failure to act in accordance with the implications of his intellect renders the individual both spiritually and symbolically impotent: in his lack of faith, he denies the call of God; in his lack of moral courage, he also denies himself.

Within Emerson's definition of self-reliance, a true man puts aside any fear of criticism and "carr[ies] himself in the presence of all opposition as if every thing were titular and ephemeral but he" (51). The difference between the courageous individual and he who backs down from his position in the face of opposition becomes encapsulated within Emerson's conceptions of greatness and meanness. He argues:

> What I must do is all that concerns me, not what people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after your own, but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. (*W* 2: 53-54)

Emerson peppers the passage with acknowledgments that society can render virtuous action difficult and that manly assertions of strength in defense of higher purposes frequently demand higher degrees of conviction and commitment on the part of heroic individuals. "Greatness" can be "arduous" in terms of both thinking and acting, and it is made even "harder" by "those who think they know what is your duty better than you." Emerson does not specify exactly *who* claims to possess clearer understanding of a man's "duty," leaving it to his individual reader to supply these identities within the context of his unique condition. However, he leaves his admonition with the image of the "great man" standing stalwart in the midst of a circle of opposition, conspicuous and solitary yet bathed in the "perfect sweetness" of his unique and independent acts. The image succeeds both in separating the "great man" from the common voice of the crowd and in elevating the hero to a level that is clearly above it.

It also echoes Emerson's assertion in *Nature* that "[a] virtuous man is in unison with [Nature's] works and makes the central figure of the visible sphere" (*W* 1: 22). In "Self-Reliance," Emerson again situates his heroic individual at the center of a metaphoric circle, a movement which parallels his earlier placement of moral law at "the center of nature" and "radiat[ing] to the circumference" (41-42). Although his position distinguishes him from his more timid brethren within the sheepish fold of the multitude, his obedience to the call of the moral sentiment generally compels him to confront society's opposition and well as to resist external pressure to retreat from his noble position. Despite the furtherance of God's purpose implicit within the call itself, the heroic individual must conquer the resistance of a multitude who would question his lack of conformity to their contrary perceptions and theories. Acknowledging that "[f]or nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face" (*W* 2: 55-56), Emerson urges his hero onward with his observation that "[a] foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines" (57). The "little minds" to which Emerson refers reach beyond the multitude here to include the holders of positions of perceived authority within the political, academic, and theological spheres—an action which expands the range of potential opposition as well as diminishes the notion of moral authority associated with these titular occupations. Emerson takes pain to reinforce the notion that any faithful individual possesses the capacity to function heroically when he perceives God's call to act on behalf of the moral sentiment.

The potential for greatness resides both in the degree of self-trust and the depth of the individual's character. "Self-Reliance" makes Emerson's strongest case yet for the ability of men to rise to an exemplary level of greatness, a movement which commences with the reception of the moral sentiment and proceeds to thought and publication through definitive action. Emerson declares:

> Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom and trade and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you and all men and all events. Ordinarily, every body in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design;--and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Cæsar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as, Monachism, of the Hermit Antony; the Reformation, of Luther; Quakerism, of Fox; Methodism, of Wesley; Abolition, of Clarkson. Scipio, Milton called “the height of Rome;” and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons. (*W* 2: 60-61)

This lengthy passage merits inclusion in its entirety by virtue of its ability to connect its precepts to earlier conceptions and simultaneously to move them forward into more specific (as well as more familiar) contexts. The notion of the “true man” as “the centre of all things” echoes the image of the widening circle in *Nature* that “steal[s] in like air” to “envelope great actions” (*W* 1: 21). The heroic individual remains allied with nature and God, recalling Emerson’s contention that the universe belongs to each man, that it “is his, if he will,” and that “[i]n proportion to the energy of his thought and will, he takes up the world into himself” (20). The notions of “truth” and “heroism” coexist within “Self-Reliance,” as they did in *Nature*: the heroic individual who acts upon the noble sentiment in his publication of a truly virtuous thought enjoys the pomp of Nature, the prescience of God, and the proclamations of history combined. Once again, each of the moral exemplars within the passage considered his unique thoughts, published them through his noble acts, pursued his actions through to their completion, and survived the combined judgments of Nature, God, and history.

Although *Nature* establishes the fundamentals of the paradigm of the heroic individual that can be seen throughout the body of Emerson’s works, “Self-Reliance” provides the familiar terminology that presses this conception towards its mature and recognizable form. Emerson compresses the faithful thinker of *Nature*, the “free and brave” scholar of “The American Scholar,” and the “true preacher” who teaches from “life passed through the fire of thought” in the “Divinity School Address” into the “great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works” and thereby creates an all-purpose emphatic abstraction that transcends the implied limits of any particular vocation. As both an anomaly and a product of his time, the heroic Thinker and Actor rises above the “mediocrity” of his more socially conscious fellows by virtue of his communication with God and Nature. Emerson emphasizes his masculine courage by referring to him *twice* within the paragraph as “a true man,” first as one who “belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things,” and second as “a cause, a country, and an age.” Both gestures tie the individual directly to history, specifically as he relates to his assigned position within the unique historical moment. Although "posterity seem to follow [the exemplary individual's] steps as a train of clients," he remains connected to the unique circumstances that surround his time and place, a factor which Emerson's ensuing argument and choice of heroic exemplars clearly demonstrates.

Emerson ascribes the power of the hero to the character of the Thinker and Actor; his assertion that "[t]he man must be so much that he must make all circumstances indifferent" attests to the ability of such exemplary individuals to transcend the conditions of difficult social or historical situations in order to publish the implications of their thoughts. His designation of his heroic exemplars as causes, countries, and ages fuses specific circumstances, places, and times into the representative acts of representative individuals: Caesar and Scipio become symbols of imperial Rome; Christ stands for the moment of the birth of Christianity and subsequent centuries of spiritual inspiration and human potential; Antony, Luther, Fox, and Wesley represent unique moments within the perpetual evolution of religious thought; and Clarkson symbolizes the desire to improve the human condition inherent within the cause of abolition. Emerson's examples suggest the heroic individual's perception of a specific need within his time and a recognition of his own ability to act in a manner designed to advance that cause. They also imply the prospect of substantial delay in the acquisition and acknowledgment of change that ultimately occurs for the better. None of Emerson's "great men" can be deemed an overnight success; Emerson makes clear that virtuous action "requires infinite spaces and number and time fully to accomplish [the hero's] design." The courage of the heroic Thinker and Actor must carry him over the long haul; the need to pursue his individual actions through to their completion demands sincere commitment in order to overcome the series of potential obstacles that may arise in his promotion of a noble purpose. In addition to external opposition to the furtherance his ideas, the exemplary hero must be prepared to deal with setbacks that include personal suffering and the prospect of self-sacrifice, frequently to the point of martyrdom.

One of the first calls for self-sacrifice in defense of the moral sentiment appears within the need for nonconformity. The same thoughts and actions that distinguish the individual from the crowd and elevate him to a higher moral level create the innate potential for ostracism, a condition uniquely undesirable to inherently social beings. The exemplary Thinker and Actor must be prepared to remove himself from the comfort of his society if his thoughts dictate that he do so, a situation Emerson anticipates when he queries in “Intellect,” “What is the hardest thing in the world? To think” (*W* 2: 331). In his publication of his thoughts, the individual opens himself to the potential for criticism and condemnation, facts that Emerson seems to consider simply part and parcel of the great man’s summons to heroic action. In “Self-Reliance,” he asks, “Is it so bad then to be misunderstood?” and answers, “Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood” (58). Emerson responds to the requirement that the Thinker and Actor separate himself from the larger society by reasserting the desirability of such a solitary state and referencing the ultimate triumph of initially unpopular ideas within the wider context of human history.

The exemplars Emerson uses to illustrate the hero’s propensity for being misunderstood cover a great deal of historical ground as well as a wide range of intellectual applications. He draws Pythagoras, Socrates, and Jesus from the ancient world and Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton from the early modern period; more than two millennia of human civilization separate Pythagoras and Newton on either end of the temporal spectrum, and the exempla initially appear to have little in common except for Emerson's contention that each had been "misunderstood." Pythagoras and Socrates were philosophers, Jesus and Luther were religious leaders, and Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton were scientists; however, each exemplar faced formidable obstacles in conveying the substance of his particular message to a frequently less-than-receptive contemporary public. Though now remembered primarily as a mathematician, Pythagoras escaped tyranny in his native Ionia to found a religious brotherhood that promoted beliefs in transubstantiation, the need to live a pious life, and the ability to aspire to a level with the gods. Socrates defied Athenian convention to teach a conception of piety that neglected ceremony and ritual in favor of a personal response to a divine voice. Jesus dodged Herod, challenged scribes and Pharisees, and battled church leaders, Pontius Pilate, and even his own disciples to deliver a message of piety and a formula for moral living. Luther survived the hostilities of the Catholic Church, the Edict of Worms, St. Augustine, and the king of France to deliver a doctrine of salvation which advocates that grace represents a gift from God that is determined by faith alone.[47] Copernicus muddled through centuries of questionable scientific premises, abundant contemporary skepticism, and the frustration of delays in publication to advance his hypothesis of a heliocentric universe. Galileo battled Cardinal Bellarmine, Pope Urban VIII, and the Inquisition to advance the Copernican theory. Newton endured early setbacks, the resistance of the Royal Society and the English Jesuits, and periods of isolation and instability to advance interests that included religious topics in addition to his ground-breaking scientific work.[48]

Although Emerson's exemplars appear to represent a wide range of historical and intellectual diversity, they share a significant distinction: in each instance, the individual was forced to defy contemporary convention in his unique pursuit of the call of the moral sentiment. Furthermore, in all of these cases, at least one authority that the hero was compelled to confront was the church. Although the "church" in the immediate sense of the Catholic Church is readily apparent in the circumstances of Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, the remaining exemplars also found themselves positioned in direct opposition to the religious conventions of their times. Pythagoras and Socrates pursued notions of piety that placed them outside the boundaries of mainstream Greek religious practice, Pythagoras by forming a separate brotherhood of adherents and Socrates by advocating notions of faith that moved beyond traditional festival celebrations and the practice of public rituals. Jesus confronted the hostility of historical Judaism, literally in the form of the objections of church leaders and symbolically in the manner of their resistance to the new ideas he espoused. Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton encountered the formidable reach of a Church strengthened with unlimited jurisprudential discretion and the literal power of life and death. Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton also faced its ability to summarily dismiss or circumvent scientific findings and to discredit or excommunicate the individuals who pursued them.

Although Emerson supplies historical examples to illustrate the capacity of great men to be "misunderstood," his selection of these particular exemplars moves beyond this immediate practical purpose into the realm of heroic example. In each case, he selects an individual whose specific argument or cause was accepted, over time, as fundamentally accurate. By the nineteenth century, Pythagorean logic, Socratic philosophy, the Christian religion, Protestantism, the heliocentric solar system, and Newtonian physics were generally regarded by most, or at least many, intelligent people in the West as respectable systems of thought and/or belief. Despite the skepticism apparent in the perceptions of their own contemporaries, the views of each exemplar ultimately survived the test of history and emerged in the end as ideas that had been necessary or desirable to the course of human progress. Although not always invariably labeled as "heroes," the individuals who put forth once-radical notions eventually receive recognition as resourceful Thinkers and Actors who were willing to go to extraordinary lengths in their defense of the moral sentiment.

Despite history's tendency to absorb much of the life of the heroic individual into the substance of his idea, Emerson understood that the road to greatness can contain more potholes than merely the propensity of the great to be misunderstood. In "Circles," he observes that "[t]he new statement is always hated by the old, and, to those dwelling in the old, comes like an abyss of scepticism [sic]" (*W* 2*:* 305). Although the hero's contemporaries frequently react to the new idea with reluctance or confusion, such misunderstanding represents an essentially passive response that does little to hinder the exemplar's thought or the noble pursuit of his actions. The much greater threat to the realization of his purpose resides in barriers placed in his path by the much more powerful mode of actual active resistance. Although Emerson can appear to be emphasizing the passive response when he asks whether it is such a bad thing to be misunderstood, his allusions to Pythagoras, Socrates, Jesus, Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton undercuts this initial impression by furnishing unambiguous examples of those who confronted, and ultimately overcame, active resistance. Since Emerson offers no additional context to connect his exemplars to his claim, it is left to the reader to supply these connections and to consider the wider significance of their moral implications.

A portion of the heroic character of these historical individuals can be seen in the apparent willingness of each to sacrifice himself to his cause. Resistance to each exemplar's furtherance of the cause of the moral sentiment became much more than the disapproval of a particular authority or the dissent of a few skeptical voices; in each case, the purpose itself essentially consumed the life of the Thinker and Actor to become much of the substance of his existence. This element of self-sacrifice reasserts Emerson's contention in "The Philosophy of History" that "[a] man must not speak the truth because it is profitable to all but because it is the truth. And this profit needs to be viewed on the largest scale. The act which serves the most persons and for the longest time and in the surest way may be fatal to the fortunes and life of the doer" ("Religion," *EL* 2: 87). Like his earlier examples of Saints Peter and Paul, Sir Thomas More, Sidney, Lord Russell, Sir Henry Vane, and (again) Socrates and Luther, the exemplary heroes of "Self-Reliance" could have "yielded to the advice of prudent friends, and not held themselves so stiffly to their own sense," and there would have "been health, and venison, and long and easy life to these gentlemen, but the race of mankind would indeed be impoverished of its lofty friends, and driers of tears and the strengtheners of the heart" ("Religion," *EL* 2: 87). But the heroic individual recognizes that his personal sacrifices serve the greater good of humanity by virtue of the noble character of the calling. Each of Emerson's exemplars subscribes to his conception in "Compensation" of "[t]he absolute balance of Give and Take, the doctrine that every thing has its price,--and if that price is not paid, not that thing but something else is obtained, and that it is impossible to get anything without its price" (*W* 2: 115).

For many of Emerson's exemplary heroes, the price of furthering the human cause becomes self-sacrifice to the point of martyrdom. Among the great men who found themselves "misunderstood," Socrates and Jesus represent literal martyrs who actually died in defense of their causes. Although the causes of both of these heroes were, in fact, religious, Emerson's inclusion of several scientists among the exemplars underscores his emphasis upon the idea that motivates the moral sentiment rather than the purview of its intellectual origin. In

"Heroism," Emerson points to the need for perseverance when he insists that "[t]he characteristic of heroism is its persistency. All men have wandering impulses, fits and starts of generosity. But when you have chosen your part, abide by it, and do not weakly try to reconcile yourself with the world" (260). Since the doctrine of compensation makes clear that the reward for virtuous action does not delay itself until the afterlife, Emerson's exemplar understands that what he Gives enables the remainder of humanity to Take the benefits that result from his publication of the moral sentiment. Even when the price for furthering the greater good becomes the surrender of his own life, the exemplary hero does not retreat from his position but proceeds with an even greater sense of dedication and moral conviction.

Emerson acknowledges and even celebrates the self-sacrificial impulse; in "Heroism," he contends that "[h]uman virtue demands her champions and martyrs, and the trial of persecution always proceeds" and concludes, "I see not any road of perfect peace which a man can walk, but after the counsel of his own bosom" (*W* 2: 262). Although the sacrifice of self remains tied to virtue and the individual's publication of the implications of the moral sentiment, it can appear somewhat uncompromising and even foolhardy in its apparent idealism and absolute focus upon the realization of a specific outcome. However, such reservations fade when the hero's cause rises to the level of the moral imperative that is dictated by the call of the moral sentiment. Since the sentiment itself, as Emerson repeatedly asserts, proceeds from God and is, therefore, inherently moral, any action that the individual takes as a result of his consideration of its implications represents an assertion of his genuine faith. Following these virtuous actions through to the extent of their logical conclusion reasserts this faith, and self-sacrifice, specifically martyrdom, becomes the definitive example of a fundamentally religious act.

The self-reliance that converts the Thinker and Actor into a potential martyr and illustrates the fact of his higher faith serves an additional purpose in terms of the exemplary hero. As Emerson observes in "Compensation":

> The martyr cannot be dishonored. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode; every burned book or house enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through the earth from side to side. Hours of sanity and consideration are always striving to communities, as to individuals, when the truth is seen and the martyrs are justified. (*W* 2: 120)

The martyr remains practically useful as a moral exemplar long after he and his cause have passed into history, perhaps even more so because he *has* passed out of view. Emerson understood that temporal distance and the powers of reverence and sentiment frequently elevate the memory the heroic individual, particularly the martyr, beyond the limitations of time and place as it moves into the collective unconscious. The words and actions that precipitate the heroic event become correspondingly enhanced through association with the martyred persona, and the circumstances surrounding the heroic situation become the substance of additional tribute and legend. Emerson emphasizes the transhistorical aspect of the exemplary hero by pointing to his ability to inspire others beyond the reach of his time and place. The passage recalls the doctrine of Use initially expressed in *Nature*: once the moral sentiment has been published and the needs of the historic moment have been fulfilled, the heroic Actor has successfully served his higher purpose and becomes essentially dispensable. The need for his physical presence has been obviated, although his memory remains as an effective inspiration and example for others to emulate.[49]

Although Emerson's view of the heroic exemplar seeks to subordinate formal history to the lessons of the moral imperative, it does not seek to obliterate history per se.[50] Neither does history cease to exist once the spiritual implications of an original thought become apparent within the context of the range of human experience.[51] Emerson perceived history as a practical problem only as it related to a tendency to rely upon the impersonal "facts" of history at the expense of their greater significance, a perspective he makes clear in "History" when he points to the need to "read history aright" (*W* 2: 8). Emerson encapsulates the heroic potential of the individual and his capacity to receive the call of the moral sentiment in his elucidation of the role of the individual in history. He observes:

> The world exists for the education of each man. There is no age or state of society or mode of action in history to which there is not somewhat corresponding in his life. Every thing tends in a wonderful manner to abbreviate itself and yield its own virtue to him. He should see that he can live all history in his own person. He must sit solidly at home, and not suffer himself to be bullied by kings or empires, but know that he is greater than all the geography and all the government of the world; he must transfer the point of view from which history is commonly read, from Rome to Athens and London, to himself, and not deny his conviction that he is the court, and if England or Egypt have anything to say to him he will try the case; if not, let them forever be silent. (8-9)

The passage privileges the role of the self-reliant Thinker and Actor within the context of his own time and place as it connects his worldly "education" to that of others across the ages. "Every thing . . . abbreviate[s] itself" to the individual and his virtue, a movement that renders him both a representative of human potential and a microcosm of the Universal One. His ability to “live all history in his own person” expands his spiritual reach beyond his particular time and elevates him above the “bull[ying]” of “kings and empires” in terms of his status and place. The established history of Rome, Athens, and London becomes “common” in relation to the present and yields itself to the individual’s estimation of its relative value to his life.

Although Emerson’s rhetorical posture in “History” can appear to constitute an indictment of historical study in general, such a conclusion does not withstand close scrutiny. The sheer number of references to historical figures within the essay itself, not to mention those throughout the remainder of the series, indicates that Emerson acknowledged the usefulness of historical exemplars in illustrating philosophical precepts as well as in demonstrating those theories in practice; however, he continued to insist that the study of past events offers no acceptable alternative to an understanding of human character. “History” echoes the basic precepts of Emerson’s Introduction to the “Philosophy of History” series in its assertions concerning the limitations of formalist approaches to history and its insistence that an accurate approach to history would chronicle the various and multiple dimensions of humankind represented in the Universal One. But where “The Philosophy of History” focuses on the manufacture of historical data when it considers the “dulness” [*sic*] that “suggest[s] that [History] is not rightly written” (*EL* 2: 7), “History” shifts its perspective to the consumer when Emerson declares, “I have no expectation that any man will read history aright who thinks that what was done in a remote age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing to-day” (*W* 2: 8). Part of a general movement Emerson makes in *Essays* towards advocating a greater degree of self-reliance in thinking as well as acting, the transition in emphasis from writing to reading signals even more responsibility on the part of the individual to consider the relative significance of received knowledge and its applicability to his personal condition.

Although "History" maintains Emerson's earlier criticisms of traditional approaches to historical study, it becomes much more prescriptive in its pronouncements concerning the character of the perspective that should take its place. Emerson endeavors to redirect past renown to present relevance when he asserts:

> All inquiry into antiquity, all curiosity respecting the Pyramids, the excavated cities, Stonehenge, the Ohio Circles, Mexico, Memphis, --is the desire to do away with this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now. Belzoni digs and measures in the mummy-pits and pyramids of Thebes until he can see the end of the difference between the monstrous work and himself. When he has himself, in general and in detail, that it was made by such a person as he, so armed and so motived, and to ends to which he himself should also have worked, the problem is solved; his thought lives along the whole line of temples and sphinxes and catacombs, passes through them all with satisfaction, and they live again to the mind, or are *now*. (*W* 2: 11)

Belzoni's conversion of a past act to a present need underscores Emerson's emphasis on the immediate significance of historical events and the ability of men to create connections beyond the barrier of time by virtue of their common thoughts.[52] Belzoni's archaeological interest in the ruins of Thebes has much less to do with any great reverence for past events than with his own desire to connect himself to the minds of the men who produced them. He longs to see himself in them, as in the reflection of a mirror, and this desire symbolically wrenches both him and them out of the constrictions of time into a *now* that exists within an atemporal realm in his mind. Emerson makes clear that this impulse seeks not to propel Belzoni back in time to Thebes but to bring the significance of the past forward to the Here and Now. The movement confirms Emerson's insistence upon the priority of the present moment and the need of individuals to live life in a state of perpetual present.

Emerson's focus upon the need to perceive past events in terms of their applicability to those living in the present reaffirms his contention in "The Philosophy of History" that "[t]he best use of History is to teach us to value the Present" (*EL* 2: 157). In "History," he contends that "[w]e sympathize in the great moments of history, in the great discoveries, the great resistances, the great prosperities of men;--because there law was enacted, the sea was searched, the land was found, or the blow was struck, *for us*, as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded" (*W* 2: 6-7). The essay repeatedly emphasizes the conversion of past events to a condition of present significance; here, the ultimate value of great discoveries, resistances, or prosperities resides within the analyses of contemporary observers casting their glances backward in time. Within the doctrine of Use, any thing is useful only as it serves the needs of humankind; when applied to history, the past event becomes relevant primarily as an illustration of a particular character or trait that present use deems worthy of illumination. Emerson acknowledges this connection when he concludes that "[I]t is the universal nature which gives worth to particular men and things" (5).

Emerson's notion of history as the chronicle of the Universal Mind carries forward from "The Philosophy of History," where he maintains that "[w]e are compelled in the first essays of thought to separate the idea of Man from any particular men" and that "[w]e arrive early at the great discovery that there is one Mind common to all individual men; that what is individual is less than universal" (*EL* 2: 11).[53] The connection of history to the Universal Mind becomes paramount in “History”; Emerson opens the essay (and the entire *Essays* series) with his declaration that

> There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind is a part to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent. (*W* 2: 3)

The notion of the connection to the Universal Mind allies the individual to all other individuals both within and beyond a particular time and place; Emerson’s rhetorical structure creates ideological parity by linking Every man to the thinking of Plato, the feelings of a saint, and the capacity for comprehending events in the life of any individual in history. The idea of latent potential is reinforced by each man’s ability to access “the whole estate” and by the suggestion that Every man can aspire to the historical level of Plato or even a saint. Emerson adds a hint of a higher sanction with his use of King James English and points to the individual’s capacity to exceed his own expectations with the allusion to “all that is or can be done.” As an opening paragraph to both the essay and the series, the passage sets up an unmistakable sense of the inherent potential of each individual to influence the course both of history and of man.

Several components of “History” confirm the historical capacity of the individual and tie it to the role of the heroic exemplar. When Emerson follows his contentions concerning the Universal Mind by explaining that “[m]an is explicable by nothing less than all his history” and “[a] man is the whole encyclopædia of facts” (3), he acknowledges the part that each individual plays within the ongoing present that comprises human history. The “human spirit goes forth from the beginning to embody every faculty, every thought, every emotion which belongs to it, in appropriate events" (3); this spirit is perpetual, and it emerges within each individual who demands an original relation with the universe. The idea of the inability of the individual to receive knowledge secondhand that appears in both *Nature* and "The American Scholar" applies to historical knowledge as well; Emerson insists that "[e]very mind must know the whole lesson for itself,--must go over the whole ground. What it does not see, what it does not live, it will not know" (10). The faithful Thinker who permits himself an unobstructed view of himself and his world clears the way for original thinking and opens his mind to the potential for extraordinary thoughts and events. If the call of a moral sentiment then occurs, then the potential for heroic action may presumably follow.

Since the call of the moral sentiment precipitates heroic action, any individual who hears it may elect to initiate the cycle of thinking, acting, and following its implications through to completion that characterizes Emerson's paradigm of the exemplary hero. At this point, the individual encounters the judgment of a history that includes elements of the present as well the future. In order to maintain his claim as an heroic exemplar, he and his actions must survive the scrutiny of his contemporaries as well as the perpetual analysis of future observers. Men of his own time decide whether he passes into the record at all; men of subsequent ages determine whether he remains there. The fact of this continuous entry of individuals into the historical record and the ongoing reassessment of historical personages may have been one of the reasons why Emerson felt the need to allude to the "subjective" nature of history in his contention that "there is properly no history, only biography" (*W* 2*:* 10). As a chronicle of the unfolding of the Universal Mind, the historical record represents a series of individual actions deemed worthy of commitment to memory. The particular components of the record fluctuate as opinions change, additional facts come to light, or new events appear to eclipse the significance of the old. Because each individual possesses the potential to initiate heroic action, each person may potentially emerge as the new biography that takes its place within the continually evolving chronicle of human history.

Although the need for individuals to assume heroic roles remains an atemporal constant of the Universal Mind, the circumstances surrounding the call of the moral sentiment vary with specific historical situations. A particular point in history may dictate the need for a theologian, a soldier, an emperor, a playwright, an inventor, a reformer, or a philosopher; throughout the *Essays*, Emerson employs a diverse range of exemplary heroes from these and other walks of life to demonstrate the universality of the potential for human greatness. In "Self-Reliance," he points to the uniqueness of each man's calling when he asserts:

> Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakspeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is unique. The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow. Shakspeare will never be made by the study of Shakspeare. Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much. There is at this moment for you an utterance brave and grand as that of the colossal chisel of Phidias, or trowel of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses or

> Dante, but different from all these. . . . Abide in the simple and noble regions of thy life, obey thy heart, and thou shalt reproduce the Foreworld again. (*W* 2: 83-84)

The call to a particular vocation, like the call of the moral sentiment, is unique to each individual; Emerson emphasizes that the "assignment" each man receives is determined by God and varies with the requirements of the Universal One. Conspicuous in his self-reliance, the great man is transhistorical in a moral sense but situates himself simultaneously within and beyond the context of a specific time and place. From Moses in the fourteenth century B.C. to Washington and Franklin in the eighteenth A.D., Emerson's examples of great men demonstrate a wide range of needs covering a considerable expanse of time; although not invariably theological in terms of character or influence, these exempla are supplied with religious purpose by the allusion to the will of the Maker as well as the use of King James English within the concluding sentence. Like the moral sentiment which motivates him, the hero himself derives from God and therefore serves a higher purpose that transcends his immediate existence.

The exemplary component of the hero resides within the moral dimension of his character, a fact that connects him both to his particular time and to the chronicle of the Universal One. Emerson ties character to biography in "Self-Reliance" when he contends that "[c]haracter, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. . . . Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time to fully accomplish his design;--and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients" (*W* 2: 61). Like Shakespeare, Franklin, Washington, Bacon, Newton, Phidias, Moses, and Dante, the ensuing examples of Caesar, Christ, Antony, Luther, Fox, Wesley, Clarkson, and Scipio illustrate an expansive range of heroic motives within a considerable segment of chronological time. As historical representatives of the heroic character in a wide variety of causes, countries, and ages, each of these great men offers a biography that includes each of the elements that constitute Emerson's paradigm of the heroic exemplar. Within his original relation to the universe, each individual considered his unique thoughts, published them through noble acts, pursued these actions through to their completion, and withstood the judgments of Nature, God, and history. Most suffered and sacrificed for expressing unpopular or unconventional views: Phidias and Bacon were imprisoned, Dante was exiled, Newton struggled with anxiety and mental illness, Moses was prevented from occupying the Promised Land, Anthony battled evil in an onslaught of horrific visions; Caesar and Christ became actual martyrs. Yet despite their many differences, all of these individuals came to the nineteenth century—and, therefore, to Emerson—as relatively unambiguous personifications of exemplary heroism within a specific place and time.

Throughout the *Essays*, Emerson maintains the connection between the Thinking and Acting of the exemplary individual that he first identified in *Nature*. The opportunity for heroic action arises in a man's life not because he consciously seeks it, but because it seeks him: the implications of the thoughts which occur to him as a result of the call of the moral sentiment determine the course of his subsequent action and therefore contain the potential for heroism within them.   Emerson solidifies this concept in "Spiritual Laws" when he contends:

> There is less intention in history than we ascribe to it. We impute deep-laid far-sighted plans to Cæsar and Napoleon; but the best of their power was in nature, not in them. Men of an extraordinary success, in their honest moments, have always sung 'Not unto us, not unto us.' According to the faith of their times they have built

> altars to Fortune, or to Destiny, or to St. Julian. Their success lay in the parallelism to the course of thought, which found them in an unobstructed channel; and the wonders of which they were the visible conductors seemed to the eye their deed. (*W* 2: 134)

Emerson ascribes the favorable view of history to the individual's ability to satisfy a particular need that originates outside himself and is propelled by the power of nature. Although the hero's thoughts are his own, they arise from forces within nature that communicate to him the requirements of the Universal Mind; as the appropriate Thinker and Actor to embody a specific higher purpose, the heroic exemplar assumes his historical role as a direct result of "the parallelism to the course of thought" between the mind of God and his own. Emerson's claim that exemplars who personify the concept of "success" sing a chorus of "Not unto us" underscores the notion that success, in these cases military victory, occurs to further the greater needs of the Universal One rather than to satisfy an individual's ambition. His selection of Caesar and Napoleon to illustrate his contention supplies additional historical sanction through common associations between these military leaders and particular social advances: Emerson draws upon the implicit connections his readers will draw between Caesar and the Roman Empire and Napoleon and post-Revolutionary France. As he had throughout his post-ministerial writings, Emerson continues throughout the *Essays* to emphasize the role of the exemplary individual in history as an expression of a particular need of the Universal One within a specific place and time.

One of the most significant reassertions Emerson makes in the *Essays* concerns his conception of history as the unfolding of a perpetual present. In the epigram of *Nature*, he alludes to "A subtle chain of countless rings / The next unto the farthest brings" (*W* 1: 1) and to the "line of the horizon" in which "man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature" (10); "The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference" (41-42), and universal truth "is like a great circle on a sphere, comprising all possible circles" (44). *Nature*'s notion of "central unity" resurfaces in "Circles," in which Emerson makes repeated references to "the circular or compensatory character of every human action" and to the fact that "every action admits of being outdone" (*W* 2: 301). Asserting that "[o]ur life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower layer opens," Emerson equates natural tendencies with divine purpose when he contends that "St. Augustine described the nature of God as a circle whose center was everywhere and its circumference nowhere" (301). Within this perspective, "[p]ermanence is a word of degrees" and "[e]very thing is medial" (303); "[t]he life of man" becomes "a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end" (304).

The amount of repetition within "Circles" suggests that Emerson's purpose in recycling a single image moves beyond the merely rhetorical. An idea that covers only two sentences in *Nature* ("Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of things? Throw a stone into a stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence" [*W* 1: 26-27]) consumes most of the first six pages of "Circles" and begs the question *Why?* The answer appears within Emerson's contentions that "the heart refuses to be imprisoned" and that "[e]very ultimate fact is only the first of a new series" (*W* 2*:* 304). As he makes clear through his many references to the metaphorical circle, mankind must continually progress. The need for each individual to experience an original relation with the universe is perpetual and reemerges with the appearance of each new soul in nature. Emerson argues that “[i]n nature every moment is new; the past is always swallowed and forgotten; the coming only is sacred” (319). This fact is both inevitable and desirable; by replacing the “preposterous There or Then” with each new and original experience of the Here and the Now (“History”, *W* 2: 11), the heroic individual enables the process by which today’s events becomes the substance of tomorrow’s legends. By situating himself wholly with the present, he opens himself to the possibilities that constitute biographical history.

The need for potentially heroic individuals to exist within a perpetual present recalls Emerson’s concerns regarding “retrospective” thinking and overreliance upon received knowledge in *Nature* and “The American Scholar.” In “Self-Reliance,” Emerson maintains that reverence for the past hinders both the individual and his society when he argues that “[t]he centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul” (*W* 2: 66), and that when “man postpones or remembers,” he “does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time” (67). In *Essays*, Emerson points to the dangers of looking to the future as well as to the past; to accomplish his own work as well as any on behalf of the Universal One, the potentially heroic Thinker and Actor must confine himself to concerns that exist within the immediate present. In “History,” Emerson contends that “[n]o man can antedate his experience, or guess what faculty or feeling a new object shall unlock” (*W* 2: 38), a notion that confirms the “Not unto us” contention of “Spiritual Laws” and reinforces the role of the individual exemplar as the embodiment of the Universal One.

