



# Natural History of the Intellect

Selections from the

Last Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson

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## Introduction

The last lectures of Emerson's career entitled, *The Natural History of the Intellect* are a cycle of seventeen lectures that he delivered at Harvard University in 1871, have only recently been printed. In his last lectures, Emerson set out to gather and structure the best thoughts of a project that spanned thirty-three years and ran as a constant, though largely hidden, thread throughout his active career. The result is a vibrant fabric of thought, image, and word as startling for the boldness of its pattern as for its immediacy and relevance to the modern reader.

In these last lectures, Emerson addresses the powers of the mind and states of consciousness, the transcendency of physical into spiritual laws, the governing influence of Ideas in the history of humankind, and the ethical duty laid upon those who recognize the Good Cause as their own. These topics all serve as themes and elements of Emerson's portrait of a practical understanding of the spiritual foundations of human experience and self-development.

The last lectures of Emerson are a roadmap of self-discovery that make each person a religion of one, who finds his own north star to guide his ship of destiny. You might call these lectures a "manifesto of the conscious soul striving towards the spirit."

## Emerson's Life

American poet, essayist, and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on May 25, 1803, in Boston, Massachusetts. After studying at Harvard and teaching for a brief time, Emerson entered the ministry. He was appointed to the Old Second Church in his native city, but soon became an unwilling preacher. Unable in conscience to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper after the death of his nineteen-year-old wife of tuberculosis, Emerson resigned his pastorate in 1831.

The following year, he sailed for Europe, visiting Thomas Carlyle and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Carlyle, the Scottish-born English writer, was famous for his explosive attacks on hypocrisy and materialism, his distrust of democracy, and his highly romantic belief in the power of the individual. Emerson's friendship with Carlyle was both lasting and significant; the insights of the British thinker helped Emerson formulate his own philosophy.

On his return to New England, Emerson became known for challenging traditional thought. In 1835, he married his second wife, Lydia Jackson, and settled in Concord, Massachusetts. Known in the local literary circle as "The Sage of Concord," Emerson became the chief spokesman for Transcendentalism, the American philosophic and literary movement. Centered in New England during the 19th century, Transcendentalism was a reaction against scientific rationalism.

Emerson's first book, *Nature* (1836), is perhaps the best expression of his Transcendentalism, the belief that everything in our world—even a drop of dew—is a microcosm of the universe. His concept of the Over-Soul—a Supreme Mind that every man and woman share—allowed Transcendentalists to disregard external authority and to rely instead on direct experience. "Trust thyself," Emerson's motto, became the code of Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, and W. E. Channing. From 1842 to 1844, Emerson edited the Transcendentalist journal, *The Dial*.

Emerson wrote a poetic prose, ordering his essays by recurring themes and images. His poetry, on the other hand, is often called harsh and didactic. Among Emerson's most well-known works are *Essays, First and Second Series* (1841, 1844). The First Series includes Emerson's famous essay, "Self-Reliance," in which the writer instructs his listener to examine his relationship with Nature and God, and to trust his own judgment above all others.

Emerson's other volumes include *Poems* (1847), *Representative Men* (1850), *The Conduct of Life* (1860), and *English Traits* (1865). His best-known addresses are *The American Scholar* (1837) and *The Divinity School Address*, which he delivered before the graduates of the Harvard Divinity School, shocking Boston's

conservative clergymen with his descriptions of the divinity of man and the humanity of Jesus.

Emerson's philosophy is characterized by its reliance on intuition as the only way to comprehend reality, and his concepts owe much to the works of Plotinus, Swedenborg, and Böhme. A believer in the "divine sufficiency of the individual," Emerson was a steady optimist. He refused to grant the existence of evil. Emerson's beliefs are of central importance in the history of American culture.

At his death in 1882, Emerson left behind a trove of unpublished material extraordinary for its quantity and depth—hundreds upon thousands of pages of journals, letters, notebooks, and lectures that dwarf his nine books in volume and scope but were never seen during his lifetime. His most important manuscripts have gradually filtered through to the public over the course of the last hundred and twenty-five years, save one: the final product of what he himself considered to be the "chief task of his life."

## Selections from the Last Lectures

The following selections from Emerson's last lectures have been chosen and arranged to create a flowing river of inspiration that enkindles imagination and strengthens the soul's resolve to seek wisdom as a spiritual bride for the purified soul. Nowhere else in Emerson's work, nor in any other author, do we find the stairway that ascends to the higher calling of human thinking through the development of the human embodiment of conscience. The microcosm of the human being, for Emerson, becomes the clearest reflection of the macrocosm of the universe. Through transcendence of the ordinary, we are taught to find our higher nature which aligns with the forces of the divine.

We hope that you will enjoy these "lost" lectures of Emerson and find in them the same inspiration that awakens the divine in human conscience. May the spirit of Emerson's transcendental soul continue to touch each of us with these profoundly insightful thoughts.

## From: *The Natural History of the Intellect*

The feet are on the lowest round of the ladder and before the Deity thy gods are puppets. But here shall weakness treat of force. I dare not deal with this element in its pure essence. It is too rare for the wings of words, and one must not speak of the moment except in the moment. Yet I see that Intellect is a science of degrees, and that, as man is conscious of the law of vegetable and animal nature, so he is aware of an Intellect which overhangs his consciousness like a sky, of degree above degree, and heaven within heaven. In its last aspect, it is the supreme fact we know, is the commander of matter, and is the life and order by which matter exists. It is that which is moved by itself. There is nothing else which moves itself except the soul.

It is a steep stair down from this essence of Intellect Pure, to thought or intellections. As the sun is conceived to have made our system by hurling from itself the outer rings of diffuse ether which slowly condensed into earths and moons, by a higher force of the same law, the mind detaches minds, and a mind detaches thoughts or intellections. These again mimic in their sphericity, the first mind, and share its power.

And what are thoughts? They are perceptions of single relations of the laws of nature. It is the necessity of the human mind to see in succession the facts or laws of nature, as the eye looks at one or another object. It is higher to prefer thoughts to politics, manual skill, money; higher yet to prefer ideas to thoughts. Who has ever found its boundaries?

I knew a student who sat long at the door; gladly he would dedicate himself to such a god, be a fakeer of the Intellect, fast and pray, spend and be spent, pay the dread taxes which Nemesis exacts of the class, wear its colors, pallor, sterility, celibacy, poverty, insignificance, were these the livery of its troop, honest infirmities, honorable scars, so that he be rewarded by conquest of principles; or, by being purified and admitted into the immortalities, mount and ride on the backs of these thoughts, - steeds which course forever the ethereal plains. Time was nothing; centuries and cycles were well wasted in these surveys. It seemed as

if the sentences he wrote, a few sentences, - after summers of contemplation, - shone again with all the suns which had risen and set to contribute to his knowing. Few, few were the lords he could reckon, Perception, Memory, Imagination, and the sky of Reason over all. He did not know more for living long.

