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SOUTHWEST PHILOSOPHY REVIEW

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Editor's Note

Congratulations to the philosophers whose work is represented here and my thanks for their cooperation in preparing their work for publication. Nearly all comments appearing here were also presented at the 2008 70th Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Philosophical Society, held in Kansas City, MO. Thanks to the conference organizers and program committee for their work preparing the conference and selecting articles.

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The 2009 meeting of the Society will be held Nov. 13-15 in at the Dallas Magnolia Hotel in Dallas, TX. Scott Bartlett of Southern Methodist University will serve as the local arrangements Chair.

- Todd M. Stewart

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Southwest Philosophy Review
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Submissions are invited on any philosophical topic from any perspective. Author's name should appear only in a separate cover letter file.

Submit one electronic copy (DOC, DOCX, or RTF) to the editor by **April 15th, 2010.**

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“True Romance”: Emerson’s Realism

Joseph Urbas

Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux III

Two things have been missing from discussions of Emerson and skepticism. The first—and the most glaring omission, given his precise, unambiguous definition of skepticism as “unbelief in cause and effect” (“Worship”)—is Emerson’s causationism. The second is his view of skepticism as organically related to a wide array of other forms of anti-realism or “romance.” Only the first can explain the second and thereby give us a better sense of how Emerson’s specific response to skepticism as a philosophical problem fits into his broader, resolutely realist vision of the conduct of life.

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.

– Henry David Thoreau (1971, p. 95)

What do the gambler and the skeptic have in common? They fancy themselves apart from ordinary reality, with its laws of causality and compensation. The gambler believes Fortune will enable him, against all odds, to obtain something for nothing, to receive “unlawful” winnings, as Emerson calls them (“Self-Reliance,” CW 2, p. 50). The skeptic believes himself powerless to influence the course of events, which exhibits neither direction nor continuity, “no line, but random and chaos” (“Montaigne, or the Skeptic,” CW 4, p. 96). The one imagines himself favored by a “doting power” (W 10, p. 16); the other, deprived of any “affirmative principle” (“Experience,” CW 3, p. 27), dispossessed of a world become opaque and inaccessible. Both, in Emerson’s view, are mistaken.

Emerson called skeptical views “superficial,” and refused to believe in luck, any more than in magic, fairy tales, necromancy, mesmerism, or spirit-rapping. Nor did he embrace the highly respectable belief in Heaven as “another world.” For Emerson there was only one world—this one: “here or nowhere is the whole fact” (W 10, p. 199). All the fairy tale we desire, as his friend Thoreau agreed, is here in the realities right before our very eyes. The only “romance” Emerson would accept, as he shows at the end of his essay on skepticism, is the “true romance which the world exists

to realize" ("Experience," CW 3, p. 49). "True romance" is realism. It is empowerment by the real world, in the only way possible—through the universal law of cause and effect. Success is here or nowhere. "All successful men," Emerson insists, are "*causationists*" ("Power," CW 6, p. 28). There are no tricks, no shortcuts, no exemptions, no other worlds—even though, in our impatience with our lot, these may be what we desire most. The temptation to cheat is strong: "Cause and effect are a little tedious; how to leap to the result by short or by false means? We are not scrupulous." Americans in particular, Emerson felt, were "tainted" by the insane passion for immediate success and its attendant corruptions—spiritual, intellectual, social, political, economic. Impatience with—or skepticism about—the causal order assumes many forms in Emerson's writings; and "shallow Americanism," which he hated, is one of its sensational modern varieties ("Success," CW 7, pp. 146, 147). Our understanding of skepticism in Emerson has suffered from a tendency to consider it in isolation, as a question for philosophy only—or, more narrowly still, for epistemology. Skepticism should be seen, rather, as structurally related to a wide array of delusions and chicaneries that Emerson consistently condemned throughout his career under the broad term "romance." Skepticism should not be set apart, its importance exaggerated. It is but one form of fiction among others—albeit one that is powerful, even *useful*.[1]

I.

Before I pursue this line of inquiry, a clarification of terms is in order. The word *romance* is far from neutral. Emerson follows the common usage of the period in understanding it above all *negatively*, as *illusion* or *fiction*—that is, as the contrary of *truth, fact*, or *reality*.[2] Contemporary hostility to romance in the United States, still very much alive at the end of the nineteenth century, is well illustrated by Emerson's Transcendentalist friend James Freeman Clarke, who considered it a disease of the imagination: "Some people live in a world of dreams, apart from life. They are cradled in illusions; they surround themselves with a world of romance; they become disgusted with actual life; they feed their minds with novels, fairy-tales, and works of fancy, and thus become unfitted for reality" (Clarke, 1882, p. 189).[3] Clarke's description helps us to appreciate the peculiar status of Emersonian "true romance"—which does not stand in contrast to some "false" form of the same, for the simple reason that romance is already, by definition, what is false, illusory, or unreal. Emerson's adjective *true* is thus indispensable and very deliberately added.

It has crucial work to perform. It does not simply qualify, it negates. It makes the unreal, real. One might even be tempted to say that an entire philosophy is contained in that one word. True romance is *realism*.

The word *skepticism* can mean different things in Emerson. Sometimes he uses it broadly or loosely, in the sense of "cynicism," "pessimism," or "disbelief" (all of which, he thought, characterized the period of the Fugitive Slave Law). The essay "Experience," by contrast, considers skepticism as a specific problem for epistemology ("I am very content with knowing, if only I could know," CW 3, p. 48) and gives a vivid rendering of the skeptic's sense of "groundlessness," of the world as "withdrawn," to borrow Stanley Cavell's apt descriptions (Cavell, 1988, p. 5; 1989, p. 108). Emerson also treats skepticism as "atheism" or "impiety," notably in "Self-Reliance" (CW 2, p. 37). In "Montaigne, or the Skeptic" he considers it as a general intellectual stance, as *epoche* or suspension of belief—a meaning that the essay then deliberately sets aside in favor of a post-Humean definition. Skepticism now means, above all, *skepticism about the causal relation*: "Truth or the connection of cause and effect alone interests us" (CW 4, p. 96). That Emerson is using skepticism's representative figure, Montaigne, to settle an old score with *Hume* is suggested by the use of a technical ("causationist," "connexionist") vocabulary alien to the Essais and largely inspired by "Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion" (Urbas, 2004, pp. 249-263; JMN 9, p. 350). Clearly Emerson never quite recovered from his early, traumatic encounter with the "Scotch Goliath" (L 1, p. 138).[4] Hence his lifelong preoccupation with skepticism and equally lasting commitment to causationism.

What the different meanings of *skepticism* share is the idea of a lack of positive belief in the causal relation as universal principle of being, empowerment, and compensation. The "impiety" and "atheism" referred to in "Self-Reliance," for example, deny that there is a causal ground of existence, thought, and action. Nor do cynicism and pessimism, as general attitudes in the conduct of life, believe in a law of compensation, a "deep remedial force that underlies all facts" and that time—or "the sure years," in Emerson's phrase—will inevitably reveal. The law of compensation is for Emerson a manifestation of the causal principle in its moral dimension: "The causal retribution is in the thing.... Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end preëxists in the means, the fruit in the seed" ("Compensation," CW 2, pp. 73, 60).

There is thus a secret tie, a close kinship between romance and skepti-

cism. Skeptic, cynic, atheist, gambler, believer in fairy-tales, other worlds, and instant success—anti-realists all, in Emerson's view. They all cast doubt, in one way or another, on the universality and permanence of the causal order.

II.

Emerson's essay "Experience" is widely considered his most powerful philosophical engagement with skepticism. And rightly so. It is there, if anywhere, that he gives "full swing to his skepticism," as any "just thinker" should do ("Worship," CW 6, p. 107). "Experience" closes, however, on an odd note—on a sudden reversal of emphasis. The accent is no longer on the skeptical divorce between world and mind—"I know that the world I converse with in the city and in the farms, is not the world I think"—but on our practical, empowering relation to reality: "the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power" (CW 3, pp. 48, 49). The optimistic conclusion is hard to square with the rest of the essay. The relief seems unearned, the skeptical burden too easily lifted.

