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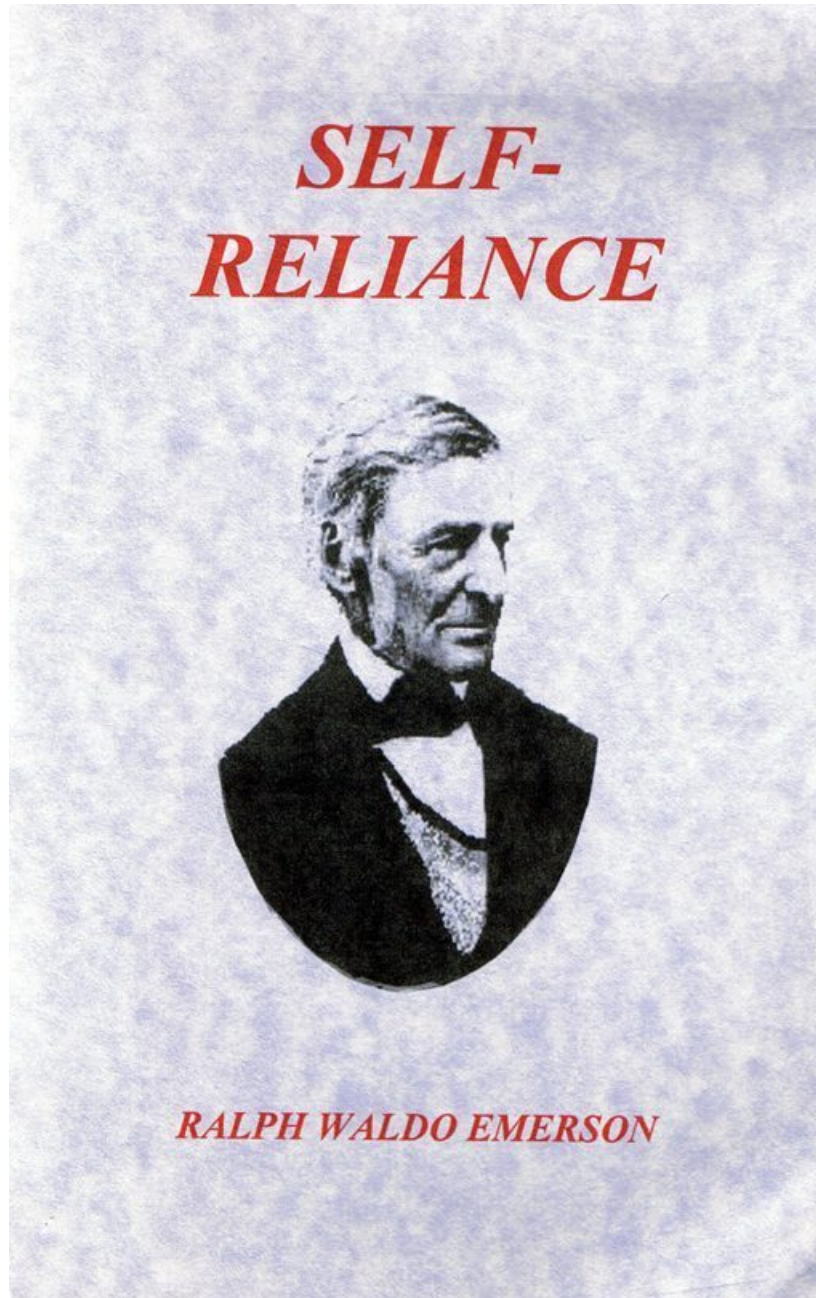
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Self-Reliance

Series: (Classic Social Commentary Series, 2) | **Author:** **Ralph Waldo Emerson** | **ISBN:** 0974086827 : 9780974086828 | **Format:** Paperback | **Size:** 140x215mm | **Pages:** 44 | **Weight:** .056 Kg. | **Published:** Presa Press

Self-Reliance by Ralph Waldo Emerson

contains the essence of transcendental philosophy. Emerson reflects upon human potential & encourages us to listen to the voice within. He explores & illuminates the concepts of idealism, individualism & spiritualism. His belief in determining one's values from personal insights rather than conforming to societal judgements remains pertinent today. Emerson has inspired classical writers from Thoreau, Whitman & Nietzsche to contemporary authors such as D. H. Lawrence, William Carlos Williams & Ernest Hemingway.