Although they are physically separated within the series, “Circles” remains closely connected to “History” in terms of its delineation of the purposes of history and the role of the heroic exemplar. The metaphor of the ever-widening circle that takes each ending as a new beginning reflects the character of Emerson's conception of history as the chronicle of a perpetual present. The emphasis on the Here and the Now and the need for an original relation to the universe situates the individual squarely within the present as the appropriate setting for his potentially heroic thoughts and actions. The moral aspect of the noble sentiment connects the individual to nature, to God, and to the needs of the Universal One; the self-reliant individual's innate ability to interpret his thoughts and to determine appropriate action give rise to the possibility that his heroic biography will ultimately pass into the chronicle that comprises the Emersonian conception of history. If "History" reflects the need for a comprehensive view of human events, "Circles" affirms that individuals will perpetually surface to supply humanity's need for heroic exemplars. Emerson summarizes the process with his contention that

> The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force or truth of the individual soul. For it is the inert effort of each thought, having formed itself into the circular wave of circumstance,--as for instance an empire, rules of an art, a local usage, a religious rite,--to heap itself on that ridge and to solidify and hem in the life. But if the soul is quick and strong it bursts over the boundary on all sides and expands another orbit on the great deep, which also runs up into a high wave, with attempt again to stop and to bind. But the heart refuses to be imprisoned; in its first and narrowest pulses it already tends outward with a vast force and to immense and innumerable expansions. (*W* 2: 304)

The autonomous exercise of individual thought that creates continuous potential for "immense and innumerable expansions" within Nature connects the intellect to God as well as to the hero and the soul. Despite the frequency of criticisms directed towards religious institutions that appear within the *Essays*, the work, like *Nature* and others which preceded it, represents a fundamental reassertion of belief in the deity and in the relationship between God and man. Emerson addresses these issues in "Spiritual Laws," where he contends that

> [a] little consideration of what takes place around us every day would show us that a higher law than that of our will regulates events; that our painful labors are unnecessary and fruitless; that only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong, and by contenting ourselves with obedience we become divine. Belief and love,--a believing love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers, God exists. There is a soul at the centre of nature and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe. It has so infused its strong enchantment into nature that we prosper when we accept its advice, and when we struggle to wound its creatures our hands are glued to our sides, or they beat our own breasts. The whole course of things goes to teach us faith. We need only obey. There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word. . . . Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which animates all whom it floats, and you are without effort impelled to truth, to right and a perfect contentment. (*W* 2: 138-39)

The passage echoes *Nature*'s notions of the call of the moral sentiment, the need for virtuous thoughts and definitive actions, the position of moral law at the center of nature and the universe, the communication between God and man and the medium of Nature, and the ability of the faithful Thinker and Actor to aspire to a level of truth that achieves the realm of the divine. In *Essays*, however, Emerson recasts these ideas within a much less ambiguous framework. Although it occurs near the center of the passage, the assertion that “God exists” conspicuously colors the concepts which precede and follow it by virtue of its directness and startling simplicity. Emerson’s addition of the emphatic “O my brothers” provides a rhetorical stroke that ensures its notice and causes the brief sentence to reverberate throughout the paragraph. His strategic borrowing from the tactics of the minister infuses his argument with the subtle sound of a sermon and underscores its religious dimension. In a single paragraph, Emerson condenses arguments that cover pages and pages in *Nature* and situates God in their center.

Emerson’s movement is symbolic as well as stylistic. According to his previous definitions, the moral law resides at the center of the universe and radiates to the circumference. By placing God among his established contentions, Emerson symbolically places Him at the same location to which he previously assigned the moral law. Such concurrent placement does not indicate contradiction or stimulate controversy: the equation of God with the moral law represents a theologically conservative religious commonplace. However, when it is considered within the context of Emerson’s contemporary reputation, the passage assumes a greater degree of significance. Unlike in many of his previous works, where Emerson’s meanings were often open to interpretation and therefore to the controversies which followed, the assertion in “Spiritual Laws” that “God exists” is neither ambiguous nor equivocal. Appearing as it did only three years following the “Divinity School Address,” the essay could represent a clarification on Emerson’s part that seeks to situate his arguments concerning faith and belief within the comfort of a familiar religious framework. Although most biographical evidence suggests that Emerson refused to retreat from his views even in the face of controversy, such a response as the one to the

"Divinity School Address" could have signaled a lack of understanding concerning some of the more conservative elements of his philosophy on the part of many of those who opposed him. Within this context, Emerson's simple assertion in *Essays* of his basic belief in the existence of God seems both a logical clarification for the benefit of his detractors and a reaffirmation of his determination to continue to publish the authentic character of his thoughts.

Although the acknowledgement of faith that appears in "Spiritual Laws" represents the most direct statement of this type that appears within the *Essays*, it is far from Emerson's final statement on the nature of God or His relationship with humankind. "The Over-Soul" defines God as "the cause" and man as "the effect" (*W* 2: 271-72); "Circles" confirms "that God is; that he is in me; and that all things are shadows of him" (309). Although these claims would have largely echoed mainstream Christian beliefs at the time of the production of *Essays*, Emerson's theology again initiated controversy because it continued to diverge from the prevailing Unitarianism in several significant areas. Much of this contention arose as a result of Emerson's criticism of religious institutions and his assertions of their inability to inspire genuine faith. In his study of Emerson's religious teachings, William A. Huggard identifies much of the substance within Emerson's religious philosophy that separated it from the currents of his time. For one thing, "Emerson did not offer the Bible as a pre-eminent indication that God exists" (39); for another, Emerson often depicts God in philosophical terms that do not always coincide with the manner of contemporary churches. Huggard suggests that Emerson's characterizations are actually more expansive; he observes:

> In "The Over-Soul" Emerson described God as that "great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere. . . ." In "Self-Reliance" Emerson depicted God as an

> immense intelligence "which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity." In "Nature," Emerson defined God as the Universal Being whose currents flow into the devout man and make him a part of it. It is easy to suppose that Emerson designedly used terms like *great*, *immense*, and *universal*, which should suggest a deity grander than the God which many men of the past have worshipped. (43)

Huggard's analysis of Emerson's perception of God as *more* than what was being taught by religious institutions during the 1830s and 1840s hits straight on target: throughout his works beginning with *Nature*, Emerson portrays God as a spiritual force *greater* than the God of mainstream Christianity. Far from seeking to abandon his Christian heritage, Emerson instead sought to make faith even more accessible to individuals by freeing it from the constraints of history and tradition and enabling men to partake of this spiritually forceful God in very unorthodox ways. In "Spiritual Laws," he suggests, "Let a man believe in God, and not in names and places and persons" (*W* 2*:* 165). A significant amount of Emerson's philosophy concerning the ability of the individual to communicate directly with God can be discerned within his adaptation of the Quaker doctrine of the inner light.

Emerson's biographers have noted the significance of Emerson's interest in the doctrine of the inner light, which began to appear as a factor in his sermons as early as 1827 and became an integral component of his religious philosophy even before he left the church.[54] Gay Wilson Allen notes that "[b]y 1834 Emerson had become more Quaker than Unitarian" (224); Lawrence Buell records that "[w]hen asked at midlife how he would classify himself religiously, Emerson significantly replied that he felt closest to Quakerism, because of its belief in an Inner Light" (60). The Quakers shared Emerson's view of the obsolescence of the Lord’s Supper and had already abolished its observance (Allen 186-87), and Emerson perceived Quakerism as “spiritually alive, as churches in general were not.”[55] The doctrine of inner light enables a direct relationship between man and God, one that does not rely upon intermediaries such as clergymen and significantly subordinates the need to sanction individual thoughts with the corporate approval of the church. As Huggard has written, Emerson’s doctrines of the inner light and the infinitude of man “rest upon the assumption that God dwells in man” (84), a notion that carries forward from *Nature* and appears throughout the body of Emerson’s early works. Huggard elaborates that “Emerson had in mind a presence within man—a light, a voice, a self, a conscience which gives man high counsels and sheds upon him illumination, both intellectual and spiritual. This light becomes man’s most reliable guide. Especially in times of great need, when man must make difficult decisions, the inner light helps man determine what he should and must do” (85).

This conception connects easily to Emerson’s notion of the call of the moral sentiment. Although not a particularly contentious perspective in twenty-first-century terms, this belief in man’s innate ability to communicate directly with God was not common in Boston in 1841, and was certainly not Unitarian. Emerson’s corresponding belief in the ability of the individual to perceive the significance of such communication and to direct his actions accordingly express his profound faith in the integrity of the direct relationship and underscore its potential to enable the individual to realize the potential divinity within himself. As Huggard contends, “Emerson believed that the inner light can illuminate both man’s intellect and his soul” (85); this intuitive perspective thus leads directly to the realization of superior thoughts and actions by virtue of its origin within the realm of the divine. Huggard makes allowance for multiple interpretations of the precise origin of the inner light when he observes that

> the inner light's supremacy is in its divine nature. We may consider it God's instrument for educating man or, more boldly, we may think of the inner light as a part of God himself. Whether the light is an instrument of God or an actual part of God's being, it is so closely associated with divinity that its admonitions far overshadow human counsels. What counsels of fallible humanity could equal those which come from the divine, supreme Being? (85)

Emerson's conception of the inner light and its ability to illuminate the moral sentiment provides individuals with much more moral and intellectual power than contemporary clergymen were willing to grant. Although the idea that "man has access to the entire mind of the Creator" and "is himself creator in the finite" (64) reaches back to *Nature* and continually resurfaces throughout Emerson's works, these premises support the contention that Emerson's philosophy seeks to expand the conception of faith beyond the limits of traditional doctrine and to make it more accessible to the needs of the common man. However controversial the doctrine of inner light may have seemed in 1841, there can be little doubt that it at least partially enables the realization of Emerson's purposes.

Emerson argued that men deserved more credit that theologians were granting and advanced the notion that God believed the same. His conception of the infinitude of man hearkens back to *Nature,* wherein Emerson declares that "the highest spirit 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" (*W* 1: 63) and "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" (64). In "The Over-Soul," Emerson repeats this notion when he asserts:

> Let man then learn the revelation of all nature and all thought to his

> heart; this, namely; that the Highest dwells with him; that the sources of nature are in his own mind, if the sentiment of duty is there. But if he would know that the great God speaketh, he must "go into his closet and shut the door," as Jesus said. God will not make himself manifest to cowards. He must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing himself from the accents of other men's devotion. Even their prayers are hurtful to him, until he have made his own. (*W* 2: 294)

This passage confirms Emerson's belief in the direct communication between God and man and in the capacity of the individual to accurately interpret the implications of the message he receives. The allusion to Jesus and its connection to the need for solitude recalls both the condition of "the great man . . . who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude in "Self-Reliance" (54) and the depiction of Jesus as the one who "[a]lone in all history . . . estimated the greatness of man" and "saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his World" in the "Divinity School Address" (128). Throughout the *Essays*, Emerson alludes to man's potential to aspire to divinity by virtue of his relationship with God. Although the individual may elect to refuse God's invitation,[56] it is available for the asking, and if he chooses to pursue a higher moral path, he will bring himself closer to God. Emerson's philosophies assure his reader that each mind possesses the innate capacity to perceive a higher purpose and the moral integrity to act in an appropriate manner to actualize God's intentions.

Despite the optimistic rhetoric and expansive religious implications of *Essays, First Series*, it, like the "Divinity School Address," was not always particularly well received. Emerson's biographers have observed the disparity between the reactions of those of his contemporaries who shared his Transcendentalist tendencies and those who allied themselves more closely with Boston's Unitarian majority. Although, as Lawrence Buell has noted, Emerson's works produced between 1836 and 1844 "set the terms for his public image as a provocative freethinker, the intellectual leader of the Transcendentalists" (31), many of Emerson's American supporters "hailed them with joy, but more privately than publicly" (Allen 379). Largely as a result of Thomas Carlyle's enthusiastic preface, *Essays, First Series* generated a generally positive response in Great Britain, where "[t]he *inspirational* value of the *Essays* quickly won a large audience" (380), and in other European venues.[57] But the response among Emerson's former theological colleagues and even within his own family was often less than enthusiastic.

Many of Emerson's New England neighbors were apparently still not ready to hear what he had to say. Gay Wilson Allen has argued that "[c]ritical reception of Emerson's *Essays* divided along ideological—or perhaps more accurately, theological—lines. Calvinists detested them, as they also did Spinoza, whom they regarded as an atheist" (379). Allen adds:

> A critic in *The Princeton Review* (October 1841), defender of Calvinist orthodoxy, thought such essays could be written as rapidly as a man could move his pen, apparently without thinking at all. In the Unitarian *Christian Examiner* (May 1841), a moderately liberal but Harvard-dominated publication, Cornelius Felton, professor of classics, admired the dazzling prose but found the thought often extravagant and resurrecting "ancient errors" which the author had mistaken for truth. He strongly objected to Emerson's doctrine of obeying his instinctual impulses, which Felton said would destroy society and reduce civilization to chaos. (379)

Although negative reactions within the theological community may seem somewhat predictable, objections to Emerson's religious philosophies were also raised closer to home. Ralph L. Rusk reports that

> [a]fter reading "Self-Reliance," [Emerson's] Aunt Mary. . . . wanted to know whether "this strange medley of atheism and false independence" was "the real sane work of that man whom I idolized as a boy, so mild, candid modest obliging." If her brother William had only lived, she was sure, his son would have never committed these offenses against Christian decency. She regretted that Waldo Emerson "had not gone to his tomb admidst his early honors' instead of living on to be disgraced by his *Essays*." (284)

Perhaps the most telling reaction to Emerson's emerging philosophy is that of his wife, Lidian. As Mary Kupiec Cayton records,

> Ellen Tucker Emerson, the Emersons' elder daughter, recounts that according to her mother, for five years the Emersons "were getting more & more married all the time. They were as happy as it was possible to be." Apparently what cut short this initial period of their marriage—at least for Lidian—was a sudden bitter realization sometime during 1840 and 1841 that her religious views differed substantially from those of her husband. She had "always felt as if Father's & her religious views were the same," she told her daughter; in fact, upon first hearing Emerson speak, she had taken the similarity in their spiritual thinking to be a portent of sorts. Now she decided that she had become "unconsciously warped" by him, and she no longer believed he was a Christian, at least "not a Christian in her sense of the word." The realization pained her. (196)[58]

Lidian Emerson’s concerns regarding the Christian character of Emerson’s faith reveal the essence of the criticism surrounding religious views that Emerson expresses in the *Essays*. Despite the minority perspective of the forward-thinking Transcendentalists, Emerson’s philosophies continued to diverge significantly from those of Boston’s Unitarian community, a body of which he had himself once been an active participant and one that continued to exert considerable influence upon many of those he was closest to. But a key element of the controversy can be clarified by Lidian Emerson’s observation that her husband was “not a Christian *in her sense of the word*” [emphasis mine]. Despite the readily apparent Christian character of his writings, by 1841, Emerson *had* departed historical Christianity both in theory and in practice. But Emerson had rejected only the ”historical” component; the Christianity itself, though radically different in form, remained as a critical factor within his transformed religious philosophy. Although they may have been difficult for those who continued to adhere to mainstream beliefs to distinguish, the portions of Christianity that deal with absolute faith and God and with the ability to communicate with Him and to serve His higher purposes emerged fully and unequivocally intact. However, Emerson could not allow the reservations of others to influence his publication of his thoughts. As he had written in his Journal following the “Divinity School Address,” “’[a] believer, a mind whose faith is consciousness, is never disturbed because other persons do not yet see the fact which he sees’” (Allen 323).

The Poet and Other Representative Men

> I count him a great man who inhabits
> a higher sphere of thought, into which
> other men rise with labor and difficulty;
> he has but to open his eyes to see things
> in a true light and in large relations,
> whilst they must make painful corrections
> and keep a vigilant eye on many sources
> of error.
> -- "Uses of Great Men," 1850

In *Essays, First Series*, Emerson supplies much of the familiar "Emersonian" terminology that places his paradigm of the exemplary individual within the purview of the familiar. The abstracted conception of the faithful thinker that appears in *Nature* becomes the emphatic Thinker and Actor within "Self-Reliance," in which Emerson equates heroic potential with individual character and identifies "[e]very true man" as "a cause, a country, and an age" (*W* 2: 60-61). Although the revised labels of Thinker and Actor prove useful in conceptualizing the critical notions of thought and action apparent within the paradigm, it can also tend to limit readers' perceptions of the Actor to one who performs a visible form of activity such as advancing a military campaign, promoting a religious agenda, or pursuing a scientific discovery. Despite Emerson's efforts to formulate an emphatic abstraction that avoids identification with any particular type of vocation, many of his heroic exemplars remain associated more with a physical conception of a particular action or event than with the intellectual processes that stimulated it, the rhetorical exercises that advanced it, or the artistic productions that celebrated and recorded it. If Emerson's emphases at the beginning of the *Essays* on history and at the end on art represent "opposing sides of the same idea,"[59] then the closing essays of the work make a conspicuous move toward expanding the conception of heroic action to include the artistic as well as the physical and intellectual realms.

When he defines the “intellect receptive” and the “intellect constructive” in “Intellect,” Emerson does more than to maintain the faith-based connection between God and the moral sentiment that he carries forward from *Nature*: although thought remains “revelation” and is, therefore, “always a miracle,” the “constructive intellect produces thoughts, sentences, poems, plans, [and] designs” and consequently represents “the marriage of thought with nature” (*W* 2: 334-35). The “two gifts” of “the thought and the publication” which Emerson ascribes to genius conspire to create a “picture or sensible object” that directs this “spiritual energy . . . on something outward” and thereby makes it transmittable to other individuals beyond the initial Thinker (335-36). Emerson asserts in “Intellect” that “the active power seizes instantly on the fit image, as the word of its momentary thought” (334), but as his examples of the products of the intellect constructive make clear, the “fit image” for a particular thought may be an intellectual idea or an artistic sentence or poem rather than a physical plan of action or a visible, corporeal design. In his contention that “[o]ur spontaneous action is always the best” (328), Emerson allows for the inherent diversity of individual gifts when he acknowledges that “[e]ach mind has its own method” (330) and concludes, “We are all wise. The difference between persons is not in wisdom but in art” (333).

Both “Intellect” and “Art” allude to the potential for an individual’s heroic action to find its appropriate expression within the realm of art. In “Intellect,” Emerson observes that “[a]s all men have some access to primary truth, so all have some art or power of communication in their head, but only in the artist does it descend into the hand” (*W* 2: 336). This ability to “illustrate . . . important laws” through images, words, or facts (339) permits the visual or literary artist to serve as the heroic Actor when circumstances produce a need for his particular gift; the “conversion of all nature into the rhetoric of thought” points to the active power available to writers in general as well as to the poet, “whose verses are to be spheral and complete” and who “is one whom Nature cannot deceive” (336; 340-41). In “Art,” Emerson identifies the role of art as “to educate the perception of beauty” (354), but the work of the artist parallels that of his other heroic exemplars in its inevitable connection to the present needs of the soul. Emerson declares:

> The reference of all production at last to aboriginal Power explains the traits common to all works of the highest art,--that they are universally intelligible; that they restore to us the simplest states of mind, and are religious. Since what skill is therein shown is the reappearance of the original soul, a jet of pure light, it should produce a similar impression to that made by natural objects. (358)

Emerson’s reference to the Power and universal intelligibility of works of art as “reappearance[s] of the original soul” recalls the higher origin of individual thought that answers the call of the moral sentiment and aligns it with the common, collective purposes of the Universal One. Emerson characterizes the “jet of pure light” that symbolizes the thought itself as “religious” and echoes this connection between the moral power of thought and the universal beauty of its artistic expression throughout the pages of the essay.[60] Although he contends that “the whole extant product of the plastic arts has herein its highest value, *as history*; as a stroke drawn in the portrait of that fate, perfect and beautiful, according to whose ordinations all beings advance to their beatitude” (*W* 2: 353-54), he also maintains his longstanding emphasis on history as the unfolding of a perpetual present when he asserts that “[t]rue art is never fixed, but always flowing” (365).

Because works of art function as expressions of the soul and serve the needs of the One Mind, they represent the products of actions that originate within the thoughts of contemplative artists that are inherently moral in nature. “Art” makes provision for artists to function as heroic Actors by virtue of each individual’s decision to respond to the call of the moral sentiment with the power of his definitive actions. Like “Intellect,” which illuminates the intellectual and historical roles of literary artists, “Art” expands the implications of the actions of visual artists into the realm of heroic exemplification: Emerson asserts that “[t]he virtue of art lies in detachment, in sequestering one object from the embarrassing variety. Until one thing comes out from the connection of things, there can be enjoyment, contemplation, but no thought” (354). Although the “office of art” may be “to educate the perception of beauty” (354), its deeper value resides within its ability to illustrate the universal truths that find expression within the specific thoughts or events that characterize a particular time. The artist’s impulse to create represents a necessary and vital response to the call of the moral sentiment, and Emerson aligns the power of literary and visual artistry when he explains that “[t]his rhetoric, or power to fix the momentary eminency of an object,--so remarkable in Burke, in Byron, in Carlyle,--the painter and sculptor exhibit in color and stone” (*W* 2: 355) and finds that “each work of genius is the tyrant of the hour and concentrates attention to itself” (355). As a product of either the literary or the visual arts, the artist’s output corresponds with the need to publish individual thought for the edification and benefit of others; in terms of his own particular gifts, the artist responds to the need for action in the manner most appropriate to his natural condition. Emerson concludes that “it is the right and property of all natural objects, of all genuine talents, of all native properties whatsoever, to be for their moment the top of the world” (355).

Like any form of action that publishes individual thought, the finished work of art becomes subject to external analyses that determine whether it passes on to subsequent generations and thus transcends its original historical context. If his work survives and continues to generate acclaim, then the artist has endured, and ultimately survived, the same paradigmatic processes to which Emerson subjects all of his other exemplary heroes. Although the post-*Nature* works, including the *Essays*, frequently employ exemplars such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Copernicus, Bacon, and Newton, men generally identified in historical terms with a strong intellectual character as well as academic courage and the promotion of original thought, Emerson's Great Men have generally been associated with occupations or credentials that move them beyond the common connotations of the abstract notion of "Thinker." The reader's foreknowledge of each of these individuals' roles as a mathematician, an educator, a philosopher, or a scientist can tend to eclipse the implied connection with abstract thought and thus to assign each exemplar the explicit label of an immediately recognizable vocation. Although such identification may seem natural or even inevitable, it oversimplifies the relationship between thought and its publication and, by extension, subordinates the Thinker who initiates a thought to the Actor who relays it to others. By privileging effect over cause, the resulting imbalance distinguishes the Actor from the Thinker and distances both from the original cause conveyed within the moral sentiment.

As he completed *Essays, First Series*, Emerson must have recognized a need to clarify his belief that both intellectual activity and the publication of thoughts through heroic action contain clear artistic implications. As much as his previous works may imply the potential for publication through literary or artistic expression, "Intellect" and "Art" confirm that writers and visual artists possess the capacity, by virtue of their thoughts and the power of their work, to elevate themselves to the level of the heroic exemplar. In "Art," Emerson observes that "[a]ll great actions have been simple, and all great pictures are" (*W* 2: 362) and that "[a] great man is a new statue in every attitude and action" (365); in both cases, works of art are aligned with “greatness” by virtue of the underlying character of the individual or the action. Although “[p]ictures and sculpture are the celebrations and festivities of form” (365), their “highest charm is in the universal language they speak. A confession of moral nature, of purity, love, and hope, breathes from them all” (359).[61] Emerson’s direct equation of great actions with great pictures and the great man with the “new statue” of the implied hero extends his explicit sanction to the idea of including artistic expression within the catalogue of potentially heroic actions. The “universal language” of art derives directly from its association with the thoughts of the artist and their connection to the Universal One, and the “confession” of a work’s “moral nature” ties it back to the call of the moral or noble sentiment. Emerson believed that art remained as vital in the nineteenth century as it had been in earlier times; he argues that “[h]e has conceived meanly of the resources of man, who believes that the best age of production is past. The real value of the Iliad or the Transfiguration[62] is as signs of power; billows or ripples they are of the stream of tendency; tokens of the everlasting effort to produce, which even in its worst estate the soul betrays” (*W* 2: 362-63).

In addition to its connections to the soul and to history, the “everlasting effort to produce” serves a perpetual purpose that fulfills the needs of man as well as maintains his relationship with God. In claiming that “[t]here is a higher work for Art than the arts” (*W* 2: 363), Emerson contends, “Art is the need to create; but in its essence, immense and universal, it is impatient of working with lame or tired hands, and of making cripples and monsters, such as all pictures and statues are. Nothing less than the creation of man and nature is its end” (363). Recalling from *Nature* the notion of nature as the visible expression of God and from “The American Scholar” the “knowledge as to a becoming creator” (*W* 1: 86), this conception of artistic inspiration and its production aligns thought with creation and ties creative activity to the “immense and universal” needs of the Universal One. Emerson’s reference to the end of art as “[n]othing less than the creation of man and nature” points reflexively to the Creator, with a capital *C*, the literal embodiment of the definition he proffers and the implicit holder of the exalted position. Besides suggesting the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of the artist’s work, Emerson’s equation of art and creation extends the reach of the inspired individual into, and in some cases even beyond, the distinctive realm of the exemplary hero. By virtue of his willingness to exert his own creative power, the artistic Actor implicitly aspires to a level of divinity and thus places himself on a level that approaches God.

If “Art” successfully outlines the capacity of the artist to attain heroic stature by publishing the implications of his thoughts through his works, then “The Poet” converts the broad strokes of this initial overview into the definition of a fully articulated heroic character. Having extended the reach of exemplary action to emcompass the works of the artistic Actor, Emerson then moves to demonstrate precisely how the poet transcends his apparent calling as a “man of Beauty” (*W* 3: 4) to fulfill the higher needs of man, history, and the Universal One. Having structured the first series of *Essays* in a manner that could suggest, by their relative positions as numbers eleven and twelve of twelve, that “Intellect” and “Art” represent afterthoughts to include artists among the ranks of self-reliant individuals in human history, Emerson initiates the second series of *Essays* with the very same discussion that somewhat inconclusively concluded the first. Though they are far from anti-essays,[63] both “Intellect” and “Art,” however consistent with Emerson’s overarching purposes in the first series, fall largely within the realm of abstract consideration of both of these wide-ranging concepts and can therefore strike the attentive reader with a subtle sense of vagueness or incompletion. Despite assertions that lay the groundwork for including literary and visual artists as prospects among heroic Thinkers and Actors, *Essays, First Series* closes with little more than a hint at a suggestion of a review of the existing paradigm that would include artists among the ranks of exemplary individuals.

Emerson clarifies any ambiguity concerning the artist's ultimate potential within the pages of "The Poet." In 1844, Emerson's poet is a full-blown exemplary hero, complete with all of the virtuous characteristics of his earlier Great Men as well as an enhanced sense of purpose and an expanded historical role. The artistic beauty that Emerson repeatedly insists "[p]roceed[s] from a religious heart" (*W* 2: 368) in "Art" connects to the earlier notion of the religious sentiment, which, as Emerson first contended in *Nature*, is both "divine and deifying" (*W* 1: 125). In "The Poet" more than in any of his other works to this point, Emerson endows his exemplary hero with a definitive transcendent power that links him both to man and to God by virtue of the gift of his creative potential. Although John S. Mann's conception of "Emerson's rhapsodic insistence on the poet as a culture-hero and savior rivaling Christ" (472) seems a bit overstated in terms of Emerson's actual posture in the essay, the poet clearly emerges on a level with any of Emerson's previous exemplars in terms of his contributions to man, and he appears even closer to approaching a level of divinity through his relationships with truth and with God.

Emerson subjects the poet to the same paradigmatic processes that characterize all of his heroic exemplars. Responding to the needs of the One Mind, the poet receives his call from nature and then considers the appropriate response to its implications. According to Emerson, the poet "stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth" (*W* 3: 5); as one of the "children of the fire," the poet represents one of "the highest minds of the world," that include "Orpheus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Plato, Plutarch, Dante, Swedenborg, and the masters of sculpture, picture and poetry," artists who "have never ceased to explore the double meaning, or . . . the quadruple or the centuple or much more manifold meaning, of every sensuous fact" (*W* 3*:* 4). In "The Poet," Emerson labels the catalyst of the divine spirit "Imagination," which he then defines as "a very high sort of seeing, which does not come by study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees" (26). Corresponding directly with his earlier notion of the call of the moral sentiment, Imagination functions as the artist's catalyst or inspiration, but as Emerson takes care to emphasize, thought plays a pivotal role in determining the form of its final expression. Contending that "[t]he thought and the form are equal in the order of time, but in the order of genesis the thought is prior to the form" (10), Emerson allies artistic production with creative energy and both compresses and distinguishes thought from action within the constraints of linear time. Even as "[t]he poet has a new thought; he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune" (10), Emerson asserts that "poetry was all written before time was" (8) and thus concurrently situates the poet within, and wrenches him out of, the context of a particular time. He also permits thought and action to at least partially occupy the same philosophical space for the first time in the course of the evolution of the heroic paradigm.

Even as Emerson allows the provinces of thought and action to overlap, he stresses the potential for many layers within the artist's process of thought. His reference to the poet's exploration of multiple meanings suggests a protracted period of intellectual consideration within the phase the artist devotes to thought, one that can appear contrary to the corresponding notion of the compression of thought and action suggested in the equality of thought and form within the specified order of time. But in "The Poet," Emerson begins a subtle shift in the paradigm of the heroic exemplar that acknowledges more complex relationships between the individual elements of the model than he had previously distinguished. The discrete steps of thought and action that characterize unique events in the lives of military leaders, theologians, philosophers, and scientists must be adjusted to accommodate the multidimensional aspects of humanity, truth, and time that the artist inevitably encounters in his work. Although transhistorical components exist within the narratives of Emerson's earlier heroic exemplars, these factors generally represent effects of the completed heroic process rather than actual causes that stimulate events. Unlike those for whom analysis of the significance of action commences only after the action itself has been completed, the poet encounters both this requirement and the need to examine layers of implication within the consideration stage of thought, before the action of artistic production has even been undertaken.

Emerson defines the poet's principal role as "interpreter"; although "[t]here is no man who does not anticipate a supersensual utility in the sun and stars, earth and water" (*W* 3: 5), "the great majority of men seem to be minors, who have not yet come into possession of their own, who cannot report the conversation they have had with nature" (5). Emerson explains that "[t]he poet is the person in whom these powers are in balance, the man without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart" (6). Because "[t]hought makes everything fit for use" (*W* 3: 17) and the "office" of the poet is "announcement" (13), the artist must receive inspiration from nature, interpret the higher truths he discerns within it, and then impart or "articulate" (20) these "impulses of moral nature" (35) for the edification of other men. As with all of Emerson's exemplary heroes, the "necessity to be published" (5) commences within the phase of thought and concludes within the purview of action; in the case of the poet, however, such distinctions frequently blur as he converts the inspiration he receives from Imagination to the form of the message he ultimately imparts.

Before 1841, "publication" for Emerson's exemplary heroes generally meant a non-literal movement from thought to action such as concluding a military conquest, founding a system of belief, exhibiting extraordinary courage in the course of a conflict, or advancing a noble or revolutionary objective. Although "Intellect" and "Art" set the stage for demonstrating heroism in situations that reach beyond these transparent definitions of "action," "The Poet" confirms the calling of the exemplary artist and acknowledges the universe's need for the unique contribution of his gift. For the poet, the publication of thought through definitive action becomes literal literary publication; in 1844, Emerson was ready to state unequivocally that "[w]ords and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words" (8). Although Emerson's earlier use of exemplars such as Homer and Pindar in *Nature*; Milton, Goethe, and Byron in "The Philosophy of History"; Cicero, Locke, and Bacon in "The American Scholar"; and Shakespeare and Dante in *Essays, First Series* indicates that he had equated artistic production with action from the beginning of his literary career, he also apparently perceived that his implicit acknowledgments of the heroic character of the artist may have been understated or overlooked among the many types of actors his illustrations tended to employ. The deliberate restatement of the notion of "words and deeds" as "indifferent modes of the divine energy" in the declarations that "[w]ords are also actions" and "actions are a kind of words" suggests the centrality of this concept to Emerson's argument as well as his desire to clarify his contention that the distinction itself exists within his definition of heroic action.

The Thinker and Actor that Emerson identified in “Self-Reliance” becomes the Knower, Doer, and Sayer of “The Poet”; recognizing the inability of his original term to express the inherent complexities of heroic thought and action, Emerson expands his identifying labels from a two- to a three-part model and supplies several additional layers of corresponding and correlating contexts. As he explains:

> the universe has three children, born at one time, which reappear under different names in every system of thought, whether they be called cause, operation and effect; or, more poetically, Jove, Pluto, Neptune; or, theologically, the Father, the Spirit and the Son; but which we will call here the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer. These stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty. These three are equal. Each is that which he is, essentially, so that he cannot be surmounted or analyzed, and each of these three has the power of the others latent in him and his own, patent. (*W* 3: 6-7)

The explicit connection Emerson makes between “every system of thought” and his wide-ranging trinitarian relationships creates a direct relationship between various types of ideas and actions that occur within the scientific, mythological, theological, and artistic arenas: stressing the innate equality of each aspect of the three-part structure as well as the overlapping nature of its components, Emerson associates the Knower with truth, the Doer with the love of good, and the Sayer with the love of beauty. Although all three elements of truth, virtue, and beauty occur regularly within Emerson’s depictions of the heroic individual from *Nature* forward and continue to serve his purposes in terms of the hero’s motivation, the earlier labels of the faithful thinker and the Thinker and Actor tend to overcompress the action component of the paradigm and to oversimplify the range of potential modes of publication available to the heroic actor. Emerson's reconsideration of the nature of thought and action within "The Poet" clarifies that the possibilities of the exemplary individual extend beyond the purview of Knowing and Doing into the distinctive realm of the Sayer.