Or does long, *accumulated* experience justify such confidence, not to mention the choice of the title itself? After all, Emerson warns us sternly in the lines leading up to his conclusion, "we must be very suspicious of the deceptions of the element of time" (CW 3, p. 49). The "lesson of life" that Emerson draws in his later essay on skepticism's representative, Montaigne (who devoted his final essay to the topic of "experience"), is "practically to generalize, to believe what the years and the centuries say against the hours; to resist the usurpation of particulars" (CW 4, p. 104). "Experience" draws the same lesson, in one of its earlier sections: "The years teach much which the days never know" (CW 3, p. 40). Is Emerson's concluding show of confidence justified by the long view, a view that cannot be given "full play" for lack of space, the far-sighted view of experience itself, which reveals skepticism to be only a passing phenomenon? Is "Experience" also about resisting the usurpation of the particular mood called skepticism, which seems to rob our lives of the "affirmative principle" and to leave us we know not where (CW 3, p. 27)? Does "Experience" teach us that skepticism is nothing to be afraid of, that we must rally—"up again, old heart!" (CW 3, p. 49)—and shake off the melancholy feelings of disconnection and powerlessness? It would seem so, especially in light of what Emerson says in "Worship": "Nor do I fear skepticism for any good soul. A just thinker will allow full swing to his

skepticism. I dip my pen in the blackest ink, because I am not afraid of falling into my inkpot.... We are of different opinions at different hours, but we always may be said to be at heart on the side of truth" (CW 6, p. 107). The skeptical mood will pass. It never has the final word. Emerson was consistent on this point:

> I play with the miscellany of facts and take those superficial views which we call Skepticism but I know that they will presently appear to me in that order which makes Skepticism impossible. ("Montaigne," CW 4, p. 103)

> We may well give skepticism as much line as we can. The spirit will return, and fill us. ("Worship," CW 6, p. 107)

The sudden display of optimism at the end of "Experience" ("Patience and patience, we shall win at the last," CW 3, pp. 48-49) begins to make more sense, as Emerson's attempt to turn skepticism's greatest strength—its patience—against itself. Emerson declared the value of skepticism to lie in its refusal to rush to judgment, an idea he explored in his journal, preparatory to the Montaigne lecture. There Emerson embraces "wise" skepticism, that is to say "a long secular patience" that is "rewarded with truth perhaps in another sphere & cycle" (JMN 9, p. 304). But a wise skeptic must be skeptical about his own position too. This seems to be what Emerson means in the following journal notation: "Value of the Skeptic is the resistance to premature conclusions. If he prematurely conclude, his conclusion will be shattered, & he will become malignant. But he must limit himself with the anticipation of law in the mutations,—flowing law" (JMN 9, p. 295). The hallmark skeptical attitude of "consideration & pause" (JMN 9, p. 351) is thus turned against itself, to make room for affirmation (Urbas, 2004, p. 275). Equipollence cannot resist our natural tendency to believe and the positive, onward flow of life ("the necessity of progression or onwardness in each creature," JMN 9, p. 301). "Nature is always too strong for principle" (Hume, 1817, vol. 2, p. 153). This is Emerson's Humean "naturalism." Nature suspends skeptical suspension of judgment.

What patience and long experience teach, then, is precisely what skepticism doubts—that our natural belief is well founded, that we are connected to and empowered by the world, that the world exists for us, and that, as Emerson's favorite lines from George Herbert put it, "More servants wait on man/Than he'll take notice of" (Nature, 1836; CW 1, p.

41; "Perpetual Forces," 1862; LL 2, p. 289). Here is the "true romance" of practical empowerment in and through the world; and here "Experience" ends, that is to say in a place very different from the bewilderment of its opening line ("Where do we find ourselves?" CW 3, p. 27), but a place that is really no different from where we find ourselves at the end of Nature, which quotes Herbert and shows the return or "influx" of spirit as an "instantaneous in-streaming causing power" that assures us a "kingdom" or "dominion" over nature (CW 1, pp. 43, 45). The conclusion to "Experience," likewise, restores man to his rightful kingdom in the real world of cause and effect—a restoration prefigured in the motto to the essay, where "little man," who is perplexed ("with puzzled look") and overmastered by "his guardians tall" ("the lords of life"), is finally reassured of his proper dominion as "founder" by "dearest nature, strong and kind" (CW 3, p. 25).[5] "Self-Reliance" concludes on a similar "triumph of principles" made possible only by dealing with "Cause and Effect, the chancellors of God" (CW 2, p. 50, 49).

Nature, "Self-Reliance," and "Experience," when read in this way—that is, as ultimate reassertions of the realism of "true romance," of our empowerment in and through the causal continuum—help to explain Emerson's oblique and otherwise cryptic reply to the representative skeptic:

> Shall we say that Montaigne has spoken wisely, and given the right and permanent expression of the human mind on the conduct of life?
>
> We are natural believers. Truth or the connection of cause and effect alone interests us. (CW 4, p. 96)

Emerson cites our natural and legitimate belief in causation as his ultimate response to skepticism—which is why he gives causation the final word in "Montaigne": "though abyss open under abyss, and opinion displace opinion, all are at last contained in the eternal Cause" (CW 4, p. 105).

"Skepticism is unbelief in cause and effect" ("Worship," CW 6, p. 117), and, as such, Emerson considers it a form of anti-realism or "romance." Hence his dismissal, in the essay "History," of "the romance of skepticism" (CW 2, p. 18). Skepticism fondly imagines nature and the world to be apart from us, inaccessible. It sees neither direction nor continuity, "no line, but random and chaos." Our natural belief, on the other hand, inclines us to assert the reality of a causal continuum and of our rightful place within it, to assume that "a thread runs through all things," that "relation and connection are not somewhere and sometimes, but ev-

erywhere and always; no miscellany, no exemption, no anomaly,—but method, and an even web" ("Montaigne," CW 4, p. 96; "Worship," CW 6, p. 117). Such is human nature: "God has so constituted the human race that they must deal with realities" (CS 3, p. 256). But these same realities, with their promise of extraordinary power, are, to borrow Thoreau's comparison, "like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments." Here is a kingdom that is, as Emerson says in the closing lines of Nature, "beyond [our] dream of God" (CW 1, p. 45). This is *true* romance.

III.

Two things have been missing from discussions of Emerson and skepticism. The first—and the most glaring omission, given the precise, unambiguous definition of skepticism we have just seen in "Worship"—is Emerson's doctrine of cause and effect. The second is his vision of skepticism as organically related to other forms of anti-realism or "romance." Only the first can explain the second and thereby give us a better sense of how Emerson's response to skepticism fits into his broader philosophical vision.

The conduct of life, as Emerson learned from a long tradition of ethical philosophy extending from Cicero to Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown,[6] finds its basis in man's understanding of causal regularities, an understanding which allows him to convert the past into the future, to exercise a form of practical prophecy or "natural vaticination" (to borrow a phrase from Berkeley)—in a word, to foresee and in large measure to create the future. If thought "makes everything fit for use" for the poet (CW 3, p. 11) and the conduct of life possible for the ordinary man, that is because it seizes the causal order of the universe. That the essays in The Conduct of Life should so consistently give the last word to manifestations of universal law seems therefore fitting. I am thinking here of "Fate" and "Worship," of course, but also "Power," with its assertion that the world is "mathematical, and has no casualty" (CW 6, p. 43); "Wealth," with its emphasis on the "ties of Law," on "system," "design," and "rule" (CW 6, pp. 45, 66, 67); "Culture," which celebrates the organizing principles of "melioration" and "benefit" (CW 6, p. 88); "Considerations by the Way," with its insistence on "order," "ties," and the "few great points [that] steadily reappear" and give structure to existence (CW 6, pp. 147-148); and even the final essay, which affords a glimpse of the causal order behind the "snow-storms of illusions": "There is no chance, and no anarchy, in the universe. All is system and gradation. Every god is there sitting in his

sphere" ("Illusions," CW 6, p. 174).

Emerson is a philosopher of cause and effect—or, to use a word he appears to have coined, a "causationist."[7] Causation is the basis of his philosophy of power: "All successful men have agreed in one thing;—they were causationists. They believed that things went not by luck, but by law; that there was not a weak or a cracked link in the chain that joins the first and last of things. A belief in causality, or the strict connexion between every pulse-beat and the principle of being, and, in consequence, belief in compensation, or, that nothing is got for nothing,—characterizes all valuable minds, and must control every effort that is made by an industrious one" ("Power," CW 6, p. 29). Causation is the only game Emerson thought worth playing himself—and precisely because the outcome owes nothing to chance: "Some play at Chess, some at cards, some at the stock exchange. I prefer to play at Cause & Effect" (JMN 8, p. 194). This is the game of reality itself. And the potential winnings are the stuff of romance, dream, and fairy tale come true. With stakes like these, small wonder that Emerson's rallying cry to Margaret Fuller should be, "Cause & effect, cause & effect forever!" (L 2, p. 164).

Emerson does not believe in luck, he believes in causation. For him things go "not by luck, but by law." Accordingly, at the end of "Self-Reliance," he stigmatizes worship of Fortune as "unlawful": "Most men gamble with her, and gain all, and lose all, as her wheel rolls. But do thou leave as unlawful these winnings, and deal with Cause and Effect, the chancellors of God. In the Will work and acquire, and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance, and shalt sit hereafter out of fear from her rotations" (CW 2, p. 50). One might wonder, however, what "lawful" worship of cause and effect has to do with self-reliance. The answer is that causality, the universal law, is also the ground of selfhood—whether in the individual or in the supreme Will, whether in the private or in "the aboriginal Self" (CW 2, p. 37). As Emerson put it succinctly in an 1837 lecture, "Only Cause can say I" (EL 2, p. 248). The "aboriginal Self"—that is to say, the ground of "universal reliance" that defines the object of Emerson's metaphysical inquiry in "Self-Reliance"—is also Absolute Cause and source of all autonomy in lower beings: "Self-existence is the attribute of the Supreme Cause, and it constitutes the measure of good by the degree in which it enters into all lower forms" (CW 2, p. 40). Causality is what the essay identifies as "the fountain of action and of thought," and this causal ground, which we share with the world, "cannot be denied without impiety and atheism" (CW 2, p. 37). Here is the basis of personality and self-reliance. Which is why Emerson invites us, after identifying this ground,

to "sit at home with the cause" (CW 2, p. 41).