Ralph Waldo Emerson

(May 25, 1803 – April 27, 1882) was an American essayist, philosopher, poet, and leader of the Transcendentalist movement in the early 19th century. His teachings directly influenced the growing New Thought movement of the mid 1800s.

Emerson gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of Transcendentalism in his 1836 essay, *Nature*. As a result of this ground breaking work he gave a speech entitled *The American Scholar* in 1837, which Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. considered to be America's "Intellectual Declaration of Independence". Emerson once said

“Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you.”

Considered one of the great orators of the time, Emerson's enthusiasm

“and respect for his audience enraptured crowds. His support for abolitionism late in life created controversy, and at times he was subject to abuse from crowds while speaking on the topic, however this was not always the case. When asked to sum up his work, he said his central doctrine was “the infinitude of the private man.”

Emerson was born in Boston, Massachusetts on May 25, 1803, son of Ruth Haskins and the Rev. William Emerson, a Unitarian minister who descended from a well-known line of ministers. Their son was named after the mother’s brother Ralph and the father’s great-grandmother Rebecca Waldo. Ralph Waldo was the second of five sons who survived into adulthood; the others were William, Edward, Robert Bulkeley, and Charles. Three other children—Phebe, John Clarke, and Mary Caroline—all died in childhood.

The young Ralph Waldo Emerson’s father, who called his son “a rather dull scholar”, died from stomach cancer on May 12, 1811, less than two weeks short of Emerson’s eighth birthday. Emerson was raised by his mother as well as other intellectual and spiritual women in his family, including his aunt Mary Moody Emerson, who had a profound impact on the young Emerson. She lived with the family off and on and maintained a constant correspondence with Emerson until her death in 1863.

Emerson’s formal schooling began at the Boston Latin School in 1812 when he was nine. In October 1817, at 14, Emerson went to Harvard College and was appointed freshman messenger for the president, requiring Emerson to fetch delinquent students and send messages to faculty. Midway through his junior year, Emerson began keeping a list of books he had read and started a journal in a series of notebooks that would be called “**Wide World**”. He took outside jobs to cover his school expenses, including as a waiter for the Junior Commons and as an occasional teacher working with his uncle Samuel in Waltham, Massachusetts. By his senior year, Emerson decided to go by his middle name, Waldo. Emerson served as Class Poet and, as was custom, presented an original poem on Harvard’s Class Day, a month before his official graduation on August 29, 1821, when he was 18. He did not stand out as a student and graduated in the exact middle of his class of 59 people.

After Harvard, Emerson assisted his brother in a school for young ladies established in their mother’s house, after he had established his own school in Chelmsford, Massachusetts; when his brother went to Göttingen to study divinity, Emerson took charge of the school. Over the next several years, Emerson made his living as a schoolmaster, then went to Harvard Divinity School. In May 1828, Emerson’s younger brother William, who had been working with lawyer Daniel Webster, had to be sent to McLean Asylum.

Boston’s Second Church invited Emerson to served as its junior pastor and he was ordained on March 11, 1829. He began to disagree with the church’s methods, writing in his journal in June 1832:

“**I have sometimes thought that, in order to be a good minister, it was necessary to leave the ministry. The profession is antiquated. In an altered age, we worship in the dead forms of our forefathers**”.

His disagreements with church officials over the administration of the

Communion service and misgivings about public prayer eventually led to his resignation in 1832. As he wrote,

“**“This mode of commemorating Christ is not suitable to me. That is reason enough why I should abandon it”.**

Emerson met his first wife, Ellen Louisa Tucker, in Concord, New Hampshire and married her when she was 18. The couple moved to Boston, with Emerson’s mother Ruth moving with them to help take care of Ellen, who was already sick with tuberculosis. Less than two years later, Ellen died at the age of 20 on February 8, 1831, after uttering her last words: “I have not forgot the peace and joy”. Emerson was heavily affected by her death, often visiting her grave. In a journal entry dated March 29, 1831, Emerson wrote, “I visited Ellen’s tomb and opened the coffin”.

Emerson toured Europe in 1832 and later wrote of his travels in *English Traits* (1856). He left aboard the brig *Jasper* on Christmas day, sailing first to Malta. During his European trip, he met William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, and Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle in particular was a strong influence on Emerson; Emerson would later serve as an unofficial literary agent in the United States for Caryle. The two would maintain correspondence until Caryle’s death in 1881.