Emerson's poet occupies a position of unique privilege within this revised conception of heroic action. He asserts that

> The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre. For the world is not painted or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe. Therefore the poet is not any permissive potentate, but is emperor in his own right. Criticism is infested with a cant of materialism, which assumes that manual skill and activity is the first merit of all men, and disparages such as say and do not, overlooking the fact that some men, namely poets, are natural sayers, sent into the world to the end of expression, and confounds them with those whose province is action but who quit it to imitate the sayers. But Homer's words are as costly and admirable to Homer as Agamemnon's victories are to Agamemnon. The poet does not wait for the hero or the sage, but, as they act and think primarily, so he writes primarily what will and must be spoken, reckoning the others, though primaries also, yet, in respect to him, secondaries and servants; as sitters or models in the studio of a painter, or as assistants who bring building-materials to an architect. (*W* 3: 7-8)

Although the passage maintains much of Emerson's argument in *Nature* concerning the roles of creation and beauty in the universe, it also refines distinctions between positive modes of action and crystallizes the position of the sayer within the paradigm of the heroic exemplar. Emerson designates the poet a “sovereign” and situates him “on the center,” a movement that parallels *Nature*’s location of the “moral law,” which “lies at the center of nature and radiates to the circumference” (*W* 1: 41-42). In “The Poet,” he acknowledges both God the Creator and Beauty the creator and establishes their conjunction within the notion of the beauty the poet represents. As a part of the larger Creation, the world “is from the beginning beautiful,” and God “has not made some beautiful things” but has created beauty itself. Emerson’s emphatic Beauty is also a creator, and the poet himself personifies the conception of “the creator in the finite” that Emerson first defines in *Nature* (64). Although God retains his unique hold upon the wider Creation in the context of “The Poet,” Emerson also invests the poet with the ability to respond to the catalyst of inspiration and the corresponding power of creation “in the finite.” Like the faithful thinker of *Nature*, who is “resolute to detach every object from personal relations and set it into the light of thought” (74), the “sovereign” poet initiates an original interpretation of the world by virtue of his artistic production and thus enables “God [to] go forth anew into the creation” (74).

Emerson’s celebration of the poet’s creative potential recalls his definition of “the active soul” in “The American Scholar” and the correlation between Man Thinking and the capacity of the creative individual to aspire to a level that more closely approaches God. Although the active soul represents something “every man is entitled to” and “every man contains within him,” very few possess the creative quality characteristic of artistic expression; in the case of “almost all men,” the active soul remains “obstructed and as yet unborn” (*W* 1: 90). The poet, however, exists to “apprise us . . . of the common wealth” (*W* 3*:* 5); Emerson asserts that “[t]he soul active seeks absolute truth and utters truth, or creates” (90). The poet’s purview, by definition, lies in his distinctive gift of receiving and imparting this beauty. Much like Man Thinking in “The American Scholar,” the poet perceives truth and then converts the flame of his knowledge to intellectual power and the corresponding ability to create for himself; Emerson contends that “man hopes,” but “genius creates” (*W* 1: 90). Throughout his works, Emerson links individual genius to the act of creation and then creation to the power of the Deity; by virtue of his power to create, the poet occupies a position above that of ordinary men and thus resides closer to a level with God. In “The American Scholar,” Emerson observes that “[w]hatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux of the Deity is not his;--cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame” (90). In “The Poet,” the artistic individual becomes the “sayer,” the “namer,” the “emperor,” and the “sovereign,” each label symbolically associated with a higher office or calling and a more exalted position or purpose.

One of the clearest illustrations of Emerson’s desire to distinguish between positive modes of potentially heroic action can be found within the passage’s separation of the Sayer from the Doer within the “province” of individual action. Establishing to a division similar to that between “Materialists” and “Idealists” in “The Transcendentalist,”[64] Emerson differentiates the “manual skill and activity” frequently assumed to represent “the first merit of all men” within a capitalistic society from the “natural sayers” who are “sent into the world to the end of expression” (7). Although he acknowledges that materialism “disparages such as say and do not” and thus tends to belittle or degrade the idealistic leanings of the poet, Emerson also implies a higher function of saying when he alludes to “those whose province is action but who quit it to imitate the sayers” (7). Any potential perspective that might suggest an attempt to discount the contributions of either the Sayer or the Doer is dispelled by Emerson’s inclusion of the examples of Homer and Agamemnon to illustrate the implications of his distinction. As an heroic actor whose “manual skill and activity” led to the “victories” of the Greeks in the Trojan War, Agamemnon embodies the Doer in the form of a traditional military hero derived from the pages of classical literature. Similarly, Homer serves in the alternative “end” of the Sayer and makes his own contribution by receiving inspiration from the events in which Agamemnon participates and then imparting his artistic impressions of these occurrences in the form of original poetry.

Emerson emphasizes that the Doer and the Sayer serve equally compelling purposes in terms of relating both the substance and the spirit which characterize the performance of heroic events. Although Agamemnon’s actions easily define him as an exemplary hero worthy of celebration, emulation, and respect, events such as his military victories are likely to remain unrecognized beyond the battlefield without the timely intervention of the Sayer. Emerson’s paradigm of the heroic exemplar necessitates an initial acknowledgment of heroic action on the part of an individual’s contemporaries at the time such action occurs; the actual witnesses to Agamemnon’s victories must first deem his actions worthy of transmission before they can pass into the historical record. Although individual recollections often differ and many details can be lost in translation, the Sayer can assemble heroic events into a coherent form that communicates them more effectively and thus survives the limitations of memories that inevitably fade across the course of time. The work of the Sayer both preserves the heroic event within the context of its historical moment and suggests its wider implications with respect to the evolving human condition; as an heroic exemplar, Agamemnon serves both the present needs of the Greek army as a military leader and the artist’s needs for a representative of man’s ability to persevere in the face of challenge and to triumph in battle with one’s enemies. The former role resides with the Doer Agamemnon, but the latter belongs exclusively to the Sayer, in this case, the poet Homer.

Emerson refers to the heroic potential of both the Doer and the Sayer when he asserts that "Homer's words are as costly and admirable to Homer as Agamemnon's victories are to Agamemnon" (7). In addition to achieving a symbolic balance between doing and saying with respect to their relative functions, the passage points to the "costs" associated with heroic action on the part of both types of exemplary heroes. Like Agamemnon, for whom the price of victory included the wrath of Artemis, the loss of Mycenae, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, and his martyrdom at the hand of Clytemnestra, Homer also endured a series of trials that threatened to forestall the production of his art and tested the strength of his commitment to his artistic purpose. In addition to the blindness that restricted his expression to the medium of the spoken word, Homer encountered the external resistance that all of Emerson's heroes experience when following the implications of their thoughts through to their final completion. As Emerson observes, the poet "is isolated among his contemporaries by truth and by his art" (*W* 3: 5); despite Emerson's assurance that the poet may be consoled with the knowledge that his efforts "will draw all men sooner or later" (5), the poet must accept that "[t]he conditions are hard, but equal," and that he must "leave the world, and know the muse only" (41). Emerson concludes by reminding the poet that "[t]he world is full of renunciations and apprenticeships, and this is thine; thou must pass for a fool and a churl for a long season" (41).

Although the path for the poet, as for all of Emerson's heroes, remains strewn with obstacles that endeavor to check his determination and progress, he must ultimately maintain his focus on his virtuous inspiration and the greater benefit to be derived from his publication of a noble purpose. Emerson encourages the poet's cause when he argues:

> Doubt not, O poet, but persist. Say "It is in me, and shall out." Stand there, balked and dumb, stuttering and stammering, hissed and hooted, stand and strive, until at last rage draw out of thee that *dream*-power which every night shows thee in thine own; a power transcending all limit and privacy, and by virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity. Nothing walks or creeps, or grows, or exists, which must not in turn arise and walk before him as exponent of his meaning. Comes he to that power, his genius is no longer exhaustible. (*W* 3: 40)

Emerson's assertion, which conveys a hint of divine pronouncement with its touch of King James English, dismisses the imposition of external resistance with its introduction of the notion of transcendent power that emanates from the poet himself: having recognized the potential of this "*dream*-power," he becomes free to use it both to realize his artistic ends and to promote the higher purposes which communicate themselves as inspiration. The poet's persistence releases power that renders the creative energy of his genius inexhaustible; like "[t]he poet, the orator, bred in the woods," in *Nature* (*W* 1: 31), for whom "solemn things shall reappear in their morning luster, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which the passing events shall awaken" (31), he functions within the doctrine of Use as a commodity that can be used and reused as the evolution of circumstances dictates. As a renewable resource, the poet personifies Emerson's contention in *Nature* that "[a]ll good is eternally reproductive. The beauty of nature re-forms itself in the mind, not for barren contemplation, but for new creation" (23). As the course of events continuously offers new opportunities to perceive the call of the moral sentiment, the universe produces potentially heroic actors willing and able to respond to the calls that they hear. In "The Poet," Emerson leaves no doubt regarding the need for both Doers and

Sayers in fulfilling the perpetual requirements of the Universal One.

Despite the passage of Emerson's exemplary hero into the chronicles of the historical record and his subsequent survival within the artistic arena, the Doer himself remains connected to his historical moment and can transcend the barrier of time only as accounts of his actions are conveyed to others within the context of subsequent communication. Time restricts the heroic Doer to his own time and that which ultimately follows, whereas the Sayer occupies an area that reaches further into the realm of what Kathleen Mackin classifies as the "prophet[ic] or visionary," the place of the poet both "in and before his time" (58). In her analysis of the prophetic charge of the poet in Emerson, Whitman, and Jeffers, Mackin refers to the passage in "The Poet" wherein Emerson contends that "poetry was written before time was . . . The sign and credentials of the poet are that he announces that which no man foretold. He is the true and only doctor; he knows and tells; he is the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes" (*W* 3: 8) and concludes that Emerson renders the poet "simultaneously contemporaneous with that 'which he describes' *and* subsequent to it (since 'poetry was all written before time was')" (61). Although the Sayer remains fundamentally equal to the Doer in terms of the heroic implications of his actions, the Sayer eclipses the abilities of the Doer in this implication of the temporal transcendence of prophecy. Emerson therefore enables the poet to serve both as a representative of his own time and of the spirit of humanity that expresses itself across the temporal barriers of history.

Emerson understood the need of the poet to stand as a product of his particular place in time; his use of the examples of Homer and Agamemnon highlights the connection of the Doer and the Sayer to their historical context of ancient Greece in terms of knowing, doing, and saying. The thoughts that lead to and maintain the war are Greek; the actors who initiate, perpetuate, and conclude it are Greek; and the poet who celebrates and records the events for posterity is Greek. In “Self-Reliance,” Emerson identifies the “true man” as “a cause, a country, and an age” (*W* 2: 61); in “The Poet,” he notes that the poet must effectively represent each of these components in order to accurately translate events for others. According to Emerson, the poet is “the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes” (*W* 3: 8); although the blind Homer could not have observed the Trojan War firsthand, he was nevertheless “present and privy” to its “appearance” by virtue of his contemporaneity with the actual participants. Because these actions occurred within the context of an ancient culture characterized by many values and assumptions that have long since passed out of use, only a poet who shared the same values can fully appreciate, and therefore accurately transmit, the entire significance of historical events. Both the Doer and the Sayer remain tied to their cause, country, and age; Emerson acknowledges this connection when he maintains that “the experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poet” (10).

Although the poet remains inevitably linked to his time, the substance of his art ultimately transcends it; Emerson distinguishes between the mortality of the poet and the immortality of his production when he asserts:

> When the soul of the poet has come to ripeness of thought, she detaches and sends away from it its poems or songs,--a fearless, sleepless, deathless progeny, which is not exposed to the accidents of the weary kingdom of time; a fearless, vivacious offspring, clad with wings (such was the virtue out of which they came) which carry them fast and far, and infix them irrecoverably into the hearts of men. These wings are the beauty of the poet’s

> soul. The songs, thus flying immortal from their mortal parent, are pursued by clamorous flights of censures, which swarm in far greater numbers and threaten to devour them; but these last are not winged. At the end of a very short leap they fall plump down and rot, having received from the souls out of which they came no beautiful wings. But the melodies of the poet ascend and leap and pierce into the deeps of infinite time. (*W* 3: 23-24)

The "poems or songs" that fly "immortal from their mortal parent" are carried by the "wings" of the poet's soul, which reflect "the beauty" of that soul and the virtue that inspired it. These "songs" of the Sayer parallel the heroic acts of the Doer in their connection to the virtuous call of the noble sentiment: having received his inspiration from nature, the songs emerge "when the soul of the poet has come to ripeness of thought," or when he is ready to act upon the implications of his thoughts through the medium his art. In contrast to their "mortal parent," the poet's "melodies . . . ascend and leap and pierce into the depths of infinite time"; Emerson distinguishes between the temporality of the poet himself and his "fearless, sleepless, deathless progeny" in grandiose terms that emphasize the transcendent nature of the fruits of artistic production. Even as the poet himself remains finite and thus tied to his historical moment, his "fearless, vivacious offspring" are "clad with wings" that enable the songs themselves to be "carr[ied] fast and far" across the boundaries of linear time. Emerson makes clear that only the poems that emerge from the "beauty of the poet's soul" possess the virtue of "beautiful wings"; lesser productions that lack genuine virtue "fall plump down and rot" and therefore do not "infix them[selves] irrecoverably into the hearts of men." The contrast between songs with wings and those without directly corresponds with Emerson's distinction earlier in the essay between the "lyrist" and the "poet," or between the "contemporary" and the "eternal" man.[65]

Emerson juxtaposes the “infinite” character of the songs the poet produces to his notion of the poet as a “creator in the finite,” a conception he carries forward from *Nature*. In his earlier work, Emerson had queried, “Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man?” and elaborated,

> 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,”[66]
>
> carries upon its face the highest certificate of truth, because it animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul. (*W* 1: 64)

Like any potentially heroic individual who opens his soul to the possibilities of thought and thus “has access to the entire mind of the Creator,” the poet, whose mode of action is also creation, elevates himself by virtue of his creative power and thus brings himself closer to residing on a level with God. Emerson acknowledges in “The Poet” that “that thought which agitated [the poet] is expressed, but *alter idem*, in a manner totally new” (*W* 3: 24). The poet’s role as a creator remains, as it did in *Nature*, allied with the purview of the Creator, and the “golden key” of virtue “opes the palace of eternity” for the poet through the immortal nature of his winged songs. *Nature*’s notion of the ability of the individual to create his own world is echoed in the conception of *ascension* in “The Poet”; Emerson observes that “nature has a higher end, in the production of new individuals, than security, namely *ascension*, or the passage of the soul into higher forms” (24). Although the poet’s songs represent at least one mode of expressing of such “passage . . . into higher forms,” the immortal aspect of the poet’s work also suggests a corresponding ascension or elevation of the poet himself. Through his direct connection with his own artistic output, the poet himself symbolically transcends the barriers of time along with the songs he produces. Although physically removed, the creator remains in the minds of the men his work inspires and thus achieves a form of the same immortality associated with that of the Creator.

In “The Poet,” Emerson’s exemplary hero touches upon immortality and thus moves even closer to the potential divinity he first alluded to in *Nature*. But the poet who could represent the cause, the country, and the age that Emerson specified in “Self-Reliance” was not yet, in his view, forthcoming: having fully articulated a complete list of the artist’s gifts and attributes, Emerson abruptly announces, “I look in vain for the poet whom I describe” (*W* 3: 37). The exemplary artists of “The Poet,” which include Homer, Plutarch, Shakespeare, Spenser, Orpheus, Chaucer, Proclus, Aesop, Swedenborg, Dante, Pythagoras, and Milton, significantly precede Emerson in time, generally by many centuries. Even “the rich poets . . . Homer, Chaucer, Shakspeare, and Raphael,” who “have obviously no limits to their works except the limits of their lifetime” (40-41), reach back more a century at the least, and all, significantly, are European. Despite his contention that “America is a poem in our eyes” (38), Emerson remained unable to identify a poet who could represent the expansive possibilities that characterized his own antebellum America. William M. Moss has identified Jones Very, Henry David Thoreau, William Ellery Channing II, Christopher Pearse Cranch, and Charles King Newcomb as writers in whom Emerson perceived potential between 1838 and 1842, and although “[e]ach inspired Emerson to enthusiasm,” they also “later brought disappointment” because “the bud never flower[ed] as its discoverer had hoped” (47, 57). Although Mutlu

Konuk Blasing asserts that “Emerson does not really want his poet to appear; he only wants to propose him in order to desire him” (13), there is little reason to believe that Emerson’s statements concerning the absence of a representative American poet are either misleading or not authentic. In fact, “The Poet” makes clear Emerson’s desire for both a representative *and* an American. As the decade of the 1840s progressed, he would find his attention increasingly directed toward both of these critical concepts.

The second series of *Essays* was released at the conclusion of a period that signaled significant changes in the course of Emerson’s life and career on several different fronts. His eldest son, Waldo, had died in January of 1842, and Emerson spent much of the period between 1842 and 1844 as both an editor and contributor for *The Dial*. He continued to travel and to deliver his lectures, and as Richard Lee Francis has pointed out, “The Poet,” “[l]ike most of Emerson’s truly significant essays . . . was slow in developing” (94). Although Mark Patterson echoes a common conception when he contends that both *Essays, Second Series* and *Representative Men* “[revise] Emerson’s earlier ideas and [extend] their claims” (230-31), such a conclusion too readily dismisses Emerson’s artistic achievement in “The Poet.” As Francis has observed, “it is the poet who represents the final realization of Emerson’s vocational quest, the fullest embodiment of all the previous roles of naturalist, moralist, and scholar” (94); it is also the poet who possesses the power of original creation and thus exists, more than any other exemplary hero, on a level that approximates God. As the first of the men Emerson defines as “representative,” the poet embodies his concept of the individual who “turns the world to glass, and shows us all things in their right series and procession” (*W* 3: 20).

This notion of individuals as “representative” carries forward into *Representative Men*, which was published on January 1, 1850, although

Emerson had previously delivered lectures on Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Napoleon in both Boston and London as early as the fall of 1845.[67] Despite the apparent agreement of critics that *Representative Men* constitutes Emerson's response to Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, there is no definitive consensus regarding the final character of that response or of the extent to which Emerson was answering to Carlyle with his choice of particular exemplars. Matthiessen asserts that "Carlyle's book was more than a stimulus; it provided the assumptions against which Emerson made a quiet but fundamental counterstatement," and he concludes that Emerson, objecting to Carlyle's approach on both religious and social grounds, "grew to realize the drastic importance of Carlyle's defect" (631-32); Rusk maintains that "Emerson must have consciously rebelled against Carlyle's less democratic view of great men in the lectures *On Heroes*" (374-75) as he labored with his own production. Regardless of the specific character of Emerson's response to Carlyle or its connection to the developing notion of democracy,[68] there can be little doubt that Emerson was responding to the heroic characters in *On Heroes* as he produced *Representative Men*. As Perry Miller has proposed and Lawrence Buell has seconded, the term "'[r]epresentative' was carefully chosen over against the Carylylean 'hero' in order to make the 'democratic' point that 'the genius is great not because he surpasses but because he represents his constituency'" (Buell 82).[69] Perhaps the most convincing argument that seeks to identify Emerson's approach can be found in Buell's conclusion that for Emerson, "Representative men are not authority figures but images of human potential" (82).

Although certain assumptions can be deduced with regard to specific distinctions between the works of Emerson and Carlyle, not all critics are in agreement over the nature of these differences or even Emerson's use of certain key terms that signal his departure. In his study of “Emerson’s Theory of Human Greatness,” John O. McCormick summarizes Carylyle’s definition of great men as follows:

> “Universal History,” Carlyle says, “. . . is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, the great ones; the modelers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain. . . .” The great man is at all times related to other men by means of “divine revelation”; but here the intervention of the Deity ceases; for the hero is outside and beyond conventional morality. The hero is superior to his time, the saviour of his epoch. He is at once created by his time and determines the direction of his time; he is “the lightning without which the fuel would never have burnt; the History of the World . . . was the Biography of Great Men” (304-05).[70]

McCormick finds that “[f]or Carlyle, as for Emerson, history is the study of facts, facts as seen in the lives of great men” (305). But the very meaning of the designation *great men* varies with individual interpretation; according to McCormick, “for Emerson the terms “genius,” “hero,” “great man,” and “greatness” are synonyms” (297). Conversely, Patterson’s analysis of Emerson’s concept of the representative identifies critical equation of the representative and great man as a common mistake and contends that “the representative man is such because he can be put to use as an agent rather than exist as an autonomous model man” (233-34). Such interpretive differences point to the wide range of possibilities that present themselves even in establishing a workable definition of *representative* and the corresponding difficulty of characterizing Emerson’s treatment of historical figures in the essays; however, general conclusions can be drawn that enable the scholar to consider the significance of Emerson’s representation within the context of *Representative Men*.

Perhaps the most compelling argument in favor of distinguishing the representative from the great man derives from Emerson himself. Although he called his introductory essay “The Uses of Great Men,” Emerson nevertheless chose *Representative Men* for the title of the collective work. Such a distinction suggests that Emerson could have perceived a difference between the “great” and the “representative” and incorporated this subtlety into the substance of his work. But one of Emerson’s biographers, Ralph L. Rusk, offers an interpretation that reconciles any apparent contradiction between these two elements of the work; Rusk observes that “[a]t the outset Emerson made it clear that he was attempting to institute no cult of heroes but was using great men simply as convenient representatives of things and ideas” (374). Rusk’s thesis can be supported by the evidence of Emerson’s use of subtitles, which identify Plato as “The Philosopher,” Swedenborg as “The Mystic,” and Shakespeare as “The Poet.” Although Emerson’s didactic purposes within the work remain multiple and various, Rusk’s separation of great men and the representative into the discrete categories of means and end effectively simplifies the matter of definition and provides a logical framework from which to commence a meaningful study of the essays.

Emerson provides ample definition of the attributes of great men in his essay concerning their “Uses.” Contending that “Nature seems to exist for the excellent” and that “[t]he search after the great men is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood” (*W* 4: 3), he asserts that “[o]ther men are lenses through which we read our own minds” (5), and that “[e]ach man seeks those of different quality from his own, and such as are good of their kind” (5).

Extending this search into the spiritual realm, he argues that

> our religion is the love and cherishing of these patrons. The gods of fable are the shining moments of great men. We run all our vessels into one mould. Our colossal theologies of Judaism, Christism, Buddhism, Mahotmetism, and the necessary and structural action of the human mind. The student of history is like a man going into a warehouse to buy cloths or carpets. He fancies he has a new article. If he go to the factory, he shall find that his new stuff still repeats the scrolls and rosettes which are found on the interior walls of the pyramids of Thebes. Our theism is the purification of the human mind. Man can paint, or make, or think, nothing but man. He believes that the great material elements had their origin from his thought. And our philosophy finds one essence collected or distributed. (*W* 4: 4-5)

In this passage, Emerson aligns theology with the philosophy of the One Mind and emphasizes the timelessness of man's appreciation for human greatness. Although the individual's entry into the historical "warehouse" is original and unique, the "factory" remains common to all, and the "new stuff" each person encounters in his search bears the collective imprint of centuries of human thought. Emerson underscores the desirability of the search for the exceptional by pointing to the prevalence of examples of higher achievement in both mythology and theology and by spreading the area of the quest for great men across history and into the ancient world. He also establishes the first of several direct connections between the representative individual and the thoughts of a particular age.

Like all of Emerson's exemplars, the great man emerges within the context of a particular place and time. Emerson observes that "the great are near; we know them at sight" (7), but he also stresses that the great man must participate with others in the experiences of a particular moment; a person of character "must be related to us, and our life receive from him some promise of explanation" (6). As with all of Emerson's heroic personages, the great man is distinguished by his ability to receive the moral sentiment from nature and to convert it to a higher purpose through the power of his unique thoughts; Emerson elaborates:

> I count him a great man who inhabits a higher sphere of thought, into which other men rise with difficulty; he has but to open his eyes to see things in a true light and in large relations, whilst they must make painful corrections and keep a vigilant eye on many sources of error. His service to us is of like sort. It costs a beautiful person no exertion to paint her image on our eyes; yet how splendid is that benefit! It costs no more for a wise soul to convey his quality to other men. And every one can do his best thing easiest. *"Peu de moyens, beaucoup d'effet."* He is great who is what he is from nature, and who never reminds us of others. (*W* 4: 6)

The passage perpetuates the idea of the contribution of individual gifts to the cause of the Universal One Emerson detailed in "Intellect" and "Art": the "higher sphere of thought" that the great man inhabits derives from his innate ability to perceive inspiration directly from nature and to interpret its meaning for others.[71] Metaphors of vision allude to the power of the great man's perception: "he has but to open his eyes to see things in a true light and in large relations," and like the artist or the poet, "he paint[s] her image on our eyes." The great man is "a wise soul" whose "service" produces a "splendid . . . benefit"; like the artist or the poet, he combines the "two gifts" of "the thought and the publication" of genius to create a "picture or sensible object" that directs "spiritual energy . . . on something outward" ("Intellect," *W* 2: 335-36). As with all of Emerson's exemplary persons beginning with those in *Nature*, the great man is a unique individual who enjoys an original relation to the universe and who responds to the implications of the call of the moral sentiment with the strength of his definitive actions.

The notion of the moral sentiment appears regularly throughout the pages of *Representative Men*. Emerson asserts in "Uses of Great Men" that "all mental and moral force is a positive good" (*W* 4: 13), and he reasserts some version of this same idea within each subsequent essay, albeit far more obliquely in those of Napoleon and Goethe. Plato achieved a "balanced soul" because, "[i]f he loved abstract truth, he saved himself by propounding the most popular of all principles, the absolute good" (55). In "Swedenborg; or, the Mystic," Emerson identifies "[t]he atmosphere of moral sentiment" as "a region of grandeur which reduces all material magnificence to toys, yet opens to every wretch that has reason the doors to the universe" (94). Shakespeare "is like some saint" (210), and in "Montaigne; or, the Skeptic," Emerson argues that [t]he final solution in which skepticism is lost, is in the moral sentiment, which never forfeits its supremacy" (183). He even posits "that the intellect and moral sentiment are unanimous" (175), but that "the moral sentiment easily outweighs [all moods]" and "is the drop which balances the sea" (183). In "Goethe; or, the Writer," a "primary truth" reflects "the shining of the spiritual sun down into the shaft of the mine" (264-65), but this light does not quite fall upon Goethe himself: Emerson faults his subject for his distance from "the highest grounds from which genius has spoken" because "[h]e has not worshipped the highest unity; he is incapable of a self-surrender to the moral sentiment" (284). Similarly, Napoleon "is no saint, . . . no hero in the high sense" (225); Emerson portrays him alternately as "a boundless liar" (254), "thoroughly unscrupulous" (255), and "not . . . a gentleman" (256), and he ultimately concludes that Bonaparte "did all that in him lay to live and thrive without moral principle" (258).

Emerson's negative depiction of the moral characters of Napoleon and Goethe within otherwise essentially positive accounts of their contributions as "representative" historical figures highlights one of the philosophical predicaments Emerson encountered while producing *Representative Men*. Despite the development of a maturity and life experience that had enabled him to perceive ideological complexities and therefore to refine earlier ideas such as that of the Thinker and Actor, Emerson initially was unable to reconcile the obvious successes of seemingly non-moral figures such as Napoleon and Goethe with his idealistic notions of the progress of exemplary achievement. In his pivotal study of "Emersonian Genius and the American Democracy," Perry Miller points to the conflict between self-reliance and individual genius and its origins within the cult of genius that had emerged in the early nineteenth century. In particular, Miller notes Emerson's uneasiness with the political emergence of Andrew Jackson (and later, of Abraham Lincoln) and asserts that "to the end of his days, [Emerson] remained the child of Boston . . . secure in his provincial superiority, voting Whig and Republican, associating the idea of the Democratic party with vulgarity, with General Jackson and tobacco-chewing" (27). But with *Representative Men*, Emerson was compelled to address the material achievements of "dangerous geniuses" such as Jackson, Napoleon, and Goethe and to account for the facts of their material successes despite their "moral imperfections" (32).

Miller argues that Emerson worked his way out of the resulting moral quandary by producing "a book not about heroes and how to worship them, but about how an intelligent and sensitive man lives, or must learn to live, in a democratic society and era" (41). Miller explains that

> [b]y calling great men not heroes but representatives, Emerson, in the most American of fashions, put them to work; the first chapter is slyly titled "Uses of Great Men." He divides genius as a genus into subordinate species, whereupon for each type a specific set of laws can be worked out. Thus the individual genius, even when seemingly lawless, adheres to a pattern of coherence in relation to the sum total of the parts. If it be necessary—as we are compelled to recognize—that all sides of life be expressed, then each genius has a function, be he good or evil; what each incarnates we recognize as an accentuated part of ourselves—because all men are one, and any one man is all men. (41)

Miller's association of the work of the genius with the collective benefit of the human whole once again connects the thoughts and actions of the exemplary individual to the needs of the One Mind, a pattern that traces its origins back to its appearance in *Nature*. Thus, even the "seemingly lawless" individual can play a definitive role in history: if "each genius has a function," whether that function "be . . . good or evil," then the worldly success of that person "adheres to a pattern of coherence in relation to the sum total of the parts" which constitute the whole of the human experience. Miller's analysis offers a useful context by which to consider Emerson's treatment of the historical figure who achieves "greatness" despite the absence of a clear moral purpose, and it remains indispensable in terms of situating Emerson's philosophical approach within the greater context of the cult of genius which pervaded the nineteenth century. However, it fails to account for the critical fact that *Representative Men* continues to conform to the paradigm of the heroic exemplar Emerson first established in *Nature*. It also dismisses the clear position of each individual within the work as a definitive representative of a cause, a country, and an age.

In *Representative Men*, Emerson once again emphasizes the roles of original thought and actions in the individual's furtherance of a higher purpose. In "Uses of Great Men," Emerson stresses that "all mental and moral force is a positive good" and equates the power of thought and activity with "any man of a vigorous mind" (*W* 4: 13); he then connects "the distinctive benefit of ideas" with "the service rendered by those who introduce moral truths into the general mind" (21). It is "impossible to think, on certain levels, except through [Plato]" (44); "the thoughts in which [Swedenborg] lived were, the universality of each law in nature" (106). The skeptical Montaigne "stands for the intellectual faculties" (155); Shakespeare proves that "[t]hought is the property of him who can entertain it and of him who can adequately place it" (198). Napoleon "combined the natural and the intellectual power" (229); Goethe illustrates that the writer's "office is a reception of the facts into the mind" (261). Despite a tendency among Americans of his time towards "a certain ridicule, among superficial people, thrown on the scholars or clerisy" (265-66), Emerson maintained the primacy of thought within his paradigm of the exemplary hero and emphasized the necessity of this component within each of his *Representative* essays. Acknowledging that "public opinion commends the practical man" and considers "ideas . . . subversive of social order and comfort" (266), Emerson nevertheless continues to encourage an idealistic adherence to the sanctity of individual thoughts. The American Scholar once again functions in his capacity as "the man of the ages," and the superficial ridicule of naysayers remains "of no import unless the scholar heed it" (265-66).

The process of thought completes itself with its publication; following his consideration of an idea within the privacy of his own mind, the representative individual must then act upon the implications of his thoughts for the edification and benefit of others. In "Uses of Great Men," Emerson equates physical and mental action when he observes that

> [w]e go to the gymnasium and the swimming-school to see the power and beauty of the body; there is the like pleasure and a higher benefit from witnessing intellectual feats of all kinds; as feats of memory, of mathematical combination, great power of abstraction, the transmutings of the imagination, even versatility and concentration,--as these acts expose the invisible organs and members of the mind, which respond, member for member, to the parts of the body. For we thus enter a new gymnasium, and learn to choose men by their truest marks, taught, with Plato, "to choose those who can, without aid from the eye or any other sense, proceed to truth and to being. . . . And this benefit is real because we are entitled to these enlargements, and once having passed the bounds shall never again be quite the miserable pedants we were. (*W* 4: 16-17)

Individuals whose intellectual power enables them to "proceed to truth and to being" benefit their "witness[es]" by exposing them to their "intellectual feats" and expanding their minds by virtue of these "enlargements." Emerson makes clear that publication of thought may be achieved via several discrete avenues; as intellectual feats parallel "the power and beauty of the body," the implications of the thoughts of the Knower find their proper expression in the definitive acts of the Doer or the Sayer. Although "Montaigne" differentiates between "producers" and the "higher class" of poets "who, from the intellectual kingdom, feed the thought and imagination with ideas and pictures which raise men out of the world of corn and money, and console them for the shortcomings of the day and the meanness of labor and traffic" (94), both Doing and Saying remain appropriate responses to the particular knowledge that characterizes the representative man.

Whether he is a practical actor like Napoleon or a contemplative scholar like Plato, Swedenborg, or Goethe,[72] Emerson continued to believe in “the directness of action” (“Napoleon” 232) and that “great action must draw on the spiritual nature” (“Goethe” 268). Though the actions of an individual as “singularly destitute of generous sentiments” (253) as Napoleon may still lead to the fact of his material success, Emerson persisted in contending that “[t]he measure of action is the sentiment from which it proceeds” (268) and that, in most cases at least, “[a] great man . . . finds himself in the river of thoughts and events, forced onward by the ideas and necessities of his contemporaries” (“Shakespeare” 190).