"Self-Reliance" thus raises the crucial question, Where do we place our reliance? In luck or in Law? In a purely external force or "favorable event" (CW 2, p. 51), or in the causal power that we share with the world, that is both "in us" and "out there" ("Compensation," CW 2, p. 60)? "Strong men believe in cause and effect" ("Worship," CW 6, p. 117). This is the strength of the true and self-reliant individual who relies on his own personal causal force as it meshes with the causal power of the universe: "Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature" (Divinity School Address, CW 1, p. 79). Reality is for Emerson one great causal and ontological continuum of which man is an integral part. As he says in "The Over-Soul," there is "no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. The walls are taken away" (CW 2, p. 161). The causal continuum is also moral. "All things are moral" because the cause of the world is itself moral (CW 1, p. 25; CW 2, p. 60; LL 2, p. 133). There is no escaping the moral law (W 10, p. 86). Which is why there is and can be no cheating.

IV.

A full treatment of the sources and nature of Emerson's philosophy of cause and effect would take me well beyond the scope of this paper. I can however give its background and essential characteristics in a few broad strokes.

In its ontologizing tendency—a reaction to British empiricism from Locke to Hume—Emerson's causationism draws on Plato, Cambridge Platonism, the rational intuitionism of Samuel Clarke and Richard Price (strong influences on his elders Mary Moody Emerson and William Ellery Channing), and Scottish common sense philosophy, as well as on the post-Kantian metaphysics—Schelling's in particular—that was then sweeping the New England intellectual landscape, principally through mediators such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Victor Cousin, and Frederic Henry Hedge.[8] In Emerson, cause is not only a cognitive principle, it is also substance (the essay "Experience," for example, equates "unbounded substance" and "ineffable cause," CW 3, p. 42). It is the ground of being. It thus has ontological as well as epistemological status (something that the overemphasis on epistemology in Emerson studies has tended to obscure[9]). Lawrence Buell has observed of the term "Intellect" that "like most of Emerson's master categories, [it] teeters between mental capacity and spiritual force" (Buell, 2003, p. 230)—and for the simple reason, we might add, that it partakes of both. Emerson's monism, which poses

a causal and ontological continuity of self and world, explains why he treats terms such as intellect, along with "fact," "truth," "generalization," "thought," "mind," "soul," "idea," "reason," "spirit," "will," and "the moral sentiment," as both subjective and objective, as both "in us" and "out there," as both psychological and ontological, as categories of mind and of being—even if their ultimate ground is external, in the Cause. Emerson certainly agreed with Dugald Stewart that "the idea of an efficient cause implies the idea of Mind" (Stewart, 1822, p. 352n).[10] Mind (or thought, intellect, reason, spirit, soul, idea) is the causal and creative force, both in the individual and in the universe as a whole. This is what Emerson calls "the doctrine of the sovereignty of mind" (LL 1, p. 306).[11]

Emerson the visionary recorded the year after Nature, in an 1837 journal entry, his direct intuition of the causa causarum and ground of all being: "A certain wandering light comes to me which I instantly perceive to be the Cause of Causes. It transcends all proving. It is itself the ground of being; and I see that it is not one & I another, but this is the life of my life" (JMN 5, p. 337). In his cooler moments, though, Emerson seems to have been ready to accept Hume's argument about the non-observability of the "necessary connexion," though the Montaigne lecture dismisses the whole question as beside the point: "Seen or unseen, we believe the tie exists" (CW 4, p. 96).[12] We are, in any case, "natural believers": "We are born believing. A man bears beliefs, as a tree bears apples" ("Montaigne," CW 4, p. 96; "Worship," CW 6, p. 108). And our belief in causation is for Emerson the most fundamental belief of all.

Emerson's moral sentiment, "the most important point of continuity in his thinking from first to last," his "bedrock of consistency" (Robinson, 1993, pp. 195, 7), gives us a felt or intuitive perception of the causal ground of existence. It may be described as Emerson's regrounding of eighteenth-century moral-sense theory in universal causation or "the nature of things," and in this particular respect it owes more to rational intuitionism—and in particular to Richard Price[13]—than to Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, or David Hume. The Emersonian moral sentiment is not merely subjective; it bespeaks our participation in the causal and ontological continuum: it "speaks to every man the law after which the Universe was made" (W 11, p. 486). It is our communication with Being. It is universal causal law as felt and actualized within us. It is "all we know of the Cause of Causes" ("Holiness," EL 2, p. 352). It is, at the same time, "the basis of nature" ("Holiness," EL 2, p. 345) and, as such, constitutes the object of all philosophical and scientific inquiry:

> Underneath all these appearances, lies that which is, that which lives, that which causes. This ever renewing generation of appearances rests on a reality, and a reality that is alive.
>
> To a true scholar the attraction of the aspects of nature, the departments of life, and the passages of his experience, is simply the information they yield him of this supreme nature which lurks within all. That reality, that causing force is moral. The Moral Sentiment is but its other name. ("Introductory Lecture," Lectures on the Times, CW 1, p. 182)

As our felt, vital link to Being, the moral sentiment is what makes us at home in the universe: "It puts us in place. It centres, it concentrates us. It puts us at the heart of nature, where we belong; in the cabinet of Science and of Causes; there, where all the wires terminate which hold the world in magnetic communication, and so converts us into universal beings" ("Morals," LL 2, p. 133). As Emerson says in an early lecture, the individual finds its true home "in that which affirms itself to be the Cause of all" ("Home," EL 3, p. 29); and in "Self-Reliance," an essay that closes on a celebration of "Cause and Effect, the chancellors of God," he invites us, as we have seen, to "sit at home with the cause" (CW 2, pp. 50, 41). Home is where the Cause is.

The moral sentiment is Emerson's considered response to skepticism, and perhaps the clearest and most succinct statement of this, and of Emerson's causationist ontology as it determines his epistemology and his ethics, is to be found in the essay "Worship":

> Skepticism is unbelief in cause and effect. A man does not see, that, as he eats, so he thinks: as he deals, so he is, and so he appears; he does not see, that his son is the son of his thoughts and of his actions; that fortunes are not exceptions but fruits; that relation and connection are not somewhere and sometimes, but everywhere and always; no miscellany, no exemption, no anomaly,—but method, and an even web; and what comes out, that was put in. As we are, so we do; and as we do, so is it done to us; we are the builders of our fortunes; cant and lying and the attempt to secure a good which does not belong to us, are, once for all, balked and vain. But, in the human mind, this tie of fate is made alive. The law is the basis of the human mind. In us, it is inspiration; *out there* in Nature, we see its fatal strength. We call it the moral sentiment. (CW 6, p. 117; emphasis added)

The very shape of this paragraph shows that Emerson's response to skepticism ("unbelief in cause and effect") lies in a reassertion of the causal continuum ("relation and connection" as "everywhere and always") through

the moral sentiment, which reveals the divorce between mind and world to be the result of "those superficial views which we call Skepticism." What is *in us* and *out there* is the selfsame causal force, however different the names we may give it: "All things are moral. That soul which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law. We feel its inspiration; out there in history we can see its fatal strength" ("Compensation," CW 2, p. 60).

As we have already seen, too, Emerson insists that the moral sentiment always has the last word. I quote the key paragraph of "Montaigne" in full:

> The final solution in which Skepticism is lost, is, in the moral sentiment, *which never forfeits its supremacy*. All moods may be safely tried, and their weight allowed to all objections: the moral sentiment as easily outweighs them all, as any one. This is the drop which balances the sea. I play with the miscellany of facts and take those superficial views which we call Skepticism but I know that they will presently appear to me in that order which makes Skepticism impossible. A man of thought must feel the thought that is parent of the universe: that the masses of nature do undulate and flow. (CW 4, p. 103; emphasis added)

The moral sentiment is what enables us to overcome skepticism by confirming our shared being-as-cause, by actualizing the deep kinship between our thought and the causal thought that is "parent of the universe" and origin of everything that is.

V.

With this outline of Emerson's causationism in mind, and before returning to the theme of romance, I would like to register a few brief objections to Stanley Cavell's original and highly influential interpretations of Emerson and skepticism.

For reasons peculiar to his own philosophical project, Cavell portrays "those superficial views which we call Skepticism" as deeper in Emerson than they actually are. For Cavell, philosophy's "task" is "not so much to defeat the skeptical argument as to preserve it" (Cavell, 1988, p. 5), and the high philosophical stakes he places in its preservation become, by association, Emerson's. Cavell sees skepticism in Emerson as insuperable, and in "Finding as Founding" he takes this insuperability to be what distinguishes later writings like "Experience" from *Nature*: "in *Nature* Emerson is taking the issue of skepticism as solvable or controllable whereas thereafter he takes its unsolvability to the heart of his thinking" (Cavell,

1989, p. 79). But the unsolvability Cavell wants to see in the later work is simply not there. As we have seen, the restoration to power enacted in the motto to "Experience" not only prefigures the conclusion of the essay proper but matches the final movements of *Nature* and "Self-Reliance." And if anything, later writings like "Montaigne," "Worship," and the journal entries show an Emerson even more convinced than ever that the moral sentiment *always* has the final word. That one conviction never failed him: "The commanding fact which I never do not see, is the sufficiency of the moral sentiment" ("The Sovereignty of Ethics," W 10, p. 212). In Emerson, it is this vital link to reality—or to "dearest nature, strong and kind"—that takes care of skepticism. This is Emerson's naturalism. The Emersonian subject is part of the causal and ontological continuum, and as such—and as the moral sentiment fully attests—is fundamentally at home in the world, despite recurrent attacks of skeptical doubt.[14] Even more: the very recurrence of the skeptical mood is, for Emerson, evidence of a deeper law behind it, to be disclosed in the fullness of time ("One day, I shall know the value and law of this discrepance," "Experience," CW 3, p. 48). Emerson once again turns skepticism against itself, making it serve as a paradoxical affirmation of law and our natural belief in it, for skepticism is, as the Montaigne lecture puts it, "an inevitable stage in the growth of every superior mind, and is the evidence of its perception of the flowing power which remains itself in all changes" (CW 4, p. 97). Which is why Emerson had already emphasized in "Experience" that "skepticisms are not gratuitous or lawless." Despite itself, skepticism confirms the law.