Emerson returned to the United States on October 9, 1833, and lived with his mother in Newton, Massachusetts until November 1834, when he moved to Concord, Massachusetts to live with his step-grandfather Dr. Ezra Ripley at what was later named *The Old Manse*. In 1835, he bought a house on the Cambridge and Concord Turnpike in Concord, Massachusetts, now open to the public as the *Ralph Waldo Emerson House*, and quickly became one of the leading citizens in the town. He married his second wife Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, Massachusetts, in her home town on September 14, 1835. He called her Lidian and she called him Mr. Emerson. Their children were Waldo, Ellen, Edith, and Edward Waldo Emerson. Ellen was named for his first wife, at Lidian’s suggestion.

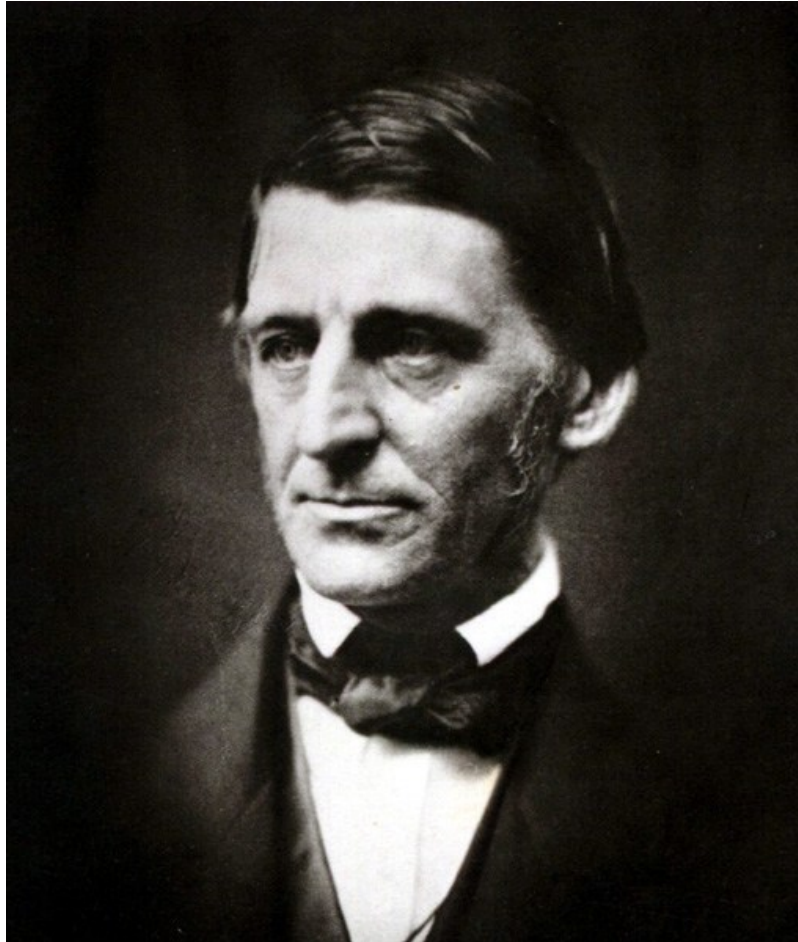
Emerson lived a financially conservative lifestyle. He had inherited some wealth after his wife’s death, though he brought a lawsuit against the Tucker family in 1836 to get it. He received \$11,674.79 in July 1837. Around this time, he had enough money to pay the rent of his neighbor Bronson Alcott.

Emerson and other like-minded intellectuals founded the Transcendental Club, which served as a center for the movement. Its first meeting was held on September 19, 1836. The group did not publish its journal, *The Dial*, until July 1840. Emerson anonymously published his first essay, *Nature*, in September 1836. A year later, on August 31, 1837, Emerson delivered his now-famous Phi Beta Kappa address, “**The American Scholar**”, then known as “**An Oration, Delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge**”; it was renamed for a collection of essays in 1849. In the speech, Emerson declared literary independence in the United States and urged Americans to create a writing style all their own and free from Europe. James Russell Lowell, who was a student at Harvard at the time, called it, “an event without former parallel on our literary annals”.

In 1838 Emerson was invited into Divinity Hall, Harvard Divinity School, for the school’s graduation address, which came to be known as his *Divinity School Address*. Emerson discounted Biblical miracles and proclaimed that, while Jesus was a great man, he was not God. His comments

outraged the establishment and the general Protestant community. For this, he was denounced as an atheist, and a poisoner of young men's minds. Despite the roar of critics, he made no reply, leaving others to put forward a defense. He was not invited back to speak at Harvard for another thirty years, but by the mid-1880s his position had become standard Unitarian doctrine.