Like all of Emerson’s exemplary individuals, the representative man must commit to the action he undertakes on behalf of the greater good and carry it through to the point of its final completion. Ironically, the individual who best illustrates this particular characteristic is Napoleon, who “inspires confidence and vigor by the extraordinary unity of his actions” (*W* 4: 233) despite his dismissal of the moral sentiment. Emerson’s treatment of the seemingly contradictory factors of amorality and action comes across as a sort of begrudging admiration for his subject; he observes that Napoleon

> knew what to do, and he flew to his mark. He would shorten a straight line to come at his object. Horrible anecdotes may no doubt be collected from his history, of the price at which he bought his successes; but he must not therefore be set down as cruel, but only as one who knew no impediment to his will; not bloodthirsty, not cruel,--but woe to what thing or person stood in his way! Not bloodthirsty, but not sparing of blood,--and pitiless. He saw only the object: the obstacle must give way. (233-34)

The equivocal nature of Emerson’s analysis of Napoleon’s singlemindedness underscores the difficulty of the moral quandary to which Miller refers: although Emerson seems to approve of Napoleon's intellectual focus and his self-reliant pursuit of desired ends, the moral justification for his quest remains absent, and his means appear ruthless, at best. The passage vacillates between recognition and repugnance: despite his appreciation of Napoleon's power to overwhelm an obstacle, Emerson can not quite dismiss the blood price with which Bonaparte "bought his successes." Although this type of ambivalence does not appear in Emerson's handling of exemplary individuals prior to *Representative Men*, neither does any attempt to consider historical figures concurrently as symbols of causes, countries, and ages and as representatives of abstract ideas. Despite the ability of the exemplary hero to fulfill both roles with relative ease, the amoral figure falls short of achieving heroic status and struggles as an abstract idea. His ends can not fully justify his means, and however representative his actions and perseverance may be in terms of his cause, his country, and his age, he can never completely represent any ideal that contains a legitimizing moral component.

The tendency toward self-sacrifice continues as a quality of the exemplary individual; in "Uses of Great Men," Emerson refers to human fascination with the "genius who occupies himself with one thing, all his life long" (11). Although concentration upon a particular area of specialization may seem like a logical requirement of any true vocation, Emerson takes care to emphasize, as he did in his earlier works, that the focus of the exemplary individual upon a specific desired outcome frequently necessitates his distancing or even removal from involvement in ordinary domestic and social relationships. Emerson's brief biographies of Plato, Swedenborg, and Montaigne allude to their never having married, and very little attention is paid to the lives of any of these "great men" beyond their vocations and places in history. Although none of them literally martyred himself in his pursuit of his own calling, Emerson can not seem to resist connecting Plato to Socrates and recalling the martyrdom of the mentor, apparently without any particular necessity, in the essay that celebrates the student. This conspicuous inclusion aligns Emerson's treatment of the individuals in *Representative Men* with that of the heroic exemplars within his earlier works, beginning with those in *Nature*. Despite the absence of a genuine, self-sacrificing titular character among the representatives he elects to critique, Emerson nevertheless proffers the possibility of martyrdom in the furtherance of individual calling by pointing to the example of Socrates. In doing so, he indirectly maintains an emphasis upon the self-sacrificial component that characterizes the quintessential exemplary hero.

Like all of Emerson's exemplars, the representative individual remains tied to the historical context of his particular place and time. In the "Uses" essay, Emerson asserts that "great men exist that there may be greater men" (*W* 4: 35), and "[a]ll that respects the individual is temporary and prospective, like the individual himself" (34). This idea of "rotation" as "the law of nature" (19) parallels the recurring notion of renewal that most clearly manifests itself in "Circles"; in "Uses," Emerson explains:

> The soul is impatient of masters and eager for change. Housekeepers say of a domestic who has been valuable, "She has lived with me long enough." We are tendencies, or rather symptoms, and none of us complete. We touch and go, and sip the foam of many lives. Rotation is the law of nature. When nature removes a great man, people explore the horizon for a successor; but none comes, and none will. His class is extinguished with him. In some other and quite different field the next man will appear; not Jefferson, not Franklin, but now a great salesman, then a road-

> contractor, then a student of fishes, then a buffalo-hunting explorer, or a semi-savage Western general. Thus we make a stand against our rougher masters; but against the best there is a finer remedy. (*W* 4: 19)

Although the great man serves a particular purpose by satisfying a particular need within the context of a particular time, his office is always a temporary one; as time progresses, a different need will emerge, and a new man will come forward to embody its requirements. Emerson's juxtaposition of the historical figures of Jefferson and Franklin is telling: though essentially historical contemporaries, each man played a distinctive role in the development of the American democracy, one that could not have been effectively fulfilled by the other. As the nation expanded, the necessity for great men evolved with it, and the need for Sayers like Jefferson and Franklin was replaced with a demand for Doers such as contractors, hunters, and explorers. Specific needs and their fulfillers can not transcend the boundaries of place and time; as Emerson observes in "Shakespeare," "the generic catholic genius who is not afraid or ashamed to owe his originality to the originality of all, stands with the next age as the recorder and embodiment of his own" (*W* 4: 201). In "Napoleon," he can state the great man's relationship with time even more directly: "Nature must have the greatest share in every success. . . . Such as man was wanted, and such as man was born" (230).

Although the characteristics of the paradigm of the heroic exemplar persist within the sketches of *Representative Men*, the qualifications Emerson makes to some of his subjects concerning the absence of the moral sentiment mark a departure from his earlier works. The "moral imperfections" of "dangerous geniuses" such as Napoleon and Goethe (Miller 32) disqualify them as true heroes in the established Emersonian tradition, but each representative remains viable as an exemplar of his respective cause, country, and age. Emerson makes allowance for the “true man” he recognized in “Self-Reliance”; though few would argue with the virtuous character of Christ, that of the other figures whom “Self-Reliance” indicates “must make all circumstances indifferent”; i.e., Caesar, Antony, Luther, Fox, Wesley, Clarkson, and Scipio, falls into the category of the far less absolute (*W* 2: 60-61). If the fact of Rome succeeds in mitigating any pragmatism in the actions of the “true man” Caesar, then the military success of Napoleon can be at least partially excused as progress in defense of democracy—provided that no presumption of a moral motivation is either stated or implied. In each of his essays in *Representative Men*, Emerson clearly specifies the grounds on which his subject qualifies as a “representative,” and in each case, these qualifications remain tied to the particular circumstances of a cause, a country, and an age.

Like his more heroic counterpart, the representative individual is invariably a bona fide historical player; as Emerson asserts in “Uses,” “[h]e is not only representative, but participant” (*W* 4*:* 11). His contemporaries determine the tenor of his historical sentence; Emerson contends that “the constituency determines the vote of the representative. . . . Like can only be known by like. The reason why he knows about them is that he is of them; he has just come out of nature, or from being part of that thing” (11). As “our proxies,” great men “enlarge” humanity, which continually celebrates “the contributions of men who have perished to add their point of light to our sky” (12, 17). In *Representative Men*, Plato represents Western philosophy and was “like every great man, consumed by his own times” (41) while living among the learned of ancient Greece. Swedenborg, “who appeared among his contemporaries a visionary and elixir of moonbeams” and “no doubt led the most real life of any man then in the world” (98), “anticipated much of the nineteenth century” (102) and thus survives as an example of the intellectual potential of original thought that existed in the eighteenth century. Montaigne "stands for the intellectual faculties, a cool head and whatever serves to keep it cool" who "occup[ies] the middle ground" between "the abstractionist and the materialist" (154-55); Emerson observes that "Gibbon reckons, in these bigoted times [of the sixteenth century], but two men of liberality in France,--Henry IV. and Montaigne" (164).[73] The poet is "a heart in unison with his time and country. . . . freighted with the weightiest convictions and pointed with the most determined aim which any man or class knows of in his times" (189); Shakespeare, therefore, "[found] himself in the river of the thoughts and events" of Elizabethan England and responded directly to "a national interest" (190, 192). Napoleon possessed "precisely what is agreeable to the heart of every man in the nineteenth century" (225-26) and "comes to be a bureau for all the intelligence, wit and power of the age and country" from which he issues (227); Emerson contends that "[h]e interests us as he stands for France and for Europe; and he exists as captain and king only as far as the Revolution, or the interest of the industrious masses, found an organ and a leader in him" (240). Goethe "was the soul of his century" (273) and "the head and body of the German nation" (283); Emerson concludes with some reverence that "[t]he Eternal Genius who built the world has confided himself more to [Goethe] than to any other" (283).

Despite the abundance of evidence in *Representative Men* that attests to the capacity of each of Emerson's subjects to stand for a particular cause, country, and age,[74] they are far less successful as "convenient representatives of things and ideas" (Rusk 374), even in terms of their specified functions. The number of defects and limitations Emerson ascribes to his "representatives" is staggering and begs the question of exactly what he desired them to represent. Plato, the philosopher and "monistic dualist,"[75] fares the best of the lot,[76] but he is nevertheless too “literary”; Emerson asserts that “almost the sole deduction from the merit of Plato [is] that his writings have not . . . the vital authority which the screams of prophets and the sermons of unlettered Arabs and Jews possess” (75-76). Plato “has not a system” (76), and even “[t]he acutest German, the lovingest disciple, could never tell what Platonism was” (78). Swedenborg, the mystic, suffers from the “vice” of “theological determination”; he “failed by attaching [himself] to the Christian symbol, instead of the moral sentiment” (134-35), allying himself with the institutions of historical Christianity rather than the original experience of a genuine faith. In Emerson’s view, Swedenborg “could never break the umbilical cord which held him to nature, and he did not rise to the platform of pure genius,” and he “remained entirely devoid of the whole apparatus of poetic expression” (143). Swedenborg’s “system of the world wants central spontaneity; it is dynamic, not vital, and lacks power to generate life,” and “[t]here is no individual in it” (133). Montaigne is useful as “the interrogator of custom,” but “[t]he wise skeptic is a bad citizen; no conservative, he sees the selfishness of property and the drowsiness of institutions. But neither is he fit to work with any democratic party that ever was constituted; for parties wish every one committed, and he penetrates the popular patriotism” (172). However, Emerson continues to assert the primacy of the moral sentiment when he insists that “[t]he final solution in which skepticism is lost, is in the moral sentiment, which never forfeits its supremacy” (183). Shakespeare had the power to produce “perfect representation”; Emerson observes that “[h]e had the power to make one picture. Daguerre learned how to let one flower etch its image on his plate of iodine, and then proceeds at his leisure to etch a million. There are always objects; but there was never representation” (214).[77] However, despite the poet’s love of virtue and search for beauty (215), Shakespeare “led an obscure and profane life, using his genius for the public amusement” (218).

Napoleon, the “man of the world,” was a “realist” who “understood his business” (232-33), but he viewed “fighting as the best mode of addressing national differences” (235); “He was thoroughly unscrupulous,” and “[h]e would steal, slander, assassinate, drown and poison, as his interest dictated” (255). His “experiment” ultimately “came to no result. . . . He left France smaller, poorer, feebler, than he found it; and the whole contest for freedom was to be begun again” (257). Goethe, the writer, “clothed our modern existence with poetry” and “detected the Genius of life” (273), but Emerson asserts that “[t]his lawgiver of art was not an artist” (287) and maintains that “great action must draw on the spiritual nature,” and “[t]he measure of action is the sentiment from which it proceeds” (268). Emerson finally concludes that Goethe has not “ascended to the highest grounds from which genius has spoken” because “[h]e has not worshipped the highest unity; he is incapable of self-surrender to the moral sentiment” (284).

The presence of the moral sentiment within Emerson’s characterization the representative and his emphasis upon the many defects and limitations that constitute each individual’s performance of his stated function suggest that Emerson, at least on some level, continued to focus upon idealized, abstract notions of the traits of the exemplary individual throughout *Representative Men*. Had he been satisfied with the fact of their “representation” of their specific functions, it would seem likely that only a cursory mention of any anomalous shortcomings would have been necessary to accomplish his purpose. But the lists of limitations appear for each of Emerson’s subjects and frequently cover several pages, implying that none of Emerson’s representative men fully “represents” the idea with which he has been associated. Although one can accept Bernard Howells’s contention that “Emerson’s thought does not develop so much as undergo a process of digressive explicating, governed by two of its own internal principles; unsynthesised dialectics and universal analogy, continually forcing the reader to transcend and revise any unilateral interpretation" (472), a simpler interpretation is also possible: that in Emersonian terms, no individual human being, regardless of the greatness of his gifts, can ever fully represent the entire implication of an idea. The fact that Emerson selects individuals almost universally associated with excellence in their particular professions supports this contention, as does his careful enumeration of their individual contributions to their fields of interest and acknowledgments of their service to the causes and people of their time. It would seem that Emerson's thesis in *Representative Men* boils down to a confirmed belief that a man can represent a cause, a country, and an age, but he invariably falls short of completely embodying the ideal personification of an idea.

Emerson had one option that would likely have better enabled him to achieve the quality that he ultimately elected to leave unrealized. Rusk reports that Emerson had considered using Jesus to represent the mystic instead of Swedenborg, a move that could have dramatically altered the entire course of *Representative Men*. Rusk contends that Emerson

> had felt that Jesus was the representative mystic that he ought to sketch, and later he envied Renan his subject.[78] Had he chosen Jesus, he would undoubtedly have had, in his view, a purer mystic than Swedenborg, with less of the tough wrapping of theological determination to cut away. But his interpretation of Jesus, he knew from experience, would have aroused antagonisms for which he would have been bracing himself as he wrote. Such a sketch of Jesus as he would have wished to make would have required, as he said, "great gifts,--steadiest insight and perfect temper; else, the consciousness of want of sympathy in the audience would make

> one petulant or so, in spite of himself." (375)[79]

Although the decision to use Jesus as a representative figure would doubtless have involved a considerable degree of practical difficulty, as Emerson himself acknowledges, other factors may also have contributed to his election to forego using Jesus in favor of Swedenborg. For one, Emerson might have resisted, or perhaps even rejected, the notion of certain defects or limitations in terms of the moral character of his subject. Although Huggard maintains that Emerson "did not regard Jesus as a perfect man," he also finds that "the deficiencies Emerson found in Jesus were secular flaws and not flagrant sins" (104-05). Emerson still regarded Jesus as "the superior ethical teacher,"[80] a sanction that reaffirms his association with moral character and alignment with the moral sentiment. Emerson faulted Swedenborg's attachment "to the Christian symbol, instead of to the moral sentiment" (*W* 4: 135) and concluded that Swedenborg finally added "nothing" to the "personality of the Deity" (137). Jesus would have been much less susceptible to such criticisms, if Emerson's concern had been to portray "representation" in terms of human perfectibility. But Emerson seems to have been determined to avoid the appearance of employing any representative who could have been considered anything other than a man,[81] and the inclusion of a figure whom Emerson himself "exalted . . . above all others" (100) could have seriously compromised the notion of the humanity of the representative man. Though many other considerations could well have played into Emerson's choices, the question of what he might have accomplished had he used Jesus as his mystic raises intriguing possibilities.

Despite the belief of some of his contemporaries that Emerson was "past the peak of his performance" (Rusk 377) at the time of the publication of *Representative Men*, analysis of both it and "The Poet" reveals that Emerson's conception of the exemplary individual continued to evolve. Useful "Emersonian" notions that appeared in their familiar forms in the first series of *Essays* are expanded and refined; ideas such as the Thinker and Actor of “Self-Reliance” become the elaborated Knower, Doer, and Sayer in “The Poet,” and a heroic individual who can exemplify the character of a cause, a country, and an age emerges as a man incapable of personifying the implications of an essentially abstract idea. Despite the germination of many of his heroic concepts in *Nature* and earlier essays, Emerson continued to find new ways to measure the heroism of the exemplary individual, but these new measures do not deviate far from his original heroic paradigm. Regardless of his particular calling or vocation or connection to a certain place and time, the heroic exemplar continues to hear the call of the moral sentiment and to consider the implications of his thoughts on the message he hears. He then acts on these implications and carries them through to the point of completion. Having finished his work, he receives the acknowledgment of both his contemporaries and the judgment of history. If he emerges as the best of the best of exemplars, he can also be considered in terms of the ideal.

The increasing complexity of many ideas considered by some to have “peaked” within *Essays, First Series* can be attributed to several factors that included the developing maturity of their author. Emerson was in his early thirties when he wrote *Nature*, his early forties with the *Essays*, and nearing fifty when he produced *Representative Men*. Although many ideas reemerge within the course of his subsequent writings, they also remain subject to his continual reconsideration, adjustment, and refinement. The historical personages Emerson employs come and go throughout the works, only to come and go again in often completely different contexts. But the individual who survives the imposition of the heroic paradigm tends to remain within his capacity as a exemplar; Emerson exhibits no inclination to reclassify individuals once he has identified their heroic potential. Through the publication of *Representative Men*, Emerson had, with only a few exceptions, relied upon the use of historical figures to demonstrate the extent of the human potential. But a new cause was developing within his own age, and this time much closer to home. The next time Emerson went searching for heroes, he would find them in his own back yard.

Cause, Country, and Age:

The Heroic Exemplar, Abolition, and the American Civil War

> Our helm is given up to a better guidance than our own; the course of events is quite too strong for any helmsman, and our little wherry is taken in tow by the ship of the great Admiral who knows the way, and has the force to draw men and states and planets to their good.
>
> -- "The Fortune of the Republic," 1863

At the time Emerson published *Nature* in 1836, the maturing American nation had already left much of its eighteenth-century social and spiritual legacy behind it and was experiencing a wave of reform.[82] Key institutions such as the Federalist party, the church, and even capitalism were being called into question, and the notion of the individual ultimately emerged as the new symbol of promise and hope for the America of the coming age (Elkins 142). The Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had forbidden slavery north of the line of 36°30' in the Louisiana Purchase area, tenuously held the longstanding conflict between the North and the South at least temporarily in check, but the anti-slavery impulse had been gaining considerable momentum in New England and would soon become a serious force with which the entire country would be forced to contend. Although he had been philosophically opposed to slavery from his youth,[83] the Emerson who had published *Nature* and *Essays, First* and *Second Series* considered himself a philosopher, not a political activist. Although he had written occasional letters to government officials concerning political matters, he remained skeptical of organized reform, observing in "New England Reformers" that "[t]he criticism and attack on institutions, which we have witnessed, has made one thing plain, that society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him: he has become tediously good in some particular but negligent or narrow in the rest; and hypocrisy and vanity are often the disgusting result" (*W* 3*:* 261). Emerson had concluded this essay with his observation that "[i]t is handsomer to remain in the establishment better than the establishment, and conduct that in the best manner, than to make a sally against evil by some single improvement, without supporting it by a total regeneration" (261).

Although Emerson's promotion of his doctrine of self-reliance neither precluded the possibility nor negated the necessity of social reform, it continued to emphasize the need to reform the individual before attempting to transform society at large. Unlike Thoreau or many of the other more radical reformers of his day, Emerson was not entirely anti-institutional; in "New England Reformers," he had advocated working to improve society from within the system by directing reform energy outward from the morally conscious individual to other like-minded individuals within the larger community. Contending that "[e]ntire self-reliance belongs to the intellect," (“Intellect,” *W* 2*:* 344), Emerson had asserted in "Spiritual Laws" that "[a] man's genius, the quality that differences him from every other, the susceptibility to one class of influences, the selection of what is fit for him, the rejection of what is unfit, determines for him the character of the universe. A man is a method, a progressive arrangement; a selecting principle, gathering his like to him wherever he goes. He takes only his own out of the multiplicity that sweeps and circles around him" (*W* 2*:* 143-44).

It follows logically that Emerson, as a professor of the ideology he himself promoted, would allow his intellect to guide him in espousing causes for individual reform, and that he would, by extension, adopt these same principles in determining if and when these ideas should be opened to public view. Publication constitutes an important part of Emerson's paradigm of the exemplary individual, and throughout his long career, Emerson proved himself more than capable of self-consciously fulfilling the roles he had first identified as the Thinker and Actor and later expanded into the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer. As a Thinker, Knower, and Sayer, Emerson contemplated man's nature; as an Actor and a Doer, he applied these findings to his considerations concerning man's social and historical place. Not surprisingly, perhaps inevitably, the historical opportunity arose that enabled Emerson to illustrate the abstract principles of his own philosophy as well as to demonstrate their concrete application within the potentially explosive context of a particularly contentious political, moral, and social issue.

That issue was slavery, and while Emerson was by no means "compelled" to support efforts to eliminate slavery in the United States, he, like many others, found himself gradually drawn into the national debate.[84] As his early works had become more widely known, Emerson's popularity had expanded, resulting in an ever-increasing demand for his services as a lecturer and public speaker. By 1850, Emerson's lecture tours had reached westward to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys and eastward to the British Isles, spreading his fame beyond his New England origins and resulting in his becoming one of the most widely-recognized and highly-acclaimed spokesmen of his day (Cayton 238). Although his wife Lidian and his brother Charles had allied themselves with anti-slavery movements beginning in the 1830s, Emerson himself had initially resisted the repeated requests of abolitionists to publicly support their cause.[85] Avowedly anti-slavery in principle, he nevertheless long refrained from openly identifying himself as an abolitionist or from actively promoting membership in anti-slavery societies.[86] Emerson addressed the issue only morally and abstractly prior the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, which represented a small, if considerably divisive, part of the Compromise of 1850.

By compelling *all* Americans, including Northerners, to participate in the apprehension of runaway slaves, the Fugitive Slave Law effectively transported the issue of slavery from the relative safety of the remote South and delivered it to the unreceptive doorstep of the vocally dissenting North. The old dispute had not truly hit the North so "close to home" until this point, when Emerson and others recognized that passive resistance to legislative mandates would no longer provide an effective response to the increasingly divisive issue. Its gradual encroachment into the lives of the citizens of Massachusetts is mirrored in Emerson's representative and often influential anti-slavery views, which evolved throughout the course of the 1840s and 1850s from passive to active resistance and from quiet support of abolition in principle to outspoken advocacy of the controversial John Brown. By the time the crisis culminated in the commencement of the Civil War, Emerson welcomed the opportunity as a "favorable moment . . . for the cutting out of our cancerous Slavery" (*JMN* 15: 145), and he concluded in his Journal that "it is felt by all as immensely better than the so-called Integrity of the Republic, as amputation is better than cancer: and we find it out by wondering why we are so easy at heart, in spite of being so beaten & so poor" (*JMN* 15: 141-42).[87] Over time, Emerson came to view the abolition of slavery, and by extension the Civil War, as necessary and desirable historical progressions toward the next concentric circle in the evolution of American culture (*W* 2: 301); he claims in "History" that "the thought is always prior to the fact; all the facts of history preëxist in the mind as laws. Each law in turn is made by circumstances predominant, and the limits of nature give power to but one at a time" (3). By the time the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter, Emerson had perceived slavery as a moral aberration, had taken action to call for its eradication, and was prepared to see it through to its necessary and desirable end using whatever means were required to "do away this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now" (*W*

2: 11).

Emerson had observed in "Spiritual Laws" that "[t]he soul's emphasis is always right" (*W* 2: 145) and that "[b]y a divine necessity every fact in nature is constrained to offer its testimony" (155). For Emerson, abolition became a moral purpose that required contemplation, publication, and ultimately, regeneration. These elements parallel the stages of calling, temptation, and salvation within Luther's model of the *exemplum fidei* (Bercovitch 9); in both cases, the moral sentiment provides the catalyst that compels the individual to consider his dilemma intellectually to determine the appropriate action. The decision to go public signals the point of no return: having overcome any temptation to settle for a passive response, the exemplary individual publishes his position and thus commits to a course of action. The realization of his goals and the satisfaction of the needs of the moral sentiment provide his ultimate salvation; even if the hero perishes in the process of pushing history forward, the health of his society is improved, and those who survive reap the regenerative benefits of his noble vision and purpose. For Emerson and many of his contemporaries, abolition became such a purpose; by mid-century, the need to become actively involved in politics for the benefit of the Universal One had become increasingly apparent. In "Spiritual Laws," Emerson contends that "I desire not to disgrace the soul. The fact that I am here certainly shows me that the soul had need of an organ here" and asks, "Shall I not assume the post?" (163). Emerson's evolving public position on the slavery issue and his use of heroic exemplars who acted on behalf of the abolitionist cause represents perhaps the clearest demonstration of the philosophical notions of the exemplary hero he had developed throughout the course of his work to this time.

Unlike many of his fellow Transcendentalists, including Frederic Hedge, James Freeman Clarke, William Henry Channing, and Theodore Parker, Emerson never officially joined any of the anti-slavery societies, and slavery remained for him throughout the 1830s a serious but subordinate social issue that he publicly addressed essentially only in passing. The outspoken advocacy of reform "causes" has been observed to characterize Transcendentalism as a movement; Stanley Elkins asserts that "far from 'revolting' against the age, Transcendentalism embodied in aggravated form certain of its most remarkable features--its anti-institutionalism, its individual perfectionism, its abstraction, and its guilt and reforming zeal" (158). This profile hardly fits Emerson, Transcendentalism's founder and primary spokesman. His declaration in "New England Reformers" of his preference to work within the system establishes his theory of political activism as stopping short of anti-institutional, and his less-than-flattering assessment of the "hypocrisy and vanity" of organized reformers (*W* 3*:* 261) scarcely suggests a genuine sense of "reforming zeal" on his part. Emerson may indeed be classified as a Transcendentalist, and he could certainly show concern for the need for social change, but for the period of the 1830s, he could hardly have been characterized as a "zealous" reformer.

The remaining points of Elkins' evaluation, however, are in many ways characteristic of Emerson's own approach to moral and social issues. Individual perfectionism--or, more accurately, individual perfectibility--lies at the core of Emerson's concept of self-reliance, as it is the individual who publishes his private convictions and thereby offers them for public debate. This emphasis upon the importance of individual action is consistent throughout the entire works of Emerson; even his later encouragement to others to join anti-slavery societies constitutes a personal act of individual moral responsibility rather than blind acquiescence to the mandates of an historical wave. Elkins astutely connects the individual's sense of social responsibility to personal guilt, which he contends is "always a necessary element in any reform movement anywhere," but "comes to assume a unique a disproportionate role in American reform activity" (161). Elkins explains that Protestant Americans, who lack the European's formal religious and secular institutions that are designed to absorb and redirect guilt, must project their sense of social responsibility inward, where it can accumulate and become unstable, even to the point of "implacable moral aggression" (161). Although Emerson became neither implacable nor aggressive with regard to the issue of slavery, he did become seriously determined, and his personal sense of social responsibility, once essentially personal and abstract, ultimately became undeniably public and concrete.

Elkins' comments with regard to the notion of moral abstraction deserve particular attention within the contexts of both Transcendentalism and American society as a whole throughout the course of the 1830s. Elkins relates that during this period, "Society, institutions, power--all became abstractions, both in letters and in popular oratory. Where now was the setting in which the thinker might locate man, the object of his contemplation? The transcendent 'individual' must be placed not in the society over which he had symbolically triumphed but in a transcendental universe--man himself became an abstraction" (144). This notion ironically functions to distance the reforming agent from his flesh-and-blood beneficiary: slavery becomes a concern not so much for individual human beings in bondage but an ideological issue of right and wrong. Elkins concludes that "[s]ubordinating everything to its rightness or wrongness was the theme of all the Transcendentalists' sermons; slavery became not really a social problem but a moral abstraction. And once they came to the decision that it was wrong, which they all did, the burden of guilt for its continued existence became theirs and that of their hearers" (170). The Transcendentalist Thinkers, including Emerson, were thus understandably drawn to the intellectual quality of moral abstractionism, and the anti-slavery issue, not surprisingly, provided an irresistible opportunity for serious philosophical contemplation. Slavery remained a fundamentally moral issue for Emerson throughout the 1830s and 1840s, the period during which he produced *Nature* and his *Essays, First* and *Second Series*.

Emerson concretizes his consistent connection of the image of the hero with the notion of the noble sentiment in "Heroism," delivered at Boston's Masonic Temple on January 24, 1838, as part of the "Human Culture" series. At the end of the speech, Emerson praises an abolitionist clergyman, Elijah P. Lovejoy, who had been murdered in Alton, Illinois, while attempting to publish an abolitionist newspaper.[88] While showcasing Lovejoy as an heroic exemplar, Emerson essentially sidesteps the clergyman's cause, choosing to focus instead on the issue of Lovejoy's martyrdom as the cause of freedom of speech. Still, Emerson's language suggests an underlying awareness of the potential political ramifications of the event. Observing that "[t]imes of heroism are generally times of terror," Emerson contends that "whoso is heroic, will always find crises to try his edge" (*EL* 2: 337). He identifies Lovejoy as a specific illustration of this particular abstraction, but his subsequent rhetoric betrays an awareness of more serious political concerns:

> In the gloom of our ignorance of what shall be, in the hour when we are deaf to the higher voices, who does not envy them who have seen the end to their manful endeavor? Who that sees the meanness of our politics, but inly congratulates Washington, that he is long already wrapped in his shroud, and forever safe; that he was laid sweet in his grave, the hope of humanity not yet subjugated in him? (338)

Emerson characteristically poses his philosophical questions within the guise of abstract query, but the use of the image of Washington lends a political poignancy to his rhetorical musing. In establishing a connection between Washington and Lovejoy as martyrs to the cause of freedom, Emerson creates a subtle patriotic parallel between the two without actually identifying their respective political purposes. It also equates the self-sacrifice of the contemporary Lovejoy with the historical figure who represented the very essence of the notion of heroism in the minds of many nineteenth-century Americans.

Despite Emerson's declining to specify the cause of Lovejoy's martyrdom as abolition, it is reasonable to assume that his Boston audience would have been well aware of this connection. Emerson provides no biographical data concerning the clergyman, referring to him only by his last name and omitting both the date and location of his death. This approach suggests that these details were probably already known to his listeners, but it also provides Emerson with a means of elevating the cause of Lovejoy's martyrdom over that of the martyr himself. Emerson is clearly more concerned with the broader philosophical issue of freedom of speech than with its specific manifestation in the cause of abolition (Gougeon, "Abolition" 363), and his emphasis on the iconographic figure of Washington serves to tie this notion to the patriotic principles upon which the country was founded. Far from a genuine anti-slavery tract, "Heroism" nevertheless illustrates Emerson's advocacy of freedom of speech and establishes abolition as an appropriate political expression of the implications of that abstract ideal. It also represents a departure from his previous practice of drawing his exemplary heroes from the past. Until this point, nearly all of the individuals he had used to illustrate moral adherence in his written works had been historical figures.

Emerson's connection of Lovejoy with the concept of patriotic heroism remains consistent with his earlier identification of the character traits of the heroic exemplar. He portrays "brave Lovejoy" quite clearly as a nonconformist, a man who trusts himself to speak his latent conviction (*W* 2: 47-50) and creates a position for Lovejoy within the company of "great men" who "[a]ccept the place the divine providence had found for [them], the society of [their] contemporaries, [and] the connection of events" (47). Emerson attributes Lovejoy's martyrdom to the narrowness of "the world's opinion"; Lovejoy becomes "the great man . . . who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude" (53-54). Emerson's paradigm of the exemplary hero makes provision for martyrdom in the pursuit of a just cause, and Lovejoy's efforts on behalf of free speech are, by Emerson's definition of the moral sentiment, just. "God will not have his work made manifest by cowards," Emerson asserts in "Self-Reliance" (47); Lovejoy thus becomes a hero by virtue of his acting upon his private thoughts and thereby publishing his inner convictions. He also carries his convictions through to the point of completion and withstands (as Emerson appears to suggest) the judgments of history, men, and God. His elevation in "Heroism" serves both to illustrate the inherent political implications of Emerson's supremely individualistic philosophy and to identify his overall purpose in addressing the slavery issue in early 1838 as still essentially moral.

With these factors in mind, it is perhaps less surprising than it might initially appear that Emerson would advocate war. Despite Rusk's contention that such a position "was essentially false to his character and philosophy" (410), the need to publish thought through the medium of positive action continues to constitute a critical component of Emerson's ideology and remains consistent with the obligations of the Actor or Doer as he repeatedly defines them. In his lecture "War," delivered at the American Peace Society at the Odeon in Boston on March 12, 1838, Emerson notes that

> [i]t has been a favorite study of modern philosophy to indicate the

> steps of human progress, to watch the rising of a thought in one man's mind, the communication of it to a few, to a small minority, its expansion and general reception, until it publishes itself to the world by destroying the existing laws and institutions, and the generation of new. Looked at in this general and historical way, many things wear a very different face from that they show near by, and one at a time,--and, particularly, war. War, which to sane men at the present day begins to look like an epidemic insanity, breaking out here and there like the cholera or influenza, infecting men's brains instead of their bowels,-- when, seen in the remote past, in the infancy of society, appears a part of the connection of events, and, in its place, necessary. (*W* 11: 151)

As Emerson explains it, war functions as a facilitator of ideas: its "nature and office" becomes "the subject of all history" (154). It represents "a temporary and preparatory state" that "does actively forward the culture of man" by "shak[ing] the whole society until every atom falls into the place its specific gravity assigns it" (152). Emerson ties war as an institution to concepts he articulates in both *Nature* and "Self-Reliance"; he asks his audience, "What does all this war, beginning from the lowest races and reaching up to man, signify?" and replies:

> Is it not manifest that it covers a great and beneficent principle, which Nature had deeply at heart? What is that principle?--It is self-help. Nature implants with life the instinct of self-help, perpetual struggle to be, to resist opposition, to attain to freedom, to attain to a mastery and the security of a permanent, self-defended being; and to each creature these objects are made so dear that it risks its life continually in the struggle for these ends. (154-55)

The promotion of the moral sentiment is thus, in itself, a principle worth dying for, either in traditional war as illustrated here or in a personal war such as Elijah P. Lovejoy's. Within Emerson's heroic paradigm, the individual's example delivers his moral purpose to other individuals within the larger society; as a result, a clergyman's martyrdom in the cause of abolition resides on a parallel plane with the patriotic death of a soldier on the battlefield. Emerson identifies the actions of each as inherently heroic: the individual sacrifices himself in the name of the noble sentiment; the moral purpose prevails, the needs of the One Mind are met, and human culture progresses.