Nor can the place of skepticism in Emerson's thought be fully understood without considering his explicit definition of it as "unbelief in cause and effect."[15] Emerson's causationist ontology and his doctrine of the moral sentiment make it difficult to accept the Cavellian thesis that he abandons any idea of an ultimate ground for existence ("founding") or selfhood ("a resubstantializing of the self").[16] What Cavell proposes as Emersonian alternatives to such foundations—"finding" and "onwardness"—are in reality expressions of Emerson's causationism. Perhaps it is Cavell's aversion to "metaphysical fixture[s]" (Cavell, 1981, p. 128) that leads him astray here. Emerson's causationist ontology, though synonymous with permanence, is fundamentally dynamic. His philosophy is "one of fluxions and mobility" ("Montaigne," CW 4, p. 91). If "the masses of nature do undulate and flow," that is because of the dynamic causal law that is their origin (again: "the flowing power which remains itself in all changes"). If Emerson's world is ceaselessly moving, a world where

"everything tilts and rocks" ("The Method of Nature," CW 1, p. 121), it is nevertheless securely governed by the flowing law of causation; and successful individuals, who are all "*causationists*" (Emerson's emphasis), who all believe in "causality, or the strict connection between every trifle and the principle of being," are those who "enter cordially into the game, and whirl with the whirling world" ("Power," CW 6, p. 29). The dizzying spectacle that was a source of melancholy and skepticism for Montaigne is thus transformed by Emerson into a powerful confirmation of his causationist faith.

Nor, finally, should we attribute too much power to moods. If Cavell is certainly right to insist on their importance, he errs in refusing to acknowledge a principle of permanence or order behind them. The moral sentiment *never forfeits its supremacy*, here either. For Cavell, the essay "Experience" is "about the epistemology, or say the logic, of moods" (1981, 126). In the section of the essay devoted explicitly to "Reality," however, Emerson adds a crucial distinction that Cavell omits from his discussion: "If I have described life as a flux of moods, I must now add, that there is that in us which changes not, and which ranks all sensations and states of mind." This principle of permanence is identified as "the First Cause" (CW 3, p. 42).[17] The Montaigne essay, too, acknowledges "the power of moods," but in its conclusion Emerson insists that the moral sentiment "as easily outweighs them all, as any one." All of our opinions or moods, he says in the essay's final line, "are at last contained in the eternal Cause" (CW 4, pp. 99, 103, 105).

Cavell's representation of Emerson as a "philosopher of moods" (Cavell, 1981, p. 151), and of Emersonian selfhood as loosed from all moorings, is in some respects more applicable to Montaigne, who claimed that "we have no communication with Being" (Montaigne, 1892, vol. 1, p. 617).[18] Emerson's essays do of course have many Montaignian moments. "Experience" is full of them, as is "Circles," and especially a passage Cavell singles out for commentary: "Our moods do not believe in each other" (CW 2, p. 182). Unlike its Montaignian counterpart, however, the Emersonian self *does* have communication with Being, through the moral sentiment, which "mends Montaigne" and turns Emerson's own vocation as an essayist into a sustained effort to improve on his skeptical predecessor. Thus Emerson, in his journal, the year before the publication of his first essay, *Nature*: "When will you mend Montaigne? When will you take the hint of nature? Where are your Essays? Can you not express your one conviction that moral laws hold?" (JMN 5, p. 40; May 14, 1835).

What Cavell gives us is an Emerson more congenial to the postmodern mind, an Emerson whose skepticism conveys our sense of "groundlessness" but who turns that to good account by replacing the outdated metaphysical ambition of "founding" ("an old thought for an old world," Cavell, 1989, p. 109) with the fresh, unencumbered, open-ended project of "finding." The opposition is factitious, however; for as Emerson reminds us in "Experience," the moral sentiment—our living link to the Cause of all causes—is also "well called 'the newness'" (CW 3, p. 40).

VI.

There are many varieties of unbelief—thus of skepticism, which is best understood, not as a term of art, not as a conundrum for philosophers only, but as closely related to a host of other forms of anti-realism that Emerson consistently stigmatized throughout his career. What "skepticism," "romance," "melodrama," "superstition," "atheism," and depictions of Heaven as "another world" all have in common is their doubt about the universality of the causal tie. For Emerson, belief is belief in this tie; skepticism, "unbelief in cause and effect." Hence, as we have seen, his peculiar response to the representative skeptic, Montaigne: *We are natural believers. Truth or the connection of cause and effect alone interests us.*

To return to the question with which I began. What gamblers and skeptics have in common is their denial of the causal continuum or, to put it another way, their belief that relation and connection are only somewhere and sometimes, not everywhere and always; that there is no even web, that there are exemptions to the universal rule of law which may work to their benefit or detriment. But the causal order has no pauses, no gaps, no interstices, no dead zones. It is universal and constant in its operations: "we are begirt with laws which execute themselves" ("Spiritual Laws," CW 2, p. 79). Power is therefore plentiful and always available to us right here and now. *More servants wait on us than we'll take notice of.*

Even so, romance (broadly understood as any form of anti-realism that doubts the existence of a causal continuum and our rightful place therein) sees the world of today—when it does not despair of it completely or seek to replace it with another and richer, somewhere beyond the stars—as a lawless, poor, disenchanted, or inaccessible thing. As Emerson puts it in the strongly skeptical opening of "Experience": "Every ship is a romantic object, except that we sail in. Embark, and the romance quits our vessel, and hangs on every other sail in the horizon" (CW 3, p. 28).[19] The present is dull by definition:

> When you say the times, the persons are prosaic; where is the feudal, or the Saracenic, or the Egyptian architecture? where the romantic manners? where the Romish or the Calvinistic religion, which made a kind of poetry in the air for Milton, or Byron, or Belzoni? but to us it is barren as a dry goods shop;—you expose your atheism. Is a railroad, or a shoe-factory, or an insurance-office, or a bank, or a bakery *outside of the system and connexion of things*, or further from God than a sheep-pasture or a clam-bank? Is chemistry suspended? Do not the electricities and the imponderable influences play with all their magic undulation? Do not gravity and polarity keep their unerring watch on a needle and thread, or a cobbler's lapstone, or a switchman's turntable as on the moon's orbit? Only bring a deep observer, and he will make light of the new shop or old cathedral all one to him or new circumstances that afflict you. He will find the circumstance not altered: as deep a cloud of mystery on the cause, as dazzling a glory on the invincible law. ("Celebration of Intellect," LL 2, pp. 250-251; emphasis added)

What is remarkable about this passage—taken from a late (1861) lecture—is its agreement with Emerson's earliest published writings. I am thinking, in particular, of the famous opening paragraph of *Nature* (1836), where Emerson, in denouncing worship of the past and pointing to the "life" and "powers" nature provides, insisted on a simple yet powerful truth: "The sun shines to-day also" (CW 1, p. 7). In his late as in his early writings, Emerson shows the desire for romance to be based on the mistaken idea that we are now somehow *outside of the system and connexion of things*, that we enjoy no "original relation to the universe" (Nature, CW 1, p. 7) and are therefore destitute. In "The American Scholar" (1837), Emerson again appealed to simple, everyday facts of experience, famously embracing "the common," "the familar," and "the low," in order to insist

that everything—even the veriest trifle—falls within the great causal order:

> What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body;—show me the ultimate reason of these matters;—show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature; let me see every trifle bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law; and the shop, the plough, and the leger, referred to the like cause by which light undulates and poets

> sing;—and the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber room, but has form and order; there is no trifle; there is no puzzle; but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench. (CW 1, pp. 67-68)

Disgust with actual life, abhorrence of everything commonplace, is skepticism. In Emerson's lifelong celebration of ordinary experience, we see the centrality and longevity of his realist, causationist commitment.

