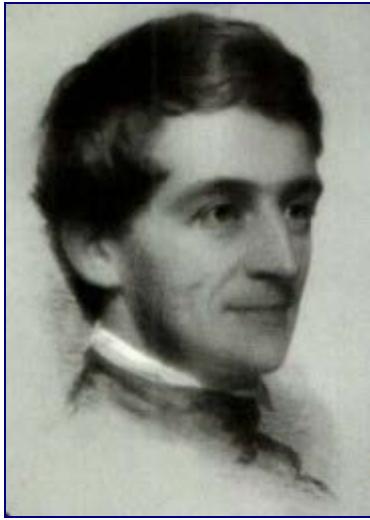
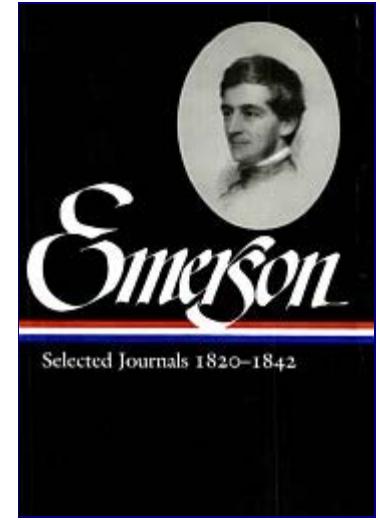


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**A READER'S JOURNAL**  
**Emerson**  
**Selected Journals 1820 - 1842**  
by  
**Ralph Waldo Emerson**  
Library of America No. 201  
ARJ2 Chapter: Evolution of Consciousness  
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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2015

This book contains excerpts from the 16 volume Harvard edition of *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo*



*Emerson*. The editor chose "to present Emerson's best and most vital writing, and to retain what was most significant biographically and historically in the journals."

My purpose in reading these two volumes was to encounter Emerson the man and writer and to witness first-hand his evolution as a thinker and a writer. I first met Emerson when I was a young man starting college at the tender age of 18 when I purchased A Modern Library edition of his *Collected Essays and Writings*. His essay on "Self-Reliance" acted as a power potion on me and helped me shape the remainder of my life. Emerson wrote therein, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." After reading that sentence, I never felt squeamish about speaking out of my own reality as I learned more about the world. The older I became the better I understood the truths contained in the often-elided second phrase, in which he reveals the greatest defenders of foolish consistency, namely, *statesmen* who strenuously defend out-dated policies, *philosophers* who eschew non-Aristotelian modes of thought, and *divines* who expound on canonical creeds in weak and weekly sermons.

Where in his life did Emerson learn about foolish consistency? I imagine he did so by refusing to give way to a way of thought or action merely because others considered it the right thing to do. Emerson was born in 1803 when he began writing his journal in 1820, making him about the age I was when I was reading his essays for the first time.

Everyone knows that there are 26 letters in the English alphabet, but there were 27 to Emerson because in the early 1810s when he was in grade school, the last letter of the alphabet was named "and". So if he were to recite the alphabet he would end by saying, ". . . x, y, z, and *per se* and." Over the two centuries since then, the phrase "and *per se* and" became condensed into one word, "ampersand" and it is denoted by this character: "&". I mention this because the editors have remained true to the way Emerson wrote, probably in pencil in cursive script. The symbol "&" originated from cursive writing of the Latin word, "et", like in "et tu, Brute" which means "and you, Brutus." The shorthand cursive writing of "et" involved a script "e" starting from the bottom end of the "e" going left and upward, turning right at the top and moving left to finish the "e". This was followed without stopping by a downward move, then turning right with an upward curve which crossed the initial beginning of the "e" making the ending stroke resemble a "t". Throughout his Journals, Emerson used an ampersand in place of "and" wherever it appeared. In the common usage, "et cetera" is today abbreviated "etc", and now you can learn how the curious abbreviation of "etc" got that way. Emerson and his peers abbreviated it this way "&c". This curious usage puzzled me until a friend sent me an email([1](#)) which explained the origin of the word "ampersand".

With that as prologue, here's the first three sentences of his journal:

**[Page 1] Jan. 25, 1820. Mixing with the thousand pursuits & passions & objects of the world as personified by Imagination is profitable & entertaining. These pages are intended at this commencement to contain a record of new thoughts (when they occur); for a receptacle of all the old ideas that partial but peculiar peepings at antiquity can furnish or furbish; for tablet to save the wear & tear of weak Memory & in short for all the various purposes & utility real or imaginary which are usually comprehended under that comprehensive title *Common Place book*. O ye witches assist me! enliven or horrify some midnight lucubration or dream (whichever may be found most convenient) to supply this reservoir when other resources fail.**

Emerson explains how the Greeks wrote a lot about its later times, but as you go back, at some point, it's like a veil dropped and nothing was written. Why? Because whatever happened before the invention of writing could scarcely be written about. For what we know about earlier periods of the Greeks, we have only Homer's epics. These long stories were transmitted by memory from generation to generation until the human processes of memory weakened and writing was created to enable us to retain things in external memory. My reading of these Journals of Emerson is my personal way of going back to before the veil fell in Emerson's life, to see for myself what he was thinking about and writing about before the Essays he is so famous for came into existence. These Essays are like the products of Emerson's workshop, I wanted to spend some time in his dusty workshop with him as he saws, sands, and pieces together the objects which take final form later in his published Essays.

In this droll collection of three items, Emerson visited to break the tedium of his writing with some curious tidbits. He was writing this at the same age as I was when I met him, both of us callow college students. (Note the appearance of "&c" in place of our "etc".)

**[page 14] August 8, 1820. A strange idea or two may find place here to relieve this metaphysical prolixity. *Imprimis*. In Lapland the intense cold freezes the words of men as they come out in breath & they are heard not until the sun thaws them! *Item*. When Astrology was much in vogue, a mighty man of gramarye (RJM: occult or magic) repaired to Gregory VII to give the science a patron saint. The pontiff — well pleased directed him to make his choice from the Pantheon. Accordingly the conjurer was hood-winked & marched into the building and took hold first of the statue of the Devil as combating with the Archangel Michael! *Item*. Lord Bacon notices a singular fact that the opposite shores of S. America & Africa correspond — bay to cape — gulf to coast &c "which could not be without a cause." *Vide Map*.**

Now some short items which I found interesting. In this passage we encounter his variant spelling of "receive". On some pages I have spotted both spellings, also finding *pierce* spelled *peirce* and various *ou* spellings such as *favour* and *rumour*.

**[page 19] October 20, 1820. The supreme Pontiff sent a confessor to Rabelais on his deathbed charging him to recieve (sic) absolution. Rabelais dismissed the messenger & bid him tell the Pontiff he was now going to visit the Great Perhaps.**

JK Rowlings, a novelist who actually wore skirts, in her *Harry Potter* novels, would probably fit the injunction that young Emerson laid down for novelists.

**[page 32] February 22, 1822. The novelist must fasten the skirts of his tale to scenes or traditions so well known as to make it impossible to disbelieve and so obscure as not to obtrude repugnant facts upon the finished deception he weaves.**

In this next passage, one suspects "Mowna Roa" to be Mauna Loa (which means Long Mountain), the tall ancient volcano 13,678 feet high in the big island of Hawaii of the island chain originally called the Sandwich Isles. (One wonders if it is this original name which led modern Hawaiian natives to adopt

Spam as their favorite meat for making sandwiches.)

**[page 42] May 7, 1822. Mowna Roa, mountain in Sandwich Isles was seen by Marchand at the distance of 53 leagues ie. 159 miles — Greatest distance at which a terrestrial object hath been seen from the level of the sea.**

If some materialists, like Rabelais, were to doubt the power of prayer, this story might give him pause. In the year 1412 an Italian ranger named Squarcia commonly fed human flesh to his dogs. One day after his hounds had torn to pieces John Posterla and other men.

**[page 46] May 14, 1822. He delivered up to them also the son of John Posterla aged only twelve, but when the boy cast himself on his knees to ask pardon, the dogs stood still & would not touch him. Squarcia, with his knife stabbed the child & the dogs refused still to taste of his blood & entrails.**

Familiarity breeds contempt is a familiar saying and in this next passage Emerson hints at this saying as he pleads with the Goddess of Nature for her favor. (Note the word "and" is spelled out in the quotation of Fortune.)