Emerson suggests in "War" that the abolition of slavery would be accomplished as a natural consequence of the evolution of the moral ideal from thought, to action, and finally to historical fact. Reminding his listeners that "it is a lesson which all history teaches wise men, to put trust in ideas, and not in circumstances" (163), he entreats them to

> [o]bserve the ideas of the present day,--orthodoxy, skepticism, missions, popular education, temperance, anti-masonry, anti-slavery; see how each of these abstractions has embodied itself in an imposing apparatus in the community; and how timber, brick, lime and stone have flown into convenient shape, obedient to the master-idea reigning in the minds of many persons. (164)

The individual remains the agent of social change, but Emerson has moved beyond the simple consideration of abstract moral concepts to an overt conviction that change will, indeed, occur. He points to the machinery already in place: the thought of abolition has been published, individuals are responding to the logic behind its argument, and action is being taken on the sentiment's behalf. Emerson's language concerning the "imposing apparatus" conveys a sense of both power and momentum; "timber, brick, lime and stone" have "flown" into shape (as opposed to, say, falling into place), implying that the "apparatus" operates as a result of the workings of a driving force much greater than that of its own power. The overall effect upon the listener is to evoke a feeling of eventuality, an anticipatory perception of historical inevitability. Emerson subtly suggests in "War" not only that abolition and other moral reforms *should* happen, but that they, in fact, *will* happen.

The essentially abstract concepts that Emerson introduced in *Nature* matured throughout the late 1830s and early 1840s to result in an obviously thoroughly-considered philosophy that could then conceivably be applied to practical historical circumstances. In his "Lecture on the Times," read at the Masonic Temple in Boston on December 2, 1841, Emerson insists that "the subject of the times is not an abstract question" (*W* 1: 261) and that "we are not permitted to stand as spectators of the pageant which the times exhibit; we are parties also, and have a responsibility which is not to be declined" (266). Dividing society into the parties of the Past and Future, Emerson elaborates:

> The actors constitute that great army of martyrs who, at least in America, by their conscience and philanthropy, occupy the ground which Calvinism occupied in the last age, and compose the visible church of the existing generation. The present age will be marked by its harvest of projects for the reform of domestic, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical institutions. The leaders of the crusades against War, Negro slavery, intemperance, Government based on force, Usages of trade, Court and Custom-house Oaths, and so on to the agitators on the system of Education and the laws of Property, are the right successors of Luther, Knox, Robinson, Fox, Penn, Wesley, and Whitefield. They have the same virtues and vices; the same noble impulse, and the same bigotry. These movements

> are on all accounts important; they not only check the special abuses, but they educate the conscience and the intellect of the people. How can such a question as the Slave-trade be agitated for forty years by all the Christian nations, without throwing great light on ethics into the general mind? The fury with which the slave-trader defends every inch of his bloody deck and his howling auction-platform, is a trumpet to alarm the ear of mankind, to wake the dull, and drive all neutrals to take sides and to listen to the argument and the verdict. (*W* 1: 268-69).

Emerson's juxtaposition of the Calvinism of "the last age" with "the visible church of the existing generation" creates a clear sense of division between the needs of the past and those of the present and calls attention to the fact that reform movements have initiated a process by which old institutions are being replaced with the strength of new ideas. His equation of contemporary crusaders with historically-validated reformers of the past suggests that reform itself represents a regenerative cycle of Thinkers and Actors, and that today's reformers will be hailed as heroes by future generations, just as yesterday's reformers continue to be venerated by the people of the present. Emerson's examples of reform ideas long since translated into historical fact leaves the listener with the impression that positive change can, and indeed will, occur again; society needs only good leaders to convert good ideas into social and political reality. Emerson's emphasis on the human imperfection of reformers themselves is significant; as with his use of the figure of Lovejoy in "Heroism," it subordinates the reformer to the higher purpose of his cause and stresses the supremacy of the moral principles behind the issue itself.

Another important transition occurs in the use of slavery as a specific example among the many broader reform issues Emerson provides. For the first time, the language he uses assumes a tone of righteous indignation. The slave-trader's deck becomes "bloody," his auction platform is "howling," and the whole scene represents "a trumpet to alarm the ear of mankind." Later in the lecture, Emerson alludes to "the compromise made with the slaveholder, [which] not much noticed at first, every day appears more flagrant mischief to the American constitution" (274). The subtle emotion of the language conveys an unmistakably negative judgment of the slave-trade and leaves little doubt as to which "side" the speaker implicitly endorses. Emerson's pointing to the slave-trade as a forty-year-old *ethical* debate over which individuals have begun to take sides suggests that historical change is indeed a slow process, but that in the case of slavery, it is already underway.

However politically remote Emerson might have appeared in his lectures of the early 1840s, he had by the middle of the decade begun to assume a stronger rhetorical stance and tentatively to move away from a fundamentally abstract contemplation of the role of the individual in society to a consideration of the potential need for genuine affirmative action. In his lecture "The Young American," read before the Mercantile Library Association in Boston on February 7, 1844, Emerson asserts that "Government has been a fossil; it should be a plant. I conceive that the office of statute law should be to express and not to impede the mind of mankind. New thoughts, new things" (*W* 1: 379), and adds that

> Government in our times is beginning to wear a clumsy and cumbrous appearance. We have already seen our way to shorter methods. The time is full of good signs. Some of them shall ripen to fruit. All the beneficent socialism is a friendly omen, and the swelling cry of voices for the education of the people indicates that Government has other offices than those of banker and

> executioner (380).

Although such declarations do not directly translate into acts of revolution, they form an intriguing counterpart to Emerson's accompanying call to "young men, to obey your heart and be the nobility of this land" (387). Emerson's equation of action and nobility connects to his earlier conception of the Actor as hero and with the abolition of slavery as a positive expression of the moral sentiment. He explains:

> If a humane measure is propounded in behalf of the slave, or of the Irishman, or the Catholic, or for the succor of the poor; that sentiment, that project, will have the homage of the hero. That is his nobility, his oath of knighthood, to succor the helpless and oppressed; always to throw himself on the side of weakness, of youth, of hope; on the liberal, on the expansive side, never on the defensive, the conserving, the timorous, the lock-and-bolt system. (390)

Despite his apparent assertiveness on behalf of the noble sentiment, Emerson seems content at this point to call upon younger Americans to address the nation's social ills and to bequeath "the country of the Future" (371) to the next generation of independent Thinkers and Actors. Even so, he entreats his listeners to avoid impeding the progress that moral reformers have already initiated, arguing that

> We have our own affairs, our own genius, which chains each to his proper work. We cannot give our life to the cause of the debtor, of the slave, or the pauper, as another is doing; but to one thing we are bound, not to blaspheme the sentiment and the work of that man, not to throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the abolitionist, the philanthropist; as the organs of influence and opinion are swift to

> do. (390)

The notion of the driving force behind the moral sentiment which compels the laws of the soul to "execute themselves" ("Divinity School Address," *W* 1: 122) should not be thwarted by timidity or conservative reluctance; the individual who acts upon his own moral conviction is thus "ennobled" in "The Young American," much like the deified hero Emerson had described in "Divinity School Address" (122). But "The Young American" subordinates the state in a much more overt manner by elevating the individual not only above the state itself, but over the very notion of "Union." Emerson observes that

> At this moment, the terror of old people and of vicious people is lest the Union of these states be destroyed: as if the Union had any other real basis than the good pleasure of a majority of the citizens to be united. But the wise and just man will always feel that he stands on his own feet; that he imparts strength to the State, not receives security from it; and that if all went down, he and such as he would quite easily combine in a new and better constitution. (390-91)

Emerson links his subtle reiteration of "History's" requirement to "do away with this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now" (*W* 2: 11) with the self-reliant individual's need to speak his latent conviction so that "the inmost in due time [may become] the outmost" (45); the state exists by virtue of individuals who grant its presumed authority rather than those who derive their power from it. The speech marks Emerson's first declaration that the Union survives at the sufferance of its citizens, and that it could be, if moral circumstances warranted, dissolved and recreated.

As "The Young American" represents Emerson's initial foray into the subject of the Union, the speech he delivered to the citizens of Concord on

August 1, 1844, marks his first open identification with abolitionism and his first public address on behalf of the cause. Approached by the women of Concord's Anti-Slavery Society with a request for an observation of the tenth anniversary of the Act of Parliament, Emerson responded with "Emancipation in the British West Indies," a speech which characteristically stresses the moral implications of slavery and invites the reader to sympathize with the noble sentiment. Citing the oppression of the slave and his status as "an article of luxury to the commercial nations (*W* 11: 102), Emerson's speech outlines the early atrocities of West Indian slaveholders in graphic detail and equates them with moral injustice:

> But the crude element of good in human affairs must work and ripen, spite of whips and plantation laws and West Indian interest. Conscience rolled over on its pillow, and could not sleep. We sympathize very tenderly here with the poor aggrieved planter, of whom so many unpleasant things are said; but if we saw the whip applied to old men, to tender women; and, undeniably, though I shrink to say so, pregnant women set in the treadmill for refusing to work; when, not they, but the eternal law of animal nature refused to work;--if we saw men's backs flayed with cowhides . . . if we saw the runaways hunted with bloodhounds into swamps and hills . . .--if we saw these things with eyes, we too should wince. They are not pleasant sights. The blood is moral: the blood is anti-slavery: it runs cold in the veins: the stomach rises with disgust, and curses slavery. (103-04)

Emerson continues his emphatic diatribe by praising the individual Actors in the cause of West Indian liberation and the decisive role played by the British public in effecting Parliament's proclamation of emancipation. He considers that "[o]n viewing this history, I think the whole transaction reflects infinite honor on the people and parliament of England. It was a stately spectacle, to see the cause of human rights argued with so much patience and generosity and with such a mass of evidence before that powerful people" (127). Aligning America's former enemy with a sound moral purpose, Emerson points to England's "bright example" and declares the event "a moral revolution" (135). He concludes that "[t]his moral force perpetually reinforces and dignifies the friends of this cause" (137). Emerson employs his most dramatic approach to date in articulating the abolitionist cause; stating his belief in the progress of human society, Emerson "assure[s] [him]self that this coldness and blindness will pass away" and that "[a] single noble wind of sentiment will scatter them forever" (146-47). Appealing to the emotions of his audience, Emerson seeks to elicit sympathy for the plight of the oppressed and offers his hope that all Americans will eventually recognize the need to abolish slavery. He makes no call for direct political action, and his speech both mirrors the philosophical aspects of his earlier works and signals a departure from his previous tendency to address the issue in essentially abstract terms.

Like "Heroism," "Emancipation in the British West Indies" celebrates the triumph of the self-reliant individual. Emerson cites the former slaves' efforts at assimilating themselves into West Indian society, declaring that "[i]t now appears that the negro race is, more than any other, susceptible to rapid civilization" (141). Insisting that "the black race can contend with the white," he calls for the self-reliant black man to "play his part" and for white society to "let them emerge, clothed and in their own form" (144-45). Emerson praises the British public for standing up for their beliefs by forcing a resolution of the West Indian emancipation issue in Parliament. He observes that "[t]he stream of human affairs flows its own way" (139), echoing his own notion of continual human progression in both "History" and "Circles." And by announcing that "[s]lavery is no scholar, no improver" (125), he aligns abolitionism with the concept of man as Thinker and Actor as defined in "The American Scholar" and with the expanded notion of the Knower, Doer, and Sayer that appears in “The Poet.”

While these examples illustrate Emerson's ideological consistency in "Emancipation in the British West Indies," other passages reveal an expansion of his slavery concerns beyond exclusively moral considerations and their tentative projection into social and politically active realms. Emerson does not directly indict the South in this address, but he presents an abstract claim that "[t]he planter is the spoiled child of his unnatural habits, and has contracted in his indolent and luxurious climate the need of excitement by irritating and tormenting his slave" (*W* 11: 119). Any implication of the Southern planter, if intended, is indirect; Emerson questions the economic and moral motives of slaveholders *in general* from a comparatively safe distance by addressing the issue obliquely as an *English* (read *foreign*) problem. The same strategy which enables Emerson to equate slaveholding with moral degeneracy provides him with a means of allying abolitionist New England with moral virtue; at one point, he muses, "Forgive me, fellow citizens, if I own to you, that in the last few days that my attention has been occupied with this history, I have not been able to read a page of it without the most painful comparisons. Whilst I have read of England, I have thought of New England" (129).

Emerson often thought of New England, particularly Massachusetts, and many of his political views centered on the effects of politics and politicians upon the citizens of Massachusetts (Allen 605). In "Emancipation in the British West Indies," Emerson questions the authority of the federal government in allowing Southern states to enslave black citizens of Massachusetts and to detain them on ships in Southern ports. He charges:

> In the sleep of the laws, the private interference of two excellent

> citizens of Boston has, I have ascertained, rescued several natives of this State from these Southern prisons. Gentlemen, I thought the deck of a Massachusetts ship was as much the territory of Massachusetts as the floor on which we stand. It should be as sacred as the temple of God. . . . If the state has no power to defend its own people in its own shipping, because it has delegated that power to the Federal Government, has it no representation in the Federal Government? . . . The Congress should instruct the President to send to those ports of Charleston, Savannah and New Orleans such orders and such force as should release, forthwith, all such citizens of Massachusetts as were holden in prison without the allegation of any crime, and should set on foot the strictest inquisition to discover where such persons, brought into slavery by these local laws at any time heretofore, may now be. (130-32)

Emerson's concern is for the free citizens of Massachusetts, and his accusations of impropriety are significantly directed towards politicians, particularly those within the federal government. Although noticeably vehement in tone, the speech calls not upon individuals but on elected leaders to take action to correct the problem of illegal detention of Massachusetts citizens. In 1844, Emerson still viewed slavery as a fundamentally moral issue, but the legal ability of Southern states to hold Northern citizens had added a new political dimension to the old moral equation. Formerly confined to the remote regions of the South, slavery was beginning to encroach upon not only the lives of the slaves themselves but on those of the free citizens in the territory of the North.

Although Allen and Gougeon both mark "Emancipation in the British West Indies" as the occasion of Emerson's active entry into the abolitionist cause,[89] it is important to note that even at this point, Emerson makes no direct appeal for abolitionist action on the part of individuals but instead calls upon elected leaders to hold the prevailing balance of political power in check. Rusk's contention that the address represents Emerson's "sudden leap into the political arena in aid of the abolitionists" (303) appears more accurate in light of Emerson's continued emphasis on abstract Thinking as opposed to concrete Acting, and any potentially heroic individual who would have answered Emerson's call at this point would more than likely have emerged from the ranks of politicians or government officials. Although the significance of Emerson's public stance in "Emancipation in the British West Indies" cannot be overlooked, several more years would pass before he would actively encourage individual Thinkers and Knowers to become Actors and Doers on behalf of abolitionism. Although he was moving in a clear direction, Emerson was still in the process of articulating his ideology, and his focus remained on philosophical abstraction rather than political activism.

Emerson released *Essays, Second Series* on October 19, 1844, soon after his Concord neighbor, attorney Samuel Hoar, returned from South Carolina following an abortive attempt to intervene on behalf of black sailors from Massachusetts being held in Southern ports. Commissioned by Massachusetts Governor George N. Briggs, Hoar and his daughter, Elizabeth, the former fiancée of Emerson's late brother, Charles, had been forcibly expelled in response to their presumed insult to South Carolina by an angry mob which threatened to set fire to their Charleston hotel. The incident raised many Concordians' ire against South Carolina,[90] and a pronounced negative attitude towards Southerners in general, and South Carolinians in particular, began to appear in many of Emerson's speeches. But his essays remained philosophical, and despite the changing social and political climate, no direct condemnation of either Southerners or the South is found in *Essays, Second Series*.

Although his political awareness was increasing, Emerson continued to limit direct references to historical events in the second volume of *Essays*. A bipolar structure rests at the core of "Politics," an essay Rusk quite accurately describes as "delicately balanced" (303). Maintaining that "[t]he fact of two poles, of two forces, centripetal and centrifugal, is universal, and each force by its own activity develops the other" (*W* 3: 212), Emerson explains:

> Of the two great parties which at this hour almost share the nation between them, I should say that one has the best cause, and the other contains the best men. The philosopher, the poet, or the religious man will of course wish to cast his vote with the democrat, for free-trade, for wide suffrage, for the abolition of legal cruelties in the penal code, and for facilitating in every manner the access of the young and the poor to the sources of wealth and power. But he can rarely accept the persons whom the so-called popular party propose to him as representatives of these liberalities. They have not at heart the ends which give to the name of democracy what hope and virtues are in it. (209-10)

Emerson balances his assertion with an analysis of "the other side, the conservative party," which he describes as

> composed of the most moderate, able and cultivated part of the population, [but] is timid, and merely defensive of property. It vindicates no right, it aspires to no real good, it brands no crime, it proposes no generous policy; it does not build, nor write, nor cherish the arts, nor foster religion, nor establish schools, nor encourage science, nor emancipate the slave, nor befriend the poor, or the Indian, or the immigrant. (210)

Emerson ultimately finds both parties lacking; neither provides both acceptable and practical answers to the nation's prevailing moral questions. As he does with zealous advocates of reform in "New England Reformers," he significantly connects politicians to a want of self-reliance when he contends that "[a] party is perpetually corrupted by personality," adding that "[w]hilst we absolve the association from dishonesty, we cannot extend the same charity to their leaders" (208-09). The reformer or politician cannot hope to reform society until he reforms himself; Emerson explains that

> Parties of principle, as, religious sects, or the party of free-trade, of universal suffrage, of abolition of slavery, of abolition of capital punishment,--degenerate into personalities, or would inspire enthusiasm. The vice of our leading parties in this country (which may be cited as a fair specimen of these societies of opinion) is that they do not plant themselves on the deep and necessary grounds to which they are especially entitled, but lash themselves to fury in the carrying of some local and momentary measure, nowise useful to the commonwealth. (209).

Emerson continues to affirm abolition as a worthwhile cause of reform, but his examples in both "Politics" and "New England Reformers" emphasize that actions of politicians and reformers tend to serve "the design[s] of the agent" (283) rather the needs of society at large.

Rusk ponders the possibilities of the political impact of "Politics" had it "reflect[ed] [the] outburst of assured enthusiasm for reform" exhibited in Emerson's speech on "Emancipation in the British West Indies" (303). Rusk quite properly points to Emerson's association with William Lloyd Garrison and other radical abolitionists, but he also acknowledges the "philosophical and academic" tone of "Politics" as it stands (303). Emerson effectively utilized the essay format to articulate his ideology in such an "academic" manner, but to discover practical applications of this philosophy, one must also examine the texts of his public addresses. An increasing sense of the urgency of a moral imperative can be discerned in Emerson's anti-slavery speeches beginning in the middle of the decade of the 1840s: his initial decision to speak openly on behalf of the abolitionists in "Emancipation in the British West Indies" was soon followed by additional anti-slavery addresses that embrace the cause of abolition in indisputably decisive terms.

Emerson accepted an invitation to speak before a convention of abolitionists on the "Anniversary of West Indian Emancipation" in Waltham, Massachusetts, on August 1, 1845. Favorably recalling the success of the emancipation of West Indian slaves, Emerson expresses his desire to "look forward to the similar occasion which we hope to celebrate in our own land" (*AW* 35) before addressing the issue of the defense of slavery in America. Correctly discerning "the objection of an inferiority of race" (36), Emerson queries, "And what is the amount of this conclusion in which the men of New-England acquiesce?" and replies:

> It is, that the Creator of the Negro has given him up to stand as a victim of a caricature of the white man beside him; to stoop under his pack, and to bleed under his whip. If that be the doctrine, then, I say, if He has given up his cause, He has also given up mine, who feel his wrong, and who in our hearts must curse the Creator who has undone him. (36)

But Emerson does not allow this conclusion to stand; he immediately reassures his audience that "it is not so; the Universe is not bankrupt" (36) and announces his intention to focus upon the moral aspects of the slavery question.

The moral sentiment, according to Emerson, supports abolition; he declares that "[t]he sentiment of right, which is the principle of civilization and the reason of reason, fights against this damnable atheism" (37), and elaborates that

> It is certain that, if it should come to question, all just men, all intelligent agents, must take the part of the black against the white man. Then I say, never is the planter safe; his house is a den; a just man cannot go there, except to tell him so. Whatever may appear at the moment, however contrasted the fortunes of the black and the white--though the one live in his hereditary mansion-house, and the latter in a shed; though one rides an Arabian horse, and the other is hunted by blood-hounds; though one eats, and the other sweats; one strikes, and the other dies--yet is the planter's an unsafe and unblest condition. Nature fights on the other side, and as power is always stealing from the idle to the busy hand, it seems inevitable that a revolution is preparing at no distant day to set these disjointed matters right. (37)

Emerson does not hesitate to use the bipolar structure to place the slave (and, by extension, the abolitionist) on the side of right and to align the planter with the unintelligent, the unblest, and, significantly, the unsafe. Emerson's prophetic anticipation of a "revolution . . . to set these disjointed matters right" remains philosophically allied with "History's" notion of the progression of human events: it neither calls for nor advocates direct political action, but merely predicts that abolition in the United States will ultimately occur. Emerson asserts that the slaves' fate "depends on the raising of their masters" and encourages his listeners to "[e]levate, enlighten, civilize the semi-barbarous nations of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama--take away from their debauched society the Bowie-knife, the rum-bowl, the dice-box, and the stews--take out the brute, and infuse a drop of civility and generosity, and you touch those selfish lords with thought and gentleness" (38). Emerson's assumption of the superiority of the moral sentiment enables him to elevate the Northern abolitionists above the "semi-barbarous" Southern planters, but his rather condescending tone is somewhat muted by the moral basis of his injunction to "enlighten" the slaveholders with the fruits of self-reliant Thinking. Despite the stated purpose of the speech, Emerson's focus remains on the exchange of ideas between individual Thinkers; he continues to make no attempt to promote political Action beyond increasing intellectual communication of the notion of the moral sentiment. Emerson continued to believe that the moral argument would succeed in making the case for abolition on the strength of its own merits. He would, however, grow increasingly frustrated in this hope as events of the decade progressed.

Emerson maintained his nonviolent position throughout the remainder of the 1840s. In his "Antislavery Speech at Dedham," delivered on July 4, 1846, he cautions that "[i]t is of no use to vote Slavery and the wars of Slavery to be damnable, if we go ahead of the sense and civilization of the people: the wolf will show his head very unexpectedly" (*AW* 42). Emerson recognized that the time for direct political action had not yet arrived, but he could and did encourage active support for the abolitionists, who had "[w]ith the noblest purpose in the general defection and apathy . . . been faithful to themselves" (44). Explaining that "[t]he history of this party of freedom, seems to me one of the best symptoms, but it is only a symptom," Emerson contends, "I am glad, not for what it has done, but that the party exists. Not what they do, but what they see, seems to me sublime" (44). Emerson defends the ideology of abolition without actually identifying himself as an abolitionist: he still portrays abolitionists as "they," but he qualifies this presumed distance by claiming, "I am a debtor, in common with all well-meaning persons, to this association. I think they have lessons yet to learn, and are learning them" (44). From Emerson's perspective, the abolitionists run counter to the prevailing trend towards apathy by consistently publishing their ideological views and forcing them into the public forum. The abolitionists thus merit respect by virtue of their willingness to voice their demands for change by courageously arguing against immoral and outmoded institutions.

In his address to the editors of the *Massachusetts Quarterly* in December of 1847, Emerson astutely identifies slavery as "in some sort the special enigma of the time . . . [which] has provoked against it a sort of inspiration and enthusiasm singular in modern history" (*W* 11: 390-91). Although he understood the frustratingly slow pace at which historical change often proceeds, he fervently believed that abolition was destined to become a reality and that circumstances were already moving to propel it in that direction. In his "Antislavery Remarks at Worcester" on August 3, 1849, Emerson exclaims:

> We are to rejoice in the march of events, in the sequence of the centuries, the progress of the great universal human, and shall I not say, divine, genius, which overpowers all our vices as well as our virtues, and turns our vices to the general benefit. I believe that the ardor of our virtuous enthusiasm in behalf of the slave, and of our indignation at his oppressor, naturally blinds us a little to the fate that is involved alike in our freedom, and in the slaveholding system at the South. (*AW* 47-48)

In this speech, Emerson avoids his characteristic distance from the abolitionists by referring to *our* "virtuous enthusiasm in behalf of the slave" and *our* "indignation at his oppressor." He counterbalances the moral cause of abolition, with which he now openly identifies, with vividly dehumanizing descriptions of the degeneracy of the South, contending that

> One must look to the planters of the South with the same feelings that he would regard the spider and the fly, the tiger and the deer.

> It is a barbarism. The people are barbarous. They are still in the animal state. They are not accountable like those whose eyes have once been opened to a Christianity that makes a return to evil impossible. Revolutions, as we say, never move backward. In our own history, this has been repeated over and over again. (48)

Definitive change is both necessary and desirable; Emerson declares that "it becomes essential, it becomes imperative, as man rises in the scale of civilization, as the ameliorating and expanding principles find effect in him;--it becomes as imperative that this institution should become discreditable, and should perish, as the old institutions which have gone before" (49). At Worcester, Emerson predicts that "such a relation [between tyrants and slaves] cannot continue" in the South, asserting that "it is the order of Providence that we would conspire heartily in this [abolitionist] work" (*AW* 49-50). In his final anti-slavery speech of the decade, Emerson enthusiastically regards the abolition of slavery as a "triumph which I look upon as inevitable" (49).

In 1850, an event occurred which brought slavery sharply to the attention of many Americans who had previously ignored, sidestepped, or remained on the margins of the issue. In an effort to avoid the threatened secession of Southern states, the United States Congress passed a series of measures designed to strike a balance of power between pro- and anti-slavery forces that included the Fugitive Slave Law. This law required the citizens of free states to assist the slave states in the apprehension of runaway slaves, and the resulting opposition of anti-slavery advocates in the North was met with ever-increasing antagonism on the part of the citizens of the South. The Fugitive Slave Law played perhaps the single most important role in escalating existing tensions between the two factions throughout the 1850s and creating even deeper ideological divisions between the sparring regions of the country. Senator Daniel Webster of

Massachusetts delivered a stirring speech to Congress in support of the so-called Compromise of 1850, a move which alienated many of his anti-slavery constituents in Massachusetts and fueled the fury of the Northern abolitionists. Emerson, who had once admired Webster, was enraged by both the Compromise and Webster's advocacy of it, and he responded with uncharacteristic bitterness and anger in the privacy of his Journal.

The volume of entries that Emerson devotes to slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law beginning in September of 1850 attests to the considerable extent to which the law and its potential ramifications affected him in a profoundly personal manner. The editors of *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* observe that his eighty-six page diatribe in Journal BO constitutes "a concentration unique, in length and tone, in all of Emerson's journals" (11: xv); in one entry, Emerson refers to “Bad times” and records:

> We wake up with a painful auguring, and after exploring a little to know the cause find it is the odious news in each day's paper, the infamy that has fallen on Massachusetts, that clouds the daylight, & takes away the comfort of every hour. We shall never feel well again until that detestable law is nullified in Massachusetts & until the Government is assured that once for all it cannot & shall not be executed here. All I have, and all I can do shall be given & done in opposition to the execution of the law. (*JMN* 11: 343-44)

Emerson extends his passionate attack on the law to include Daniel Webster and even the Union itself. He bitterly proclaims that "[t]he fame of Webster ends in this nasty law" (351), then elaborates:

> I may then add *the Union*. Nothing seems to me more bitterly futile than this bluster about the Union. A year ago we were all lovers & prizers of it. Before the passage of that law which Mr. Webster

> made his own, we indulged in all the dreams which foreign nations still cherish of American destiny. But in the new attitude in which we find ourselves, the degradation & personal dishonour which now rests like a miasma on every house in Massachusetts, the sentiment is entirely changed. No man can look his neighbor in the face. We sneak about with the infamy of crime in the streets, & cowardice in ourselves and frankly once and for all the Union is sunk, the flag is hateful, & will be hissed. (348-49)

Emerson's Journal evidences an unmistakable shift in both tone and focus: whereas his entries of the 1830s and 1840s had called only for consideration and discussion of the slavery issue for the purpose of persuading others to accept it as a moral aberration, those beginning in 1850 exhibit a decisive condemnation of the institution on social and political as well as philosophical grounds. Emerson reacts to the Fugitive Slave Law as an outraged citizen being force-fed a provision which he finds particularly unpalatable, and the establishment he once advocated working within now appears to him as singularly repugnant.

Although Emerson's public speeches never quite assumed the uncompromising level of anger apparent in many of his Journal entries, their tone became noticeably more vehement as the rift between the North and the South deepened over time. Emerson publicly opposed Daniel Webster when he addressed the citizens of Concord on the subject of "The Fugitive Slave Law" on May 3, 1851. Feeling personally betrayed (Allen 552-53), he veers from his characteristic habit of avoiding specific references to living persons and bitterly attacks Webster by name, angrily denouncing the senator's "treachery" (*W* 11: 181).[91] Departing from his previous sense of optimism that the issue would ultimately be decided on the strength of arguments based the presence of the moral sentiment, Emerson adopts a more outraged tone and vehemence of language than that of his earlier anti-slavery speeches. He condemns the "tameness" of the city of Boston for its "passive obedience" to the law on moral, social, and political grounds:

> I thought none, that was not ready to go on all fours, would back this law. And yet here are upright men . . . who can see nothing in this claim for bare humanity, and the health and honor of their native State, but canting fanaticism, sedition and "one idea." Because of this preoccupied mind, the whole wealth and power of Boston--two hundred thousand souls . . . are thrown into the scale of the crime: and the poor black boy, whom the fame of Boston had reached in the recesses of a vile swamp, or in the alleys of Savannah, on arriving here finds all his force employed to catch him. The famous town of Boston is his master's hound. The learning of the universities, the culture of elegant society, the acumen of lawyers, the majesty of the Bench, the eloquence of the Christian pulpit, the stoutness of Democracy; the respectability of the Whig party are all combined to kidnap him. (180-85)

Although Emerson's emphasis remains primarily moral, he has expanded the scope of the slavery issue to implicate not only the slaveholders of the South but the population of the entire country as well. He argues that "[t]he crisis is interesting as it shows the self-protecting nature of the world and of the Divine laws. It is the law of the world,--as much immorality as there is, so much misery . . . . America, the most prosperous country in the Universe, has the greatest calamity in the Universe, negro slavery" (186). Citing historical examples of obviously unjust laws, Emerson encourages his audience to resist the mandate of the Fugitive Slave Law through passive disobedience.

The first "Fugitive Slave Law" address signals the point at which Emerson departs from mere contemplation to consider crossing the invisible boundary between the Thinker and the Actor. "If one man," he suggests, "had felt the spirit of Coke or Manfield or Parsons, and read the law with the eye of freedom, the dishonor of Massachusetts had been prevented, and a limit set to these encroachments forever" (*W* 11: 214). Since the dishonor was not prevented, Massachusetts citizens must inhibit further damage through individual acts of resistance. Emerson contends, "It is contrary to the primal sentiment of duty, and therefore all men that are born are, in proportion to their power of thought and their moral sensibility, found to be the natural enemies of this law. The resistance of all moral beings is secured to it" (188). Self-reliant morality is assisted by the "chain of affinity" argument of "History"; Emerson's belief that "[w]e sympathize in the great moments of history, in the great discoveries, the great resistances, the great prosperities of men;--because there law was enacted . . . *for us*, as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded" (*W* 2: 6-7) is thus realized in the form of courageous acts of civil disobedience to morally reprehensible statutes. Emerson utilizes historical examples of resistance to "immoral laws" to bolster his argument against the Fugitive Slave Law and to encourage his listeners to consider the potential of their individual and collective moral power:

> We must make a small state great, by making every man in it true. It was the praise of Athens, "She could not lead countless armies into the field, but she knew how with a little band to defeat those who could." Every Roman reckoned himself at least a match for a Province. Every Dorian did. Every Englishman in Australia, in South Africa, in India, or in whatever barbarous country their forts and factories have been set up,--represents London, represents the art, power and law of Europe. Every man educated at the Northern

> school carries the like advantages into the South. (*W* 11: 212-13)

The "Circles" philosophy that enables Emerson to look toward the future abolition of slavery is the same force which holds Webster back; "Mr. Webster," he declares, "is a man who lives by his memory, a man of the past, not a man of faith or of hope" (203). Relegated to the remote regions of a dead past, Webster is pronounced incapable of personal transcendence from the limits of the There and Then to the living reality of the Here and Now (*W* 2: 11), the location to which Emerson predictably assigns his morally-conscious, self-reliant Actor.

Emerson's political focus within the first "Fugitive Slave Law" address continues to center on the implications of the law to the lives of the citizens of Massachusetts. Emerson opens the address by pointing to his own reluctance to speak on the issue at all and by indicating that recent events have compelled his personal attention, as well as that of his listeners:

> Fellow Citizens: I accepted your invitation to speak to you on the great question of these days, with very little consideration of what I might have to offer: for there seems to be no option. The last year has forced all of us into politics, and made it a paramount duty to seek what it is often a duty to shun. We do not breathe well. There is infamy in the air. I have a new experience. I wake in the morning with a painful sensation, which I carry about all day, and which, when traced home, is the odious remembrance of that ignominy which has fallen on Massachusetts, which robs the landscape of beauty, and takes the sunshine out of every hour. I have lived all my life in this state, and never had any experience of personal inconvenience from the laws, until now. They never came near me to any discomfort before. I find the like sensibility in my neighbors; and in that class who take no interest in the ordinary

> questions of party politics. . . . the whole population will in a short time be as painfully affected. (*W* 11: 179-80)

The city of Boston's willingness to participate in the apprehension of fugitive slaves illustrates to Emerson the close proximity of the matter and prompts him to go public with his abolitionist views. Emerson underscores the significance of slavery as it has become a *Massachusetts* issue; he contends that "[o]ne thing is plain, we cannot answer for the Union, but we must keep Massachusetts true. It is of unspeakable importance that she play her honest part. She must follow no vicious example. Massachusetts is a little state: countries have been great by ideas" (210-11). Emerson thus equates the notion of patriotism with Massachusetts' self-interest, a characteristic posture which acquires a political dimension in this and subsequent anti-slavery addresses.