The same commitment extended to religion and theology. Emerson's reality included Heaven, which he doggedly refused to imagine as a world elsewhere: "When I talked with an ardent missionary, and pointed out to him that his creed found no support in my experience, he replied, 'It is not so in your experience, but is so in the other world.' I answer: Other world! there is no other world. God is one and omnipresent; here or nowhere is the whole fact." Religion is not, as "the sturdiest prejudice" would have it, "something by itself; a department distinct from all other experiences, and to which the tests and judgment men are ready enough to show on other things, do not apply" ("The Sovereignty of Ethics," W 10, p. 199). Nor should prayer bespeak a separation from God, lest it become false and—like the gambler's dealings with Fortune—unlawful: "Prayer as a means to effect a private end, is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg" ("Self-Reliance," CW 2, p. 44). There is only one world. In Emerson's sternly realist vision, Heaven too is part of the causal continuum: "My idea of heaven is that there is no melodrama in it at all; that it is wholly real. Here is the emphasis of conscience and experience; this is no speculation, but the most practical of doctrines. Do you think that the eternal chain of cause and effect which pervades Nature, which threads the globes as beads on a string, leaves this out of its circuit,—leaves out this desire of God and men as a waif and a caprice, altogether cheap and common, and falling without reason or merit?" ("Immortality," W 8, pp. 344-345).

Emerson refused to accept conventional accounts of Biblical miracles for the same reason—the separation of the miracle from the causal order of nature and ordinary experience, which turns the event into the stuff of romance (W 11, pp. 488-489). With Emerson's natural supernaturalism, *everything* is miraculous: "All things are dissolved to their centre by their cause, and in the universal miracle petty and particular miracles disappear" ("Self-Reliance," CW 2, p. 38). The one true miracle is that of Being itself, of every aspect of the causal order, of every moment of

existence: "There is but one Miracle—the perpetual fact of Being & Becoming, the ceaseless saliency, the transit from the Vast to the Particular, which miracle, one & the same, has for its most universal name, the word God" (TN 2, p. 287). With a miracle of this scale, why indeed settle for the "petty and and particular" ones?

> "Nature," said Swedenborg, "makes almost as much demand on our faith as miracles do." And I find nothing in fables more astonishing than my experience in every hour. One moment of a man's life is a fact so stupendous as to take the lustre out of all fiction. The lovers of marvels, of what we call the occult and unproved sciences, of mesmerism, of astrology, of coincidences, of intercourse, by writing or by rapping or by painting, with departed spirits, need not reproach us with incredulity because we are slow to accept their statement. It is not the incredibility of the fact, but a certain want of harmony between the action and the agents. We are used to vaster wonders than these that are alleged. ("Demonology," W 10, p. 12)

VII.

As with religion, so with politics,[20] which secretes its own forms of romance and skepticism.

At the intersection of these last two terms are what Emerson calls, in the closing paragraph of "Experience," "manipular attempts to realize the world of thought":

> I know that the world I converse with in the city and in the farms, is not the world I *think*. I observe that difference, and shall observe it. One day, I shall know the value and law of this discrepance. But I have not found that much was gained by manipular attempts to realize the world of thought. Many eager persons successively make an experiment in this way, and make themselves ridiculous. They acquire democratic manners, they foam at the mouth, they hate and deny. Worse, I observe, that, in the history of mankind, there is never a solitary example of success,—taking their own tests of success. I say this polemically, or in reply to the inquiry, why not realize your world? But far be from me the despair which prejudges the law by a paltry empiricism,—since there never was a right endeavor, but it succeeded. Patience and patience, we shall win at the last. (CW 3, pp. 48-49)

Emerson is attacking reform that begins in separation and disenchantment and ends in confusion and defeat—reform that doubts the "true doctrine of omnipresence" (or "that God re-appears with all his parts in every moss

and cobweb," "Compensation," CW 2, p. 60); reform that starts from a skeptical split between mind and world, and then seeks to close the gap by a pure act of will that confounds the ideal and the material and imagines external reality to be a dull, malleable substance much in need of my thought and ready to receive the personal seal that alone will make it "my" world—a world finally worth inhabiting![21]

Earlier on in "Experience" Emerson evoked, with particular reference to the Brook Farm experiment, the "failures and follies" of reform. These, to his mind, provide useful illustrations of the vagaries of over-intellectualization and doctrinaire views of social change:

> But what help from these fineries or pedantries? What help from thought? Life is not dialectics. We, I think, in these times, have had lessons enough of the futility of criticism. Our young people have thought and written much on labor and reform, and for all that they have written, neither the world nor themselves have got on a step. Intellectual tasting of life will not supersede muscular activity. If a man should consider the nicety of the passage of a piece of bread down his throat, he would starve. At Education-Farm, the noblest theory of life sat on the noblest figures of young men and maidens, quite powerless and melancholy. It would not rake or pitch a ton of hay; it would not rub down a horse; and the men and maidens it left pale and hungry. (CW 3, p. 34)

Criticism is a form of skepticism. The intellect stands aloof and delivers a sweeping objection to what is. It sets itself over and against the external world and then proceeds to conflate the two, confusing orders of reality (*"intellectual tasting* of life," "*manipular* attempts to realize the world of *thought*") and yielding no real progress. There is thus a skepticism, as there is a romance, of reform. The two merge in a common refusal of reality in the here and now. Men become "craze[d] with thinking" and "live in their fancy, like drunkards whose hands are too soft and tremulous for successful labor." Life becomes pure romance, "a tempest of fancies," a "vertigo of shows and politics"—against which a "respect to the present hour" is, Emerson says, "the only ballast I know" (CW 3, p. 35).

If the romance version of reform is doomed to failure, that is because it lacks this basic respect for the present—always the realm of cause and effect for Emerson[22]—and starts from the premise of separation and disenchantment, which it would then presumptuously correct. In truth, however, "the world is saturated with deity and with law" ("Montaigne," CW

4, p. 103). We are never truly apart from the world but ever "embosomed" in its wonders, as Emerson insists in his conclusion to "New England Reformers" (the final piece in *Essays: Second Series*), where he evokes, once again, his idea of *true* romance:

> That which befits us, embosomed in beauty and wonder as we are, is cheerfulness and courage, and the endeavour to realize our aspirations. The life of man is the true romance, which when it is valiantly conducted, will yield the imagination a higher joy than any fiction. All around us, what powers are wrapped up under the coarse mattings of custom, and all wonder prevented. It is so wonderful to our neurologists that a man can see without his eyes, that it does not occur to them, that it is just as wonderful, that he should see with them; and that is ever the difference between the wise and the unwise: the latter wonders at what is unusual, the wise man wonders at the usual. (CW 3, p. 167)

The language is the same here as in the first paragraph of Nature, which insisted on the reality of our present surroundings as a steady source of wonder and empowerment: we are indeed "embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature" (Nature, CW 1, p. 7). The crippling fallacy of doctrinaire reform is to presuppose, instead, the essential non-divinity of our actual, everyday existence, which the strength of private hope alone might suddenly quicken and transform. And as it begins, so it ends: "Unspeakably sad and barren does life look to those, who a few months ago were dazzled with the splendor of the promise of the times" ("Experience," CW 3, p. 34).

By way of contrast, the closing paragraphs of "New England Reformers" emphasize our solid grounding in universal causality. This is what the romantic reformer, with his intellectual volontarism (a political version of what Emerson calls elsewhere the "fantastical will"[23]), forgets—our "strict connexion with a higher fact never yet manifested," with a "power over and behind us"; our "open channel to the highest life, [which] is the first and last reality"—in a word, our secure grounding in the ultimate principle of reliance: "the Law alive and beautiful, which works over our heads and under our feet" (CW 3, pp. 165, 166). The romantic reformer sins by presumption and egotism (on which more shortly), as if his way were the only way, though reality itself—"the frame of things"—says otherwise and "preaches indifferency" ("Experience," CW 3, p. 35). He acts as if the entire world needed help to be set right. Emerson seeks to deflate such

pretensions, remarking dryly: "we need not assist the administration of the universe" ("New England Reformers," CW 3, p. 166).

The "practical wisdom" Emerson celebrates in "Experience" reveals the true source of "practical power." It shows us that the world is here to assist us, not the other way around. The "end" or "purpose" the world—the object of Emerson's inquiry in Nature (CW 1, p. 7)—is to provide us with the means "to realize our aspirations," or to make life *true romance*. The "right endeavour" succeeds, not by virtue of sheer will, but because of its secure grounding in the causal order, because of its perfect alignment with the real. "Whilst a man seeks good ends," Emerson said in his 1838 Divinity School Address, "he is strong by the whole strength of nature" (CW 1, p. 79). Or as he recorded three years earlier in an 1835 journal entry: "The true man in every act has the Universe at his back" (JMN 5, p. 48). Power is always for Emerson "a sharing of the nature of the world" ("Power," CW 6, p. 30). And political power is no exception. It too rests on "necessary foundations," on "deep and necessary grounds"; its ultimate source is not volontarism but reliance: "We must trust infinitely to the beneficent necessity which shines through all laws" ("Politics," CW 3, pp. 117, 122, 124).

Emerson's realism is not conservative. It does not exclude a yearning for the better. On the contrary, in Emerson's vision reality itself is progressive, driven by what "The Method of Nature" calls "tendency" (CW 1, pp. 126, 131), a principle whose universal operation Emerson underscores at the end of his response to the representative skeptic: "Through the years and the centuries, through evil agents, through toys and atoms, a great and beneficent tendency irresistibly streams" ("Montaigne," CW 4, p. 104). Or as Emerson exclaims in "Experience," "Onward and onward!" (CW 3, p. 43). Causality, the "flowing law" to which the skeptic too must finally submit, is an inherently progressive, transformative, creative principle. "To meliorate, is the law of nature" ("Culture," CW 6, p. 74). The principle of melioration is part and parcel of Emerson's ontology. Which explains why at the end of "Fate," Emerson insists on both causation (*tie, thread, connexion, relation, chain of cause and effect*) and progress: "Fate involves the melioration. No statement of the Universe can have any soundness, which does not admit its ascending effort" ("Fate," CW 6, p. 19).[24] In a word: "melioration is the law" ("The Sovereignty of Ethics," W 10, p. 188).