**[Page 74] June 11, 1823. If she was partial once, she is morose now; for Familiarity, (if awful Nature will permit to use so bold a word,) breeds disgust; & Vinegar is the son of Wine; peradventure I may yet be admitted to the contemplation of her inner magnificence, & her favour (sic) may find me, no shrine indeed, but some snug niche, in the temple of Tim. 'Tut,' says Fortune — 'and if you fail, — it shall never be from lack of vanity.'**

If a "foolish consistency" may be likened to chains, this next passage of Emerson takes on new meaning. Much of our busy-ness in school and college is learning to adhere to consistencies which may then enslave our minds, preventing us from perceiving the world in fresh new ways.

**[page 75] September, 1823. Man is a foolish slave who is busy in forging his own fetters. Sometimes he lifts up his eyes for a moment, admires freedom, & then hammers the rivets of his chain.**

Emerson says on page 92, "A nation like a tree does not thrive till it is engrafted with a foreign stock." Then he discusses the first appearance of newspapers in 1538 and their later appearance in America, how they helped to stem spurious and inaccurate reports.

**[page 93] December 21, 1823. For a report cannot be denied, but a printed rumour can be. . . Newspapers are the proper literature of America, which affects to be so practical & unromantic a land.**

For all single friends of my own age, may I offer what Emerson calls, "a homely verse of blessed truth in human history":

**[page 93] December 21, 1823.  
"There lives no goose so gray, but soon or late  
She finds some honest gander for her mate."**

In this next passage Emerson presages the 21st Century Smartphone, the wireless wonder device which is a cell phone, a dictating machine, a universal encyclopedia (Google), dictionary, address book, typewriter, etc, and can provide music, poetry, novels, newspapers from all over the world, all in a simple handheld device which nearly everyone in the civilized world carries with them today. He extrapolates from the Steam Engine of James Watt to create his prediction of our world to become a magical world like Jonathan Swift's *Laputa*. While Swift was able to predict two moons of Mars, he was not able to predict

the wonders of the world-wide Internet and Smartphones.

**[page 101] February 17, 1824. Pliny's uncle had a slave read while he eat (sic). In the progress of Watt & Perkin's philosophy the day may come when the scholar shall be provided with a Reading Steam Engine; when he shall say Presto — & it shall discourse eloquent history — & Stop Sesame & it shall hush to let him think. He shall put in a pin, & hear poetry; & two pins, & hear a song. That age will discover Laputa.**

From my study of Galambos' innovative work(2), I decades ago decided that no vote of mine would support or empower anyone to coerce another human being. Emerson is thinking a bit along those lines when he talks about some naval battle being fought or bandied about in 1824 (likely one of naval battles during the Greek War for Independence).

**[page 118] December 10, 1824. The man whom your vote supports is to govern some millions — and it would be laughable not to know the issue of the naval battle. In ten years this great competition will be very stale & a few words will inform you the result which cost you so many columns of the newsprints, so many anxious conjectures. Your soul will last longer than the ship; & will value its just & philosophical associations long after the memory has spurned all obtrusive & burdensome contents.**

Anyone who follows the news of the world today will be familiar with the anxious suppositions they create in the reader or the viewer of their reports.

In this next passage, I am delighted to find that the Swiss used self-sealing shingles on their roofs in Emerson's time, almost 200 hundred years ago. I had thought self-sealing shingles were an invention of the twentieth century, but the self-sealing asphalt shingles in popular use today are designed after the Larch tree shingles of Switzerland.

**[page 132] March 16, 1826. I am pleased with every token however slight in nature , in institutions, in arts, of progressive adaptation to wants — . The men of Switzerland cover their houses with shingles of the Larch tree which in a little time give out their pitch to the sun & fill up every joint so that the roof is impervious to rain.**

When men of reason ask for proof of immortality, they wish us to answer them with reasons, and in doing so, they wish in vain. Evidence of the spiritual world, in which we live, and move, and have our being in this life and the next, comes from *feeling* not from abstract logical reasoning. Emerson was clear on that point in his time.

**[page 134] May 28, 1826. I feel that the affections of the soul are sublimer than the faculties of the intellect. I *feel* immortal. And the evidence of immortality comes better from consciousness than from reason.**

Perhaps the truth of immortality is easily recognized. Emerson quotes Fontenelle as saying, on page 140, "We seem to recognize a truth the first time we hear it." Children are born knowing they are immortal because they come into this world carrying the waves of glory from the spiritual world with them; only with persistence of their teachers can this innate truth be muddled up and meticulously washed away as they grow into adults.

Our common word *factory* was unknown in the 1820s and Emerson shows us its origin.

**[page 141, *italics added to text*] December 3, 1826. The men of this age work & play between steam engines of tremendous force, amid the roaring wheels of *manufactories*, brave the incalculable forces of the storm here in the seat of its sovereignty and fulfil in these perilous crises all the minute offices of life, as calm & unawed as they would compose themselves to sleep in the shade of a forest.**

What is it that makes a thought or an idea last for a very long time? Emerson admits that he knew the

answer before he read Burke, but shares it with us here:

**[page 141] November 1826. I find in Burke almost the same thought I had entertained as an original remark three years ago that nothing but the moral quality of actions can penetrate thro' vast intervals of time.**

One of the fun parts of reading Emerson is discovering old meanings for words which have taken on new ones for us. The verb *career* is such a word. It means to rush forward at high speed without control. How many of you have had such a career in your lifetime?

**[page 146] Alexandria, Egypt, May 5, 1827. — My days run onward like the weaver's beam. They have no honour (sic) among men, they have no grandeur in the view of the invisible world. It is as if a net of meanness were drawn around aspiring men thro' which their eyes are kept on mighty objects but the subtle (sic) fence is forever interposed. "They also serve who only stand & wait." Aye but they must wait in a certain temper & in a certain equipment. They must wait as the knight on the van (vanguard) of the embattled line standing in the stirrups, his spear in rest, his steed foaming, ready for the career with the speed of a whirlwind. Am I the accomplished cavalier?**

We are in the beginning of Presidential campaign in which one highly favored candidate is from Florida. In this next passage, Emerson is visiting St. Augustine in Florida and tells us what he heard there.

**[page 152] February 24, 1827. I attended mass in the Catholic Church. The mass is in Latin & the sermon in English & the audience who are Spaniards understand neither. The services have been recently interrupted by the imprisonment of the worthy father for debt in the Castle of St. Marks.**

**The people call the place Botany Bay & say that whenever Presidents or Bishops or Presbyteries have danglers on their hands fit for no offices they send them to Florida.**

When we say something is just on the tip of our tongue, it might never occur to us that Emerson said it differently in his time, "It is strange that the greatest men of the time only *say* what is just trembling on the lips of all thinking men." (Page 162) Certainly that was true of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt in their time.

We observe what is good and enjoy it; but we never question it, do we? All else we do question.

**[page 166] August 18, 1830. We never ask the reason of what is good. The sun shines & warms & lights us & we have no curiosity to know why this is so; but we ask the reason of all evil, of pain, & hunger, & mosquitoes, & silly people.**

Plagiarism is like wax fruit in a bowl in the kitchen, it doesn't pass the sniff test: no sensible person would pick up a wax pear and take a bite from it. As soon as one's fingers contact the pear, the illusion of being a real pear is broken. Similarly with artificial flowers: real flowers move almost imperceptibly in a room in the slightest air movement as a person walks by. They can never be mistaken as artificial, and only the most callous eye can judge an artificial flower as being real.

**[page 169] November 19, 1830. The speech a man repeats which is not his own but was borrowed from another with the hope to pass for original is like a flower held in the hand or a dead feather in the cap manifestly cut off from all life & can deceive none but a child into the belief that is a part of himself.**

Writing as far as words are concerned is just "one damn thing after another" — there's a blank space and a word is needed to fill it. The blank page for some writers is the most daunting challenge to face. At least a mountaineer has a definite object, a large structure of earth, in front of him. But a writer has nothing, a blank space, a whiteness which will take on meaning only by dint of the writer's efforts. A writer creates a

mountain of meaning by filling the blank page with words, and the reader's job is to climb that mountain, which the reader will do, if the meaning is interesting and attractive and the path is welcoming, meandering along a refreshing stream from which to drink, providing on occasion, panoramic views to entertain the eyes, and leading to a definite goal at the end of the path, perhaps a mountain cabin in which to find blessed repose and a promise of a hearty meal of pancakes in the lodge the next morning.