In January 1842, Emerson lost his first son, Waldo, to scarlet fever. Emerson wrote of his grief in the poem "**Threnody**", and the essay "**Experience**". In the same year, William James was born, and Emerson agreed to be his godfather.



In the 1840s Emerson was hospitable to Nathaniel Hawthorne and his family, and appears to have heavily influenced Hawthorne during these three years.

Emerson made a living as a popular lecturer in New England and the rest of the country outside of the South. During several scheduled appearances he was not able to make, Frederick Douglass took his place. Emerson spoke on a wide variety of subjects. Many of his essays grew out of his lectures. He charged between \$10 and \$50 for each appearance, bringing him about \$800 to \$1,000 per year.

Emerson associated with Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau and often took walks with them in Concord. Emerson encouraged Thoreau's talent and early career. The land on which Thoreau built his cabin on Walden Pond belonged to Emerson. While Thoreau was living at Walden, Emerson provided food and hired Thoreau to perform odd jobs. When Thoreau left Walden after two years' time, it was to live at the Emerson house while Emerson was away on a lecture tour. Their close relationship fractured after Emerson gave Thoreau the poor advice to publish his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*,

without extensive drafts, and directed Thoreau to his own agent who made Thoreau split the price/risk of publishing. The book found few readers, and put Thoreau heavily into debt. Eventually the two would reconcile some of their differences, although Thoreau privately accused Emerson of having drifted from his original philosophy, and Emerson began to view Thoreau as a misanthrope. Emerson's eulogy to Thoreau is largely credited with the latter's negative reputation during the 19th century.

Emerson was noted as being a very abstract and difficult writer who nevertheless drew large crowds for his speeches. The heart of Emerson's writing were his direct observations in his journals, which he started keeping as a teenager at Harvard. The journals were elaborately indexed by Emerson. Emerson went back to his journals, his bank of experiences and ideas, and took out relevant passages, which were joined together in his dense, concentrated lectures. He later revised and polished his lectures for his essays and sermons.

He was considered one of the great orators of the time, a man who could enrapture crowds with his deep voice, his enthusiasm, and his egalitarian respect for his audience. His outspoken, uncompromising support for abolitionism later in life caused protest and jeers from crowds when he spoke on the subject, however this was not always the case. He continued to speak on abolition without concern for his popularity and with increasing radicalism. He attempted, with difficulty, not to join the public arena as a member of any group or movement, and always retained a stringent independence that reflected his individualism. He always insisted that he wanted no followers, but sought to give man back to himself, as a self-reliant individual.

finish each day and be done
with it. you have done what you
could. some blunders and
absurdities have crept in;
forget them as soon as you can.
tomorrow is a new day. you shall
begin it serenely and with too
high a spirit to be encumbered
with your old nonsense.

-emerson

Emerson's journals show that he was concerned with the evil of slavery from his youth forward, and he even dreamed that he might somehow deliver slaves from bondage. As a minister, Emerson frequently used slavery as an example of a human injustice. But it was not until 1837 that Emerson was provoked by the murder of an abolitionist publisher, Elijah P. Lovejoy, in Alton, Illinois, into delivering a moderate antislavery address. At

this point Emerson still maintained that reform was best achieved by the moral suasion of individuals rather than by the militant action of groups. Over the next seven years Emerson read more deeply into the horrors of slavery, his fears concerning its expansion grew, and he acquired a deep admiration for the abolitionist movement, which he expressed in a moving speech in Concord on August 1, 1844. He stated, 'we are indebted mainly to this movement, and to the continuers of it, for the popular discussion of every point of practical ethics.' Thereafter, he was welcomed by the abolitionists with enthusiasm.