This is the metaphysics grounding Emerson's "philosophical antislavery," which led, as Len Gougeon notes, to an "active abolitionism" (EAW, p. xxx). Slavery, Emerson declared flatly, is "no improver" (EAW, p. 21).

It was therefore doomed by reality and the implacable law of melioration. If the abolitionist movement was powerful, in Emerson's view, it was not so much for doctrinal reasons, or because of the political will and energy of its activists (important though these were), but above all because it had "the Eternal constitution of the universe" on its side: "It is of no use to vote down gravitation or morals. What is useful will last; whilst that which is hurtful to the world will sink beneath all the opposing forces which it must exasperate" ("The Fugitive Slave Law," EAW, p. 84). As Emerson emphasized in an earlier address on the Fugitive Slave Law, "men have to do with rectitude, with benefit, with truth, with something which is, independent of appearances" ("'Address to the Citizens of Concord' on the Fugitive Slave Law," EAW, p. 58). Truth, being, and reality are the measure of good: "Cause & effect exist. Things are good as they are true, calicoes, temples, laws, poems. There is a truth translateable into the languages of all arts & works, &, as men are perceivers of the truth, they command so much of the secret of creation. Whatever is false cannot be enacted" (TN 1, p. 235). The Fugitive Slave Law was false in precisely this sense. It might well be passed by Congress, but it could not—and could never be—enacted. It could never have the causal efficacy of a true law in perfect conformity with "the law of things." It was inimical to reality itself, and therefore null and void. The Emancipation Proclamation, by contrast, enabled the US to recover from its false position with respect to the fundamental law of being. It redressed the moral and ontological balance, realigning the laws of men with the laws of things: "The President by this act has paroled all the slaves in America; they will no more fight against us; and it relieves our race once for all of its crime and false position. The first condition of success is secured in putting ourselves right. We have recovered ourselves from our false position and planted ourselves on a law of nature" ("The President's Proclamation," EAW, p. 132).

As Emerson would later write in "Illusions," "when we break the laws, we lose our hold on the central reality" (CW 6, p. 172). This is precisely what happened with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, which caused the U.S. to lose its grip on the real. In his 1855 lecture on "American Slavery" (a remarkable specimen of causationist reasoning), Emerson identifies the historical moment as one "of greatest darkness, and of total eclipse," a period of "want of faith in laws," of "disbelief in principles," of "non-credence"—in a word, of *skepticism* (LL 2, pp. 6-7, 3). As "paltry empiricists," his contemporaries "could not see beyond their eye-lids, they dwell in the senses;—cause being out of sight is out of mind" (LL 2, p. 6). The institution of slavery "rests on skepticism" (LL 2, p. 3). It

embodies a skeptical doubt about the law of being, an "unbelief in cause and effect," to use the language of five years later in "Worship." But as Emerson warns on the same page of "Worship," "laws do not stop where our eyes lose them" (CW 6, p. 117). The laws of causality and compensation persist: "But geometry survives, though we have forgotten it. Everything rests on foundations, alike the globe of the world, the human mind, and the calico print" ("American Slavery," LL 2, p. 6). One of Emerson's self-assigned tasks in this somber period was to remind his fellow Americans of what they had forgotten. Hence his references, in the antislavery writings, to natural or physical law—especially to the law gravitation, to which he had already appealed at the end of "New England Reformers" (CW 3, p. 166; EAW, pp. 61, 84, 123).

VIII.

To return to the individual: it is crucial to remember that Emersonian selfhood, including its ethical dimension, is part of the causal and ontological continuum. The law of the world, as it turns out, is the law of the mind; the cause-and-effect relation in the world meshes with the causal force that is basis of personal identity—the individual will: "You will see the results of inquiry into the moral nature: it is the same fact existing as sentiment and as will in the mind, which works in nature as irresisitible law, exerting influence in nations, intelligent beings, or down in the kingdoms of brute or of chemical nature" ("Morals," LL 2, p. 139).

Romance is a disorder of the ego, an imbalance in the relation of self to world. It casts doubt on the metaphysical basis of selfhood in "universal reliance"—that is to say, in our shared causality with the world. The result is either selfhood in retreat, estranged from other beings, cut off from nature, humankind, and God; or selfhood radically expanded, in the extension of a "foolish," supernaturally privileged personality "beyond all bounds,—into the domain of the infinite or the universal" (EL 3, p. 165). Either way, there is exaggeration or disproportion.

Philosophical skepticism is an exaggeration of the ego's isolation, of its disempowering lack of any "affirmative principle," its inability to get a purchase on a world whose objects are all "evanescence and lubricity" ("Experience," CW 3, p. 29). "Demonology"—the general term for "Dreams, Omens, Coincidences, Luck, Sortilege, Magic," and host of other "obscure facts" which stand as "exceptions to, if not violation of, the ordinary laws" (EL 3, p. 151)—is exaggeration in the other sense. Here the individual self is empowered, not by causal law, but by an occult force: "The insinuation is that the known external laws of morals and of

matter are sometimes corrupted or eluded by this lurking gypsy principle, this Mother power, that chooses favorites, and works in the dark of the Universe for their behoof." Emerson calls demonology "the Shadow of Theology" (EL 3, p. 170). Demonology is partiality; it is belief, not in the divine, universal law of cause and effect, but in a "peculiar and alien power" that dotes on certain individuals. Demons have their darlings:

> This supernatural favoritism is allied with a large class of superstitions; with the revelations of ghosts which are a selecting tribe speaking to one and avoiding millions; with the traditions respecting fairies, angels, and saints, scarcely less partial; the agents and the means of magic, as magicians and amulets. This faith in a partial power, so easily sliding into the popular belief every where, and in the particular of lucky days and fortunate persons as common in Boston today as the faith in incantations and philtres was in ancient Rome, or in the beneficent potency of the sign of the Cross in modern Rome; this supposed power crosses the ordinary and acknowledged powers natural and moral which science and religion and philosophy reverence and explore. (EL 3, pp. 160, 162)

Demonology is egotism, exaltation of the personality. "Philosophically considered," Emerson writes, it is "nothing but a great name for a very common and well known tendency of the mind,—an exaggeration, namely, of the Individual, of the personal bodily man which nature steadily postpones" (EL 3, p. 165). Christianity, with its personal God and its "noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus" (to quote the strong language of the Divinity School Address, CW 1, p. 82), stands guilty of the same "usurpation," in that it "intrudes the element of a limited personality into the high place which nothing but spiritual energy can fill."[25]

There are no favorites, however. There is one world and one law for all: "If we please, we can no doubt look strange on the matter, and say, in beholding one who is called a fortunate man, 'What lucky star presides over him!' but the law of the Universe is one for each, and one for all;—and there is as precise and as describable a reason for every fact occurring to him, as for any occurring to any man; that every fact in which the moral elements intermingle, is not the less under the dominion of fatal law, than the properties of light, or water, or salt, or sugar" (EL 3, pp. 165-166). The self-reliant individual spurns supernatural privileges, "unlawful" winnings, "the flattery of omens," and "easy and vulgar" projections of "exuberant selfhood" beyond its proper sphere (EL 3, p. 165). In light of this, the conclusion of "Self-Reliance," with its somewhat unexpected denunciation of faith in Fortune, begins to make more sense, for one of the

main aims of the essay is to define selfhood and the individual will in their proper relation to the world: "We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and of thought" (CW 2, p. 37). The well-balanced ego understands where its true ground is—in this shared causality with nature.[26] It refuses to imagine that it has been vouchsafed special powers or exemptions.

Nor is the self-reliant individual a "busy body" who pushes the desire for empirical evidence beyond its proper bounds (EL 3, p. 166). This is what Emerson denounces as "prying" or "peeping."[27] Demonology is by nature intrusive. It is "inquiry pursued on low principles." It is the senses meddling in things spiritual. Such is the "popular notion of revelation," which is for Emerson no better than "a telling of fortunes": "the understanding seeks to find answers to sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, what their hands shall 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" ("The Over-Soul," CW 2, pp. 167-168). Lusting after knowledge of our future state, like worship of the past or faith in Fortune, betrays an impatience with our lot, a want of self-reliance, a discontent with experience, a skepticism about the here and now. Emerson's remedy for this failing is always the same—to deal exclusively with cause and effect:

> 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 in 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, which 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. (CW 2, p. 168)

IX.