**[page 175] July 8, 1831. No man can write well who thinks there is any choice of words for him. The laws of composition are as strict as those of sculpture & architecture. There is always one line that ought to be drawn or one proportion that should be kept & every other line or proportion is wrong, &c so far wrong as it deviates from this. So in writing, there is always a right word, & every other word than that is wrong. There is no beauty in words except in their collocation. The effect of a fanciful word misplaced, is like that horn of exquisite polish growing on a human head.**

Ever wonder why there seems to be an increasing percentage of atheists among the intellectually discerning effete? Emerson wrote on July 21, 1831, "God cannot be intellectually discerned." Lacking this important distinction, intellectuals attempt it anyway and failing, create a badge of their failure with **ATHEIST** on it, claiming they have proved that God does not exist. With materialistic blinders on, they cannot spy the spiritual world which lies to either side of their line of sight as they trot through the City of God carrying their intellectual rubbish to sell to others who lack either intelligence or discernment.

Atheists are like watchmen in a factory who have fallen asleep, mesmerized by their own abstract logical thought processes.

**[page 179] July 26, 1831. There is an engine at Waltham to watch the watchmen of the factory. Every hour they must put a ring on to the wheel or if they fall asleep & do not, the machine will show their neglect & which hour they slept. Such a machine is every man's Reputation.**

Below I have extracted some sentences from Emerson's prose on page 181 to 182 and reformatted them without changing a word to create this found poem. "A poem is an experiment upon the human mind," as he quotes Sir J. Mackintosh as saying on page 191, as these sentences qualify as one. It might be entitled "Yes, There Is" to highlight the meaning of the two solitary Yes's which appear.

**What we love —  
that shall we seek.**

**What cares the lover sick with his passion  
how long is the way to his mistress  
or how poor her house?  
What cares the ardent philosopher  
how fast it rains  
or what brilliant party he loses  
when he posts away to the conversation of a wise man?  
What cares the merchant on what wharves  
the goods he would monopolize are to be sought?**

**But is there no difference in the objects which the heart loves?  
Is there no truth? Yes.**

**And is there no power in truth to command itself? Yes.  
It alone can satisfy the heart.**

**We call you to that which all the future shall teach,  
far more forcibly & simply than we do now.**

### **These things are true & real & grand & lovely & good.**

What Emerson is talking about is a *celestial economy* which redounds to anyone who offers the world what is both good and true, even if it is only sticking a sapling of a tree into the ground, as this quote he gives us from Robert Haskins.

**[page 185] December 28, 1831.** "Always be sticking a tree, Jock, — it will be growing when we're sleeping," was the thrifty Scotchman's dying advice. Always be setting a good action to grow — is the advice of a divine thrift. It is bearing you fruit all the time — knitting you to men's hearts, & to men's good, & to God, & beyond this it is benefitting others by remembrance, by emulation, by love. The progress of moral nature is geometrical. Celestial economy!

Johnny Appleseed certainly followed this advice as he left behind thousands of apple trees across our young country and knitted himself into the hearts of people nourished by his apples. Thank God for celestial economy.

Emerson calls to our attention the trials of Galileo, and how it is easier to argue against an innovator than it is to innovate, like Galileo and so many other others have done, only to be despised and ridiculed for their work by those neither capable of doing innovative work nor of understanding it.

**[page 189, 190] February 20, 1832.** It is idle in us to wonder at the bigotry & violence of the persecution of Galileo. Every man may read the history of it in himself when he is contradicted & silenced in argument by a person whom he had always reckoned his inferior.

Emerson calls Shakespeare a "Master of the World" who leaves behind characters who, though written in pencil, remain tattooed in India ink upon our memory.

**[page 192] May 16, 1832.** Then Ariel, Hamlet, & all — all done in sport with the free daring pencil of a Master of the World. He leaves his children with God.

On a visit to the White Mountain, July 14, 1832, Emerson must have been facing the deadly blank white page when he penned the following lines. Peter Elbow(3) urged wannabe writers to conquer the blank page by taking a pencil and begin writing for at least ten minutes without stopping. Soon the editor, the critic in your head will give up in disgust and your original thoughts can appear. One *thought may be as wide as a country*.

**[page 194] July 14, 1832.** There is nothing to be said. Why take the pencil? I believe something will occur. A slight momentum would send the planet to roll forever. And the laws of thought are not unlike. A thought I said is a country wide enough for an active mind. It unrolls, it unfolds, it shows unlimited sense within itself.

In Emerson's time he could write "The British Plutarch & the modern Plutarch is yet to be written." That was true on August 12, 1832, but about a hundred years and change, the famed statesman and historian Winston Churchill became the British Plutarch.

To take unquestioned another's opinion as one's own would be to shoulder a burden which will weigh down one's heart. Emerson chose to choose his own way.

**[page 199] October 9, 1832.**  
Henceforth, please God, forever I forego  
The yoke of men's opinions. I will be  
Lighthearted as a bird & live with God.

This next passage presages Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* by 17 years, and the story Emerson relates likely spawned the idea for Melville's novel.

[page 302] *Boston, February 19, 1834.* A seaman in the coach told the story of an old sperm whale which he called a white whale which was known for many years by the whalers as Old Tom & who rushed upon the boats which attacked him & crushed the boats to small chips in his jaws, the men generally escaping by jumping overboard & being picked up. A vessel was fitted out at New Bedford, he said, to take him. And he was finally taken somewhere off Payta head by the Winslow or the Essex. He gave a fine account of a storm which I heard imperfectly. Only "the whole ocean was all feather white." A whale sometimes runs off three rolls of cord, three hundred fathom in length each one.

Emerson was keen on self-reliance, a subject he wrote keenly on in his eponymous Essay. Here we get a strong taste of his self-reliance in action.

[page 305] *March 22, 1834.* I ask advice. It is not that I wish my companion to dictate to me the course I should take. Before God, No. It were to un-man, to un-god myself. It is that I wish him to give me information about the facts, not a law as to the duty. It is that he may stimulate me by his thoughts to unfold my own, so that I may become *master of the facts* still. My own bosom will supply, as surely as God liveth, the direction of my course.

He writes on page 310, "We are always getting ready to live, but never living." Do you know people like that? They get "very little life in a lifetime." (Page 311) Living to me means enjoying every moment of what I'm doing. If I'm not doing something I want to, I change my attitude until I want this same activity. My everyday "I" that complains is the not the eternal I that plans my activities, the I that has laid out my life's plan for me before my birth in this lifetime. Often the very thing "I" didn't want to do was a necessary step to what followed which was the very thing "I" did want to happen but didn't know it earlier. If you want to live every moment to the fullest do a little "want development" as I have explained it.

What is the power of an unanswered question?<sup>(4)</sup> Have you ever thought about that? If so, did you accept the first answer which popped into your mind? Such easy answers short-circuit the power of an unanswered question, draining all the creative energy that was present in it uselessly into the ground. Emerson was aware of the power of an unanswered question and gave us advice to hold onto one and then what else we might do. He suggests that we treat it as a truth, one about which we are puzzled.

[page 311] *April 13, 1834.* Set out to study a particular truth. Read upon it. Walk to think upon it. Talk of it. Write about it. The thing itself will not much manifest itself, at least not much in accommodation to your studying arrangements. The gleams you do get, out they will flash, as likely at dinner, or in the roar of Faneuil Hall, as in your painfulest abstraction.

On April 30, 1834, Emerson wrote, "Give me the eye to see a navy in an acorn." But he wrote this in the time when oak trees provided the planks which formed boats for the navy. We might write today, "Give me the eye to see a navy in a blast furnace."

On page 314 Emerson expounds on the classification scheme of Linnaeus to describe nature, and comments that "A Classification is nothing but a Cabinet." Seeing the abstract logical structure Linnaeus built of living, vibrant nature, Emerson bemoans the lack of a science of animated nature. He was writing this some 30 years before Rudolf Steiner was born whose development of anthroposophy gave us a science of animated nature which included human beings. Steiner was inspired by the work of Goethe which was familiar to Emerson.

[page 318, 319] *May 3, 1834.* We have no Theory of animated Nature. When we have, it will be itself the true Classification. . . . When shall such a classification be obtained in botany? This is evidently what Goethe aimed to do, in seeking the Arch plant, which being known, would give not only all actual but all possible vegetable forms.

Railroads were new in Emerson's day, and people of the countryside called the railroad train, "hell in harness". Note that the two words *rail* and *road* had not yet been concatenated into one word when he wrote this, and that it's a steam engine that Emerson affectionately called a "teakettle".

**[page 323, 324] June 10, 1834.** One has dim foresight of hitherto uncomputed mechanical advantages who rides on the rail-road and moreover a practical confirmation of the ideal philosophy that Matter is phenomenal whilst men & trees barns whiz by you as fast as the leaves of a dictionary. As our teakettle hissed along through a field of mayflowers, we could judge of the sensations of a swallow who skims by trees & bushes with about the same speed. The very permanence of matter seems compromised & oaks, fields, hills, hitherto esteemed symbols of stability do absolutely dance by you.