In 1845, Emerson's journals show he was reading the Bhagavad Gita and Henry Thomas Colebrooke's Essays on the Vedas. Emerson was strongly influenced by the Vedas, and much of his writing has strong shades of nondualism. One of the clearest examples of this can be found in his essay "The Over-soul":

“ *We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are shining parts, is the soul.*

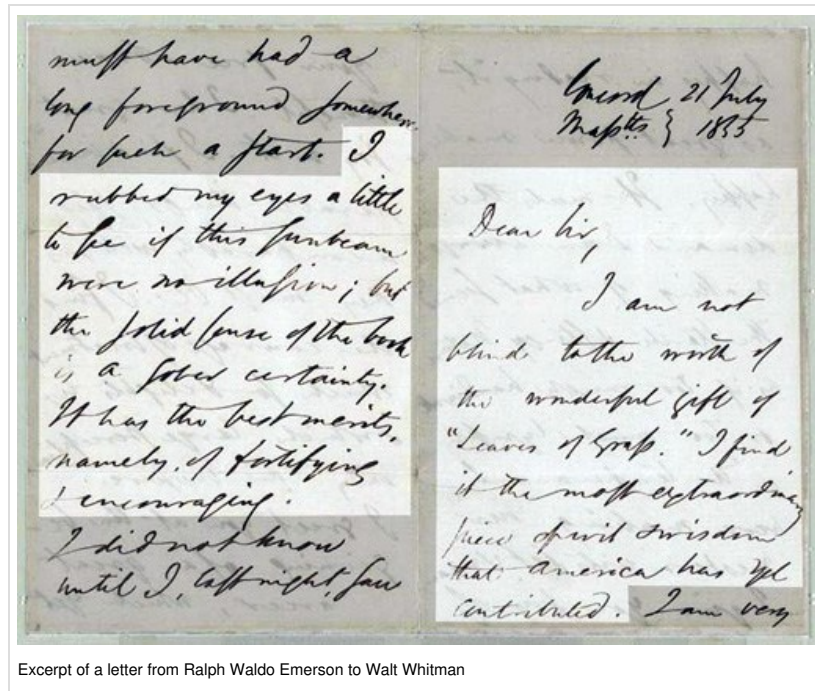
Emerson was introduced to Indian philosophy when reading the works of French philosopher Victor Cousin. In February 1852, Emerson and James Freeman Clarke and William Henry Channing edited an edition of the works and letters of Margaret Fuller, who had died in 1850. Within a week of her death, her New York editor Horace Greeley suggested to Emerson that a biography of Fuller, to be called Margaret and Her Friends, be prepared quickly "before the interest excited by her sad decease has passed away". Published with the title **The Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli**, Fuller's words were heavily censored or rewritten. The three editors were not concerned about accuracy; they believed public interest in Fuller was temporary and that she would not survive as a historical figure. Even so, for a time, it was the best-selling biography of the decade and went through thirteen editions before the end of the century.

Beginning as early as the summer of 1871 or in the spring of 1872, Emerson's was losing his memory. By the end of the decade, he forgot his own name at times and, when anyone asked how he felt, he responded,

“ *Quite well; I have lost my mental faculties, but am perfectly well*”.

Emerson's Concord home caught fire on July 24, 1872; Emerson called for help from neighbors and, giving up on putting out the flames, all attempted to save as many objects as possible. The fire was put out by Ephraim Bull, Jr., the one-armed son of Ephraim Wales Bull. Donations were collected by friends to help the Emersons rebuild, including \$5,000 gathered by Francis Cabot Lowell, another \$10,000 collected by LeBaron Russell Briggs, and a personal donation of \$1,000 from George Bancroft. The fire marked an end to Emerson's serious lecturing career; from then on, he would lecture only on special occasions and only in front of familiar audiences. While the house was being rebuilt, Emerson took a trip to

England, the main European continent, and Egypt. He left on October 23, 1872, along with his daughter Ellen while his wife Lidian spent time at the Old Manse and with friends.



Excerpt of a letter from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Walt Whitman

On April 19, 1882, Emerson went walking and was suddenly caught in the rain, exacerbating an apparent cold. Two days later, he was diagnosed with pneumonia. He died on April 27, 1882. Emerson is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Massachusetts. When placed in his coffin, he wore a white robe given by American sculptor Daniel Chester French.

Emerson was strongly influenced by his early reading of the French essayist Montaigne. From those compositions he took the conversational, subjective style and the loss of belief in a personal God. He never read Kant's works, but, instead, relied on Coleridge's interpretation of the German Transcendental Idealist. This led to Emerson's non-traditional ideas of soul and God.

There is evidence suggesting that Emerson was bisexual. During early years at Harvard, he found himself 'strangely attracted' to a young freshman named Josh Gay about whom he wrote sexually charged poetry. Gay would be only the first of his infatuations and interests, with Nathaniel Hawthorne numbered among them.

Herman Melville, who had met Emerson in 1849, originally thought the Concord Sage had "a defect in the region of the heart" and a "self-conceit so intensely intellectual that at first one hesitates to call it by its right name", though he later admitted Emerson was "a great man".