Higher than all feats of talent is the intellect itself. Intellections are external to intellect, a heaven within man, a realm of undiscovered sciences, of slumbering potencies, a heaven of which the feats of talent are no measure: it arches like a sky over all that it has done, all that has been done. All that is urged by the Saint for the superiority of faith over works, is as truly urged for the highest state of intellectual perception, over any intellectual performance. In excited conversations, we have glimpses of the universe, perceptions of immense power native to the first, far-darting lights and shadows of a mountain landscape, such as we cannot often attain unto in our solitary studies.

For my thoughts, I seem to stand on the bank of a river, and watch the endless flow of the stream floating objects of all shapes, colors and natures; nor can I much detain them as they pass, except by running beside them a little way along the bank. But whence they come or whither they go, is not told me. Only I have suspicion that, as geologists say that every river makes its own valley, so does this mystic stream. It makes its valley, makes its banks, and makes, perhaps, the observer too. As soon as the intellect awakes all things are changed; all things, the most familiar, make a musical impression. Sometimes tis comedy without laughter. Every creature in the human world, fashionist, farmer, millionaire, pauper, magistrate, all are toy-people in a toy-house.

Dionysius described the orders of celestial angels, so the degrees of Intellect are an organic fact, and it is these which give birth to mythology. You have been pleased with stories of gods, in Homer, Ovid, and the Edda. I invite you to the beholding and knowing of real gods, who forever work and rule: Memory; and Vision: the Power of Imagination; the Poet Apollo, the Zodiacal Chain of Cause and Effect; Illusion the Veil, and Transition of Energy; Wisdom with his solar eye, whose look is classification, and distributes natures. And high over all its several

perceptions and powers, the Intellect Pure, which we cannot discriminate from the Cause of Causes.

I think tis better to follow its waters on their way into life, - to see the powers in governing kingdoms, organizing society, in arts, in science, in poetry, in life, for in all these we go to the end of use. Swedenborg upheaved the law out of piety. Goethe had this feeling. But I share the wonder and awe of the fact when I see the outpouring, - when I see the thought poured into man, unlocking nature; every thought symbolized by nature; every fact in nature a type of somewhat in him.

## Transcendency of Physics

“There is a certain common bound that unites all the sciences together,” said Cicero, or as a Frenchman would say, all the sciences are solidaires. The same genius breathes through them all, and they are successive planes and forms for the appearance of the same power. The highest value of natural history, of the new results of geology, of the discovery of parallax, and the resolution of nebulae is its translation into an universal cipher applicable to the Intellect.

There is a similarity of intellect to the history of material atoms. From whatever side we look at nature we seem to be exploring the figure of a disguised man. The world may be reeled off from any one of its laws, like a ball of yarn. The chemist can explain by his analogies the processes of intellect; the zoologist from his; geometer, mechanician respectively from theirs. Thus, the idea of vegetation is irresistible in considering mental activity. Man, a higher plant, repeats in his mental functions germination, growth, state of melioration, crossings, blight, parasites, and all the accidents of the plant. Thus, a good work does itself, - the new study, the good book, advances, whether the writer is awake or asleep. Our mental processes go forward when they seem suspended. Scholars say that, if they return to the study of a new language after some intermission, the intelligence of it is more and not less. A subject of thought to which we return from month to month, from year to year, has always some new ripeness of which we can give no account. Hence, we say, the book grew in the author’s mind. There

is always a new thought awaiting us in the morning, as the plant during the night has put out a new leaf.

Thus, the laws of fluids and the atmosphere, of light, heat, electricity, and galvanism, the laws of undulation and polarity, are symbolical statements of the laws of memory and of thinking. So, the relation between intellect and morals is like that between light and heat. Modern philosophers have established the identity of light and heat. The same force, combined with body, is heat; thrown off from body, is light. Every breathe of air is a carrier of the universal mind. For all difference is quantitative: the quality is one.

All thought analogizes. Mental faculties are the transcendency of the physical. All above as below is organized, and after one law, so that whoso enunciates a law of nature – in the same words enunciates a law of the mind.

The laws of material nature, (chemistry, polarity, undulation, gravity, centrifugence, periodicity) run up into the invisible world of the mind. And hereby we acquire a key to those sublimities which skulk and hide in the caverns of human consciousness, namely by the solar microscope of Analogy. Tis the key that opens the universe. Nature shows everything once, shows everything in coarse or colossal lines somewhere; and here, by extending into our reveries and dreams the same law by which tides ebb and flow, moons wax and wane, trees grow, and stones fall. Those laws of chemistry, astronomy, botany are repeated on a higher plane in the mind.

Thus, the first quality we know in matter is centrality, which we commonly call gravity, and which holds the Universe, pure and indestructible in motes, as in masses, and from each atom rays out illimitable influence. To this central essence answers truth in the intellectual world, - Truth, whose center is everywhere, and its circumference nowhere; whose existence we cannot disimagine; Truth, the soundness and health of things, against which no blow can be struck, but it recoils on the striker; no fraud can prosper. Liars also are true. Let a man begin where he will, and work in whatever direction, he is sure to be found instantly afterwards arriving at a right result. Truth, which we cannot wound, on whose side we always heartily are.

As gravity is a primal attribute of matter, so a primal measure of a mind is its centrality, its veracity, its entire yielding to a grander gravity, namely, to the reality and essence of things, which we call truth. Like the momentum of falling bodies, the power of the mind, and its pace, increases as it approaches the end of its task. The momentum which increases by exact law in falling bodies increases by the like ratio in mental action. Every scholar knows, that he applies himself coldly and slowly at first, but, with the progress of the work, the mind becomes heated, and sees far and wide as it approaches the end of the task, so that it is the common remark of the student, "Could I only have begun with the same fire I had on the last day I should have done something!" Then to do something well, we must have done it often. When we have gravity or centrality in nature, then we have Polarity.

Perception gives pleasure; classification gives a keen pleasure. Memory does; Imagination intoxicates. See how nature has secured the communication of knowledge. And in higher activity of the mind, every new perception is attended with a thrill of pleasure, and the imparting of it to others is also attended with pleasure. Thought is the child of the Intellect, and the child is conceived with joy, and born with joy.

Intellectual activity is contagious, like the superinductions of chemistry.