In this next passage, Emerson notes the wonders of what I call Matherne's Rule No. 2, "You never know until you find out."

**[page 329] June 26, 1834.** We are wonderfully protected. We have scarce a misfortune, a hindrance, an infirmity, an enemy, but it is somehow productive of singular advantage to us. . . . God brings us by ways we know not & like not into Paradise.

This next passage has the phrase "pleached doublet" in it, and neither of its two words was familiar to me, so I Googled the phrase. If the pages of a dictionary flew by fast when Emerson searched for the definition of a word in his day, imagine what he would think about the speed of a Google search today. Well, while the dictionary is always helpful, my Google search gave me an answer which was exactly accurate and perfectly useless. It gave me the following sentence in Emerson's Journal, including its page number. What amazed me was seeing something Emerson wrote in 1834 returned to me during a search which took only half a second.

**[page 335] August 16, 1834.** There is more true elevation of character in Prince Hal's sentence about the pleached doublet than in any king in the romances.

By asking Google for an image I received photos of what a pleached doublet looks like. "Pleached" is an early version of what is called, "pleated" today. A "doublet" is a name for an old-style vest which had leather cords instead of buttons to fasten it closed.

To those of my fellow Americans who think that there are asses in Washington, you might be edified to discover that George Washington introduced the ass to America. He discovered that farms in Spain used an animal that worked harder than horses and ate less. When he inquired, he was given a jackass and told to mate it with a horse mare to produce this infertile animal which worked so efficiently. In the last fifteen years of his life, George created several dozens of these *mules* and farmers from all over bred their mules from George's ass. Maybe that's where our saying, "Let George do it," originated. This exposition on the "ass" came about because Emerson wrote in his August 21, 1834 journal entry, "Washington introduced the ass into America." (Page 339)

Finally I found a passage which provides fuel for Emerson's famous Essay called "Self-Reliance".

**[page 346] October 6, 1834.** Insist on yourself. Never imitate. For your own talent you can present every moment with all the force of a lifetime's cultivation but of the adopted stolen talent of anybody else you have only a frigid brief extempore half possession.

Emerson writes on November 5, 1834, "The sublime of the Ship is that in the pathless sea it carries its own direction in the chart & compass." (Page 352) What about the human being? Are we not each on a pathless sea but possess a sublime spirit within us which can read our karmic chart and soul's compass heading to set a course for us?

Rudolf Steiner often spoke of how our ability to see into the spiritual world is revealed only gradually and only to the most moral of persons, so that their power may be used for good. Emerson says it this way:

**[page 353] November 5, 1834. Do not trust man, great God!, with more power until he has learned to use his little power better. Does not our power increase exactly in the measure that we learn how to use it?**

This next two passages chime in my memory a familiar tune; likely I have read their successors in some of Emerson's Essays.

**[page 375] December 21, 1834. It is very easy in the world to live by the opinion of the world. It is very easy in solitude to be self-centered. But the finished man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.**

**[page 380] December 26, 1834. "There's nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so."**

Some of you may think, "I never saw a Titian; I never read Aristotle, Bacon, or Shakespeare, so what good did they do for me?" But you do look at paintings, think logically, understand some science, and speak and write English, don't you? Titian, Aristotle, Bacon, Shakespeare and other great beings like them are the people who formed our way of painting, thinking, and speaking. In a sense, Emerson reminds us, "the language thinks for us."

**[page 396] January 13, 1825. "Our very signboards show there has been a Titian in the world." Do you think that Aristotle benefits him only who reads the Ethics & the Rhetoric? Or Bacon or Shakespeare or the Schools those only who converse in them? Far otherwise; these men acted directly upon the common speech of men & made distinctions which as they were seen to be just by all who understood them, were rigidly observed as rules in their conversation & writing; & so were diffused gradually as improvements in the vernacular language. Thus the language *thinks* for us as Coleridge said.**

Say what you have to say, then shut up. Speak only when you have something important to say, then be quiet. Emerson says something similar but conjures up a white fence for us.

**[page 409] May 13, 1835. Imprison that stammering tongue within its white fence until you have a necessary sentiment or a useful fact to utter, & that said, be dumb again. Then your words will weigh something. . .**

I would be remiss not to share this amazing quotation which I have seen in many places and contexts; truly this is an original thought of Emerson's. It is sad to think that the "city of God" does not appear over our modern cities because of the glare of the dazzling lights of our cities, lights which are visible from outer space, appearing as star-spangled tinsel adorning the night side of our planet.

**[page 425] July 31, 1835. If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, men would believe & adore & for a few generations preserve the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown. But every night come out these preachers of beauty, & light the Universe with their admonishing smile.**

The passage below matches up well with this quotation from some other place in Emerson's writings: "A weed is a plant whose virtues have not been discovered."

**[page 465] June 16, 1836. Matter is the frail and weary weed in which God has drest the soul which he has called into time.**

Two of Emerson's views on history. First, on page 470 he writes, "The best Service which history renders us is to lead us to prize the present." Few historians do this, in my opinion, but Dr. Kevin Dann is a prominent exception. Second, this next passage:

**[page 471] August 27, 1836. History.** A great licentiousness seems to have followed directly on the heels of the Reformation. Luther even had to lament the decay of piety in his own household. "Doctor," said his wife to him one day, "how is it that while subject to papacy, we prayed so often & with such fervor, while now we pray with the utmost coldness & very seldom?" Remember Luther's wife!

As I read this next statement of Emerson's I realized that this was the effect that meeting him in his Essays had on me at the age of 18.

**[page 482] October 18, 1836. When I see a man of genius he always inspires me with a feeling of boundless confidence in my own powers.**

Do you have a speech or talk ahead of you that you are planning to give? He reminds us that "*In that hour it shall be given you what ye shall say.*"

**[page 482] October 18, 1836. Say the thing that is fit for this new-born and infinite hour. Come forsake, this once, this balmy time, the historical, & let us go to the Most high & go forth with him now that he is to say, Let there be Light. Propose no methods, prepare no words, select no traditions, but fix your eye on the audience & the fit word will utter itself as when the eye seek the person in the remote corner of the house the voice accommodates itself to the area to be filled.**

The passage below is a worthy sermon on the human being and how we fit into the world of time and spirit, how the circumstances of our life are like bark peeling off an expanding tree. Do we bemoan the loss of the bark when the tree yet lives on? So much of the things people call life is like lost bark, a byproduct of human existence.

**[page 485] October 19, 1836. There are two facts, the Individual and the Universal. To this belong the finite, the temporal, ignorance, sin, death; to that belong the infinite, the immutable, truth, goodness, life. In Man they both consist. The All is in Man. In Man the perpetual progress is from the Individual to the Universal, from that which is human, to that which is divine. "Self dies, & dies perpetually." The circumstances, the persons, the body, the world, the memory are forever perishing as the bark peels off the expanding tree. The facts so familiar to me in infancy, my cradle and porringer, my nurse and nursery, have died out of my world forever. The images of the following period are fading, & will presently be obliterated. Can I doubt that the facts & events & persons & personal relations that now appertain to me will perish as utterly when the soul shall have exhausted their meaning & use? The world is the gymnasium on which the youth of the Universe are trained to strength & skill. When they have become masters of strength & skill, who cares what becomes of the masts & bars & ropes on which they strained their muscle?**

From this next passage we can see clearly that Emerson understood sleep as an astral refreshment of our human body.

**[page 488] November 7, 1836. Sleep for five minutes seems an indispensable cordial to the human system. No rest is like the rest of sleep. All other balm differs from the balm of sleep as mechanical mixture differs from chemical. For this is the abdication of Will & the accepting of a supernatural aid. It is the introduction of the supernatural into the familiar day.**

Emerson had little patience with those who urged that "ministers adapt their preaching to the great mass." In this next passage, he leads us to see sermons like the Wizard of Oz thundering words as from the Godhead, with Emerson entering as Toto to pull away the curtain concealing a trembling old man pulling strings and spewing bird-droppings of wisdom.

**[page 489] November 8, 1836. But these pert gentlemen assume that the whole object is to manage "the great mass" & they forsooth are behind the curtain with the Deity and mean to help manage. They know all & will now smirk & manoeuvre & condescendingly yield the dropping of their wisdom to the poor people.**

The value of praise from others is especially important to writers. Emerson knew this well, and points out a phenomenon that I have observed in myself that I thought no one else knew about.