Three years later, Emerson demonstrated an unwillingness to let up on his opposition to either Webster or the slavery issue. His second "Fugitive Slave Law" address, delivered at New York's Tabernacle on March 7, 1854, commemorates the fourth anniversary of Webster's now-infamous "Seventh of March" speech supporting the Compromise of 1850. Similar in tone and approach to his 1851 address, the speech constitutes "a more finished and dramatic performance" in an even more receptive anti-slavery forum (Allen 556). Echoing his 1851 notion of his compulsory entrance into the fray, Emerson emphasizes the fact that the issue continues to affect him personally. He observes:

> I have lived all my life without suffering any known inconvenience from American Slavery. I never saw it; I never heard the whip; I never felt the check on my free speech and action, until, the other day, when Mr. Webster, by his personal influence, brought the Fugitive Slave Law on the country. I say Mr. Webster, for though

> the Bill was not his, it is yet notorious that he was the life and soul of it, that he gave it all he had; it cost him his life, and under the shadow of his great name inferior men sheltered themselves, threw their ballots for it and made the law. (*W* 11: 219)

Emerson utilizes the fact of Webster's recent death to suggest that the odious law actually consumed its most influential supporter, who had been criticized as "the chief of all the slave-catchers in the country" (Current 175). Emerson follows with a compellingly equivocal memoir that both praises Webster's early accomplishments as "the representative of the American Continent" (*W* 11: 221) and blasts "the defects of this great man's mind" (223). Grouping Webster with politicians in general, Emerson concludes that "the great show their legitimate power in nothing more than in their power to misguide us" (220). Once a man whom Emerson considered a credible Thinker and Actor, Webster is unceremoniously stripped of his former status as an American hero when he fails to act according to the moral imperatives that characterize the noble sentiment. As Emerson addresses "the readers and thinkers of 1854," he discourages blind obedience and points to the moral dangers that can accompany the following of leaders.

Although self-reliance constitutes the core of Emerson's argument, his second "Fugitive Slave Law" address is certainly more than just "'Self-Reliance' written as an occasional piece."[92] The expansion of Emerson’s argument to include the citizens of New York signals a departure from his exclusive emphasis on Massachusetts and is accompanied by a corresponding shift in his persuasive strategy. For the first time in an anti-slavery address, Emerson utilizes the second person to illustrate the moral, social, and political significance of the progression of historical events. He asserts:

> You relied on the constitution. It has not the word *slave* in it; and

> very good argument has shown that it would not warrant the crimes that are done under it; that, with provisions so vague for an object not named, and which could not be availed of to claim a barrel of sugar or a barrel of corn, the robbing of a man and of all his posterity is effected. You relied on the Supreme Court. The law was right, excellent law for the lambs. But what if unhappily the judges were chosen from the wolves, and give to all the law a wolfish interpretation? You relied on the Missouri Compromise. That is ridden over. You relied on State sovereignty in the Free States to protect their citizens. They are driven with contempt out of the courts and out of the territory of the Slave States,--if they are so happy as to get out with their lives,--and now you relied on these dismal guaranties [*sic*] infamously made in 1850; and, before the body of Webster is yet crumbled, it is found that they have crumbled. This eternal monument of his fame and of the Union is rotten in four years. They are no guaranty to the free states. They are a guaranty to the slave states that, as they have hitherto met with no repulse, they shall meet with none. (*W* 11: 233-34)

Emerson's strategy presents the Fugitive Slave Law as a personal affront to each individual in his audience and points to the ineffective response of government leaders to the progressive developments within each stage of the national crisis. Expressing his unwavering belief in the inevitability of the institution's demise, Emerson suggests taking a less passive approach to the problem:

> Whilst the inconsistency of slavery with the principles upon which the world is built guarantees its downfall, I own that the patience it requires is almost too sublime for mortals, and seems to demand of us more than mere hoping. And when one sees how fast the rot

> spreads,--it is growing serious,--I think we demand of superior men that they be superior in this,--that the mind and the virtue shall give their verdict in their day, and accelerate so far the progress of civilization. (240-41)

Emerson's urging of his audience to "accelerate . . . the progress of civilization" constitutes an unmistakable call for definitive action beyond his earlier plea for passive resistance to the mandates of the Fugitive Slave Law. Contending that "Liberty is aggressive" and that "Liberty is the Crusade of all brave and conscientious men," Emerson openly expresses support for the Anti-Slavery Society and urges his audience to side with the moral cause: "It is a potent support and ally to a brave man standing single, or with a few, for the right, and out-voted and ostracized, to know that better men in other parts of the country appreciate the service and will rightly report him to his own and the next age" (*W* 11: 241-44). Emerson contends that potentially heroic Actors will take action on behalf of the moral sentiment in the "hope we have reached the end of our unbelief, have come to a belief that there is a divine Providence in the world, which will not save us but through our own coöperation" (244). Though Emerson's call for individual action in the cause of abolition hardly makes him "almost an anarchist" (Allen 556), his stance does reflect a progression in his political view of the appropriate response to the Fugitive Slave Law from passive disobedience towards more radical forms of active civil resistance. The "Fugitive Slave Law" addresses of 1851 and 1854 reveal an Emerson determined to propel history forward on behalf of the mandates of the moral sentiment and to persuade conscientious Thinkers to join the ranks of self-reliant Actors pursuing the noble cause.

Emerson articulates the various aspects of his consideration of the slavery issue in his "Lecture on Slavery," initially delivered on January 25, 1855, at the

Tremont Temple in Boston.[93] The speech survives as a fitting summary of Emerson's public ideological and sociopolitical positions during the middle of the decade of the 1850s: still emphasizing the philosophical nature of slavery as an aberration of the moral sentiment, he characterizes the institution as an evil blight upon the nation and proposes concrete solutions. Echoing *Nature*'s emphasis on the primacy of the moral sentiment, Emerson reminds his audience that "[t]he idea of abstract right exists in the human mind, and lays itself out in the equilibrium of nature, in the equalities and periods of our system, in the level of seas, in the action and reaction of forces, that nothing is allowed to exceed or absorb the rest; if it do, it is disease and is quickly destroyed" (*AW* 98). He adds that "[a] high state of general health cannot coexist with a mortal disease in any part. If any one member suffers, all the members suffer. Then, again, we must find relief from the uniform gloom of the theme, in large considerations of history, whereinto slavery and war enter as necessary shadows in the vast picture of Providence" (92). Observing that "the theory of our government is Liberty" and that Liberty "is the severest test by which a government can be tried" (104), Emerson recites the moral failure of public officials to nullify the Fugitive Slave Law. He charges that

> [t]his outrage of giving back a stolen and plundered man to his thieves was ordained and under circumstances the most painful. There was enough law of the State of Massachusetts to resist the dishonor and the crime, but no judge had the heart to invoke, no governor was found to execute it. The judges feared collision of the State and the Federal Courts. The Governor was a most estimable man--we all knew his sterling virtues, but he fell in an era when governors did not govern, when judges do not judge, when Presidents do not preside, and when representatives do not

> represent. (101)[94]

The failure of leaders to perform their appointed tasks and to act appropriately on behalf of their constituents creates a moral void that nature is then compelled to fill. Emerson recalls his doctrine of compensation when he reminds his listeners that "[s]ecret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the Divine justice. It is impossible to tilt the beam. All the tyrants and proprietors and monopolists of the world in vain set their shoulders to heave the bar:--settles forevermore the ponderous equator to its line, and man and mote and star and sun must range with it, or be pulverized by the recoil" (99). He insists that there is an obvious, if neglected, need for corrective action--an assignment that elected officials have repeatedly declined to accept. Pointing to the government's discrediting of itself, Emerson concludes that "[w]hen the public fails in its duty, private men take its place" (102).

Emerson's hope for a peaceful resolution to the slavery issue would be thwarted by historical events when existing tensions between the North and the South were heightened by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. In yet another effort to avert the impending national crisis, Congress repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited slavery in the Louisiana Purchase area north of an established dividing line at 36º30'. Since all of the Nebraska territory lay within the free area, a compromise was reached which divided the area into the present states of Kansas and Nebraska and left the issue of slavery in each to be decided by popular sovereignty. Having long regarded the 1820 measure as a sacred compromise, the North reacted violently to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, fearing that Kansas would fall victim to the pro-slavery forces; the South responded in kind with its own fear that Nebraska would be overrun by free-soilers. The struggle ultimately centered itself in the Kansas territory, and the ensuing series of events created even deeper divisions between pro- and anti-slavery forces in the southern and northern regions. It also produced a powerful symbol, John Brown, a violent abolitionist who had migrated to Kansas for the express purpose of promoting the free-soil cause (Villard 93).

Sporadic clashes in the Kansas territory culminated in May of 1856, when the free-soil town of Lawrence was sacked by pro-slavery forces, producing several casualties, including six free-soilers. Believing himself to be an instrument of God, John Brown assembled a small band of followers, which included four of his own sons, and launched a retaliatory raid which resulted in the brutal murders of five alleged advocates of the pro-slavery cause. Meanwhile, Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, an abolitionist, delivered in the Senate a two-day address, which harshly denounced Southern slaveholders, in response to the sacking of Lawrence. Reacting to a perceived attack on Southern honor on behalf of Senator Butler of South Carolina (who was absent during the diatribe), Congressman Preston Brooks, also of South Carolina, confronted Senator Sumner in the Senate chamber and beat him to insensibility with a heavy cane. Outraged by the attack on Sumner and the recent events in Kansas, Emerson delivered brief but fiery speeches on both issues during the course of 1856.

Emerson addressed a town meeting of the citizens of Concord on May 26, 1856, on the subject of "The Assault Upon Mr. Sumner." Even more vehement in tone than his "Fugitive Slave Law" addresses, this short but sincere speech reflects Emerson's ever-increasing disgust with the South as well as the issue of slavery. Contending that "[t]he events of the last few years and months have taught us the lessons of centuries," Emerson ponders, "I do not see how a barbarous community and a civilized community can constitute one state. I think we must get rid of slavery, or we must get rid of freedom" (*W* 11: 247). Although the address is far too brief and focused to emphasize many earlier affinities, it dramatically echoes *Nature*'s notion of the moral law's position at nature's center and its influence "upon every individual [as] that amount of truth which it illustrates to him" (*W* 1: 42). It also augments Emerson's earlier contention that "[a] right action seems to fill the eye, and be related to all nature" (45) by effectively illustrating its antithesis.

To a far greater extent than in his earlier anti-slavery addresses, Emerson creates polarity in "The Assault Upon Mr. Sumner" by drawing lines between the moral values of the *people* of the North and the South. "Life has not the parity of value in the free state and in the slave state," he announces;

> In one, it is adored with education, with skillful labor, with arts, with long prospective interests, with sacred family ties, with honor and justice. In the other, life is a fever; man is an animal, given to pleasure, frivolous, irritable, spending his days in hunting and practising with deadly weapons to defend himself against his slaves and against his companions brought up in the same idle and dangerous way. Such people live for the moment, they have properly no future, and readily risk on every passion a life which is of small value to themselves or to others. (*W* 11: 247).

By publicly dividing the two regions into honorable and barbarous camps and characterizing the Southern man as an "animal," Emerson initiates the psychological process of dehumanizing his enemy in order to make its extermination possible.[95] His portrayal of Sumner as a virtuous "protector of families" (251), a heroic victim with a "singularly pure character" (248), contrasts sharply with his corresponding depiction of the "bullies" and "assassins" of the South, who carry the mark of "[t]he murderer's brand" (251-52). Emerson's name-calling constitutes a shift in his usual logic- and reason-based argument strategy; clearly quite emotional about his subject, he complains bitterly that "[t]he whole state of South Carolina does not offer one or any number of persons who are to be weighted for a moment on the scale with such a person as the meanest of them all has now struck down" (248). Emerson continues his defense of Sumner, asserting that "I find him accused of publishing his opinion of the Nebraska conspiracy in a letter to the people of the United States, with discourtesy. Then, that he is an abolitionist; as if every sane human being were not an abolitionist, or a believer that all men should be free" (250). "[E]very man of worth in New England loves [Sumner's] virtues," as do "all honorable men and true patriots" (251-52); Emerson thus connects New England with patriotic concepts of virtue and honor and associates the South with negative notions of baseness and brutality.

Emerson expands this dichotomy in his "Speech on Affairs in Kansas," which he delivered at a Kansas relief meeting in Cambridge on September 10, 1856, and which Gay Wilson Allen appropriately describes as "one of his most impassioned speeches" (587). Emerson contends that "[t]here is this peculiarity about the case of Kansas, that all the right is on one side. We hear the screams of hunted wives and children answered by the howl of the butchers" (*W* 11: 255). Appealing for aid on behalf of the Kansas anti-slavery forces, Emerson emphasizes the justness of their cause and its contrast with that of the pro-slavery enemy: "In these calamities under which they suffer, and the worst which threaten them, the people of Kansas ask for bread, clothes, arms and men, to save them alive, and enable them to stand against these enemies of the human race. They have a right to be helped, for they have helped themselves" (256). Emerson suggests that the Kansas anti-slavery forces have earned the support of New England by virtue of their heroic self-reliance, and he deepens his personal involvement in the abolition cause by contributing to it directly and encouraging others to do the same.[96] He insists, in fact, that such relief has become a genuine necessity. He explains that

> This aid must be sent, and this is not to be doled out as an ordinary charity; but bestowed up to the magnitude of the want, and, as has been elsewhere said, "on the scale of a national action." I think we are to give largely, lavishly, to these men. And we must prepare to do it. We must learn to do with less, live in a smaller tenement, sell our apple-trees, our acres, our pleasant houses. . . . We must have aid from individuals,--we must also have aid from the state. (*W* 11: 256-57)

This passage reveals both the expanding range of Emerson's view of the slavery problem and the extremes to which he is willing to go in his efforts to remedy it. He again invites individuals to participate as Actors and offers suggestions as to how they might contribute. Emerson makes his first call for "national action" and indicates that "the whole world knows that this is no accidental brawl, but a systematic war to the knife" (257). Having previously drawn the moral battle lines, Emerson proceeds to prepare for an actual war.

At this point, Emerson's public anti-slavery pronouncements border on open subversion. He announces, "I am glad to see that the terror of disunion and anarchy is disappearing. Massachusetts, in its heroic day, had no government--was an anarchy. Every man stood on his own two feet, was his own governor; and there was no breach of peace from Cape Cod to Mount Hoosac" (261-62). Although his "heroic" example looks to the past, Emerson's attention here is focused clearly on the present. His glorification of anarchy mirrors his increasing disenchantment with the Union, which intensifies throughout his series of anti-slavery addresses. Emerson offers his most fervent criticism of the Union to date in “Speech on Affairs in Kansas"; by 1856, the Union had become for him a mockery of its original purposes and a genuine impediment to the cause of abolition. Emerson asserts:

> Language has lost its meaning in the universal cant. *Representative Government* is really misrepresentative; *Union* is a conspiracy against the Northern States which the Northern States are to have the privilege of paying for; the *adding of Cuba and Central America* to the slave marts is *enlarging the area of Freedom. Manifest Destiny, Democracy, Freedom,* fine names for an ugly thing. They call it otto of rose and lavender,--I call it bilge-water. They call if Chivalry and Freedom; I call it the stealing of the earnings of a poor man and the earnings of his little girl and boy, and the earnings of all that shall come from him, his children's children forever. (*W* 11: 259-60)

"What are the results of law and union?" Emerson queries. He responds that "[t]here is no Union. Can any citizen of Massachusetts travel in honor through Kentucky and Alabama and speak his mind? Or can any citizen of the Southern country who happens to think kidnapping a bad thing, say so? Let Mr. Underwood of Virginia answer" (260). Decidedly one-sided, Emerson's argument is nevertheless significant in its proclamation that the Union no longer exists. Sounding the death knell on the notion of "union" paves the way for Emerson's subsequent introduction of his even more dire prediction of a second revolution. He declares that

> the hour is coming when the strongest will not be strong enough. A harder task will the new revolution of the nineteenth century be than was the revolution of the eighteenth century. I think the American Revolution bought its glory cheap. If the problem was new, it was simple. If there were a few people, they were united, and the

> enemy three thousand miles off. But now, vast property, gigantic interests, family connections, webs of party, cover the land with a network that immensely multiplies the dangers of war. (262-63)

Emerson's clear recognition of the possibility of war is given added poignancy by his obvious awareness of the identity of the "enemy." Appreciating the potential ramifications of the conflict, Emerson nevertheless appears prepared to welcome a final solution to the American slavery problem.

In February of 1857, Emerson met John Brown, who had come to Massachusetts to seek funding for his abolitionist activities in Kansas. Impressed by Brown's speech at the Town Hall, Emerson entertained Brown as a guest in his home. Brown returned to Concord for the same purpose two years later, and Emerson and others, believing that Brown intended to work to make Kansas a free state, contributed generously to the cause. But Brown had another goal, which was to launch a raid upon the federal arsenal located in Harper's Ferry, Virginia. His purpose was to provide weapons to slaves to enable them to rise up against their masters and to establish a free-soil region within the territory of the South.[97] Brown's October 16 excursion at Harper's Ferry was both poorly planned and clumsily executed, and he and six of his followers were captured and placed on trial for treason by the State of Virginia. All were found guilty and ultimately hanged, but John Brown was celebrated by the North as a courageous martyr who gave his life in the relentless pursuit of a just and noble cause.

As the North gained a martyr to vindicate, the South was given a villain to malign. Northern newspapers rushed to Brown's defense, while the South expressed its outrage that a man who would incite rebellion and steal their property could be revered as a savior and regarded as an instrument of God (Villard 474-76). Many suspected that Brown actually courted martyrdom; some believed that he was genuinely insane. In any case, few felt that Brown was anything other than completely sincere in vehement advancement of his cause, and he gained many admirers, including Southerners, who regarded his raid as a demonstration that the North was capable of paying more than just lip service to the anti-slavery cause (474-76). Brown's abortive raid also provided a preview of coming events, as many observers on both sides recognized the potential for conflict and bloodshed that was going to be played out on a much larger stage within a very short period of time (474).

During Brown's trial in November of 1859, Emerson delivered an address on the subject of "Courage" at the Music Hall in Boston. Although Emerson's subsequent textual revisions resulted in a noticeably subdued tone when he converted it to essay form,[98] the address is stirring in its undisguised admiration for its *exemplum*, John Brown. Cataloguing the qualities of courage, Emerson contends that "'[t]is said courage is common, but the immense esteem in which it is held proves it to be rare" (*W* 7: 255). He identifies courage as "[t]he third excellence [following disinterestedness and practical power] . . . the perfect will, which no terrors can shake, which is attracted by frowns or threats or hostile armies, nay, needs these to be awake, and fan its reserved energies into a pure flame, and is never quite itself until the hazard is extreme; then it is serene and fertile, and all its powers play well" (255). He then recalls the affairs in Kansas, observing that

> [o]ne heard much cant of peace-parties long ago in Kansas and elsewhere, that their strength lay in the greatness of their wrongs, and dissuading all resistance, as if to make this strength greater. But were their wrongs greater than the negro's? And what kind of strength did they ever give him? It was always invitation to the tyrant, and bred disgust in those who would protect the victim.

> What cannot stand must fall; and the measure of our sincerity and therefore of the respect of men, is the amount of health and wealth we will hazard in the defence of our right. (*W* 7: 260)

Emerson again dichotomizes, indirectly equating the South with tyranny and the North with the defense of "right." "Sacred courage," according to Emerson, "indicates that a man loves an idea better than all things in the world; that he is aiming neither at pelf nor comfort, but will venture all to put in act the invisible thought in his mind" (274). John Brown's courage is thus, by Emerson's definition, sacred, for he seeks truth within himself and acts upon his own inner convictions. Brown appeals to Emerson and other abolitionists by virtue of his unfaltering "'faith in ideas'" (Perry 252); he personifies the notion of self-trust and adherence to the call of the moral sentiment, and thus embodies Emerson's paradigmatic conception of the quintessential heroic exemplar.

Although Emerson defines many of his characteristics of courage in an abstract manner, Brown and Governor Wise of Virginia are the only living individuals within the text whom he specifically identifies by name. Many of his assertions appear tailor-made for Brown, such as his belief that Nature helps those who help themselves. He observes that "Nature has charged every one with his own defense as with his own support, and the only title I can have to your help is when I have manfully put forth all the means I possess to keep me, and being overborne by odds, the by-standers have a natural wish to interfere and see fair play" (*W* 7: 260). Emerson appears to play the bystander, a witness to Brown's stirring example of self-reliance. A possible reference to Brown's serenity throughout the ordeal of his trial, the passage, which carries forward from *Nature*, suggests that right action provides its own defense and compels spectators to support it in principle. Emerson's concept of the power of self-trust is even more explicit in his closing passage:

> If you accept your thoughts as inspirations from the Supreme Intelligence, obey them when they prescribe difficult duties, because they come only so long as they are used; or, if your skepticism reaches to the last verge, and you have no confidence in any foreign mind, then be brave, because there is one good opinion which must always be of consequence to you, namely, your own. (*W* 7: 277)

The "difficult duties" subtly suggest Brown's predicament, and Emerson adroitly creates a connection between "thoughts as inspirations" and "Supreme Intelligence," a compelling notion in light of Brown's belief in himself as an instrument of God. Pointing to Brown's example, Emerson touts courageous action to its logical completion, even to the point of martyrdom, as the highest and most laudable expression of individual adherence to the call of the moral sentiment.

As his earlier address elevates Elijah P. Lovejoy by virtue of his exemplary "Heroism," Emerson equates John Brown with his own notion of "Courage." Emerson continues to employ heroic exemplars willing to martyr themselves in their furtherance of a righteous cause; in "Courage," he asserts:

> Pain is superficial, and therefore fear is. The torments of martyrdom are probably most keenly felt by the by-standers. The torments are illusory. The first suffering is the last suffering, the later hurts being lost on insensibility. Our affections and wishes for the external welfare of the hero tumultuously rush to expression in tears and outcries: but we, like him, subside into indifferency and defiance when we perceive how short is the longest arm of malice, how serene the sufferer. (265)

Emerson presents a second image of the bystander, who stands in awe of the hero's serenity, but he significantly points to the futility of the bystander's concern for the martyr's "external welfare," since the martyr himself transcends these considerations by focusing exclusively on internal motivations. Emerson contemplates the idea that "[t]here is a persuasion in the soul of man that he is here for cause, that he was put down in this place by the Creator to do the work for which he inspires him, that thus he is an overmatch for all antagonists that could combine against him" (*W* 7: 273). Convinced that Brown represents such a man, Emerson directly addresses Brown's case:

> The true temper has genial influences. It makes a bond of union between enemies. Governor Wise of Virginia, in the record of his first interviews with the prisoner, appeared to great advantage. If Governor Wise is a superior man, he distinguishes John Brown. As they confer, they understand each other swiftly; each respects the other. If opportunity allowed, they would prefer each other's society and desert their former companions. Enemies would become affectionate. Hector and Achilles, Richard and Saladin, Wellington and Soult, General Daumas and Abdel-Kader, become aware that they are nearer and more alike than any other two, and, if their nation and circumstance did not keep them apart, they would run into each other's arms. (271)

Although Emerson considered intervening with Governor Wise on Brown's behalf and he actually went so far as to draft a letter appealing to the governor's self-interest, he ultimately realized that there was very little he could do for the ardent abolitionist (Allen 590-91). Brown was found guilty of treason and was sentenced to be hanged on December 2, 1859.

On November 18, Emerson made a plea for the relief of the family of John Brown at the Tremont Temple in Boston. Pointing to Brown as "the hero of

Harper's Ferry" and "a representative of the American Republic" (*W* 11: 267), Emerson provides a brief history of Brown's life and holds him up as an example of true American patriotism. "Many of you have seen him," he observes, "and every one who has heard him speak has been impressed alike by his simple, artless goodness, joined with his sublime courage. He joins that perfect Puritan faith, which brought his fifth ancestor to Plymouth Rock with his grandfather's ardor in the Revolution" (268). Extending this notion, Emerson creates both Biblical and patriotic parallels:

> He believes in two articles,--two instruments, shall I say?--the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence; and he used this expression in conversation here concerning them, "Better that a whole generation of men, women and children should pass away by a violent death than that one word of either should be violated in this country." There is a Unionist,--there is a strict constructionist for you. He believes in the Union of the States, and he conceives that the only obstruction to the Union is Slavery, and for that reason, as a patriot, he works for its abolition. (*W* 11: 268-69)

Although Emerson's definition of "Union" here is hardly controversial, it demonstrates his constant reconsideration of the concept when it is examined within the context of his previous anti-slavery speeches. Emerson appears at this point to hold onto little hope for the Union's preservation and points to the travesty of justice that he considers Brown's condemnation to represent. He asserts that

> [n]othing can resist the sympathy which all elevated minds must feel with Brown, and through them the whole civilized world; and if he must suffer, he must drag official gentlemen into an immortality most undesirable, of which they have already some disagreeable

> forebodings. Indeed, it is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Slavery, when the governor of Virginia is forced to hang a man whom he declares to be a man of the most integrity, truthfulness and courage he has ever met. Is that the kind of man the gallows is built for? (*W* 11: 269-70)

Despite the public sympathy for his cause expressed by Emerson and others, Brown was executed as scheduled on December 2, 1859. Emerson, Thoreau, and other anti-slavery supporters held a memorial service that was attended by advocates from neighboring towns, but the controversial nature of the figure of Brown was illustrated that same night when a separate crowd burned him in effigy (Allen 590-91). Although disillusioned with the lack of progress in the anti-slavery cause, Emerson continued to applaud Brown's efforts, and he presented another brief but emotional "John Brown" speech in Salem on January 6, 1860. Employing a new argument strategy, Emerson relates the story of a young Brown's early encounter with slavery in the form of a twelve-year-old slave. After observing the mistreatment of the boy, including his witnessing the beating of the boy with an iron shovel, Brown, according to Emerson, "swore an oath of resistance to slavery as long as he lived" (*W* 11: 278). Emerson continues to elevate the character of Brown and to refer to him in glowing terms, contending that "[i]f he kept sheep, it was with a royal mind; and if he traded in wool, he was a merchant prince, not in the amount of wealth, but in the protection of interests confided to him" (280). He counters his positive portrayal of Brown with a now characteristically negative depiction of ineffective politicians:

> I am not a little surprised at the easy effrontery with which political gentlemen, in and out of Congress, take it upon them to say that there are not a thousand men in the North who sympathize with

> John Brown. It would be far safer and nearer the truth to say that all people, in proportion to their sensibility and self-respect, sympathize with him. For it is impossible to see courage, and disinterestedness, and the love that casts out fear, without sympathy. All women are drawn to him by their predominance of sentiment. All gentlemen, of course, are on his side. I do not mean by "gentlemen," people of scented hair and perfumed handkerchiefs, but men of gentle blood and generosity, "fulfilled with all nobleness," who, like the Cid, give the outcast leper a share of their bed; like the dying Sidney, pass the cup of cold water to the dying soldier who needs it more. For what is the oath of gentle blood and knighthood? What but to protect the weak and lowly against the strong oppressor? (*W* 11: 280-81)

Emerson again equates justice and right with the North, and his proclamations concerning Brown's supporters become increasingly all-inclusive. He immediately counters this upbeat notion of right thinking with a gloomy image of "the strong oppressor":

> Nothing is more absurd than to complain of this sympathy, or to complain of a party of men united in opposition to slavery. As well complain of gravity, or the ebb of the tide. Who makes the abolitionist? The slave-holder. The sentiment of mercy is the natural recoil which the laws of the universe provide to protect mankind from destruction by savage passions. And our blind statesmen go up and down, with committees of vigilance and safety, hunting for the origin of this new heresy. They will need a very vigilant committee indeed to find its birthplace, and a very strong force to root it out. For the arch-abolitionist, older than

> Brown, and older than the Shenandoah Mountains, is Love, whose other name is Justice, which was before Alfred, before Lycurgus, before slavery, and will be after it. (*W* 11: 281)

Emerson's condemnation of slavery, and by extension of the South, is by no means new at this point, but his crediting the slaveholder with creating the abolitionist makes a very compelling ideological argument. Emerson continues to blame the South for the crisis, and his reference to slavery as "this new heresy" demonstrates an increasing tendency to view the issue in fundamentally religious terms. By 1860, abolition is firmly established as a kind of crusade for Emerson, a just war to be waged at virtually any cost.

Although Emerson's advocacy of John Brown was certainly consistent with the views of many citizens of the North during the late 1850s, it was nevertheless a unique phenomenon in other ways. Emerson's public support of Brown constituted a departure for Emerson, a man who had, until the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, characteristically avoided addressing controversial subjects. It would have been difficult to find a more contentious topic in 1859 than Brown, who was, after all, a political extremist, a man who had justified murder in Lawrence, Kansas, on the basis of his own "eye for an eye" philosophy. If Emerson had been concerned with the opinions of people in the South, he would certainly have been aware of the potential ramifications of extolling the praises of a man who was obviously vilified there. But Emerson appears to have been drawn to the sincerity of Brown's conviction, the depth of his personal faith, and his self-reliant willingness to act aggressively in defense of his own beliefs. Regardless of whether or not Brown replaced Webster as Emerson's "champion of Union" (Simpson 59-60), the fact remains that Brown emerged as a powerful heroic symbol for both Emerson and the North. In electing to ally himself with Brown, Emerson irrevocably linked himself both personally and historically to the public promotion of the anti-slavery cause.

The possibility that emancipation of the slaves might be achieved only at the cost of disunion and a bloody civil war neither deterred Emerson from his philosophical purpose nor diminished his enthusiasm for his cause. In Emerson's view, the moral sentiment dictated that all conscientious Thinkers acknowledge the inherent justness of abolition in principle, and that potentially heroic Actors should support it in practice through the combined strength of their individual and collective efforts. Although he continued to focus his attention on Massachusetts politics, Emerson decided in 1860 that the Republicans offered the greater chance for realizing his abolitionist hopes and elected to direct his support towards Republican candidates (Allen 605-06). Allen observes that Emerson "was slow to work up enthusiasm" for Abraham Lincoln because Lincoln was determined to work to preserve the Union, which Emerson had already determined to be expendable in the greater moral crusade against the institution of slavery (606).[99] Emerson was not interested in compromises or partial solutions to the nation's social and political problems; he was determined to see the abolitionist effort through to what he regarded as its natural and inevitable conclusion in the total eradication of American slavery and its resulting historical and cultural progression towards the next concentric circle.

Both Rusk and Allen point out that Emerson's *The Conduct of Life*, which was published in November of 1860, makes no mention of slavery, politics, or the mounting contention between the increasingly fractious regions (Rusk 406; Allen 604). Rusk contends that Emerson "frankly gave up any debate on the spirit of the times in favor of the eternal question, 'How shall I live?'" (406), but it should be noted that such an ideological stance remained characteristic of Emerson's written works in general. Journals and essays served as the primary media for the articulation of Emerson's philosophy, providing both a private avenue for considering abstract ideas and a public means of exploring them within the safety and comfort of a controlled (and ultimately closed) environment. The social and political realms occasionally invade the journals, but they generally enter the essays only in the form of specific illustrations of the philosophical arguments Emerson presents within other contexts. Emerson's essays concentrate on the consideration of abstract concepts, and to phrase such a focus, as Rusk does, in terms of a single all-encompassing question such as "'How shall I live?'" appears fundamentally accurate at the same time that it seems to oversimplify a rather complex personal ideology. Since day-to-day living involves both thinking and acting, it is important to recognize the diverse and potentially far-reaching implications of such a deceptively simple assertion as "'How shall I live?'" within an ideology as thoroughly articulated as that of Emerson. The answers one provides to this query on any given day could mean the difference between thinking and acting, fighting and retreating, or living and dying.

It is not surprising, then, that when the war finally arrived on April 19, 1861, Emerson welcomed it as a fundamental opportunity to further the abolition of slavery as a just and moral sociopolitical cause. Asserting in "Civilization at a Pinch" that "declared war is vastly safer than war undeclared" (Cabot 2: 601), Emerson queries, "'How does Heaven help us when civilization is at a hard pinch?'" and replies:

> "Why, by a whirlwind of patriotism, not believed to exist, but now magnetizing all discordant masses under its terrible unity. It is an affair of instincts; we did not know we had them; we valued ourselves as cool calculators; we were very fine with our learning and culture, with our science that was of no country, and our religion of peace;--and now a sentiment mightier than logic, wide as

> light, strong as gravity, reaches into the college, the bank, the farm-house, and the church. It is the day of the populace; they are wiser than their teachers." (600)

Emerson's enthusiasm for war as a facilitator of ideas is anticipated in his 1838 lecture on "War," where he extols its virtues as "a temporary and preparatory state" that "does actively forward the culture of man" by "shak[ing] the whole society until every atom falls into the place its specific gravity assigns it" (*W* 11: 152). Having established the moral sentiment as an heroic principle worth fighting and dying for in earlier lectures such as "Heroism," "War," and "Courage," Emerson prepares himself and his audience of fellow Actors for the final, decisive phase of the promotion of the moral (and now patriotic) purpose. Despite the potential need for individual sacrifice and even martyrdom in the name of the noble cause, he actively seeks to compel the final step of this evolutionary process of the moral ideal from thought, to action, to its ultimate resting place within the realm of historical fact.