The same periodicity which governs the ebb and flow of seas and the astronomic motion reaches also into the laws of thought. Each produce the other. The mind now retires inward, to a sort of hibernation, sheds her plumes, hoards by coarse activity, to be freed again for new power in science and art; and this alternation of animal and of intellectual eras follows on the other. The spiritual crises are states of as certain recurrence in some form to every mind, as are dentition and puberty.

The first day of consciousness is when the young child first finds himself, as we say; the second day of youth, when the mind begins to render account to itself, when it assumes its own vows, when its religious convictions befall; the day of love, when it joins itself to its kind; and the day of reason, when it sees all its partial and fiery experiences as elements of its genius and destiny.

The perceptions of a soul, - its wondrous progeny, - are born by the conversation, the marriage of souls, so nourished, so enlarged. They are detached from their parent; they pass into other minds; ripened and unfolded by many; they hasten to incarnate themselves in action, to take body, only to carry forward the will which sent them out. They take to themselves wood, and stone, and iron, ships, and cities, armies, and nations of men, ages of duration, the pomp of religion, the armaments of war, the codes and heraldry of states, agriculture, trade, colonies, - these are the ponderous instrumentalities into which these nimble thoughts pass, and which they animate and alter, and presently antagonized by other thoughts which they first aroused, or by thoughts which are sons and daughters of these, the thought buries itself only in the new thought of larger scope which sprang from it, only in its own new creations and forward triumphs; whilst the old instrumentalities and incarnations are decomposed and recomposed into new.

## Instinct and Perception

Tis certain that a man's whole possibility is contained in that habitual first look which he casts on all objects. Here alone is the field of metaphysical discovery and of every religion or civil order that has been or shall be. All that we know is flakes and grains from this mountain.

A day comes when each man detects that there is somewhat in him that knows more than he does. Then he puts the question: Who's who? Which of these two is really me? The one that knows more or the one that knows less? The little fellow, or the big fellow? – Somewhat within him that knows more than he does. A certain dumb life in life, a simple wisdom behind all acquired wisdom; somewhat not educated or educable, not altered or alterable, a mother wit which does not learn by experience, or by books, but knew it all already; makes no progress; does not know more for living long, but was wise in youth as in age. More or less clouded, it yet resides the same in all, saying Yes or No to every proposition. Yet its grand Yes and its grand No are more musical than all eloquence. Nobody has found the limits of its knowledge. What object soever is brought before it is

already well known to it. The husks that wrap the object shrivel and disappear before its eye; it judges not by quantity, or by form, but by quality. Its justice is perfect; its look is catholic and universal; its light ubiquitous like that of the sun. It does not put forth organs, but rests in presence. Yet, trusted and obeyed in happy natures, it becomes active and salient, and makes new means for its great ends. This never pretends. Nothing seems less, nothing is more.

Ask what the Instinct declares and we have little to say: He is no newsmonger, no disputant, no talker. Tis a taper, a spark in the great night, yet a spark at which all the illumination of human arts and sciences was kindled. This is that glimmer of inextinguishable light by which men are guided. Though it does not show objects, yet shows the way. This is that sense by which men feel when they are wronged, though they do not see how. This is the source of thought and feeling which acts on masses of men, - on all men at certain times, - with resistless power. Ever at intervals leaps a word or fact to light, which is no man's invention, but the common instinct, making the revolutions which never go back.

None of the metaphysicians have prospered in describing this power, which constitutes sanity and is the corrector of private excesses and mistakes, public in all its regards, and of a balance which is never lost, not even in the insane. It works by tendency, by surprise, by long bias; its source is deep as the world. This is Instinct, and Inspiration is only the Power excited, breaking its silence; the spark bursting into flame. It belongs to all. It is in the secret of the world. It is in strictest alliance with moral nature: it proceeds from that. It is that which opens to each soul accordingly as it is obeyed, and hereby all contradictions are reconciled. This inscrutable force we call Instinct, - or Nature when it first becomes intelligent.

The poet is in the natural attitude, he is believing: but the philosopher, after some struggle, has only reasons for believing.

The ancient oracles were in each instance simply perception of the Intellect, and whenever the Intellect acts, there is an oracle, - the keen insight into some habit of mind and character betrayed in our act or word, which must have its proper sequel in our fortunes.

# Memory

We remember those things which we love, and those things which we hate. Memory was called by the schoolmen evening knowledge, in distinction from the command of the future which we have by the knowledge of causes, and which they called morning knowledge. But the old rule still stands, that the best security for the memory is really to understand the subject of thought.

In reading a foreign language, every new word added is a lamp lighting up related words and so assisting the memory and the apprehension: and so is it with each fact in a new science. The words are mutually explaining, and every one adds transparency to the whole mass, but most of all we like a great memory.

We remember what we understand and we understand best what we like, for this doubles our power of attention and makes it our own.

Memory is not a pocket, but a living instructor with a prophetic sense of the values which he accumulates; a guardian angel set there within you to record your life, and, by recording, to animate you to uplift it. It is a scripture written day by day from the birth of the man, and all the records full of meanings which open as he lives on, explaining each other, - explaining the world to him, and expanding their sense as he advances, until it shall become the whole law of nature and life.

There is much in us not suspected, and a new passion, a new science, an enlarged character lights up the walls and reads the forgotten inscriptions. Old histories are written in the mind in invisible ink. The fire of love will bring out the letters. The new step, the new thought, the new affection is the Parijati tree. You know the Eastern Indian legend – “The smell of the Parijati tree perfumed the earth for three furlongs, and an approach to it enabled every one to recollect the events of a prior existence.”

Memory has a fine art of sifting out the pain, and keeping all the joy. Of the most romantic fact, the memory is more romantic, and this power of sinking the pain

of any experience, and of recalling the saddest with tranquility, and even with a wise pleasure, is familiar.

Memory performs the impossible for man by the strength of his divine arms; holds together the past and the present, beholding both, existing in both, abides in the flowing, and gives continuity and dignity to human life.

Whenever the Muses sing, Pan spurts poppy juice all about, so that no one who hears them can carry any word away. So to the Sybil's writing on leaves which the wind scatters. Alcott asked me if the thought clothes itself in words? I answer, yes, but they are instantly forgotten. The difference between man and man is that in one the memory with inconceivable swiftness flies after and recollects these leaves, - flies on wing as fast as that mysterious whirlwind, and the envious fate is baffled.