**[page 495] November 25, 1836. The very sentiment I expressed yesterday without heed, shall sound memorable to me tomorrow if I hear it from another. My own book I read with new eyes when a stranger has praised it.**

When reading Emerson, we feel as if he frees us from being entranced by dead heroes like Alexander or Washington, as if the Sun is raining light into our minds and spirits, and everything about us is new today. Read now how he exhorts us to experience this freedom.

**[page 495] November 25, 1836. Come let us not be an appanage to Alexander, Charles V. Or any of history's heroes. Dead men all! but for me the earth is new today, & the sun is raining light.**

In our so-called government of these United States of America, we have had good administrations and bad administrations. Our only consolation could be stated in Latin as "*Res nolunt diu male administrari*" which Emerson enlightens us as to its meaning.

**[page 503, 504] January 27, 1837. The true explanation of "*Res nolunt diu male administrari*" undoubtedly is that mischief is shortlived, & all things thwart & end it. Napoleon's empire built up amid universal alarm — in how short space of time vanished out of history like breath into the air: but St Paul, the tent maker, — see what a tent he built.**

In writing about Goethe, Emerson often waxes eloquent, as in this next passage:

**[page 509] April 11, 1837. Always the man of genius dwells alone, and, like the mountain, pays the tax of snows and silence for elevation.**

Emerson was a continuous learner throughout his life. How does one gauge the effects of learning on one's life? He tells us:

**[page 513] April 21, 1837. I learn evermore. In smooth water I discover the motion of my boat by the motion of trees & houses on shore, so the progress of my mind is proved by the perpetual change in the persons & things I daily behold.**

Here he writes of another idea that he expounds more fully in his Essays: "We humans touch but at points." Yes, and some people are so much like porcupines, we may be thankful we only touch them at isolated times and points.

**[page 526] May 19, 1837. Is it not pathetic that the action of men on men is so partial? We never touch but at points. He most that I can have or be to my fellow man, is it the reading of his book, or the hearing of his project in conversation. . . Every man is an infinitely repellent orb & holds his individual being on that condition.**

One of the delights of the TV Drama, "Blue Bloods", is their Sunday family dinner, where the troubles of the day or week are bruited about, usually in good humor. Yet, on occasion, someone is not all there, and it is visible on that person's face. Emerson talks of this phenomenon here:

**[page 529] May 22, 1937. The kingdom of the involuntary, of the not me. See they not how when the unfit guest comes in, the master of the house goes out? He is not at home, he cannot be at home whilst the guest stays. His body is there and a singular inconvenience to any family. Men & women should not contend with the laws of human nature. They sit at one board, but a cloud falleth upon their faces, that hinder them from seeing one another.**

From his Self-Reliance Essay I recall this idea being presented:

**[page 534] July 21, 1837. Abide by your spontaneous impression with good humoured inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what you have thought & felt all the time, & you will be forced to take with shame your own opinion from another.**

From my recollection, the Emerson who later incorporated the above thoughts into his Essay was like a stranger who refashioned Emerson's original words of July 21, 1837 with masterly good sense the hard-to-follow sentences above, making the sense jump out easily and fall like light into one's mind. He writes on page 542, "Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tile & copestones for the masonry of today."

Have you ever gotten a request to speak at a gathering filled with admonitions about what to speak about? What did Emerson do when that happened to him?

**[page 547] September 19, 1837. On the 29 August, I received a letter from the Salem Lyceum signed I.F. Worcester, requesting me to lecture before the institution next winter and adding "The subject is of course discretionary with yourself "provided no allusions are made to religious controversy, or other exciting topics upon which the public mind is honestly divided." I replied on the same day to Mr. W. by quoting these words & adding "I am really sorry that any person in Salem should think me capable of accepting an invitation so encumbered."**

This above reply is on a par with how Groucho replied to an invitation he received to become a member of the prestigious Friar's Club in Hollywood, "I would not join any club that would have me as a member."

On page 576 began the Journal entries I was eagerly anticipating reading: his early meetings with Henry David Thoreau.

**[page 576] February 11, 1838. At the "teachers' meeting" last night my good Edmund after disclaiming any wish to difference Jesus from a human mind suddenly seemed to alter his tone & said that Jesus made the world & was the Eternal God. Henry Thoreau merely remarked that "Mr Hosmer had kicked the pail over." I delight much in my young friend, who seems to have as free & erect a mind as any I have ever met. He told me as we walked this afternoon a good story about a boy who went to school him, Wentworth, who resisted the school mistress' command that the children should bow to Dr Heywood & other gentlemen as they went by, and when Dr Heywood stood waiting & cleared his throat with a Hem! Wentworth said, "You need not hem, Doctor, I shan't bow."**

One wonders if, by saying "kicked the pail over", Thoreau was using the 19th century of our phrase, "He kicked the bucket" or perhaps, "He spilled the beans" or perhaps something else. Six days later Thoreau gets mentioned again.

**[page 577] February 11, 1838. My good Henry Thoreau made this else solitary afternoon sunny with his simplicity & clear perception. How comic is simplicity in this doubledealing quacking world. Every thing that boy says makes merry with society**

**though nothing can be graver than his meaning. I told him he should write out the history of his College life as Carlyle has his tutoring. We agreed that the seeing the stars through a telescope would be worth all the Astronomical lectures. Then he described Mr Quimby's electrical lecture here & the experiment of the shock & added that "College Corporations are very blind to the fact that that twinge in the elbow is worth all the lecturing."**

Next a passage which reminds me of the Little Prince's description of the stars in the night sky singing.

**[page 577] February 11, 1838. Tonight I walked under the stars through the snow & stopped & looked at my star sparklers & heard the voice of the wind so slight & pure & deep as if it were the sound of the stars themselves revolving.**

Next Emerson admires Wordsworth's writing a description of the simple act stopping oneself in mid-flight on a pair of ice skates, taking it as an expression of his self-reliance.

**[page 577] February 11, 1838. How much self reliance it implies to write a true description of anything. For example Wordsworth's picture of skating; that leaning back on your heels & stopping in mid career. So simple a fact no common man would have trusted himself to detach as a thought.**

And young Henry Thoreau appears again in this next passage.

**[page 582] March 6, 1838. Read in Montaigne's chapter on Seneca & Plutarch Vol II p. 624 a very good critique on the Systems & Methods on which I expended my petulance in these pages yesterday. Montaigne is spiced throughout with rebellion as much as Alcott or my young Henry T.**

And again here:

**[page 592, 593] April 24, 1838. PM. I went to the Cliff with Henry Thoreau. Warm, pleasant, misty weather which the great mountain amphitheatre seemed to drink in with gladness. A crow's voice filled all the miles of air with sound. A bird's voice, even a piping frog enlivens the solitude & makes world enough for us. At night I went out into the dark & saw a glimmering star & heard a frog & Nature seemed to say Well do not these suffice? Here is a new scene, a new experience. Ponder it, Emerson, & not like the foolish world hanker after thunders & multitudes & vast landscapes, the sea or Niagara.**

Michelangelo was a genius, but he didn't know how to do the fresco paintings of the Sistine Chapel, so he contracted with some fresco painters from Florence to do them. Digusted with their results he threw them out of the Chapel to complete it himself. Their expert technique minus his genius was a poor match for his beginner's technique plus his genius.

**[page 609] June 10, 1838. It is the distinction of genius that it is always inconceivable, — once, & ever a surprise. Shakespeare we cannot account for, no history, no "life & sinners" solves the insoluble problem,. . . And so is Genius ever total & not mechanically composable.**

When we read magazines, we hope to hear the Muses speaking or singing, but often what we hear puts us to sleep.

**[page 609] June 10, 1838. When I read the North American Review, or the London Quarterly, I seem to hear the snore of the muses, not their waking voice.**

But Emerson's voice is that of a wide-awake Muse when he speaks to me from his Journal some advice

which I have been following decades before I read it here.

**[page 609] June 10, 1838. Read & think. Study now, & now garden. Go alone, then go abroad. Speculate awhile, then work in the world. Yours affectionately.**

We would call these "goodies" in the next passage by the epithet of "goodie-two-shoes", and no one would dare claim to like them. Many people despise them because, out of their own awareness, they are also one. How do we easily recognize a "goodie-two-shoes"? They advertise their own goodness, and strive to help everyone become as good as they perceive themselves to be.