Romance is exaggeration. Rhetorically, it manifests itself in a fondness for the superlative, which is for Emerson anti-realism in expression. It is exaggeration or separation carried over into our representations of the world. The superlative, too, takes us *outside of the system and connexion of things*, beyond reality and truth, beyond "the fact" and the "true line"

("The Superlative," W 10, p. 164). But there is no exaggeration in reality, only proportion, connection, and law: "In all the years that I have sat in town and forest, I never saw a winged dragon, a flying man, or a talking fish, but ever the strictest regard to rule, and an absence of all surprises" (W 10, p. 175). The superlative disdains to rest on "the simplicity of nature, or real being" (W 10, p. 174). It refuses to see that the "firmest and noblest ground on which people can live is truth; the real with the real" (W 10, p. 176). It is hardly surprising, then, that Emerson should return to the theme of romance in his essay on the superlative form: "I hear without sympathy the complaint of young and ardent persons that they find life no region of romance, with no enchanter, no giant, no fairies, nor even muses. I am very much indebted to my eyes, and am content that they should see the real world, always geometrically finished without blur or halo. The more I am engaged with it, the more it suffices" (W 10, p. 166).

There is, however, a positive way to read the love of fiction, which may be seen, at bottom, as a realist impulse. The "true" way to read romance is as a fable of intellectual enlargement through causationism:

> All the fairy tales of Aladdin or the invisible Gyges or the talisman that opens kings' palaces or the enchanted halls underground or in the sea, are only fictions to indicate the one miracle of intellectual enlargement. When a man stupid becomes a man inspired, when one and the same man passes out of the torpid into the perceiving state, leaves the din of trifles, the stupor of the senses, to enter into the quasi-omniscience of high thought,—up and down, around, all limits disappear. No horizon shuts down. He sees things in their causes, all facts in their connection. ("Education," W 10, p. 126)

Fairy tales may also be read as allegories of practical empowerment, as "prophec[ies] of the progress of art" (W 10, p. 12)—prophecies of a dominion of man over nature "beyond his dream of God," as evoked at the end of *Nature*; or of "the transformation of genius into practical power" that is announced at the end of "Experience." There is no such thing as *pure* romance; the idlest of fictions has some basis in reality. "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth," William Blake wrote in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." And Emerson would agree:

> Indeed all productions of man are so anthropomorphous, that not possibly can he invent any fable that shall not have a deep and universal moral, and be true in senses and to an extent never intended by the inventor. Thus all the idlest fables of Homer and the poets, the modern poets

> and philosophers can explain with profound judgment, of law, and state, and Ethics. Lucian has an idle tale that Pancrates, journeying fom Memphis to Coptus, and wanting a servant, took a door-bar, and pronounced over it magical words, and it stood up and brought him water, and turned a spit, and carried bundles, doing all the work of a slave. What is this but a prophecy of the progress of art? For Pancrates read Fulton or Watt, and for magical word read steam, and do they not make an iron bar and half a dozen wheels do the work not of one, but of a thousand skilful mechanics? ("Demonology," EL 3, p. 158)

Read in this way, fables are no longer romance, they are ***true***. "The story of Orpheus, of Arion, of the Arabian Minstrel, are not fables, but experiments on the same iron at white heat" ("Perpetual Forces," LL 2, p. 297).

This is the "true romance" of the essay "Experience." This is realism. Stanley Cavell, for his part, claims that the closing line of the essay "does not exactly shift the burden from the genius onto the world" (Cavell, 1989, p. 95). Of course it does. Where else could the burden possibly be placed? On the self, in a redefinition of the will as underived personal power? We have already seen that in Emerson the self shares the same ontological ground as the world—in the Cause—and that this is the source of "universal reliance." Again, power is always for Emerson "a sharing of the nature of the world," and the "practical power" to which "Experience" gives the last word is no exception. Potential bearers of burdens are all around us in the natural world: *more servants wait on man than he'll take notice of*. All we have to do is avail ourselves of their strength. With these powers of nature, romance becomes true: "Like the hero in our nursery tale, who has one servant who eats slices of granite rocks, and another who can hear the grass grow, and a third who can run to Babylon in half an hour, so man in Nature is surrounded by a gang of friendly giants who can do harder stints than these" ("Perpetual Forces," LL 2, p. 289). Knowing how to shift the burden of realization onto such "magnificent helpers" is, for Emerson, practical wisdom itself:

> I admire still more than the saw-mill, the skill which, on the seashore, makes the tides drive the wheels, and grind corn, and which thus engages the assistance of the moon, like a hired hand, to grind, and wind, and pump, and saw, and split stone, and roll iron.
>
> Now that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance of his labor, to hitch his wagon to a star, and see his chore done by the gods themselves. That is the way we are strong, by borrowing the might of the elements. The forces of steam, gravity, galvanism, light, magnets, wind, fire serve

us day by day, and cost us nothing. ("Civilization," CW 7, p. 14; emphasis added)

The well-known phrase *to hitch your wagon to a star,* when taken in isolation, sounds positively jejune; but the passage as a whole shows Emerson's idealism to be the most practical of doctrines, the sternest of realisms.

All things considered, and despite his readiness to read facts behind fictions, to see reality at the bottom of the wildest romance, Emerson prefers "broad daylight" to those "twilights of thought" called demonology (EL 3, p. 164). He prefers truth to superlatives, reality to romance. Above all, he delights in *true* romance, a romance of the real, a romance that is a natural expression of the great causal order:

> See how Romance adheres
> To the deer, the lion,
> and every bird,
> Because they are free
> And have no master but Law. (CPT, p. 425)

Notes

[1] Thus Emerson's conclusion to the "Reality" chapter of the essay "Experience": "The new statement will comprise the skepticisms, as well as the faiths of society, and out of unbeliefs a creed shall be formed. For, skepticisms are not gratuitous or lawless, but are limitations of the affirmative statement, and the new philosophy must take them in, and make affirmations outside of them, just as much as it must include the oldest beliefs" (*CW* 3, p. 43); or as he put it more succinctly in a manuscript poem: "Lose faith to gain faith" ("Proteus," *CPT*, p. 401). The Montaigne essay describes the "spiritualist" who is "driven to express his faith by a series of skepticisms," who "denies out of more faith, and not less" (*CW* 4, pp. 102, 103). The idea that skeptical doubt can be useful in strengthening belief or knowledge was something of a commonplace in the period and may be found in Thomas Reid (quoted by Emerson in *JMN* 6, p. 114); in Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1993, p. 107), which of course had a decisive influence on the formation of Transcendentalism; and in the writings of Emerson's former teacher William Ellery Channing (1896, p. 264). Hume had of course also argued in the *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding* (section 12, part 3) for the usefulness of "*mitigated* skepticism" as a weapon against "dogmatic reasoners," in much the same terms Emerson would later use in the Montaigne lecture (Hume, 1817, vol. 2, p. 154; *CW* 4, p. 97).

[2] Thus Emerson in "Illusions": "Bare and grim to tears is the lot of the children in the hovel I saw yesterday; yet not the less they hung it round with frippery romance" (*CW* 6, p. 168). For an introduction to the cultural background of the term *romance*, see Bell (1980, pp. 7-22). Bell points to the "open hostility" to romance in a period of "rational orthodoxy" rooted in the thought of Puritan New England and reinforced by the dominance, in the universities, of Scottish common sense philosophy (Bell, 1980, pp. 11, 9, 12-13). "In spite of the efforts of Hawthorne and others to legitimize the mode through an apologetic of moral symbolism ('relating' illusion to truth, the imaginary to the actual), 'romance' meant, first of all, fiction as opposed to fact, the spurious and possibly dangerous as opposed to the genuine" (Bell, 1980, p. 9). Romance's "fundamental property" was its "departure from 'truth,' from 'fact.'" The operative distinction in contemporary discussions of romance was less literary than psychological (its "motive and effect") and ontological: "the general run of nineteenth-century comments on romance distinguish it not from *realism* but from *reality*" (Bell, 1980, p. 10).

[3] Clarke's cure for this delusion is the same as Thoreau's—to "observe realities only": "It is to seek beauty, not in the world of dreams, but in the actual world, and the actual life. It is to look for beauty everywhere,—in common things, common people, common work, common life. Looking thus we shall soon see that beauty is no monopoly of artists, poets, dreamers; that all life may become high art; that all we do, when done according to an ideal standard, instantly partakes of this element of beauty. Then, too, it will be seen that all nature is saturated and overflowing with beauty; that our Italy and Switzerland are here in Massachusetts" (Clarke, 1882, pp. 189-190). In a word, "beauty sought by itself vanishes in dreams; beauty sought in reality becomes the charm of our life" (p. 191).

[4] Emerson read "Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion" in the first American edition of Hume's philosophical writings (the second volume of which reprinted the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* ; Hume, 1817, vol. 2, pp. 3-158); see Emerson's "Catalogue of Books Read" (*JMN* 1, p. 399), as well as his 1823 reference to "Mr Hume's Essay upon Necessary Connexion" (*JMN* 2, p. 161). Robert D. Richardson is right to insist that "Emerson was to struggle against Hume for years" and that "to a great extent Emerson's life and work—indeed, transcendentalism itself—constitutes a refutation of Hume" (Richardson, 1995, p. 31). On Emerson's early struggle with Hume's skepticism, see also Barish (1989, chap. 5) and Packer (1982, pp. 157-160, 162-163).