## Imagination

The primary use of a fact is low; the secondary use, as it is a figure or illustration of my thought, is the real value. First, the fact; second, its impression, or what I think of it. Hence nature was called "a kind of adulterated reason." Seas, mountains, timber, metals, diamonds and fossils interest the eye, but tis only with some preparatory or predicting charm. Their real value come out only when I hear their meaning made plain in the spiritual truth they cover.

The Soul of the World is the right phrase: soul and world: it holds the two yet is one in the duplex energy. It pours itself through the universe and is finding ever expression in creating and compelling men to utter in their articulate fashion of speech and arts its million particulars of the one fact of Being. Each creature in the countless creatures, - hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, animal, fiber, rock, plant, animal, mite, insect, fish, mammal, or man, - is one more or less adequate fruit or representation of it; each is the emphasis of some one quality, - emphasis of one, but not contradiction of any other quality. Each says somewhat that must be told and only becomes false when it exaggerates that, and so resists the rest. In the

moment when it pipes too loud on its own key, a new creature confutes the folly by irresistible exhibition of a new part of nature, - they offset and balance to the last.

There is no choice of words for him who clearly sees the truth: that provides him with the best word.

Imagination is a spontaneous act; a perception and affirming of a real relation between a thought and some material fact. Whenever this resemblance is real, not playful, and is deep, or pointing at the causal identity, it is the act of Imagination. The very design of Imagination, this gift celestial, is to domesticate us in another nature.

The ideal of existence is the company of a Muse who doesn't wish to wander, whose visits are in secret, who divulges things not to be made popular. Soon as the wings grow which bring the gazing eyes, even these favorites flutter too near earth. No faculty leads to the invisible world so readily as Imagination.

Genius certifies its possession of a thought by translating it into a fact or form which perfectly represents it. Imagination transfigures, so that only the cosmical relations of the object are seen. Personal beauty, when best, has this transcendency. Under calm and precise outline, we are surprised by the hint of the immeasurable and divine.

Cleave to truth, and to God, against the name of God. How contagious is all mental vigor.

## Memory – Part II

The mind, by memory, has an incessant preserving and accumulating power. The Past has a new value every moment to the active mind, through the incessant purification and better method of its memory. Once it joined its facts by color and form and sensuous relations; now it unites by intrinsic, natural, - and later, by spiritual relations. Memory is stability of knowledge. It is the victory of mind over

time. The body is the impediment; the body is the river of Lethe; its continual flowing and change is the cause of oblivion.

The experience and thoughts of the past have a new value every moment to the advancing mind. What was an isolated belief or conjecture, our later experience instructs us how to place in just connection with other views which confirm and expand it.

Memory holds every intuition - our own and others – in its firm grasp, and, on reflection, they throw themselves - like to like – into natural order, and he lives a new and enlarged being, - his heart beats with the blood of multitudes of men, and of many ages. Thus, his convictions are not whimsical but cosmical.

Do we suppose it is newer with our thoughts? Do they come to us for the first time? These wandering stars and sparks of truth that shone for eternity and casually beamed this instant on us? The memory is made up of older memories: the blaze of genius owes its depth to our delighted recognition of the truth as something older than the oldest and which we knew aforetime, whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, - God knoweth.

All that we say of thought is true of memory, the treasurer of thought. The retrospective value of a new thought is immense.

## Inspiration

Sit down to write with weak eyes, and your genius, when it wakes, will make them strong. Wisdom is like electricity. There is no permanent wise man, but men capable of wisdom, who, being put into certain company, or other favorable conditions, become wise for a short time, as glass rubbed acquire power for a while. Every man is entitled to be measured or characterized by his best influence. Every loafer knows the way to the rum shop, but every angel does not know the way to his nectar: why can we never learn our proper economy? Every

youth and maid should know the road to prophecy, as surely as the cook-maid to the baker's shop.

Inspiration is very coy and capricious. We must lose many days to gain one, and, in order to win infallible verdicts from the inner mind, we must indulge and humor it in every way, and not too exactly harness and task it. We know vastly more than we can digest.

Happy beyond the common lot if he learns the secret, that besides the energy of his conscious intellect, his intellect is capable of new energy by abandonment to a higher influence; or, besides his privacy of power as an individual man, there is a great Public Power on which he can draw – by only letting himself go – by a certain abandonment to it – shall I say, by unlocking at all risks his human doors, and suffering the inundation of the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him. This ecstasy, the old philosophers called an inebriation, and said that Intellect by its relation to what is prior to Intellect is a god.

Nothing can be done except by inspiration. The man's insight and power are local; he can see and do this, but it helps him not beyond; he is fain to make that ulterior step by mechanical means. "Neither by sea nor by land shall thou find the way to the Hyperboreans," said Pindar. We poorly strive by dint of time and hoarding grain on grain to substitute labor for the afflatus of Inspiration. Genius has not only thoughts, but the copula that joins them is also a thought. There's a sound healthy universe; the sky has not lost its azure because our eyes are sick. Everything we hear for the first time was expected by the mind: the newest discovery was expected.

In domestic labor or in task work for bread, the hearing of poetry or some intellectual suggestion brings instant penitence: the thoughts revert to the Muse, and under that high invitation, we think we will throw off our chore, and attempt once more this purer, loftier service. But if we obey this suggestion, the beaming goddess presently hides her face in clouds again. We have not learned the law of mind, cannot control and bring at will or domesticate the high states of contemplation and continuous thought, - neither by idle wishing nor by rule of three, nor rule of thumb.

Our philosophy is to wait. We have retreated in patience, transferring our oft-shattered hope how often to a larger and remoter good. We meant well, but were continually forced to postpone our best action, and that which was life to do, could only be smuggled into odd moments of the months and year. But we learn to say at last, Dear God, the life of man is not by man, - it is consentaneous and far-related: it came with the sun and nature; it is crescive and vegetative, and it is with us as it is with the sun and the grass. We obey the beautiful necessity. The powers that man wants will be supplied, as man is supplied, and the philosophy of waiting is sustained by all the oracles of the universe.

## Common Sense

Common sense is primarily applied to the clear perception of material objects, to distinguish sharply one from another, and the qualities of each, so to know their use/ then to persons and duties, to language, numbers, proportion, facts, and thoughts. It implies primarily a just dealing with persons and things according to their natures. But in the young child it is already compounded with affection, thought, and imagination.

Common sense is the accepting of the order of nature as immutable, the man himself being a creature of shifting moods. It respects therefore in its ordinary use the sensible world, the common facts of human life.

Now a master must always have this direct eye to the material fact. No power of reasoning or of imagination or of virtue can excuse to men his want of it. He may be an angelical doctor, but he is not a man of this world. And men of grand genius have always combined with it this regulator.