**[page 616, 617] June 23, 1838. I hate goodies. I hate goodness that preaches. Goodness that preaches undoes itself. . . . Goodies make us very bad. . . . We will almost sin to spite them. Better indulge yourself, feed fat, drink liquors, than go strait laced for such cattle as these.**

My rare privilege of being writer, editor, and publisher permits me to experience this "new pleasure" which Emerson discusses in the passage below. My press of the 21st century does not *fall* because it prints in pixels, recyclable electrons I call them, on the world-wide web of the Internet. Once my copy-editor is done with my new piece of writing, I do a final proof and then publish it for the whole world to read instantly. Every month I do this, and just as soon as I do, the thought arises in me, "What if someone is reading some egregious typographical error of mine right now?" Perhaps it's a "not" that was inadvertently left out and has turned the meaning of my sentence upside down. This leads me to run a fine-toothed comb through my text to extract such lice-like horrors from my hairy text, while eliminating any of the more frequent minor typos which any reader will likely elide when reading at full speed, like "as it" in place of "as if", for example. These are difficult to spot when my mind is still filled with what I intended to write, so my final proofing must take place after about 3 days, and by then, when I read my own prose, it's as if I were reading someone else's prose. That's when my final polishing of the prose occurs. I call this process, "playing with sentences", after the advice Annie Dillard gave a wannabe writer who asked her, "Do you think I could be a writer?", the following answer, "I don't know. Do you like sentences?" I like sentences. And reading my own sentences at a span of time of three or more days from my composing effort allows me to discern any hitches in the get-along of my sentences and smooth them out, allows me to discern an ambiguity that had escaped me in the heat of creativity and pin down the one meaning I had intended. The most fun is to find that my meaning I thought so clear now seems befuddled, and I can tackle with some fervor the chance to clarify my intended meaning. All this I can do after the "press falls" — something unthinkable in Emerson's time.

**[page 621] August 10, 1838. If that worthy ancient king in the school books who offered a reward to the inventor of a new pleasure could make his proclamation anew, I should put in for the first prize. I would tell him to write an oration & then print it & setting himself diligently to the correction let him strike out a blunder & insert the right word just ere the press falls he shall know a new pleasure.**

Fairies are no longer visible during this stage of human evolution. Children under the age of three can still see them, often giving them names and we parents say our children have imaginary friends. But to the child, they are real friends, fully visible to them, using their clairvoyant sight which will disappear by age 3 or so. Thus, it has come to be that the dance of fairies are said to break off at the approach of human feet; it must be so since no adult humans can see them, and the children who can yet see them will soon be taught that they are only imagining that they see fairies. It seems that the coitus of parents is as hard to see as the dance of fairies as it also breaks off with the approach of human feet. (My comments suggested by an Edmund Hosmer story on Page 628)

It is better to be censured than to be praised, Emerson claims so in this next passage. This would warm the heart of the current governor of our State because our newspapers never find anything worthy of praise to write about him. Articles which start off with faint praise of him do so only to catch everyone's attention and then quickly sink into censure.

**[page 640] September 29, 1838. I hate to be defended in a newspaper. As long as all that is said is *against* me, I feel a certain sublime assurance of success but as soon as honied words of praise are spoken for me, I feel as one that lies unprotected before his enemies.**

Emerson blessed his wife who consoled him to ignore any bad talk about others, to wait till it goes away, after all, she said, "It is done in Eternity."

**[page 640] September 29, 1838. Blessed be the wife! I, as always, venerate the oracular nature of woman. The sentiment which the man thinks he came unto gradually through the events of years, to his surprise he finds woman dwelling there in the same, as her native home.**

For decades I have known the power of an unanswered question; I consider it as a gift, a quest that one gives oneself. Emerson says it is okay for a man to be unable to answer some great question or problem put to him by a friend.

**[page 641] October 5, 1838.**

**A problem appears to me. I cannot solve it with all my wits: but leave it there; let it lie awhile: I can by faithful truth live at last its uttermost darkness into light.**

Dr. Milton Erickson practiced hypnotherapy from his small office on Haworth Street in Phoenix, Arizona for about fifty years. He never found a patient he could not help. The more difficult the patient the harder Erickson studied him. He learned the science of each patient. Herbert was such a hard case — he wouldn't eat any food, always leaving it on his plate untouched. Noting this, Erickson arranged to have patients who stole food from others' plates to be seated on either side of Herbert, who was furious about them stealing his food, so he ate his food to keep it from being stolen from his plate. Finally after a year or so of many different tactics, Herbert told Erickson, "Doc, one of us is crazy." Erickson created a science designed for one person, Herbert, and did so for every other patient he encountered. This next passage could easily be Erickson talking. Insane patients had a lot to teach Erickson; he never complained about them, he learned from them.

**[page 649] October 20, 1838. I think I learn as much from the sick as from the sound, — from the insane as from the sane. Deal plainly, or as we say, roundly, with every man, & you convert him instantly into an invaluable teacher of *his Science*, and every man has one science. Every one then becomes a messenger of God to you. Insane men have a great deal to teach you.**

Much is made of Martin Luther's translation of the Latin Bible into German, and no doubt the ready available Bible in the everyday language of Germans helped bring about the Reformation. But Emerson tells us that Lessing's translation of Shakespeare into German was equally great because it brought a sudden up-welling of German literature.

**[page 650] October 20, 1838. It was not possible to write the history of Shakespeare until now. For it was on the translation of Shakespeare into German by Lessing that "the succeeding rapid burst of German literature was most intimately connected." Here certainly is an important particular in the story of that great mind yet how recent!**

Strange tongues can make one suspicious of strangers. But with familiarity, the strange tongue and the stranger speaking it becomes a welcome sight to our eyes and sound to our ears. In the 1930s, my grandmother allowed my mother to play with the children of the low-class Italian immigrant laborers in the small sawmill town of Donner. Other white families didn't allow their kids to play with the Italians. Now the songs of the Italian singers of Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and others are loved by millions all over the world. The alienated strangers have become beloved friends. Each generation brings a new set of strange languages and people speaking it into our neighborhoods beginning in earnest another

assimilation process in this great Melting Pot of America. Emerson explains the journey to us, as if he had seen more than just the first half-century of it at work in this country.

**[page 651] October 26, 1838. In going through Italy I speak Italian, thro' Arabia Arabic; I say the same things, but have altered my speech. But ignorant people think a foreigner speaking a foreign tongue a formidable odious nature, alien to the backbone. So is it with our brothers. Our journey, the journey of the Soul, is through different regions of thought, and to each its own vocabulary. As soon as we hear a new vocabulary from our own, at once we exaggerate the alarming differences, — account the man suspicious, a thief, a pagan, & set no bounds to our disgust or hatred, and, late in life, perhaps too late, we find he was loving & hating, doing & thinking the same things as we, under his own vocabulary.**

Thoreau asks us to imagine if some great proprietor had bought up the entire globe: where would any of us have to live? Thoreau to whom the whole world belonged, rightly understood, did not like to be compelled to walk in a tiny width of land known as a road. It was not where the interesting parts of Nature could be found. Perhaps it was this walk which led Emerson to sell Thoreau a small piece of land along Walden Pond, and perhaps it was Emerson's answers to Thoreau's complaints which led him to write the amazing book, *Walden*. We get only a few hints that may have happened from Emerson.

**[page 661] November 9, 1838. My brave Henry Thoreau walked with me to Walden this P. M. And complained of the proprietors who compelled him (to whom as much as any the whole world belonged), to walk in a strip of road & crowded him out of all the rest of God's earth. He must not get over the fence: but to the building of that fence he was no party. Suppose, he said, some great proprietor, before he was born, had bought up the whole globe.**

If so, Thoreau would have been "hustled out of nature." Emerson talks in depth to him about the arrangement of proprietors, et al, and my guess is that Thoreau became a surveyor for the primary reason of providing him unrestrained access to any piece of property he desired to transverse or otherwise inspect. Secondary reason was likely a need to provide himself a source of income, which he could do while spending time outdoors in the area surrounding Concord that he loved so much.