Emerson publicly expressed his support for the war in "American Nationality," an address delivered at the Music Hall in Boston on November 12, 1861. Emerson contends that

> [a]ll the evils that have yet ensued are inconsiderable, compared with the relief it has operated to public and private health. Do you suppose that we shall crawl into that collar again? I hope the war is to heal a deeper wound than any it makes; that it is to heal that scepticism, that frivolous mind, which is the spoiled child of great material prosperity. The war for the Union is broader than any state policy or sectional interest; but, at last, the Union is not broad enough, because of slavery; and we must come to emancipation, with compensation to loyal States. This is a principle. (Cabot 2:

783)[100]

Emerson continues to subordinate the preservation of the Union to what he considers to be the greater issue of freeing the slaves, but at this point, he appears willing to make good on his 1855 proposal to "buy out" the slaveholders, at least those in "loyal States," in order to compensate for their material "losses." However, his position remains noticeably uncompromising in its insistence upon the abolition of slavery as the primary goal of the war and the maintenance of the Union as a subordinate (and, if necessary, expendable) cause. Emerson explains that "[t]he result at which the government aims, and rightly, is repossession of all its territory. But, in the present aspect of the war, separation is a contingency to be contemplated; and I say, in view of that, it is vastly better than what we called the integrity of the republic, with slavery" (783-84). For Emerson, the moral purpose remains consistently paramount: the territory of the United States, and even the Union itself, are considered relevant only as far as they serve the noble sentiment and promote the philosophical mandates of the Universal One.

Despite Emerson's apparent enthusiasm for the war as a potential remedy for the "disease" of American slavery, there is little evidence upon which to base Rusk's assertion that, in the aftermath of the "American Nationality" speech, "[t]he partisan had almost swallowed up the philosopher" (413). Despite his political activism, Emerson continued to view abolition as a fundamentally moral issue and to perceive actions taken on its behalf as the publication of the moral sentiment as it had been dictated to individual Thinkers. Just as he believed that the Fugitive Slave Law had forced citizens otherwise engaged into the realm of politics, so he saw the war as the natural and inevitable outcome of the processes of human Thinking. In the Journal he titled "War," Emerson wrote in 1862 that "[i]t is impossible to /disengage/extricate oneself from the questions in which your age is involved. You can no more keep out of politics that you can keep out of the frost" (*JMN* 15: 182). Emerson's focus remains on the notion of *compulsory* political participation, and war, while hardly desirable under ordinary circumstances, becomes morally acceptable when philosophically considered as the practical means to a noble end.

Despite the war's ideological potential, Emerson in no way underestimated the possible toll it would exact on the nation nor dismissed its capacity for human pain and individual sacrifice. In "American Civilization," an address delivered at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington on January 31, 1862, Emerson contends that "[t]he war is welcome to the Southerner; a chivalrous sport to him, like hunting, and suits his semi-civilized condition. . . . It does not suit us" (*W* 11: 304). Asserting that "[e]mancipation is the demand of civilization" (304), he calls upon Congress to abolish slavery and to "pay for such slaves as we ought to pay for" (305). Although Emerson would later recognize the impracticality of his own plan to "buy out" the slaveholders (Allen 610), he would steadfastly maintain his commitment to emancipation throughout the remainder of the war. Observing in "American Civilization" that "[t]he end of all political struggle is to establish morality as the basis of all legislation" (*W* 11: 309), he insists that the act of emancipation, "which costs so little (the parties injured being such a handful that they can very easily be indemnified), rids the world, at one stroke, of this degrading nuisance, the cause of war and ruin to nations. This measure at once puts all parties right" (308).

Emerson continues to emphasize the ideological polarity between the North and the South as a practical reason for encouraging the progress of human civilization. Emerson explains that

> [w]e have attempted to hold together two states of civilization: a higher state, where labor and the tenure of land and the right of

> suffrage are democratical; and a lower state, in which the old military tenure of prisoners or slaves, and of power and land in a few hands, makes an oligarchy: we have attempted to hold these two states of society under one law. But the rude and early state of society does not work well with the later, nay, works badly, and has poisoned politics, public morals and social intercourse in the Republic, now for many years. (*W* 11: 298-99)

Although he queries, "Why cannot the best civilization be extended over the whole country, since the disorder of the less-civilized portion menaces the existence of the country?" (299), Emerson has softened his earlier rhetorical condemnation of the South and redefined it in terms of human culture and historical progress. The earlier division between "civilized" and "barbarous" states is replaced by a philosophical representation of the "old" order of the South and the more desirable "new" order promoted by the activists of the North; Emerson thus shifts his argument strategy away from angry accusation to focus on emancipation as the practical end of both moral and historical processes. His faith and idealism remain intact: he asserts that "[i]n this national crisis, it is not argument that we want, but that rare courage which dares commit itself to a principle, believe that Nature is its ally, and will create the instruments it requires, and more than make good any petty and injurious profit which it may disturb" (302). The advance of civilization compels thinking men to act; Emerson concludes with a now-characteristic observation that "Nature works through her appointed elements; and ideas must work through the brains and the arms of good and brave men, or they are no better than dreams" (310).

Emerson elaborates this concept in "Moral Forces" and "Perpetual Forces," two addresses which he delivered during the course of 1862. A

Presidential declaration of a Fast Day for April 13 in which all were encouraged "to take thankful remembrance of the better aspect of our affairs" occasioned the "Moral Forces" speech, which Emerson presented to the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society at the Music Hall (Cabot 2: 786). Affirming "[w]hat an amount of power released from doing harm and now ready to do good!" Emerson reiterates his support for the war by virtue of its potential to abolish slavery and asserts that "the moral powers are thirsts for actions" (787).[101] He remains characteristically optimistic with regard what he perceives as the imminent victory of the moral sentiment, enthusing that "[t]hings point the right way" and encouraging his audience, "Let us rejoice in every success and in every overthrow, which a wise and good soul, whether among our enemies or in other nations, would see to be for the right, for the good of humanity. We are rightly glad only in as far as we believe that the victories of our cause are real grounds of joy for all mankind" (787).

In his speech on "The Emancipation Proclamation," on October 12, Emerson celebrates both the apparent triumph of the moral sentiment and the heroic individual responsible for forcing affirmative action in his effort to propel it forward. Emerson declares:

> In so many arid forms which states encrust themselves with, once in a century, if so often, a poetic act and record occur. These are the jets of thought into affairs, when, roused by danger or inspired by genius, the political leaders of the day break the else insurmountable routine of class and local legislation, and take a step forward in the direction of catholic and universal interests. . . . Forget all that we thought shortcomings, every mistake, every delay. . . . call these endurance, wisdom, magnanimity; illuminated, as they now are, by this dazzling success. (*W* 11: 315-17)

Emerson replaces his previous impatience for decisive action on the part of political leaders with undisguised enthusiasm for both Lincoln and his Proclamation. The President's move on behalf of abolition elevates him considerably in Emerson's estimation: Emerson's once-lukewarm perception of the Republican candidate becomes unqualified admiration, as he publicly admits:

> great as the popularity of the President has been, we are beginning to think that we have underestimated the capacity and virtue which the Divine Providence has made an instrument of benefit so vast. He has been permitted to do more for America than any other American man. . . . Against all timorous counsels he had the courage to seize the moment; and such was his position, and such the felicity attending the action, that he has replaced government in the good graces of mankind. (*W* 11: 317-18)

As he does with Elijah P. Lovejoy and John Brown, Emerson assigns Lincoln a hero's status by virtue of the President's moral courage and willingness to cross the border between the Thinker to Actor and thus to further the progress of human civilization in the name of the moral sentiment. Emerson affords Lincoln the highest honor he has bestowed to date: the President has not only performed an heroic act, he has done "more for America than any other American man" (317), a considerable compliment in light of Emerson's well-established esteem for potentially heroic Actors. Emerson observes that Lincoln's act "commits the country to this justice" (319) and thus to cultural and historical progress. The combined effects of the cause, the country, and the age converge within the Proclamation, and Lincoln, its primary promoter, becomes the “instrument” of Divine Providence and the needs of the Universal One.

According to Emerson, "This act makes that the lives of our heroes have not been sacrificed in vain. It makes a victory of our defeats" (319). Emerson alludes to the "inevitableness" of the war and insists that

> [t]he war existed long before the cannonade of Sumter, and could not be postponed. It might have begun otherwise or elsewhere, but war was in the minds and bones of the combatants, it was written on the iron leaf, and you might as easily dodge gravitation. If we had consented to a peaceable secession of the rebels, the divided sentiment of the border states made peaceable secession impossible, and the slaves on the border, wherever the border might be, were an incessant fuel to rekindle the fire. . . . The war was formidable, but could not be avoided. (*W* 11: 322-23)

Although Emerson's previous blistering condemnation of the South has considerably abated, he continues to blame Southerners for the advent of the war, proclaiming that "those states have shown every year a more hostile and aggressive temper, until the instinct of self-preservation forced us into the war" (325). With Lincoln's executive action, Emerson can both justify Northern participation in the war and look forward to a future free of the "cancer" of slavery. He asserts that

> the aim of the war on our part is indicated by the aim of the President's Proclamation, namely, to break up the false combination of Southern society, to destroy the piratic features in it which makes it our enemy only as the enemy of the human race, and so allow its reconstruction on a just and healthful basis. Then new affinities will act, the old repulsion will cease, and, the cause of war being removed, Nature and trade may be trusted to establish a lasting peace. (325)

Although 1863 commenced with the Proclamation as promised, Americans would still have to suffer through another two years of war before the complete Union victory could finally be claimed. The war continued to occupy Emerson's thoughts; in April, he wrote in his Journal:

> And yet it must be confessed that the new world lies in chaos & expectation until now; that this mad war has made us all mad, that there was no minority to stand fast for eternal truth, & say, cannons & bayonets for such as already knew nothing stronger: but we are here for immortal resistance to wrong: we resist it by disobedience to every evil command, and by incessant furtherance of every right cause. (*JMN* 15: 337)

Perhaps Emerson's clerical background contributes to his persistence in viewing the war as a moral crusade, but his sincerity of purpose may be attested by his consistent and unwavering support of military action assumed on behalf of the moral sentiment. His doctrine of compensation enabled him to perceive benefits as well as losses: in one Journal entry, he contends that "[a] benefit of war is, that the appeal not being longer to letter & form, but now to the roots and strength in the people, the moral aspect becomes important, & is urgently presented & debated" (351). Emerson adheres to his earlier insistence that government exists at the sufferance of its citizens: as a tool of the people, even a martial one, it functions properly only when it serves the will of individual Thinkers and Actors in furthering the causes of humankind. An action undertaken for the common good, however costly it might appear in the present moment, is ultimately measured by the benefits it offers to the collective needs of the Universal One. As a former clergyman, Emerson could perhaps appreciate even more than many others the notion of the fruits of earlier efforts. He was content to await the noble harvest that he was certain the war would yield.

As Emerson could view abolition in terms of a moral crusade, so he could perceive those who acted upon its principles as exemplary heroes and its Thinkers, Knowers, and Sayers as their prophets. In his address on "The Man of Letters," delivered before the literary societies of Dartmouth and Waterville Colleges during 1863, Emerson once again defines the role of the scholar and his place within the context of the historical moment. The scholar, who occupies a "high office in evil times," is someone “too good for the world; he is in advance of his race; his function is prophetic. He belongs to a superior society, and is born one or two centuries too early for the rough and sensual population into which he is thrown. But the Heaven which sent him hither knew that well enough, and sent him as a leader to lead” (*W* 10: 241-42). Although "evil times" may perplex men, "[t]he inviolate soul is in perpetual telegraphic communication with the source of events. He has earlier information, a private despatch which relieves him of the terror which presses on the rest of the community. He is a learner of the laws of Nature and the experiences of history; a prophet surrendered with self-abandoning sincerity to the Heaven which pours through him its will to mankind" (242). The doctrine of compensation ensures that every right action serves its higher purpose: Emerson reemphasizes that "[t]here is no unemployed force in Nature. All decomposition is recomposition. War disorganizes, but it is to reorganize" (248).

However the war had disorganized daily life, it continued to hold for Emerson the key to a brighter future and the solution to the problems that consumed the present day. Reiterating his contention that "[i]t is impossible to extricate oneself from the questions in which our age is involved" (257), Emerson explains that “[w]ar, seeking for the roots of strength, comes upon the moral aspects at once. In quiet times, custom stifles this discussion as sentimental, and brings in the brazen devil, as by immemorial right. The war uplifted us into generous sentiments. War ennobles the age. . . . We will not again disparage America, now that we have seen what men it will bear” (257). Emerson celebrates both the war and its heroes, proclaiming that "[t]he times are dark, but heroic. . . . Slavery is broken, and, if we use our advantage, irretrievably" (258). The war provides Actors not only with opportunities for heroism, but the potential for martyrdom—a concept that reaches as far back in Emerson's anti-slavery addresses as the example of Elijah P. Lovejoy in "Heroism" and within his essays in general to *Nature*. But where the figure of Lovejoy had functioned in 1838 to illustrate Emerson's belief in abolition as a proper political expression of free speech as an abstract moral ideal, the greater number of potential martyrs in 1863 draws the more ominous assignment of effecting the implementation of emancipation as a political reality. Emerson continues to encourage personal sacrifice on the part of would-be heroes and to glorify martyrdom on behalf of a noble cause; he closes "The Man of Letters" with the intriguing query, "Who would not, if it could be made certain that the new morning of universal liberty should rise on our race by the perishing of one generation,--who would not consent to die?" (258)

Emerson maintains this optimistic tone in what Gougeon appropriately terms "one of the most powerful addresses of his career" ("Historical Background" iii), "The Fortune of the Republic," which he delivered in Boston on December 1, 1863. Connecting his conception of the moral sentiment with notions of patriotism and the moral progress of civilization, Emerson voices his continuing support for the war and articulates his hopes for the America of the approaching age. He observes that "[t]here have been revolutions which were not in the interest of feudalism and barbarism, but in that of society. And these are distinguished not by the number of combatants nor the numbers of the slain, but by the motive" (*W* 11: 514-15). Emerson's expresses his belief in the sanctity of abolitionist motives in militaristic terms when he exclaims:

> When the cannon is aimed by ideas, when men with religious convictions are behind it, when men die for what they live for, and the mainspring that works daily urges them to hazard all, then the cannon articulates its explosions with the voice of a man, then the rifle seconds the cannon and the fowling-piece the rifle, and the women make the cartridges, and all shoot at one mark; then gods join in the combat; then poets are born; and the better code of laws at last records the victory. (515)

Emerson's battle imagery builds upon the notion of the conflict as a holy war and its participants as moral crusaders. The armaments "voice" the will of the holy warriors; the ultimate "victory" is a "code of laws," a scenario reminiscent of the biblical Ten Commandments. It appears doubtful that Emerson was attempting to create a direct connection between his hopes for emancipation in 1863 and the freeing of Hebrew slaves as recounted in the book of Exodus, but the possibility that the parallels between the two might have occurred to the former minister does not seem too remote to consider. In both cases, release of the slaves involves a combination of higher law, human action, and divine intervention--with the final result in the rebirth of a nation with new promise of virtually limitless potential.

Emerson envisioned the democratic America of the future residing on a higher moral plane: with the noble sentiment as its guide, the nation, following its presumed military victory, could conceivably proceed forward, and thus progressive, direction. Emerson concludes that "[t]he new conditions of mankind in America are really favorable to progress, the removal of absurd restrictions and antique inequalities" (516). He connects these hopes to patriotic concepts when he observes that "[o]ne hundred years ago the American people attempted to carry out the bill of political rights to an almost ideal perfection. They have made great strides in that direction since. They are now proceeding, instructed by their success and by their many failures, to carry out, not the bill of rights, but the bill of human duties" (517). Emerson ingeniously equates contemporary motives with venerated ideals from the pages of American history; in this way, he creates subtle yet tangible links between the moral and patriotic ideology of the past, the present, and the future. He then ties these notions to spiritual allusions, suggesting that "[o]ur helm is given up to a better guidance than our own; the course of events is quite too strong for any helmsman, and our little wherry is taken in tow by the ship of the great Admiral which knows the way, and has the force to draw men and states and planets to their good" (543). Emerson's final thoughts leave a positive impression; he tells his audience that "[i]n seeing this guidance of events, in seeing this felicity without example that has rested on the Union thus far, I find new confidence for the future" (544).

Emerson maintained his confidence for the future throughout the remainder of the war; and one point in 1864, he wrote in his Journal that "War ennobles the Country; searches it; fires it; acquaints it with its resources; turns it away from false alliances, vain hopes, & theatric attitudes; puts it on its mettle; 'in ourselves safety must be sought'; gives it scope & object; concentrates history into a year, invents means; systematizes everything. We began the war in vast confusion; when we end it, it will be in system" (*JMN* 15: 453). The entry echoes the sentiment of his "Man of Letters" speech, which asserts a similar claim that "[w]ar ennobles the age" (*W* 10: 257), but here, Emerson looks towards the war's resolution, which he appears to anticipate in the not-so-distant future. His private records indicate that he continued to consider the war a worthwhile expenditure for which the imminent gains offset the potential losses; he ponders that "The War has cost us many valuable lives; but perhaps it has compensated us, by making many lives valuable that were not so before,--though the start & expansion it has given them. It has demoralized many rebel regiments; but I hold that it has *moralized* many of ours" (*JMN* 15: 434-35). The final remark reflects Emerson's consistency in viewing both slavery and the war in moral terms: in 1864, the notion of sacrificing oneself in the name of the noble sentiment remains an open opportunity for heroic Thinkers to act upon their convictions and to publish their courage, character, and essential self-reliance. Individuals continue to possess the potential power to effect positive change in the world: "Great men," according to Emerson, "serve us as insurrections do in bad governments" ("Character," *W* 10: 102). In "Resources," he adds that "[t]he whole history of our civil war is rich in a thousand anecdotes attesting the fertility of resource, the presence of mind, the skilled labor of our people" (*W* 8: 143-44).[102]

Emerson revisits his concept of individual heroism in "Character," an address he delivered during the winter of 1864-1865. Reasserting his early claim that "[t]he moral sentiment is alone omnipotent" (*W* 10: 96), Emerson reminds his listeners that "[h]e who doth a just action seeth therein nothing of his own, but an inconceivable nobleness attaches to it, because it is a dictate of the general mind. We have no idea of power so simple and so entire as this. It is the basis of thought, it is the basis of being" (94). He adds that "[t]he sentiment never stops in pure vision, but will be enacted. It affirms not only its truth, but its supremacy" (103). Thinking thus leads predictably to Acting, and then, finally, to change and historical progression, but Emerson is quick to remind his audience that while ideas and events prove transient, the spirit that drives the moral sentiment remains a permanent fixture in nature. Recalling notions first articulated in *Nature*, he observes that "[t]he changes are inevitable; the new age cannot see with the eyes of the last. But the change is in what is superficial; the principles are immortal, and the rally on the principle must arrive as people become intellectual" (108).

For Emerson and the abolitionists, the "new age" which they had so long anticipated was about to materialize. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union forces on April 9, 1865, and Emerson expressed his considerable enthusiasm in the pages of his Journal. In one entry, he proclaims, "We see the dawn of a new era, worth to mankind all the treasure & all the lives it has cost, yet, worth to the world the lives of all this generation of American men, if they had been demanded" (*JMN* 15: 64). Emerson viewed the war as "a new glass through which to see things"; he contends that "[t]he war has made the Divine Providence credible to a good many people. They did not believe that Heaven was quite honest" (65). Victory appeared to mark the triumph of the moral sentiment and to signal the beginning of the next phase in the progression of American culture and history: the Thinkers had thought, the Actors had acted, the heroes had pursued their noble causes to the point of their completion, and society was poised on the very perimeter of the next concentric circle. A considerable price had been paid for the privilege, but the victorious moment made the weighty sacrifice appear to have been worthwhile. Emerson felt genuine gratitude towards the individual Actors who had played their heroic parts, and his doctrine of compensation enabled him to perceive loss of lives that resulted from the war as a fair exchange for the final emancipation of American slaves. When the rebels surrendered, Emerson and others had no way of knowing that one more sacrifice remained to be made.

Emerson drew the unhappy task of addressing the citizens of Concord at the funeral services for President Lincoln on April 19, 1865. In this speech, Emerson eulogizes the fallen leader as the truest of American heroes. He observes that

> [i]n four years,--four years of battle-days,--his endurance, his fertility of resources, his magnanimity, were sorely tried and never found wanting. There, by his courage, his justice, his even temper, his fertile counsel, his humanity, he stood a heroic figure in the centre of a heroic epoch. He is the true history of the American people in his time. Step by step he walked before them; show with their slowness, quickening his march by theirs, the true representative of this continent; an entirely public man; father of his country, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their mind articulated by his tongue. (*W* 11: 335)

Emerson elevates Lincoln on both moral and civil grounds: identifying him as a clearly heroic Actor, Emerson places the President in the historical center of both the nation and its people. Emerson creates a patriotic parallel between Lincoln and Washington in his designation of the former as "father of his country," and he praises the President's suitability to the historical moment in terms of his exemplary heroism. Emerson observes that "[h]is mind mastered the problem of the day; and as the problem grew, so did his comprehension of it. Rarely was man so fitted to the event" (334). Lincoln embodied Emerson’s earlier assertion that "[e]very true man is a cause, a country, and an age" (*W* 2: 61); for Emerson, Lincoln had functioned admirably as a Thinker, as an Actor, and as a facilitator of human progress. And as the fruits of that progress were finally to be realized, the hero became a martyr.

Lincoln's martyrdom in pursuit of a noble purpose places him on a parallel plane with Emerson's earlier martyred heroes, Elijah P. Lovejoy and John Brown. With his lament for Lincoln, Emerson's elegies on behalf of abolitionist leaders come full circle: Lovejoy perishes trying to publish his anti-slavery thoughts; Brown is executed for acting upon his abolitionist convictions; and

Lincoln is assassinated after he announces emancipation and thus propels history forward into the next concentric circle. Emerson suggests in "Abraham Lincoln" that the fallen President had fulfilled his historical role; he queries, "Had he not lived long enough to keep the greatest promise that ever man made to his fellow men,--the practical abolition of slavery?" (*W* 11: 336). Emerson believed that Lincoln served the interests of humankind as much by his death as he had by his life, a notion that reaches back to *Nature*'s concept of the doctrine of Use and the notion of individuals as Nature's commodities. He ponders:

> And what if it should turn out, in the unfolding of the web, that he had reached the term; that this heroic deliverer could no longer serve us; that the rebellion had touched its natural conclusion, and what remained to be done required new and uncommitted hands,--a new spirit born out of the ashes of the war; and that Heaven, wishing to show the world a completed benefactor, shall make him serve his country even more by his death than by his life? (336)

Emerson's alluding to Lincoln as both a "deliverer" and a spirit who could serve the needs of humanity through his death creates a subtle connection to an even earlier martyr who died for the cause of the moral sentiment. Of all of Emerson's martyrs, Lincoln most closely approaches Christ in the single distinction that, he, at the time of his death, had successfully completed his assigned tasks. The call of the moral sentiment had been heard, the slaves had been freed, the Union had been preserved, the needs of the Universal One had been satisfied, and history had moved forward.

After the war ended, Emerson acknowledged the other Union martyrs who had promoted and defended the abolitionist cause. In his "Harvard Commemoration Speech," delivered on July 21, 1865, Emerson analyzes the results of the war in philosophical terms and proclaims it a moral and sociopolitical victory. He again equates military success with a higher purpose, observing that "[t]he War has lifted many other people besides Grant and Sherman into their true places. Even Divine Providence, we may say, always seems to work after a certain military necessity" (*W* 11: 341-42). Emerson believed that the North had won the war on the strength of its moral advantage; at one point in the address, he informs his audience that "[t]he war gave back integrity to this erring and immoral nation" (342). This hint of a religious undertone, which in the given context seems reminiscent of the jeremiad, adds a spiritual element which functions in a subtle manner to convert Union soldiers into genuine holy warriors. Emerson exclaims, "What an infusion of character went out from this and other colleges! . . . The experience has been uniform that it is the gentle soul that makes the firm hero after all" (342).

The heroic actions of both the martyrs and the survivors have succeeded in setting things "right"; the undesirable, outmoded There or Then has been defeated and replaced with the long-desired, morally superior Here and Now. American society had proceeded beyond the perimeter to the next concentric circle, and Emerson and his audience welcomed the historical progression and the apparent promise and potential of the coming age. Emerson creates an analogy between past and present military triumphs when he asserts, "The old Greek Heraclitus said, 'War is the Father of all things.' He said it, no doubt, as science, but we of this day can repeat it as political and social truth. War passes the power of all chemical solvents, breaking up the old adhesions, and allowing the atoms of society to take a new order" (341). Emerson credits Massachusetts with definitive leadership in the Union effort and enthuses, "when I see how irresistible the convictions of Massachusetts are in these swarming populations,--I think the little state bigger than I knew. When her blood is up, she has a fist big enough to knock down an empire. And her blood was roused"

(343-44). Recalling the courage of Massachusetts soldiers, he concludes the speech with a sincere expression of recognition, pride, and gratitude. Addressing the surviving heroes as "manly defenders, Liberty's and Humanity's bodyguard!" he contends that "[w]e shall not again disparage America, now that we have seen what men it will bear. We see--we thank you for it--a new era, worth to mankind all the treasure and all the lives it has cost; yes, worth to the world the lives of all this generation of American men, if they had been demanded" (344-45).

Fortunately, the war did not require a sacrifice in terms of Massachusetts lives to the extent that it consumed an entire generation; nevertheless, the cost was a great one, and Concord alone lost forty-four of its young men in pursuit of the Union victory. In a speech delivered on the occasion of the dedication of the soldiers' monument in Concord on April 19, 1867, Emerson recounts the history of Concord's war effort and evaluates the sacrifice in terms of gains and losses. He devotes a great deal of attention to the heroes, including his own "next neighbor," Captain Charles E. Bowers, who survived, and courageous Colonel George L. Prescott, who did not.[103] Emerson creates a connection between Bowers and his earlier hero, John Brown, by identifying both as possessing "an integrity incorruptible, and an ability that always rose to the need" (*W* 11: 360). But he focuses most of his efforts on lionizing Prescott, the martyr, to whose character and heroic exploits he devotes nearly half of the somewhat lengthy dedicatory address. Emerson traces the progress of Prescott and his 32nd Regiment through many of the major events of the war, including the Battle of Bull Run, McClellan's retreat in the Peninsula, and additional battles at Harrison's Landing, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Rappahannock Station, Baltimore, and Laurel Hill. This approach enables him both to recall the setbacks and successes of the army in general and to feature Colonel Prescott individually as a local heroic exemplar. Emerson is aided in his identification of the war as a sacrifice in the name of a spiritual cause by the martyrdom of Prescott, who was ultimately mortally wounded. He quotes a letter from a member of Prescott's regiment, who wrote that "'[Colonel Prescott] was one of the few men who fight for principle. He did not fight for glory, honor, nor money, but because he thought it was his duty'" (373).

Like Lovejoy, Brown, and Lincoln, Prescott becomes a martyr on behalf of abolition as an expression of the call of the moral sentiment. But the example of Prescott enables Emerson to bring various aspects of the war experience into clearer focus and to transport them home to Massachusetts and, finally, to Concord. The inclusion of Concordians among the heroes of the war connects the call of the moral sentiment to the common man and identifies every individual as a potential heroic Actor. Emerson declares that "[t]his new Monument is built to mark the arrival of the nation at the new principle,--say, rather, at its new acknowledgment, for the principle is as old as Heaven,--that only that state can live, in which injury to the least member is recognized as damage to the whole" (352). Emerson analyzes the results of the war in moral and spiritual terms, asserting that "[t]he war made Divine Providence credible to many who did not believe the good Heaven quite honest. . . . the country was at heart abolitionist, and for the Union was ready to die" (354-55). In Emerson's view, the war finally made the country "right" by providing an effective means by which individuals could act upon the principles of the moral sentiment to eradicate slavery in the United States. Emerson concludes the dedication with the observation that

> The world is equal to itself. The secret architecture of things begins to disclose itself; the fact that all things were made on a basis of right; that justice is really desired by all intelligent beings; that

> opposition to it is against the nature of things; and that, whatever may happen in this hour or that, the years and the centuries are always pulling down the wrong and building up the right. (354)

In his "Address at the Dedication of Soldiers' Monument in Concord," Emerson finally lays the long fight for emancipation of the slaves to rest with Prescott and his fellow abolitionist martyrs. The moral purpose which had commanded his thoughts and actions and had pervaded his Journal and addresses for more than three decades had finally prevailed, and this unusual chapter in Emerson's life and career would close in the very same place at which it had opened: "close to home" in Concord, Massachusetts.

Conclusion

Prior to the moment at which Emerson publicly entered the movement to abolish slavery following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, the overwhelming majority of his heroic exemplars had been drawn from the pages of history. Beginning with *Nature*, Emerson personifies the character traits he identifies with the exemplary individual with the lives and experiences of historical figures. *Nature*'s use of Biblical heroes such as David, Isaiah, and Jesus is balanced with secular examples such as Homer, Pindar, Socrates, and Phocion from classical literature and Leonidas, Arnold Winkelreid, Columbus, Sir Henry Vane, and Lord Russell from the more recent history of Europe; however, the purpose of each individual is to demonstrate Emerson's overriding contention that the "high and divine" beauty of virtue perpetually combines with the human will to publish virtuous thoughts and thus to convey the substance of the will of God from the moral exemplar to others. Although the concept of the "faithful thinker" of *Nature* evolves over time into the Thinker and Actor of "Self-Reliance" and the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer of "The Poet," the potentially heroic individual remains inextricably tied to the conception of the moral sentiment throughout the body of Emerson's work.

The individual who perceives the call of the moral sentiment and then acts decisively upon its implications distinguishes himself from other men by virtue of his definitive courage and the extraordinary depth of his faith. *Nature* introduces Emerson's paradigm of the heroic exemplar and delineates its components; once the individual has fulfilled its fundamental requirements of contemplation and publication of the moral sentiment, he must then follow his elected course of action through to its logical completion and thus fulfill the needs of the moral sentiment within the context of the historical moment. Emerson emphasizes an element of self-sacrifice within the exemplary individual that tends to celebrate martyrdom; within his works throughout the 1840s, this trait appears frequently in his heroic illustrations, and even as late as *Representative Men*, the implication that the great man must suffer along his path to greatness remains paramount within the works. With the series of addresses devoted to the topics of slavery and the Civil War, however, these ideas of martyrdom and self-sacrifice assume an even greater significance: as the events that would mark his own cause, country, and age unfolded, Emerson saw the role of the heroic exemplar increasingly filled with the examples of the lives, and in many cases the deaths, of many of his own contemporaries. As the issues that divided the country in the 1850s moved to the forefront of men's thinking and then occupied center stage, Emerson's heroic exemplar evolved from an essentially abstract philosophical construct into the concrete reality of many individuals sacrificing themselves to the implications of a higher purpose.

Although Emerson did not fail to appreciate the magnitude of the War and the ramifications of the sacrifices made on its behalf, he supported both it and the abolition movement that preceded it as current expressions of the call of the moral sentiment. From the beginning, his definition of the heroic exemplar had emphasized the need of each individual to engage in an original relation with the universe, one that sets aside the influences of tradition and other external tuition in favor of each man's innate morality and perception of virtuous purpose. Although this injunction prompted much contemporary objection to Emerson's philosophies, especially at the time of the "Divinity School Address," this initial furor eventually subsided, and very little objection was raised in response to the "anti-establishment" tenor of Emerson's calls for civil disobedience once the Fugitive Slave Law was enacted. By 1850, much of Emerson's audience had apparently caught up with him and his thinking, and many of the same ideas that had appeared contentious in the mid-1830s now seemed particularly suited to the times.

However, despite the acceptance into mainstream thinking that characterized his later years as a writer and public speaker, neither Emerson nor his message truly changed. The influence of the minister that can be discerned within *Nature* and “The Philosophy of History” is still apparent in the calls for disregarding the mandates of the Fugitive Slave Law and his appeals for support of John Brown. Although Emerson’s notion of the heroic exemplar underwent a continual process of revision and refinement throughout the course of his career, it remained consistently tied to the notion of a higher calling that was apparent within his earliest conceptions of the moral sentiment. In *Nature*, Emerson establishes that Nature functions as intermediary between God and Man and thus continually provides the “commodity” of heroic individuals who function as means to the production of noble ends. Within Emerson’s doctrine of Use, such commodities are subordinated to the higher purposes they serve; once the moral sentiment has been published and the needs of the historical moment have been fulfilled, the heroic actor becomes dispensable, and the need for his continued physical presence is obviated. Although specific illustrations of this phenomenon evolve throughout the works from moral abstractions to concrete applications and from historical figures to contemporary individuals, the heroic exemplar remains a fundamental expression of the influence of the moral sentiment within the visible creation and a perpetual reminder of the presence of its Creator within it.

Despite the apparent belief of many of his critics that Emerson abandoned religion at the time he left the ministry, such a conclusion is not supported by close examination of his works. Besides the consistent primacy of the moral sentiment and the conception of Nature as intermediary between God and Man, the influence of Emerson the minister can be discerned in many of the connections between his paradigm of the heroic exemplar and the earlier religious notions of *exemplum* and *exemplum fidei*. Emerson draws from the *exemplum fidei* the organic process of “calling, temptation, and salvation shared by all believers” (Bercovitch 24) in the pattern of the individual’s reception of the call of the moral sentiment, his contemplation of its implications, and his response to these implications by publication through the power of his words or virtuous acts. The hero’s resistance to external influence and unwavering adherence to his cause parallel the temptation stage of the process, and he receives his salvation by satisfying his noble purpose and receiving the acknowledgment of his contemporaries and the judgments of history combined. The self-sacrificial element of the paradigm more closely resembles the *exemplum* in its adherence to the events in the life of Christ, most notably in its emphasis on the act of martyrdom. Although the number of actual martyrs within Emerson’s specific illustrations varies in different works, it never disappears completely. Even in *Representative Men*, in which only one of six historical figures qualifies as a literal martyr, the emphasis upon the sacrifice of self to the mandates of a higher purpose remains conspicuously consistent.