## Wit and Humor

Wit is a sudden perception of all sides of the subject, - of relations so unexpected, and yet real, that we hear it with a pleased wonder that the speaker should see so fast and so truly. Speed is an essential trait of wit. Wit delights whilst it satisfies the mind.

Pythagoras said, "Remember to be sober, and to be disposed to believe, for these are the nerves of wisdom."

## Genius

The means of ennobling everything sensuous, and to animate also the deadest facts through uniting them to the idea, Goethe said, is the finest privilege of our supersensuous origin. Man, how much soever the earth draws him, with its thousand myriad appearances, lifts yet a searching, longing look to the heaven which vaults over him in immeasurable spaces, whilst he feels deeply in himself that he is a citizen of that spiritual kingdom, our belief in which we must not repel or surrender. In this longing lies the secret of the eternal striving after an unknown aim. It is also the lever of our searching and thinking, - soft bond between poetry and reality.

Genius is not personal, it is human, the Apotheosis of Man. It lies close to Being. The superiority of the man is in the simplicity of his thought, that he has no obstruction, but looks straight at the pure fact with no colored opinion, so that compared with him, other people appear to be walking in fog. The genius has the gentleness and simple manners and direct speech of childhood, far from the assumptions of public favorites. It does not cost him to see better than they, and he has might by his mere reality and gentleness.

Talent costs exertion: does something. Genius is. He cannot help his power and never needs to see to the proper recognition of his dignity. The greatest men

impress by their presence, by their being. High genius is always moral: probity is its ground.

The surprises which genius has for us are in the homeliness of the fact, and the large scope or fruitfulness of the thought. Any path, every path, leads through Nature. A generalization may be made from every fact truly seen.

Society is made up of men of talents. That which sleeps in them is Genius, and the use of metaphysics is in every way to lay bare this fact, and if possible awake this slumberer, and subordinate these too proud and busy hands to the god.

The eye of genius looks through to the causal thought. Whilst the world of men give undivided heed to fact, Genius has been startled by perceiving the fact to be a mask, and detecting eyes that peer through it to meet its own. It knows that facts are not ultimates. Common sense stops at a fact; to it a fact is sacred: it will not go behind this, and it reckons mad those who do.

Talent is a lower liminary skill, some knack. Intellect never again seems as before: for the state of Being, which is always divinely new, - ever flowing from its ineffable fountain, - is a condition of each experience. Thus Genius, like good generals, carries his base with him.

## Demonology

The witchcraft of sleep divides with truth the empire of our lives. Sleep takes off the costume of circumstance, arms us with a terrible freedom, so that every will rushes to a deed. Tis no wonder that particular dreams, omens and coincidences should be prophetic, because all are prophetic.

The soul contains, in itself, the event that shall presently befall it, for the event is only the actualizing of its thoughts. A man's fortune is in his character.

The history of man is a series of conspiracies to win from nature some advantage without paying for it.

## Transcendency of Poetry

Is not poetry the little chamber in the brain where is generated the explosive force, which, by gentle shocks, sets in action the intellectual world?

Poetry finds its rhymes and cadences in the rhymes and iterations of nature, and is the gift to men of new images and symbols, each one the ensign and oracle of an age! That shall assimilate men to it, - mould itself into religions and mythologies, and impart its quality to centuries, - poetry, which tastes the world, and reports of it, upbuilding the world again. Poetry must be affirmation. It is the piety of the intellect.

The poet who shall use nature as his hieroglyphic must have an adequate message to convey thereby. The Muse should be the counter-part of Nature, and equally rich. I find her not often in books. We know Nature, and figure her exuberant, tranquil, magnificent in her fertility, coherent, so that every creation is omen of every other. She is not proud of the sea, of the stars, of space, or time, or man, or woman. All her kinds share the attributes of the selectest extremes. But in current literature I do not find her.

It is not style or rhymes or a new image more or less that imparts, but sanity; that life should not be mean, that life should be an image in every part beautiful, that the old forgotten splendors of the universe should glow again for us, - that we should lose our wit, but gain our reason, and when life is true to the poles of nature, the streams of truth will roll through us in song.

I have heard that there is a hope which precedes and must precede all science of the visible or the invisible world; and, that science is the realization of that hope in either region. The philosophy which a nation receives rules its religion, poetry, politics, arts, trades, and whole history.

The high poetry which shall thrill and agitate mankind, restore youth and health, dissipate the dreams under which men reel and stagger, and bring in the new thoughts, - the sanity and heroic aims of nations, - is deeper hid, and longer postponed than was America, or Australia, or the finding of steam, or of the galvanic battery.

In the dance of God, there is not one of the chorus but can and will begin to spin, - monumental as he now looks, - whenever the music and the figure reach his place and duty.

The poet is rare because he must be exquisitely vital and sympathetic, and, at the same time, immovably centered. In good society, nay, among the angels in heaven, is not everything spoken is fine parable, and not servilely as it befell to the sense? All is symbolized. Facts are not foreign as they seem, but related. Wait a little, and we see the return of the remote hyperbolic curve.

The solid men complain that the idealist leaves out the fundamental facts; the poet complains that the solid men leave out the sky. To every plant there are two powers; one shoots down as rootlet, and one upward as tree. You must have eyes of science to see in the seed its nodes; you must have the vivacity of the poet to perceive in the thought its futurities.

The Poet is representative, - whole man, diamond-merchant, symbolizer, emancipator: in him the world projects a scribe's hand and writes the adequate genesis. The nature of things is flowing, or metamorphosis. The free spirit sympathizes not only with the actual form but with the power or possible forms: but for obvious municipal or parietal uses, God has given us a bias or a rest on today's forms. Hence the shudder of joy with which in each clear moment we recognize the metamorphosis, because it is always a conquest, a surprise from the heart of things.

Every man may be lifted to a platform whence he looks beyond sense perception to moral and spiritual truth; - and in that mood deals sovereignly with matter,

and strings worlds like beads upon his thought. The success with which this is done can alone determine how genuine is the inspiration.

One would say of the force in the works of nature: all depends on the battery. If it gives one shock, we shall get to the fish form, and stop; if two shocks, to the bird; if three, to the quadruped; if four, to the man. The number of successive saltations the nimble thought can make, measures the difference between the highest and lowest of mankind. The habit of saliency, - of not pausing but going on, - is a sort of importation and domestication of the Divine effort in a man. After the largest circle has been drawn, a larger can be drawn around it.

The problem of the poet is to unite freedom with precision; to give the pleasure of color, and be not less the most powerful of sculptors. Music seems to you sufficient, or the subtle and delicate scent of lavender; but Dante was free imagination, - all wings, - yet he wrote like Euclid; and mark the equality of Shakespeare to the comic, the tender and sweet, and to the grand, and terrible.