**[page 662, 663] November 9, 1838. Always pay, for first or last you must pay your entire expense. Uncles & Aunts, fathers & elder brothers, patrons & friends may stand for a time between you & justice; but it is only postponement — you must pay at last your own debt. If you are wise, you will dread a prosperity which only loads you with new debt. A whig victory, a rise of rents, the momentary triumph of a religious poet or some other quite outward event raises your spirits & you think easy days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. It can never be so. Nothing can ever bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the attainment of principles.**

In the above passage I found what I had read in Emerson's Essays decades ago, namely, the refrain, "Nothing can ever bring you peace but yourself." I wish our children would discover this for themselves and soon. The first part of the Emerson passage reminds me of a book *Naikan Psychotherapy*([5](#)) in which this explanation appears. It discusses something else [I](#) wish our children would discover for themselves. Here is a quote from that book:

**[page 1, D.K. Reynolds] Naikan is a form of self-reflection or meditation that emphasizes how much each of us has received from others, how little we have returned to them, and how much trouble and worry we have caused our loved ones from as far back as we recall.**

The above sentence majestically captures the essence of the book. In it, Reynolds writes of the importance for us as adults to thank those who took care of us as children, the aunts who cooked for us, who took us

to parades, the uncles who took us fishing, all the various people who provided for our good without getting any compensation for it directly; these people need to be thanked early and often by us as adults. It is as good for us to give this gratitude as it is good for them to receive it.

Locating the above book 30 years after having read it was made possible only by the essence of the book having been burnt into my memory. Ah Memory! Then I encountered this paragraph from page 664, in which Emerson wafts eloquent breezes our way from his store of memories, all of which begs to be rendered into a found poem. (Emerson wrote this on November 9, 1838, page 664.)

What else should it be called but, "Ah Memory!"

**Ah Memory!**

**Dear daughter of God!**

**Thy blessing is millionfold.**

**The poor short lone fact that dies at the birth,  
thou catchest up &  
bathest in immortal waters.**

**Then a thousand times over it lives & acts again,  
each time transfigured,  
ennobled.**

**Then in solitude & darkness,  
I walk over again my sunny walks;  
in streets behold again the shadows of my grey birches,  
in the still river;  
hear the joyful voices of my brothers  
a thousand times over, & vibrate anew  
to the tenderness & dainty music  
of the early poetry I fed upon in boyhood.**

**As fair to me the clump of flags  
that bent over the water  
as if to see its own beauty below,  
one evening last summer,  
as any plants that are growing there today.**

**At this hour, the stream is flowing,  
though I hear it not;  
the plants are drinking their accustomed life,  
& repaying it with their beautiful forms,  
but I need not wander thither.**

**It flows for me,  
& they grow for me  
in the returning images  
of former summers.**

~^~

The popular food we call the Graham Cracker was named after the founder of the Graham diet, Sylvester Graham, who was born in 1794 and was still alive during Emerson's life.

**[page 677] May 26, 1839. The poor mind does not seem to itself to be anything unless it have an outside oddity, some Graham diet, or Quaker coat, or Calvinistic Prayer-**

**meeting, or Abolition Effort, or any how some wild contrasting action to testify that it is something. The rich mind lies in the sun & sleeps & is Nature. Or Why need you rail, or need a biting criticism on the Church & the College to demonstrate your holiness & your intellectual aims? Let others draw that inference which damns the institutions if they will. Be thyself too great for enmity & fault-finding.**

This next passage was probably written before Thoreau studied surveying, an occupation which flowed so delightfully into his favorite past-time, spending time in the woods, that it could be a stretch to call surveying his *occupation* except that it did occupy some small portion of the time he spent enjoying the woods.

**[page 677] May 26, 1839. My brave Henry here who is content to live now, & feels no shame in not studying for any profession, for he does not postpone his life but lives already, — pours contempt on these crybabies of routine & Boston.**

Emerson tells us, "The finite is the foam of the infinite." In two hundred plus years no one has come up with a better definition for the world we perceive in relation to the spiritual world which coincides with it invisibly to most of us. When I get a latte at my favorite coffeeshop each morning, I ask for extra foam because it modulates the heat of the scalding hot espresso and brings out its sweet flavor while it is yet very hot, all without burning my tongue. I cannot see the hot espresso, only the foam which covers it. In Itzhak Bentov's classic, [A Cosmic Book](#), he described how our known universe could be but a bubble in a cosmic foam of numberless universes. Thus everything we see and know is but the foam of the infinite, just as Emerson wrote in 1839.

In this next passage, Emerson envisions a "Society for preventing the murder of worms". Emerson prophesied, in effect, the curious organization we are besieged by today, which is devoted to preventing the killing of any animal, even worms, I would suppose! It has become almost a cult, growing like a weed in recent years, while being lampooned by reasonable adults. *Res nolunt diu male administrari.*

I chuckle over the statement, almost obligatory at the end of any Hollywood movie today, "No Animals Were Injured in the Making of this Movie." I try in vain to imagine a movie cast eating lunch consisting only of tofu and alfalfa sprouts. Surely those Pepperoni Pizzas contain dead pig and the Chicken Tenders they eat from a fast food joint come from dead chickens, killed for the sole purpose of eating them. How does that absolve Popeye's chicken-eating customers, but cause derision to be spewed on hunters of mallard ducks? But these little inconvenient truths are glossed over in favor of Hollywood's greater good, which seems to be making money while pretending *not to be* money-hungry and killing animals for food while putting a statement to the contrary at the end of their movies. All I can say to Hollywood is, "Thanks for not showing the killing and butchering of the animals on film which went into the gullets of the people making the film!"

**[page 679] May 29, 1839. Reform always has this damper, that a new simplicity can be preached with equal emphasis (& who shall deny that it is preached with equal reason too) on the simplicity it preaches. Thus when we have come to live on the fruits of our own gardens, & begin to boast that we lead a man's life, then shall come some audacious upstart to upbraid us with our false & foreign taste which steadily plucks up every thing which nature puts in our soil & laboriously plants every thing not intended to grow there. "Behold," shall that man of the Weeds say, "the perpetual broad hint that nature gives you. Every day these plants you destroyed yesterday, appear again: and see a frost, a rain, a drought, has killed this exotic corn & wheat & beans & beets which luxurious man would substitute for his native & allowed table." Then too will arise the Society for preventing the murder of worms. And it will be asked with indignation what right have we to tear our small fellow citizens out of the sod and put them to death for eating a morsel of corn or a melon leaf or a bit of apple, whilst it can be proved to any jury by a surgical examination of their jaws & forceps & stomachs that this is the natural food of this eater. In the same age a man will be reproached with simony & sacrilege because he took money of the bookseller for his poem or history.**

In this next passage the curious adverb "inly" appears, which we would say "inwardly" in its place today. Two of my favorite quotations about friends follow.

**[page 684] June 16, 1839. I must be myself. I cannot disintegrate myself any longer for you or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should! I must be myself; I will not hide my tastes or my aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do bravely before the sun & moon whatsoever inly rejoiceth me, & the heart appoints.**

**I do with my friends as I do with books. I would have them where I can get them, but I seldom use them.**

My books are where I can get them. My trouble finding the hardback book Naikan Psychotherapy on my bookshelves after thirty years indicates there are many books on my bookshelf that I seldom reference, but how wonderful they are to me when I need a specific reference, as I did inside this book I had read decades ago. There it was on page 1 marked off as special and signed and dated by me. What will the wonders of electronic books do to scholars of the future? Their books will be ephemeral electronic objects which disappear as they read the last page of each. A physical book is its own reason for keeping around; an e-book has no such necessary reality, existing at the whim of the reader. There will be ways of getting around this, but I'm glad I got a chance in the 1950s to drive an automobile which had a mechanical push-button on the floor to start its engine, and that I got physical books to read, make marginal notes in, and keep indefinitely. Like the floor-starter automobiles are collected and treasured as antiques, I wish that the annotated volumes of my library will be collected and treasured also.

**[page 685] June 16, 1839. We will meet as though we met not, & part as though we parted not.**

Emerson railed against consistency in many ways, likening it to wooden walls we build to fence ourselves in, after which we complain about the restrictions. Voltaire said, "It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere." Emerson reminds us of the chains of consistency, devoting a complete Essay to the subject. Here are some of his early thoughts on the subject.

**[page 690] July 3, 1839. Consistency! Nonsense with your wooden walls. Speak what you think today in words as strong as cannon balls & tomorrow speak what you think then as hard though it contradicts to the ear every thing you said today.**

Henry David Thoreau walked the woods of Concord and saw things few other people saw. Here is an example.

**[page 725] November 20, 1839. Ah Nature the very look of the woods is heroical & stimulating. This afternoon in a very thick grove where H. D. T. showed me the bush of mountain laurel, the first I have seen in Concord, the stems of pine & hemlock & oak almost gleamed like steel upon the excited eye. How old, how aboriginal these trees appear, though not many years older than I.**

The old saying, "making a clean shrift of things", had me puzzled until I read this sentence and realized that Emerson is saying we help each other by seeking forgiveness, not just by telling, *shrift* being the past tense of *shrive*.