In his book **The American Religion**, Harold Bloom repeatedly refers to Emerson as "The prophet of the American Religion," which in the context of the book refers to indigenously American and gnostic-tinged religions such as Mormonism, Christian Science, and Seventh Day Adventism that arose largely in Emerson's lifetime.

Emerson's "Collected Essays: First (1841) and Second (1844) Series," including his seminal essays on "History," "Self-Reliance," "Compensation," "Spiritual Laws," "Love," "Friendship," "Prudence," "Heroism," "The Over-soul," "Circles," "Intellect," and "Art" in the first and "The Poet," "Experience," "Character," "Manners," "Gifts," "Nature," "Politics," and "Nominalist and Realist" in the second, is

often considered to be one of the 100 greatest books of all time.

In May 2006, 168 years after Emerson delivered his “**Divinity School Address**,” Harvard Divinity School announced the establishment of the Emerson Unitarian Universalist Association Professorship. Harvard has also named a building, Emerson Hall (1900), after him. The protagonist in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Science in the Capital Trilogy* quotes extensively from Emerson for the Day using Emerson’s thoughts to interpret his view of events in the world.

Selected works

Collections

- * Poems (1847)
- * Representative Men (1850)
- * English Traits (1856)
- * The Conduct of Life (1860)
- * May Day and Other Poems (1867)
- * Society and Solitude (1870)
- * Letters and Social Aims (1876)

Essays

- * “Self-Reliance”
- * “Compensation”
- * “The Over-Soul”
- * “The Poet”
- * “Experience”
- * “Nature (book)”
- * “The American Scholar”

Poems

- * “Concord Hymn”
- * “The Rhodora”
- * Classical liberalism
- * Libertarianism
- * Contributions to liberal theory
- * Ralph Waldo Emerson House
- * Emerson literary society
- * Unitarianism
- * New Thought
- * Unity Church
- * Religious Science
- * Divine Science

Further reading

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Character

By : Ralph Waldo Emerson

The face which character wears to me is self-sufficingness. I revere the person who is rich; so that I cannot think of him as alone, or poor, or exiled, or unhappy, or a client, but as a perpetual patron, benefactor, and beautiful man. Character is centrality, the impossibility of being displeased or overset.

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Tom L

— SEPTEMBER 19, 2009 AT 7:04 AM

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misattributed to him during the early part of the 20th century, but it doesn't exist anywhere in his writings. Thought you might want to know that.

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jamie urquiza

— APRIL 26, 2014 AT 4:09 AM

i am very concerned that we as civilized beings are losing our ability to deal with each other in more humanitarian ways as we become authority or work with authority because we have become too dependent on machines to assist us to do work and less dependant on each other; and turning towards computers to inform and guide us in making critical decisions on how to decide others fate. We have become so independent of our peers and distant relatives to family members. We mostly visit each other virtually and act so okay about it. computers can't understand humanitarian language,only people can teach it to each other through direct contact and human intervention. Did Emerson ever write a beware clause, essay or poem about this dilemma; maybe not the computer machine version,yet, happening in a fully developed civilization such as ours so we can not let our civilization fall to ruins. I believe no civilization can function efficiently without a proper government and humanitarian language flowing and flowering in the times. thank you for giving me the opportunity to express this relative concern view with everyone. j.u. e.e.

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If you're not familiar with Ralph Waldo Emerson...don't worry, I'm not, too. But seriously, this guy is pretty woke. I like the way he thinks about nonconformity and confidence in your ideas in this book. In an argumentative, non-self-helpy way, Emerson talks about why self-expression is the path to self-discovery (and discovery in general), and why others' opinions don't matter. You'd think that self-consciousness is only prevalent in the Digital Age, but based on Emerson's writing, it existed far back during his years. The problem with the original version, though, is that it's really hard to Ralph Waldo Emerson—an American essayist, lecturer, and philosopher—was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on May 25, 1803. The son of a prominent Unitarian minister, Emerson entered Harvard at 14 and completed his education at Harvard Divinity School. Emerson's work also reflects the influence of Romanticism, a nineteenth century literary movement that celebrated the importance of the individual, imagination, and irrationality. Other Books Related to Self-Reliance. Emerson's "Nature," published in 1836, offered one of the earliest formulations of the ideas later developed fully in "Self-Reliance." Emerson's influence is also reflected in the work of other members of the Transcendentalist Club. Read Self-Reliance by

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