The correlations between Emerson’s heroic paradigm and the concepts of the *exemplum* and *exemplum fidei* suggest that Emerson the minister continued to exert a considerable influence over his later works as both a writer and a speaker. The catalyst for Emerson’s hero, like that for both the saint and his Protestant equivalent, remains the moral or noble sentiment, and the process through which the exceptional individual attains the elevated status of the exemplar continues along a similar, parallel course. The pervasiveness of martyrs among his many illustrations of exemplary heroes suggests that Emerson continued to revere the *exemplum exemplorium* of Jesus well into his second career and to adhere to it as the definitive representation of human potential attained. Although Jesus appears often among his many heroic exemplars, Emerson could not, despite his own personal desires, bring himself to use Jesus to represent mysticism in his sketches of *Representative Men* and settled for Swedenborg instead. Despite his acknowledgment in his journal that he felt himself not entirely up to the task, the possibility remains that Emerson perceived that his subject was too complex for the limitations any specific genre imposes. As evidenced by the various contexts within which the example of Jesus appears, the implications of his life extended into many arenas, perhaps too many to restrict it to a single exemplary category, even that of the mystic. Although Jesus appears throughout the works as an exemplar of limitless potential, his full significance to the post-ministerial Emerson remained largely unexplored as a focused subject and must therefore be inferred from the excerpts available.

A strong temptation always exists to view an historical subject in contemporary terms; in the case of Emerson, this tendency has become particularly problematic. The highly individualistic component of Emerson's writings and the continuing appeal of his works to both religious and secular readers and scholars create opportunities to categorize the works within any of the numerous possibilities available. A religious reader, like William A. Huggard, can interpret Emerson as a writer who viewed himself primarily as a religious instructor (30), whereas more secular readers, like David S. Reynolds, can conclude that Emerson "[chose] artistry and humanity above Christianity" (23). The fact that Emerson's work lends itself to so many potential interpretations cautions the critic to avoid espousing the contentions of either extreme; both the "religious" and "secular" labels implicitly discount the inherent complexities of Emerson's thinking and reduce his philosophical tenets to a level of patent oversimplification. Huggard's conclusions place too much emphasis upon the religious aspect of Emerson’s teachings and discount the humanist and the secular; Reynolds focuses too much upon the humanist and secular components and thus underplays the religious and the Christian. Emerson’s writings transcend both boundaries to the point where neither a completely religious nor a fully secular interpretation remains logically feasible. Therefore, any temptation to oversimplify Emerson by embracing either extreme must consciously be avoided.

Although Emerson’s post-ministerial philosophy cannot be classified as truly religious in character, it contains a profoundly religious component that appears as early as *Nature* and courses throughout the body of his works. When Emerson resigned from the ministry, he freed himself to explore the implications of his own philosophical impulses beyond the intellectual restrictions imposed by the standards of his church. His true beliefs could now be expressed without fear of alienating fellow clergymen or his congregation, and even if his opinions did occasionally generate controversy, as they often did during the period in which he continued to be associated with the ministry, Emerson could comfort himself with the knowledge that the opinions he shared were genuine, uncensored, and true to the conscience and the mind that were his own. It is no accident that these are the characteristics of the “thinking” stage of the heroic paradigm, and that they represent Emerson’s own response to the call of a moral sentiment that compelled him to leave his church. But no corresponding compulsion dictated that he abandon the religious sentiment within his life or his works, and no evidence within his writings suggests that he ever chose to do so. The influence of Emerson’s first career can be discerned within his conception of the moral sentiment, the paradigm of the heroic exemplar, and the connection of the exemplary individual to the needs of the Universal One. It can also be seen within his continued references to God as the Creator and Supreme Being and his allusions to God’s ongoing role in the universe. Emerson may have altered his career and ceased to be a practicing minister, but the evidence of his works reveals that he never surrendered the impulse that he identifies as the religious sentiment. Interpretations that dismiss or neglect such a significant influence shortchange Emerson’s value as a transitional writer and submerge many of the layers of relevance and meaning that continue to draw scholars to his work.

Notes

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[1] Alan D. Hodder reaches a similar conclusion in his comparison of the writings of Emerson and Jonathan Edwards. He asserts, "[t]o contend that Emerson inaugurated the end of theology and even the beginning of the postmodern distrust of signification does not spell the end of faith nor even the end of the quest for the transcendent. It only results in their radicalization—a revitalization of faith in the unknown and unknowable God" (446).

[2] The term is borrowed from Huggard, who observes that "[w]e could hardly overemphasize the fact that in Emerson's view what distinguished Jesus from other human beings, and exalted him above all others, was the lofty quality of his religious insights and the surpassing goodness of his life. Throughout Emerson's references to Jesus, therefore, we find Emerson placing stress on the noble humanity of Jesus" (100).

[3] Robinson argues that in the early 1830s, while Emerson was still an active minister, it was "apparent that Christ emobodie[d], at this point in Emerson's thought, the concept of the universal man. Through an association with a moral sense which functions through aspiration, Christ assumes the role of the moral ideal" (*Apostle* 57). Although Robinson emphasizes Emerson's "eventual rejection of Unitarian Christology" (56), I am arguing that, symbolically at least, Jesus remained Emerson's heroic ideal throughout his post-ministerial career.

[4] A complete discussion of medieval religious concepts appears in Bercovitch's discussion of "Puritanism and the Self," pages 1-34.

[5] I am using the term "secular humanism" as Bercovitch defines it in *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. According to Bercovitch, "The humanists differed from the Reformers neither in their worldliness nor in their optimism, but in their individualism. Whether they saw man as the quintessence of dust or as the

paragon of creation, a very god in action and apprehension, it was the microcosm that held their attention. Indeed, one major strain in their thought excludes the divine altogether from the ideals of self-fulfillment. The tradition of humanist personal literature . . . [leaves] the question of sainthood to theologians . . . [and] declares the primacy of the single separate person, and justifies his self-study on its intrinsic merits, without pretense at religious or even moral instruction" (11).

[6] As Bercovitch notes, "[t]he concept of the soul's journey is a Christian commonplace," but "[w]hereas the Reformed biographies leap from the individual to the universal, the Catholic hagiographies begin and end with the extraordinary and unique" (8). Bercovitch's primary source for hagiographical *exempla* in this discussion is *The Golden Legend*, "after 1200 the standard medieval collection of Saints' Lives" (8).

[7] According to Bercovitch, "In affirming [the] connection between legal and spiritual calling, the Puritans extended the *exemplum* perforce beyond the Good Magistrate to encompass the whole man. They found a biographical precedent in the early Christian funeral orations. . . . The influence of these eulogies upon Mather, and upon colonial literature in general, is considerable. It extends even to matters of structure. The standard form established by Gregory Nazianzus (to whose orations Mather several times refers) leaves its impress upon the Life of Winthrop: an opening encomium, a description of endowments, a list of achievements, and a rendering of the death scene, followed by a public exhortation" (6).

[8] Bercovitch contends that "by and large, the art of biography from Roper through Walton to Johnson forms a transitional mode between hagiography and modern biography. Though it insists on details, it forces them into the framework

of the ideal. Its aim is to teach by use of examples" (4). This mode, which Bercovitch labels "exemplary biography," provides an appropriate description of a portion of what Emerson accomplishes in his accounts of heroic exemplars in *Nature*.

[9] According to Bercovitch, the Reformers greeted the humanist notion of *imitatio hominis* with the same disdain they held for the Catholic *imitatio*. Their objection to the *imitatio hominis* derived from "its flaunted freedom of the intellect, its pagan tributes to the splendor of the human body, and its extravagant claims for self-determination" (10). Although moral objection to these theoretical concepts would certainly have abated somewhat during the time between Luther and Emerson, clear distinctions between examples based upon religious and secular principles could, and can, still be drawn.

[10] Bercovitch observes, "The tradition of humanist personal literature, extending from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries--from Petrarch's *Letter to Posterity* to Cellini's ebullient autobiography, Jerome Cardan's melancholy *Book of My Own Life*, and, most fully, Montaigne's *Essays*—is concerned exclusively with the autonomous secular self. Leaving the question of sainthood to theologians, each of these writers declares the primacy of the single separate person, and justifies his self-study on its intrinsic merits, without pretense or even moral instruction. He assumes that what he has thought and done will interest others because it is authentically *his*, the product of his own personality in all its rich uniqueness" (11-12).

[11] According to Edward Emerson's note, the passage is from Milton's *Comus*.

[12] Although elements of this humanist strain of thought, particularly its focus upon the potential of the human individual, appear in Emerson's depiction of

heroic *exempla*, it remains subordinate to the religious element of the *exemplum fidei* in terms of its overall structure and emphasis.

[13] Cayton quotes *JMN* 5: 109, Emerson's letter to Thomas Carlyle dated April 30, 1835, from *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, ed. Joseph Slater (New York: Columbia UP, 1964), 171, and *JMN* 7: 277. (From Cayton's note.)

[14] Whicher, Spiller, and Williams reach a similar conclusion; they note that Emerson's "attempt to fit a theory of history into his general scheme of thinking was a phase or stage in the sustained effort to formulate an "original relation to the universe" which began after his return from Europe in 1833 and continued until the *Essays* in 1841.

[15] Alternate titles supplied by Whicher, Spiller, and Williams; see *EL* 2: 5.

[16] See Buell, *Emerson* 22-31.

[17] Buell reports that "Coleridge's term for the intelligentsia, the 'clerisy,' seemed as right to [Emerson] as it did to Victorian counterparts like Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and Matthew Arnold: a secularized ministry" (22).

[18] According to Whicher, Spiller, and Williams, the original source for this passage is Emerson's Journal B, pages 268-69. The passage here is quoted from *EL* 2: 4-5.

[19] Whicher, Speller, and Williams note that "[p]erhaps because of its generally pessimistic tone, Emerson does not seem to have repeated this lecture after including it in this course at the Masonic Temple, Boston, on February 23, 1837; nor did he use it to any great extent in his *Essays*. In his introductory lecture to the series on "The Present Age" in 1839-40 he used many of the same ideas but adopted amore positive and constructive attitude toward the commerce, the learning, and other aspects of contemporary America" (157).

[20] See *W* 2: 19-22.

[21] “Yet this principle . . . of solitude” appears in “Self-Reliance” (*W* 2: 53-54).

[22] “Do not seek yourself outside yourself.”

[23] Emerson himself regarded *Man Thinking* in a similar manner; Buell points out that Emerson subsequently defined it as “intellectual vitality as self-sustaining lived experience (19).

[24] Edward Stessel contends that in “The American Scholar,” Emerson “call[s] the scholar from his private peace into a state of battle” (170). I would argue that it asserts a less aggressive position, more of a suggestion of a need for battle-readiness than an overt call to militant action.

[25] Makarushka reaches a similar conclusion. She observes, “For Emerson, religious sentiment and the divine are not located in extrinsic laws but within each individual. In other words, the emphasis for both Calvinism and its Unitarian corrective is on the significance of conforming to external criteria. For New England Calvinism that meant, generally speaking, a conformity with rigidly defined theological models for justification; for Unitarianism, a conformity with the rational socially correct models of behavior” (22).

[26] See O’Keefe’s discussion of “Jesus Lost and Jesus Regained,” *Mythic Archetypes* 104-41.

[27] Reynolds contends that “The Divinity School Address boldly attacks historical Christianity and offers a humanistic, aesthetic religion to take its place” (96). Although Emerson’s philosophy certainly contains humanist elements, his complaints against historical Christianity fall substantially short of an “attack” on traditional beliefs. Emerson does not seek to discredit historical approaches to religious indoctrination but instead to demonstrate to the graduates how to remove historical baggage in order to make spirituality and the experience of faith a vital, immediate presence.

[28] O'Keefe argues that "Emerson is clearly describing a Messiah" who will announce "a new Gospel" (*Mythic Archetypes* 105), and that "Emerson metamorphoses himself from the prophet John the Baptist, announcing the coming of Jesus, to the prophet Jesus himself" (106). Matthiessen contends that Emerson "regarded himself as a prophet, not a Messiah" (75).

[29] I am using the term in the sense that Huggard defines it in Chapter VI. Although it is closely connected to the Quaker doctrine of inner light and exhibits some influence derived from this source, Huggard contends that "If man is to make any significant progress toward divine attributes he must, as Emerson said, 'learn to detect and watch that gleam of light' which flashes across the inner sky; and he must become joyfully obedient to its beams" (84). Huggard also connects the basic term *inner light* to the corresponding ideas of "*inner voice,* the *intuitive wisdom, conscience, reason,* and the *self*" (84).

[30] According to Bercovitch, "Behind every experience of the saint stood Jesus Himself, *exemplum exemplorium* for both the believer and the organic body of believers" (10).

[31] Cayton explains, "Although the *Examiner* did not presume to dispute Emerson's right to say whatever he wanted, it did complain of the impropriety of saying it from a Unitarian platform, thereby implying that what he spoke was Unitarianism" (171). Burkholder provides the example of "The New School in Literature and Religion" from the *Boston Daily Advertiser* for August 27, 1838, which argues, "'They announce themselves as prophets and priests of a new future, in which all is to be changed, all old opinions done away, and all present forms of society abolished. But by what process this joyful revolution is to be effected we are not told'" (2-3).

[32] In his biography of Emerson, Rusk notes that “students of theological schools of the most liberal sort seem to have been able to take a generous dose of radicalism without flinching, though the ministry, having to beware of offending laymen of more conservative opinion, could easily be alarmed” (268).

[33] Allen notes that Ellery Channing had made similar points in 1819: “that ‘the creation is a birth and shining forth of the Divine Mind’; that ‘We see God around us because He dwells within us’; that “God’s infinity has its image in the soul’; and that ‘through the soul, much more than through the universe, we arrive at this conception of the Deity’” (316-17). Allen cites Miller’s *Transcendentalists* 343-44.

[34] Rusk refers to comments made by Emerson’s uncle Samuel Ripley.

[35] Steele contends that both Emerson and his audience were alienated and remained “under the control of Christian and Enlightenment thinking” (187). I believe that this condition applied only to Emerson’s audience, not to Emerson himself.

[36] Johnson cites *L* 2: 194.

[37] Emerson contends, “In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout, and devotion is thought. Deep calls unto deep. But in actual life, the marriage is not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers, but their sense of duty has not yet extended to the use of all their faculties” (74). Emerson suggests that innocent followers of tradition or duty impede the development of genuine knowledge, or faith, or both. The man who attends worship services out of a “sense of duty” derived from tradition instead of the depth of his own consideration voluntarily restricts his innate ability to engage his own intellectual faculties by ceding the power of independent thought to his

forebears. The innocent follower of a shallow faith precludes his own intellectual discovery and thereby stifles the range of his thought. See Chapter 1.

[38] This conclusion is supported by passages in Emerson's Journals. One entry in Journal "C" dated March 18, 1838, describes the events that Emerson used for the scenario of the spectral preacher in the "Divinity School Address": "At Church all day but almost tempted to say I would go no more. Men go where they are wont to go else had no soul gone this afternoon. The snowstorm was real[,] the preacher merely spectral" (*JMN* 5: 463). In another entry dated May 26, Emerson recounts that he was "[n]ettled again and nervous . . . by the wretched Sunday's preaching of Mr H" (5: 502). In still another from Journal "D" dated January 6, 1839, Emerson reports, "It seemed to me at church today that the communion service as it is now celebrated is a document of the dulness of the race" (*JMN* 7: 163). In yet another from March of 1839, which the editors of *JMN* connect to the current passage in "Compensation," Emerson complains, "I am weary of hearing at Church of another state. When shall I hear the prophet of the Present state?" (7: 175).

[39] Bishop adds that "[t]hese beliefs are, obviously, not peculiar to Emerson. In subscribing to them, he was quite consciously linking himself with a very old and broad tradition; in one form or another, belief in the inwardness of the moral law might almost be called *the* theory of moral action from the Greek on. He had absorbed this tradition while at Harvard, chiefly through Dugald Stewart, the Scottish realist. Though he came to question many other aspects of the culture in which he had been trained, he always preserved his old belief in an intrinsic moral sense" (67).

[40] See "Self-Reliance," *W* 2: 64-65.

[41] Bottorff reaches a similar conclusion when he interprets the passage as meaning “self-reliance is piety, whereas mundane “piety” is impiety” (212).

[42] Stessel observes that “Emerson was used to finding energy and bravery in military heroes” (168).

[43] See Bercovitch 8-15.

[44] Although Lee and I observe these same characteristics within the doctrine of compensation, I disagree with Lee’s larger argument that the essay fails both artistically and as a matter of argument. Despite his awareness of the “decided ministerial overtones” of “Compensation” (293), Lee appears to subscribe to standard interpretations of the notion of the Last Judgment that perpetuate the human value of revenge in the guise of a moral treatise. I support the alternative views of Jacobson and Pommer, both of whom demonstrate that Emerson himself sought to move beyond such traditional interpretations in favor of a more intellectually satisfying moral philosophy.

[45] As Cayton points out, “It is only the essays clearly focused on human relationships—“Love,” “Friendship,” and “Self-Reliance”—that Emerson begins to explore what is for him entirely new ground” (198).

[46] Bottorff agrees when he contends that “Trust thyself,” in the metaphysical sense of “obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark,” the Platonic light and dark allusion changing to the Biblical, emphasizes right action” (209-10).

[47] This is the principle of *sola fides*, which Bercovitch notes “removes the center of authority from ecclesiastical institutions and relocates it in the elect soul” (10).

[48] One of his religious theories hypothesized that Biblical passages involving the Trinity represent subsequent textual additions.

[49] Mildred Silver reaches a similar conclusion when she contends, "The self-reliant man, depending on the deeper, higher self, which is God, will through his own effort to express the indwelling Spirit make his pilgrim's progress. Others will be encouraged by his example to do likewise" (19). Gustaaf Van Cromphout also finds that Emerson "held that truth was not so much to be discovered as to be created—created by God (or the Over-Soul) as He shapes the course of history through the thoughts and actions of the great men He inspires" (55).

[50] Within an otherwise poignant argument, Caponigri asserts that "History must be destroyed not merely as a religious and human force, but as a principle of Being. It must be shown that man's spiritual life is independent of history because reality itself is ultimately ahistorical" (371). The idea that Emerson seeks to "destroy" history is too absolute a claim in view of the fact that he preserves the heroic exemplar as an inspiration to subsequent generations, an act which returns the hero to a fundamentally historical realm.

[51] William Bysshe Stein accurately interprets Emerson's view of the significance of individual actions until the point at which he contends that "once so apprehended, history ceases to exist" (200). Stein's assertions concerning the primacy of the spiritual character of the heroic act are otherwise compelling.

[52] Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778-1823), Italian archaeological excavator whose *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries Within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* had been published in 1820.

[53] In "The Philosophy of History," Emerson depicts the idea of the One Man variously as the Universal Man, the Universal Mind, the Universal Soul, and the Universal One. These terms are used interchangeably throughout this work; the author attempts to duplicate Emerson's use within a given context.

[54] Allen points to the “murmur[ings] about their pastor’s Quakerish tendencies” on the part of some of the members of the Second Church and contends that Emerson “may have been somewhat influenced by his friends in the church in New Bedford in which he had preached from time to time, beginning in 1827” (177).

[55] Rusk 204-05 attributes this perception to both Quakerism and Swedenborgianism.

[56] Huggard reports that “[w]e notice that Emerson did not say that all, or most, men commit themselves to this noble spiritual progress, but he implied that the way is open to all” (83).

[57] Allen points to Edgar Quinet, who “praised [Emerson} as ‘the most ideal writer of our times,’” in a French production of *Christianity and the French Revolution* (380), “the prominent critic Philarète Chasles,” who “called attention to Emerson’s *Essays*, and the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz,” who “praised them in a lecture at the Sorbonne,” and “Daniel Stern (pseudonym of the Comtesse d’Agoult), who wrote a review for *La Revue Indépendente* (380).

[58] Cayton cities Ellen Tucker Emerson’s *The Life of Lidian Jackson Emerson* 79.

[59] In his essay analyzing Emerson’s “use of the sphere as both an image and a structural device” in the *Essays*, David G. Hoch “believe[s] that it is by design that [“History” and “Art”] begin and end the book by stating opposing sides of the same idea” (288).

[60] In the introduction, Emerson argues, “Because the soul is progressive, it never quite repeats itself, but in every act attempts the production of a new and fairer whole. . . . Thus in our fine arts, not imitation but creation is the aim. . . . [The painter] should know that the landscape has beauty for his eye because it expresses a thought which is to him good; and this because the same power

which sees through his eyes is seen in the spectacle" (*W* 2: 351). On the second page, he queries, "What is the abridgement and selection we observe in all spiritual activity, but itself the creative impulse? for it is the inlet of that higher illumination which teaches to convey a larger sense by simpler symbols" (352). Emerson elaborates, "As far as the spiritual character of the period overpowers the artist and finds expression in his work, so far it will retain a certain grandeur, and will represent to future beholders the Unknown, the Inevitable, the Divine" (352). Near the center, he contends, "In proportion to his force, the artist will find in his work an outlet for his proper character" (360). A few pages later, he asserts, "The real value of the Iliad or the Transfiguration is as signs of power; billows or ripples they are of the stream of tendency; tokens of the everlasting effort to produce, which even in its worst estate the soul betrays" (363). In the conclusion, Emerson confirms that art "[p]roceed[s] from a religious heart" (368).

[61] This passage specifically addresses Greek sculpture, Roman masonry, and Tuscan and Venetian painting. I am extending it to include all works of art, as suggested by Emerson's preceding observation, "The best of beauty is a finer charm than skill in surfaces, in outlines, or rules of art can ever teach, namely a radiation from the work of art, of human character,--a wonderful expression through stone, or canvas, or musical sound, of the deepest and simplest attributes of our nature, and therefore most intelligible at last to those souls which have these attributes" (*W* 2: 358-59).

[62] Emerson refers to Raphael's *The Transfiguration*, which he describes as "an eminent example of this particular merit" [the notion that "All great actions have been simple, and all great pictures are"] (*W* 2: 362). He explains that "[a] calm benignant beauty shines over all this picture, and goes directly to the heart. It seems almost to call you by name. The sweet and sublime face of Jesus is

beyond praise, yet how it disappoints all florid expectations! This familiar, simple, home-speaking countenance is as if one should meet a friend" (362).

[63] In his analysis of "The Dissolving Rhetoric of 'Intellect,'" Sanford Pinsker claims that "the center of Emerson's concern remains enigmatic and stubbornly non-verbal. The result is an anti-essay—a species of *poem*—which substitutes poetic technique for the usual modes of persuasive rhetoric in an attempt to express the inexpressible" (284). Although Pinsker limits his discussion to "Intellect," I am extending his assertion to include the similar-constructed "Art."

[64] Emerson had delivered "The Transcendentalist" lecture at Boston's Masonic Temple in January of 1842.

[65] According to Edward Emerson's Notes, "The allusion to [the contrasts between the 'lyrist' and the 'and' and the 'contemporary' and the 'eternal' man, which appears on page 9,] is probably to Tennyson, who had not come to his full strength; possibly to Mr. Emerson's unseen friend and correspondent in England, John Sterling, who died the year these essays were published" (*W* 3: 295) .

[66] The passage is taken from Milton's *Comus*.

[67] Per Edward Emerson's note, *W* 4: 296-97.

[68] Buell draws from Perry Miller's "Emersonian Genius and the American Democracy" in his contention that "'[r]epresentative' was chosen over the Carlylean 'hero' in order to make the 'democratic' point that 'genius is great not only because he surpasses but because he represents his constituency" (82). Buell cites the essay from *Emerson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Milton Konvitz and Stephen Whicher (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1962), p. 82; within the current study, all references to Miller's "Emersonian Genius" are taken from *The New England Quarterly* 26.1 (Mar., 1953): 27-44.

[69] Buell quotes Miller from "Emersonian Genius," p. 41-42.

[70] McCormick quotes Carlyle from *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 1: 13, 43.

[71] "Each man is by secret liking connected with some district of nature, whose agent and interpreter he is; as Linnæus, of plants, Huber, of bees; Fries, of lichens; Van Mons, of pears; Dalton, of atomic forms; Euclid, of lines; Newton, of fluxions" (*W* 4: 9).

[72] The term "practical actor" is borrowed from Patterson, who asserts that "[l]ike the middle-class businessmen whom he came to represent, Napoleon presented the problem of worldly and practical action, and Emerson approached him as if to understand the social consequences of his own work. He desired not so much to overcome Napoleon or the world as to convert their power to his ends" (236).

[73] In his essay "Emerson's 'Montaigne; or, the Skeptic': Biography as Autobiography," Richard R. O'Keefe raises a legitimate point when he asks, "why is there so little of Montaigne in 'Montaigne'?" (206). As O'Keefe accurately observes, "After delaying for fourteen paragraphs to address his specific subject, Emerson then deals with it in a way that seems cursory" (209). Although not particularly germane to the argument at hand, O'Keefe's query raises the relevant issue of why Emerson selected Montaigne as the best representative of a useful but abstract notion. If one accepts O'Keefe's argument in its entirety, the representative function of the skeptic eclipses the notion of Montaigne as the representative historical figure and thus diminishes the great man's role. Despite the distinctiveness of the essay's structure, I do not believe that this was part of Emerson's objective.

[74] M. Luke Bresky reaches a similar conclusion in his essay concerning the nationality of Emerson's representatives when he observes that "Emerson's biographical lecturers participated in a localized, largely oratorical discourse combining the representative heroics of nationality with the representative

heroics of vocation" (215). I am equating the concept of "vocation" with the similar notion of "cause."

[75] Ray Benoit contends that "Emerson found Plato a monistic dualist; he found him believing that spirit and matter have an existence independent of each other; i.e., one is not a refinement of the other, but hinting at a higher ground in which they are reconciled into a bipolar unity" (492). Benoit's statements concerning spirit, matter, and the higher ground of unity strike me as an apt statement of the purest essence of Emerson's spiritual philosophy.

[76] The relative absence of defects and limitations Emerson ascribes to Plato (as compared to his other subjects in *Representative Men*) would seem to support Matthiessen's assertion that "[t]he representative man whom [Emerson] most revered was Plato" (3).

[77] Robert P. Falk contends, "Strictly speaking, there is but one 'rule' for the poet—to put himself in harmony with the Universal Mind, or to express symbolically, by interpretation of the material world, man's relation with the Oversoul" (534). Emerson's allusion of the products of Shakespeare and Daguerre does exactly that by juxtaposing an organic interpretation of the material world (the poem) with a mechanical one (the daguerreotype) and reasserting the superiority of the Idealist to the Materialist.

[78] Ernest Renan (1823-1892), French historian, philosopher, and religious scholar. Renan's *Vie de Jésus* was published in 1863.

[79] Rusk uses a passage from Emerson's "War" journal (*JMN* 15: 224) from late 1863.

[80] Huggard's source is *L* 1: 251.

[81] Huggard writes of the nineteenth-century controversy concerning the question of whether Jesus was God or a man. Although Emerson himself "believed that

Jesus was in his nature a human being" (99), he could not assume that this belief was shared by the majority of people in his audience. See Huggard 98-110.

[82] See Elkins 27-34 and 140-222.

[83] See Allen 97-98 and Barish 116-17.

[84] I take exception to Cayton's contention that the antislavery issue constituted a reform movement that Emerson "could not refuse to support actively" (240). Like any political activist, Emerson retained the right of refusal; his election to enter the public debate represented a conscious choice based upon character, consideration and consistency rather some (external) means of "compulsion."

[85] See Gougeon's "Abolition, the Emersons, and 1837" and Ellen Tucker Emerson 83-84.

[86] Rusk declares Emerson "avowedly an abolitionist" as of January, 1861 (408); Allen notes Emerson's suggestion for support of the Anti-Slavery Society in his second Fugitive Slave Law Address in New York on March 7, 1854 (556-58). I contend that his abolitionist leanings are clear as early as the publication of *Nature* in 1836.

[87] The quoted passage "it is felt. . . . so poor" appears is from one of Emerson's own letters to James Elliot Cabot.

[88] See Gougeon, "Abolition, The Emersons, and 1837," 345-64.

[89] See Allen 424-30 and Gougeon's "Historical Background" to *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* xxvii-xxxi.

[90] For accounts of the Hoar incident, see Allen 429-30, Rusk 303-06, and Gougeon's "Historical Background" xxx-xxxi.

[91] See Johnson, "Emerson's Craft of Revision," 171-89.

[92] See Hughes 273-86.

[93] In his “Historical Background” to *Emerson’s Antislavery Writings*, Gougeon notes that the lecture marked the first time Emerson had presented an antislavery lecture so frequenty since his first Fugitive Slave Law address and asserts that Emerson “undoubtedly felt that the times demanded it” (xliii).

[94] According to Gougeon’s note, “Emerson may be referring to any one of the four governors of Massachusetts during this period: George N. Briggs (1796-1861), governor 1844-1851; George S. Boutell (1818-1905), governor 1851-1853; John H. Clifford (1809-1876), governor 1853-1854); and Emory Washburn (1800-1877), governor 1854-1855” (217).

[95] In the documentary film *Faces of the Enemy*, Dr. John W. Dower observes that Japanese image-makers during World War II limited their anti-American propaganda efforts to the dehumanization of American *leaders*, whereas American propagandists exhibited a unique tendency to attack the *people* of an enemy nation as well as its leaders. Emerson's characterization of the people of the South as "animals" is consistent with this approach; having already criticized leaders for their failure to resolve the slavery issue, he redirects his accusations to implicate the people who support the enemy's position. By questioning the character and integrity of the people of the South, Emerson perpetuates and intensifies his long-established dichotomy between "right" and "wrong" causes.

[96] See Edward Emerson, “Notes” (*W* 11: 595-97).

[97] For a detailed description of Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, see Villard 391-466. For more on Emerson’s response to the raid, see Allen 588-92.

[98] According to Edward Emerson's "Notes," the text of "Courage" represents an edited version of Emerson's actual speech. Published eleven years subsequent to Emerson's address, the essay "underwent many changes, passages written during the shame and anger of the dark days before the war disappearing when

the essay took on its more classic form, and some proud memories of that great struggle taking their place" (*W* 7: 427).

[99] Miller reaches a similar conclusion when he observes that “Lincoln was, nominally, a Republican, but before 1865 Emerson saw him only as the creature of universal suffrage; the assassination and the rapid canonization undoubtedly helped, but Emerson was still feeling his own way and not merely moving with the times when in 1871 he told his Harvard audience, ‘John Brown and Abraham Lincoln were both men of genius, and have obtained this simple grandeur of utterance’” (40-41).

[100] Cabot appears to paraphrase Emerson's speech here rather than to quote it directly. He indicates his source as the *Boston Evening Transcript* for November 13, 1861.

[101] In this apparent synopsis, Cabot again seems to be paraphrasing Emerson; he does not indicate a source for the speech and does not use quotation marks. In the introduction to his Appendix "F", Cabot announces his intention to provide "abstracts" of Emerson's unpublished papers, "as far as possible in his own words, with reference to passages which have been printed" (2: 710). Neither "Moral Forces" nor "American Nationality" appears in Emerson's *Works*.

[102] "Resources" constituted one of six weekly lectures delivered before the Parker Fraternity at the Melodoeon in Boston during the winter of 1864-1865.

[103] Emerson's anecdote does not specifically name Captain Bowers or label him as Emerson's "next neighbor"; this information is provided in Edward Emerson's "Notes" (*W* 11: 619). Colonel Prescott is directly identified by Emerson in the address.

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VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: “A HIGHER SPHERE OF THOUGHT”: EMERSON’S USE OF THE *EXEMPLUM* AND *EXEMPLUM FIDEI*

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Pages in Study: 318 Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: English

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to demonstrate how many of the beliefs of the minister continued to influence Ralph Waldo Emerson's articulation of transcendentalist tenets beginning with the publication of *Nature*. Although Emerson extends to man a more powerful and proactive role in the areas of intellectual pursuit and self-determination, he adheres to established Christian beliefs in much of his consideration of the issues of morality, contemplation, spirituality, and heroism. The presence of the moral sentiment within nature and the ability of the individual to access it through his exercise of autonomous thought establish the foundation upon which Emerson constructs his paradigm of the heroic exemplar, which exhibits signs of the *imitatio Christi* from both medieval hagiography and its subsequent Protestant transfigurations. Elements of both the Catholic *exemplum* and the Reformed *exemplum fidei* appear within the lives of Emerson's heroes and in his paradigm of the heroic exemplar. These notions remain consistent throughout his work and are apparent in his depictions of heroic individuals from *Nature* through the 1860s.

Findings and Conclusions: Despite the apparent belief of many of his critics that Emerson abandoned religion at the time he left the ministry, such a conclusion is not supported by close examination of his works. Besides the consistent primacy of the moral sentiment and the conception of Nature as intermediary between God and Man, the influence of Emerson the minister can be discerned in many of the connections between his paradigm of the heroic exemplar and the religious notions of *exemplum* and *exemplum fidei*. The catalyst for Emerson's hero, like that for both the saint and his Protestant equivalent, remains the moral or noble sentiment, and the process through which the individual attains the elevated status of the exemplar continues along a parallel course. Although Emerson's post-ministerial philosophy cannot be classified as truly religious in character, it contains a profoundly religious component. The evidence of his works reveals that even after Emerson left the ministry, he never surrendered the impulse he identifies in *Nature* as the religious sentiment.

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