[5] The different attempts to read Emerson's "lords of life" as Kantian categories (Van Leer, 1986, pp. 150-187; Cavell, 1989, pp. 88-89, 96, 111; Goodman, 1990, pp. 47-51; Laugier, 2002, pp. 47-48) appear to me misguided. I would suggest that the most pertinent philosophical reading of the introductory poem is also the simplest and most obvious one: it is Emerson's naturalist response to skepticism (I use "naturalist" as Strawson does in his discussion of "Hume the naturalist" versus "Hume the skeptic"; Strawson, 1985, pp. 38-39). Thus: "Dearest nature, strong and kind," steps in to dispel the skeptical doubt or puzzlement of "little man" (walking about "with puzzled look") by changing the subject

("Darling, never mind!") and by pointing, in the penultimate line ("Tomorrow they will wear another face"), to what Emerson will call in the Montaigne lecture the "rotation of states of mind" (*CW* 3, p. 25; *CW* 4, p. 99). If nature declares "little man" to be "the founder," that is because of his immediate, empowering relation to the Cause—that is to say, to "the inventor of the game/Omnipresent without a name." In support of this assertion, I would cite the "Reality" chapter of the essay proper, which, after giving a definition of the "First Cause" as that which "ranks all sensations and states of mind," refers to the absolute cause and "unbounded substance" as "ineffable": "The baffled intellect must still kneel before this cause, which refuses to be named" (*CW* 3, p. 42). In Emerson, the law "without name" is the ultimate principle of being (see for example "Worship," *CW* 6, p. 117). As "inventor of the game," this ultimate reality is, we might say, the *overlord* of life.

[6] Cicero, *De Officiis* I.iv; Stewart, 1829, vol. 2, p. 228; vol. 3, pp. 375-376; Brown, 1822, pp. 160, 235; and 1824, vol. 1, pp. 78, 441; vol. 2, pp. 232-238. Emerson identifies "knowledge of causes," which gives us "command of the future," with the *matutina cognitio* of the scholastics (*W* 12, p. 94; cf. also *Nature*, *CW* 1, p. 43).

[7] If we judge from the *OED* entry for "causationist," which cites "Montaigne" and "Power" as its sole sources, Emerson appears to have invented the word.

[8] In one of the first major contemporary assessments of Transcendentalist philosophy, James Murdock insisted that "to understand more fully the metaphysics of the Transcendental writers, we must not overlook their *ontological* doctrines" (Murdock, 1842, p. 183). Transcendentalism's ontological turn—or what Herbert W. Schneider (1967) once called its "escape from phenomenology"—is perhaps best illustrated in one of the founding documents of the movement, Frederic Henry Hedge's 1833 essay on Coleridge. Reviewing recent trends in German metaphysics, Hedge made his own preference perfectly clear, declaring the philosophy of Fichte "altogether too subjective" and that of Schelling—"the ontologist of the Kantian school"—to be "the most satisfactory" (Hedge, 1833, pp. 124, 125).

[9] "Philosophy-as-epistemology"—to borrow Richard Rorty's apt phrase (1980, pp. 136-139)—has exercised a strong hold on Emerson studies, though in a distinctly anti-foundationalist spirit. That one of the first book-length rehabilitations of Emerson as philosopher should bear the title *Emerson's Epistemology* (Van Leer, 1986) is symptomatic. Robinson (1993, p. 207n56) lists other examples, in a brief defense of the epistemology-centered tradition, against the criticisms of West (1989, pp. 4-5).

[10] For John Lysaker, Emerson's essays "delimit the scope of efficient causality," notably through the language of *casualty:* "In disclosing the casualty in which the very thought of causality arises, Emerson draws the bottom out from under this would-be ontological linchpin" (Lysaker, 2008, pp. 85, 87, 86). The chapter of "Experience" devoted to this very theme—"Surprise"—suggests the

contrary, however. It begins in "the kingdom of *known* cause and effect" (my emphasis) and ends, like *Nature* (*CW* 1, p. 45), in "the kingdom that cometh without observation," which Emerson identifies successively with "the moral sentiment," "the grace of God," and "the vital force supplied from the Eternal" (*CW* 3, pp. 39-40)—all manifestations of the *causa causarum*. Though *casualty* certainly marks the limits of our agency and our ability to penetrate causal sequences ("power keeps quite another road than the turnpikes of choice and will, namely, the subterranean and invisible tunnels and channels of life"), it in no way undermines Emerson's causationist ontology. Surprises are intimations of Being.

[11] In what is surely one of the most extraordinary moments in the late Emerson, the diehard idealist and steadfast believer in the sovereignty of mind declares himself ready to embrace the possibility of an emergent-powers materialism: "If there be but one substance or reality, and that is body, and it has the quality of creating the sublime astronomy, of converting itself into brain, and geometry, and reason; if it can reason in Newton, and sing in Homer and Shakespeare, and love and serve as saints and angels, then I have no objection to transfer to body all my wonder and allegiance" ("The Natural Method of Mental Philosophy," *LL* 2, p. 98).

[12] For an analysis of the peculiar syntax of this sentence and its possible philosophical implications, see Urbas (2004, pp. 273-274).

[13] For Emerson's earliest impressions—at age 17!—of Price as a possible ally in the struggle against skepticism, see *JMN* 1, p. 51 (for March 14, 1821). Price's aim, as he himself put it, was "to trace the obligations of virtue up to the truth and the nature of things, and these to the Deity," (1948 [1787], p. 11). Emerson, in an early lecture on "Ethics," defined the subject in rational-intutitionist terms, as grounded "in the Nature of things" (*EL* 2, p. 144).

[14] Russell Goodman is right to argue that "skepticism is not Emerson's most considered stance" (Goodman, 1990, p. 53).

[15] At no point in Cavell's various discussions of Emerson and skepticism does he bother to consider this definition; nor have post-Cavellian commentaries (e.g. Michael, 1988; and Goodman, 1990) made good on this omission. Cavell's indifference to Emerson's lecture on the "representative skeptic" seems equally unaccountable.

[16] What the "epistemology of moods" teaches us is that there is no ground outside the succession itself: "The existence of one of these worlds of life depends on our finding ourselves there. They have no foundation otherwise." Cavell insists on this point: "foundation reaches no farther than each issue of finding" (Cavell, 1989, pp. 96-97, 114). On selfhood, I would quote *In Quest of the Ordinary:* "the self's (perpetual, step-wise, circle-wise) construction of the self, say in 'Self-Reliance,' has to pass through an idea of the self's alliance with and rallying of itself, its self-authorizations, as on a path, or succession, in the aftermath of religion's dominance. This by no means implies that Emerson persists in seeking a resubstantializing of the self, the hope for which Hume and

Kant, let us say, had shattered" (Cavell, 1988, p. xii).

[17] Cavell does quote these lines from "Reality" elsewhere, but without commentary (Cavell, 1989, pp. 99-100).

[18] For a comparison of Cavell and Montaigne on the questions of skepticism and friendship, see Flatham (2006).

[19] Packer sums up romance nicely in her reading of "Experience" ("*Romance*—the glamour or beauty that could transmute life's baser metals into gold—is always somewhere else, somewhere just beyond our grasp") and reads its final transmutation into truth at the end of the essay as "the point at which desire and fact, the pleasure principle and the reality principle, will coincide" (Packer, 1982, pp. 150-151, 178). Van Leer, on the other hand, gives an excessively pessimistic reading of the conclusion: "And though power is still imaginable, perhaps even realizable, this romance of transformation is less declared a truth than practical truth a romance" (Van Leer, 1986, p. 187). For a more balanced interpretation, emphasizing the pragmatic message of the closing lines, see Robinson (1993, pp. 69-70).

[20] For a well-informed and insightful critique of recent scholarship on Emerson and politics, see Gurley (2007).

[21] Stanley Cavell reads Emerson's call for change "precisely not through willing but by 'patience and patience'" as his solution to the Kantian conundrum of *how pure reason can be practical* (Cavell, 2004, p. 139).

[22] Thus "The Over-Soul": "It is not in 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, which curtains events, it instructs the children of men to live in to-day" (*CW* 2, p. 168).

[23] "Let us build altars to the Beautiful Necessity. If we thought men were free in the sense, that, in a single exception one fantastical will could prevail over the law of things, it were all one as if a child's hand could pull down the sun" ("Fate," *CW* 6, p. 26).

[24] For Deming (2007, p. 59) Emerson's commitment to the principle of melioration in "Fate" is undercut by his own rhetoric.

[25] Emerson adds, in the same journal entry on demonology just quoted: "The divine will, or, *the eternal tendency to the good of the whole, active in every atom, every moment,*—is the only will that can be supposed predominant a single hairbreadth beyond the lines of individual action & influence as known to experience; but a ghost, a Jupiter, a fairy, a devil, and not less a saint, an angel, & the God of popular religion, as of Calvinism, & Romanism, is an aggrandized & monstrous individual will. The divine will, such as I describe it, is spiritual. These other things, though called spiritual, are not so, but only demonological; & fictions" (*JMN* 7, pp. 167-168).

[26] In a Cavellian reading of "Self-Reliance," Greenham claims that the realization that we share the same causal ground as nature "does not amount to a recovery in itself" (Greenham, 2007, p. 254)—despite Emerson's strong,

demonstrative language: "*Here* 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" (*CW* 2, p. 37; emphasis added). Greenham argues nevertheless that the only ground for reliance is language and that Emerson's writing should be read "as an attempt to found the self upon words" (Greenham, 2007, p. 277).

[27] Animal magnetism is a case in point. It is for Emerson yet another inquiry "pursued on low principles": "Animal Magnetism peeps" ("Demonology," *EL* 3, p. 167).

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