We must not conclude against poetry from the defects of poets. They are in our experience men of every degree of skill, - some of them only once or twice receivers of an inspiration, and frequently falling back on a low life. The drop of ichor that tingles in their veins has not yet refined their blood, and cannot lift the whole man to the digestion and function of ichor, - that is, to god-like nature. Time will be when ichor shall be their blood, - when what are now glimpses and aspirations shall be the routine of the day. Yet even partial ascents to poetry and ideas are forerunners, and announce the dawn. In the mire of the sensual life, their religion, - even their superstitions, their poets, their admiration of heroes and benefactors, their novel, their newspaper, even, are hosts of ideals, - a cordage of ropes that hold them up out of the mire. Poetry is inestimable as a lonely faith, a lonely protest in the uproar of atheism.

Speech is the first and simplest vehicle of mind, - is of all things next to the mind. 'Tis the property of symbols to delight. The poetic theory is the generation of matter from thought. Plato and Swedenborg are the expounders of the doctrine.

I doubt never the riches of nature, the gifts of the future, the immense wealth of the mind. O yes, poets we shall have, - mythology, symbols, religion, of our own. We too shall know how to take up all this industry and empire, this Western civilization into thought, as easily as men did when arts were few; - but not by holding it highly, but by holding it low. The intellect uses, and is not used. The only heart that can help us is one that draws, not from our society, but from itself, a counterpoise to society.

The poet should rejoice if he has taught us to despise his song, - if he has so moved us as to lift us; to open the eye of the intellect to see farther and better.

## Laws of Mind

Thought is identical, the oceanic one which flows hither and thither and sees that all are its offspring, and coins itself indifferently into house or inhabitant, into planet, man, fish, oak, or grain of sand. Nature is saturated with deity. The particle is saturated with the elixir of the universe. The thinker radiates as suns and revolves as planets.

There are times, (and these are the memorable hours of life,) when that vault is full of light, when a man finds the world in his own mind, when he sees that outward nature and art and history have their beginnings here, - have their origin in his thought. The mind is eternal and abides; - these pass away.

Every law of nature is only a translation of every other law. Every law of matter is only a pictorial representation of a law of mind. The reason why Imagination finds types everywhere in nature is because chemistry or astronomy or zoology all only externalize the laws of the mind.

And as mind, our mind, or mind like ours, reappears to us in our study of nature, - nature being everywhere formed after a method which we can well understand, and all the parts, to the most remote allied and explicable, - therefore our own organization is a perpetual key, and a well-ordered mind brings to the study of

every new fact or class of acts a certain divination of that which he shall find. The doctrine of Identity is the last generalization. To the child all appears difference; but later he classifies things which resemble outwardly or inwardly one another. Gradually, he finds these resemblances and makes new classification and at last sees what vast identity exists throughout: that every form is parallel with every other; that the laws of each class of beings correspond to the laws of another, and of every other; the laws of the body correspond to those of the mind. But this is a late process.

Men are in their thoughts and cannot order them, cannot detach them. Later the man of genius detaches them, compares them, sees their likeness or unlikeness, ranks them, sees that these are above him and others are outgrown, are below him, comes to generalize, as we say, or see that many of his experiences are all examples of one law: he lays up that law in his memory and drops the thousand facts.

Having well accepted this law of identity pervading the universe, we next perceive that whilst every creature represents and obeys it, there is diversity more or less of power; there is high and low; that the lowest only means incipient form, and over it is a higher class in which its rudiments are opened, raised to higher powers; that there is development from less to more, from lower to superior function, and that steadily ascending to man. Ascension of state is the next law – in the least egg to complete maturity; and in the next higher animal to maturity also; up to man, and in man from the child to the adult; from the savage to the Greek, and from the slave to the freeman; from the unwise to the wise and virtuous. And none so able or so high, but all his accomplishment is only a perception of interminable knowledge and power existing yet unattained before him.

Tis indifferent whether you say, All is matter or All is spirit; and tis plain, there is a tendency in the times to an identity philosophy. You do not degrade man by saying, Spirit is only finer body; not exalt him by saying, Matter is phenomenal merely. All rests on the affection of the theorist, - on the question, whether his aim be noble. Here and there were souls which saw through banquets and wine, lands, offices, money, and vulgar pleasure, - saw that these as object of desire

were all alike and all cheats, - perish in the using. But the soul is distinguished by its aim, - what is the end? This re-acts, this far future consummation which it seeks – re-acts through ages and ennobles and illuminates every passing moment, consecrates the individual among his coevals, though they had every advantage of skill, force, and favor.

Here and there is a soul which is a seed or principle of good, - a needle pointing to the true north, - thrown into the mountains of foolishness and deserts of evil, and therefore maligned and isolated by the rest. This soul has the secret power; this soul achieves somewhat new and beautiful which endears heaven and earth to mankind and lends a domestic grace to the sun and stars.

It is one of the remarkable signs, - the fascination with facts, superficially considered the strongholds of materialism, are beginning to exert on the minds which have the least sympathy with a low materialism. I do not know that I should feel threatened or insulted if the chemist should take his protoplasm or should mix his hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon and make a plant or an animalcule incontestably swimming and jumping before my eyes. I might feel that the day had arrived when the human race might be trusted with a new degree of power, and its immense responsibility, for these steps are not solitary or local, but only hint of an advanced frontier supported by an advancing race behind it.

What at first scares the spiritualist in the experiments of natural science, as if thought were only finer chyle, - fine to aroma, - now redounds to the credit of matter, which, it appears, is impregnated with thought and heaven and is really of God and not of the devil, as he had too hastily believed. All is resolved into unity again. My chemistry, he will say, was blind and barbarous, - but my Intuition is, was, and will be true. It is the unexpected triumph of Idealism.

Nature, through all of her works, makes one silent demand of man; it is thus: Be Master.

“I will finish the house,” she says; “Be you the tenant; not a piece of furniture, but the lord and user of all. Be thou the mighty benefactor. Don’t be scared by size: only fools are. What are millions of leagues, what are dreary durations to thee?”

Suns and atoms, tis all the same. An atom is all. One atom is like another, and a sun is nothing but a larger lump of the same atoms. Every breath of air is a carrier of the soul of the world. And when once thy mind knows the law of so much as thine own body, thou hast nothing to learn from galaxies of stars. Tis not diameters, but ideas and insights that make depth and vastness. Ponderable and imponderable agents that work through wild space are only extensions of thy hands and feet.”