**[page 734] April, 1840. By confession we help each other; by clean shrift, and not by dictation.**

Emerson was dealing with the new mode of fast transportation of his time, the railroad. What he says equally applies to all of our modern methods of fast transportation. He was not against it, but merely

observes the consequences of it on the individual. For myself, I would rather drive six hours than take a jet airplane because the long waits involved on each end of a flight can add up to six hours in some cases.

**[page 735] April 7, 1840. The railroad makes a man a chattel, transports him by the box & the ton; he waits on it. He feels that he pays a high price for his speed in this compromise of all his will. I think the man who walks looks down on us who ride.**

Emerson was a scholar who disliked scholarly writing, disdaining the style of the North American Review and London Quarterly, but he loved the brusque direct talk of truckers and teamsters. Note that in his time, a teamster actually drove a team of horses. It took *guts* for him to admit that he loved their way of direct talking, preferring it over academic bafflegab. If he shouts , "I don't want none, nohow!" — no one mistakes his meaning, no matter how many negatives he uses for emphasis! Meaning is in people, not the words they use!

**[page 749] June 21, 1840. The language of the street is always strong. What can describe the folly & emptiness of molding like the word *jawing*? I feel too the force of the double negative, though clean contrary to our grammar rules. And I confess to some pleasure from the stinging rhetoric of a rattling oath in the mouth of truckmen & teamsters. How laconic & brisk it is by the side of a page of the North American Review. Cut these words & they would bleed; they are vascular & alive; they walk & run. Moreover they who speak them have this elegance, that they do not trip in their speech. It is a shower of bullets, whilst Cambridge men & Yale men correct themselves & begin again at every half sentence. I know nobody among my contemporaries except Carlyle who writes with any sinew & vivacity comparable to Plutarch & Montaigne. Yet always this profane swearing & bar-room wit has salt & fire in it. I cannot now read Webster's speeches. Fuller & Brown & Milton are quick, but the list is soon ended. Goethe seems to be well alive, no pedant. Luther too. *Guts* is a stronger word than intestines.**

What does love mean to men and to women? Emerson chimes in with his thoughts.

**[page 759] September 30, 1841. The first thing men think of, when they love, is to exhibit their usefulness & advantages. Women refuse these, asking only love.**

Emerson says on page 770 that a writer ought not to be married, ought not to have a family, but if married should be married to a shrewd woman.

**[page 770] February 4, 1841. I think the Roman Church with its celibate clergy & monastic cells was right. If he must marry, perhaps he should be regarded happiest who has a shrew for a wife, a sharp-tongued notable dame who can & will assume the total economy of the house, and having some sense that her philosopher is best in his study suffers him not to intermeddle with her thrift. He shall be master but not mistress, as E. H. said. (Edmund Hosmer)**

On pages 780 to 782, Emerson accompanies Thoreau on a boat ride, watching the Sun mixing its colors in the palette of the water's surface, as they paddle down a small stream, watching the moon rising into the star-filled cathedral ceiling above them. It is an amazing read so I will only tease you with this introductory passage.

**[page 780, 781] June 6, 1841. Then the good river-god has taken the form of my valiant Henry Thoreau here & introduced me to the riches of his shadowy starlit, moonlit stream, a lovely new world lying as close & yet as unknown to this vulgar trite of streets & shops as death to life or poetry or prose. Through one field only we went to the boat & then left all time, all science, all history behind us and entered into Nature with one stroke of a paddle. Take care, good friend! I said, as I looked west into the sunset overhead & underneath, & he with his face toward me rowed towards it, — take care;**

**you know not what you do, dipping your wooden oar into the enchanted liquid, painted with all reds, purples, & yellows which glows under & behind you.**

With difficulty, let's tear ourselves away from the magical boat ride to more mundane matters, namely, Emerson's comment on boring lectures, lecturers, and academic authors. He writes on page 782, "The borer on our peachtrees bores that she may deposit an egg; but the borer into theories & institutions & books, bore that he may bore."

On page 784, he writes about men with a lack of perspective who think the nearest thing is the largest, "As on a mountain you must level your gun at another mountain & see if the shot run out of the barrel, to know that the summit is lower than yours." In his day, the shot, a lead ball, was rolled into the barrel and could not be shot unless the gun was kept above level with the ground, or else the lead ball would roll out of the barrel. Modern guns, since Emerson's time, have shot that are wadded in a shell or use metal cartridges either of which secure the shot to the shell and prevent it rolling out.

Below is a paragraph which I have reformatted as Emerson's great paean to the wheels of progress of the 19th century. Listen to it create the sound of Emerson's teakettle, the early steam locomotive, as it lumbers over chestnut sleepers and issues its call for more iron rails for its wheels to roll over. It is the sound of progress through the land between Concord and Boston, then a wilderness, now completely filled with houses and farms some two centuries hence. I will label this "The Teakettle's Song". (From Page 792)

### **The Teakettle's Song**

**I hear the whistle of the locomotive in the woods.  
Wherever that music comes it has a sequel.  
It is the voice of the civility of the Nineteenth Century  
saying "Here I am."**

**It is interrogative: it is prophetic: and this Cassandra is believed:**

**"Whew! . . . Whew! . . . Whew!"**

**How is real estate here in the swamp & wilderness?**

***Swamp & Wilderness***

***Ho for Boston!***

***Whew! . . . Whew!***

**Down with that forest on the side of the hill.  
I want ten thousand chestnut sleepers.  
I want cedar posts  
and hundreds of thousands of feet of boards.**

**Up my masters, of oak & pine!  
You have waited long enough —  
a good part of a century in the wind & stupid sky.**

***Ho for axes & saws and  
away with me to Boston!***

## Whew! . . . Whew!

I will plant a dozen houses on this pasture next moon  
and a village anon; and

I will sprinkle yonder square mile with white houses  
like the broken snow-banks that strow it in March."

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When the so-called government of these United States of America declared a "war on poverty", thereby relegating a large portion of its citizens to a lifelong dependency, it was no doubt unaware of what Emerson wrote in 1840, "Dependency is the only poverty." (Page 803)

Make yourself strong by self-reliance and eschew foolish consistency — two powerful messages Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke to me when I was a callow college student. These two new thoughts entered me at the dawn of my maturity, making day in my soul after a long teenage twilight.

**[page 804] January 13, 1841. Every new thought which makes day in our souls has its long morning twilight to announce its coming.**

How best to close this review of Emerson's Journals, but with a dream in which he ate the apple of the world:

**[page 804] January 13, 1841. I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw the world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand & brought it to me and said "This must thou eat." And I ate the world.**

Emerson's influence has spread world-wide, though few recognize it when it appears in their life. He made the world a part of himself as surely as if he had eaten it. In the time of Emerson, he had to read the books of non-Americans: Montaigne, Wordsworth, Voltaire, Wordsworth, Swedenborg, Goethe, Walter Scott, Rabelais, Pascal, Keats, Hume, Homer, and Cicero among many others. They were Emerson's bootstrap into literature. From his readings and his life he created a powerful American presence in literature, equal to that of the French, English, Swedish, German, Greek, and Roman writers who inspired him. He, in turn, became American writers's bootstrap into literature. We can read Emerson, the first true American philosopher and writer, and be inspired by him yet today. If you want to get close to Emerson, there is no better place to start than with the two volumes of his compiled Journals published by *The Library of America*, of which this is the first volume.

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### *Footnotes*

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#### **Footnote 1.**

Thanks to Professor Henry Gurr for his enlightening email which pointed to this [website](#) which you can click to read about the ampersand.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

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#### **Footnote 2.**

See Sic Itur Ad Astra, <http://www.doyletics.com/arj/siaa1rvw.shtml>

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### **Footnote 3.**

In his book, [Writing Without Teachers](#), which helped me to disable the critic in my head long enough to write creatively. Critics have no business sitting near the fire of creativity, bugging the writer. Their job is best performed back in the coolness of the tent the next morning.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 3.](#)

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### **Footnote 4.**

This is a statement of [Matherne's Rule No. 25](#).

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### **Footnote 5.**

*Naikan Psychotherapy — Meditation for Self-Development* was written by David K. Reynolds in 1983, University of Chicago Press. It took me some time to locate this book I read November, 1985. I had forgotten both the name of the author and the name of the type of psychotherapy he wrote about, but what he wrote was indelible on my memory, so, holding it as an unanswered question overnight, I did a quick scan through 200 psychotherapy references of Wikipedia, found the author and then quickly located the book in my library. Persistence is often the better part of valor.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 5.](#)

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