## Meters of Mind

But there is a meter which determines the constructive power of men, - this, namely, the question whether the mind possesses the control of its thoughts, or they of it. They are possessed by the ideas, but do not possess them. The most manifest sign of wisdom is a continual cheerfulness. Life is incessant parturition (birthing). When we have arrived at the question, the answer is already near.

As my perception or sensibility is exalted, I see the genesis of your action and of your thoughts; I see you in your cleft and fountains, and to my eye, instead of a little pond of life, you are a rivulet fed by rills from every plain and height in nature, and antiquity, and deriving a remote origin from the source of things.

Therefore, we ought to come to a picture twenty times, in the light of twenty new views of man and nature. The act of perception instantly throws man on the party of the Eternal.

All thought is perception of truth. All truths are related, and the mind perceives this order and consent of parts throughout nature. All truth is practical, leads and impels to its embodiment or incarnation in facts and institutions. Then the best part of it is, - not the fruits or facts, not the profit – but the mind’s part herein. Tis a lesson we daily learn in conversing with men that it is not so important what the topic or interest is about as is the angle of vision under which the object is seen: - that means, that it be seen in wide relations, see with what belongs to it

near and far, and the larger the mind the more truth. One man astonishes by the grandeur of his scope, another confines by the narrowness of his.

A master can formulate his thought. Our thoughts at first possess us. Later, if we have good heads, we come to possess them. The masters are exact minds, severe with themselves, and can formulate something.

Everyone can do his best thing easiest. Your own act is always cheerful to you. God makes one man of each kind. That makes the eternal interest of persons to each other.

My belief is that each soul represents a certain fact in nature, a law, sometimes a fact in natural science or in politics or in morals, a law of beauty, or of metaphysics, or of mechanic power whose demonstrator or orator he is and should be, that justice may be done to that particular fact among men. Thus, opinions are organic.

A strong nature feels itself brought into the world for its own development and not for the approbation of the public. We are glad of a day when we know what we are to do in it and of every day so long as we are obeying our true genius. The greatest pride of a man consists therein, that the recognition of him by others is nowise necessary to him. If you surrender your individuality you lose your strength and all real success.

People interest us as long as there is some reserve about them. Only that mind draws me which I cannot entirely read. Tis just the same with the public which you address.

In every man we require a bit of night, of chaos, as the spring of a watch turns best on a diamond. In every individual we require a certain abyss of reliance and fortitude on which to fall back, when worst comes to worst. That continent, that backbone being secure, he may have what variety, what surface, what ornament or flourish he will.

Every soul has a bias or polarity of its own, and each new. Everyone is a magnet with a new north; that every mind is different, and the more it is unfolded, the more pronounced is that difference.

The height of culture, the highest behavior consists in the identification of the ego with the Universe, so that when a man says, I hope, I find, I think, - he might as properly say, the human race thinks, or finds, or hopes; he states a fact which commands the understanding and assents of all the company; and meantime, he shall be able continually to keep sight of his biographical ego.

## Will

The truth is that every man is furnished, if he will heed it, with wisdom necessary to steer his own boat if he will not look away from his own to see how his neighbor steers his.

Use your powers, and put them to the best use. Tis the used key which is bright. Those faculties will be sharp, which are employed, - imagination, reasoning, numbering, or fighting.

Freedom is a thing of degrees. Is a slave-holder free? Not one. Is a politician? Not one. See the snakes wriggle and wind! Is a man free whose conscience accuses his lies, thefts, indulgences, without number? Is he free whom I see, when my eyes anointed, to be always egotist and blinded by his preference of himself? A humble man can see.

What Inspiration in every assertion of the will! Now all teaching that shows the omnipotence of the will is spiritual, - good effect; and never was anything gained by admitting the omnipotence of limitations.

The primary rule for conduct of the intellect is to have control of the thoughts without losing their natural attitudes and action. They are oracles: you shall not poke and drill and force but follow them. We believe that certain persons add to

the common vision a certain degree of control over these states of mind; that the true scholar is one who has the power to stand beside his thoughts, or to hold off his thoughts at arm's length and give them perspective, to form the many in one.

Wisdom is not found in the hands of those who live at their ease. Life is so affirmative, that we cannot hear of personal vigor of any kind, great power of performance, without sympathy and fresh resolutions.

No hope is so bright but is the beginning of its own fulfillment. Believe in the beneficent unweariable power of Destiny. Belief consists in accepting the affirmations of the soul; unbelief in denying them.

## Conduct of the Intellect

But not less excellent and ranking is the power to unfold instead of adding. The poet from the inception commands his complete fable. All the parts are organic and required, each from the first. Profound sincerity is the only basis of talent, as of character.

I found All on the faith that is in man. The affirmative in us reaches from pole to pole, and there is no room for the negative. All life, all genius, all progress is that; the negative is sin and death.

For a matter of this kind cannot be expressed by words, like other things to be learnt, but by a long intercourse with the subject, and living with it, a light is kindled on a sudden, as if from a leaping fire, and being engendered in the soul, feeds itself upon itself.

The population of the globe has its origin in the aims which their existence is to serve. The truth takes flesh in forms that can express and execute it, and thus, in history, an idea overhangs like the moon, and rules the tide which rises simultaneously in all the souls of a generation.

As the world is made of thickened light and arrested electricity, so ideas are the parents of men and things. They are the First Good. Now this light, this glory, like the corona which the astronomers have found around the sun, is real, and is the contribution of the mind; it is its announcement of the truth that is in nature, and which the beast and the savage do not see, but which advancing science is ever uncovering.

The spiritual determines the practical. Emotion is the first stage, thence thought, and thence action - emotion, cognition, will.

The surprise and delight which each child finds in his Being, and which animates and exaggerates to him every fact in turn, it is not easy to define or classify: it is both cognition and emotion, and it leads directly to will. It is certain light or glory which invests and magnifies all objects which he beholds, and powerfully affects his will. See how in earnest the child is with his toys, and how imaginative!

## Relation of Intellect and Morals

The obedience to a man's genius is the *particular* faith, and obedience to the moral laws the *universal* of faith.

Whoever attempts to carry out the rule of right and love and freedom must take his life in his hand.

The advocate of the good cause finds a wealth of arguments and illustrations on his way. He stands for truth, and Truth and Nature help him unexpectedly and irresistibly at every step. All the felicities of example, of imagery, of admirable poetry, old religion, new thought, the analogies of science, throng to him, and strengthen his position.

## Quotations from Ralph Waldo Emerson

A chief event of life is the day in which we have encountered a mind that startled us.

A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.

A good indignation brings out all one's powers.

A great man is always willing to be little.

A great part of courage is the courage of having done the thing before.

A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.

A man in debt is so far a slave.

A man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal, as gently as we awake from dreams.

A man is a method, a progressive arrangement; a selecting principle, gathering his like to him; wherever he goes.

A man is relieved and happy when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace.

A man is the whole encyclopedia of facts.

A man is usually more careful of his money than he is of his principles.

A man is what he thinks about all day long.

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.

All diseases run into one, old age.

All I have seen teaches me to trust the creator for all I have not seen.

All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better.

America is another name for opportunity.

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

As a cure for worrying, work is better than whiskey.

As we grow old, the beauty steals inward.

Bad times have a scientific value. These are occasions a good learner would not miss.

Be an opener of doors for such as come after thee.

Beauty is an outward gift, which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused.

Beauty without grace is the hook without the bait.

Before we acquire great power, we must acquire wisdom to use it well.

Can anything be so elegant as to have few wants, and to serve them one's self?

Genius is the power to labor better and more availably. Deserve thy genius: exalt it.

Cause and effect are two sides of one fact.

Character is higher than intellect. A great soul will be strong to live as well as think.

Every man in his lifetime needs to thank his faults.

Every man is a quotation from all his ancestors.

Every man supposes himself not to be fully understood or appreciated.

Every mind must make its choice between truth and repose. It cannot have both.

Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact.

Every spirit makes its house, and we can give a shrewd guess from the house to the inhabitant.

Everything in Nature contains all the powers of Nature. Everything is made of one hidden stuff.

Fate is nothing but the deeds committed in a prior state of existence.

Fear defeats more people than any other one thing in the world.

Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures.

Flowers are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world.

For every benefit you receive a tax is levied.

Genius always finds itself a century too early.

Getting old is a fascination thing. The older you get, the older you want to get.

God enters by a private door into every individual.

God screens us evermore from premature ideas.

Happy is the hearing man; unhappy the speaking man.

Great hearts steadily send forth the secret forces that incessantly draw great events.

He who is not everyday conquering some fear has not learned the secret of life.

Hitch your wagon to a star.

I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons.

If the stars should appear but one night every thousand years how man would marvel and stare.

If the tongue had not been framed for articulation, man would still be a beast in the forest.

If you would lift me up you must be on higher ground.

In art, the hand can never execute anything higher than the heart can imagine.

In the morning a man walks with his whole body; in the evening, only with his legs.

In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout, and devotion is thought. Deep calls unto deep.

Judge of your natural character by what you do in your dreams.

Knowledge is knowing that we cannot know.

Let us be silent, that we may hear the whispers of the gods.

Life consists in what a man is thinking of all day.

Little minds have little worries, big minds have no time for worries.

Love of beauty is taste. The creation of beauty is art.

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

Make yourself necessary to somebody.

Manners require time, and nothing is more vulgar than haste.

Men admire the man who can organize their wishes and thoughts in stone and wood and steel and brass.

Men are what their mothers made them.

Men love to wonder, and that is the seed of science.

Money often costs too much.

Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.

Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting.

No change of circumstances can repair a defect of character.

No great man ever complains of want of opportunity.

No man ever prayed heartily without learning something.

Nobody can bring you peace but yourself.

Nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain dealing.

Nothing external to you has any power over you.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Nothing is sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen.

Our best thoughts come from others.

Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.

Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual.

Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.

Peace cannot be achieved through violence, it can only be attained through understanding.

People do not seem to realize that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character.

Reality is a sliding door.

Science does not know its debt to imagination.

The ancestor of every action is a thought.

The best effort of a fine person is felt after we have left their presence.

The first wealth is health.

The greatest gift is a portion of thyself.

The highest revelation is that God is in every man.

The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common.

The man of genius inspires us with a boundless confidence in our own powers.

The only way to have a friend is to be one.

The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself.

The revelation of thought takes men out of servitude into freedom.

The reward of a thing well done is having done it.

The search after the great men is the dream of youth, and the most serious occupation of manhood.

The sum of wisdom is that time is never lost that is devoted to work.

The value of a principle is the number of things it will explain.

The world is all gates, all opportunities, strings of tension waiting to be struck.

The years teach much which the days never know.

There is a tendency for things to right themselves.

There is also something excellent in every audience, the capacity of virtue. They are ready to be beatified.

There is no chance and anarchy in the universe. All is system and gradation. Every god is there sitting in his sphere.

This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not.

To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

Trust your instinct to the end, though you can render no reason.

Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.

Your goodness must have some edge to it, else it is none.

Truth is the property of no individual but is the treasure of all men.

Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.

Use what language you will, you can never say anything but what you are.

We acquire the strength we have overcome.

We aim above the mark to hit the mark.

We are always getting ready to live but never living.

We are born believing. A man bears beliefs as a tree bears apples.  
We are by nature observers, and thereby learners. That is our permanent state.

We are rich only through what we give, and poor only through what we refuse.

We are symbols, and inhabit symbols.

We are wiser than we know.

We do not yet possess ourselves, and we know at the same time that we are much more.

We find delight in the beauty and happiness of children that makes the heart too big for the body.

We gain the strength of the temptation we resist.

We must be our own before we can be another's.

We see God face to face every hour, and know the savor of Nature.

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have never been discovered.

What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.

What would be the use of immortality to a person who cannot use well a half an hour.

What you are comes to you.

When nature has work to be done, she creates a genius to do it.

Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying.

Win as if you were used to it, lose as if you enjoyed it for a change.  
Wisdom has its root in goodness, not goodness its root in wisdom.

With the past, I have nothing to do; nor with the future. I live now.

Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words.

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.

To laugh often and much - this is to have succeeded.

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.

Society acquires new arts, and loses old instincts.

To fill the hour - that is happiness.

Every hero becomes a bore at last.

We boil at different degrees.

There is properly no history; only biography.

## Poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson

### Uriel

It fell in the ancient periods  
Which the brooding soul surveys,  
Or ever the wild Time coined itself  
Into calendar months and days.  
This was the lapse of Uriel,  
Which in Paradise befell.  
Once, among the Pleiads walking,  
Seyd overheard the young gods talking;  
And the treason, too long pent,  
To his ears was evident.  
The young deities discussed  
Laws of form, and meter just,  
Orb, quintessence, and sunbeams,  
What subsisteth, and what seems.  
One, with low tones that decide,  
And doubt and reverend use defied,  
With a look that solved the sphere,  
And stirred the devils everywhere,  
Gave his sentiment divine  
Against the being of a line.  
“Line in nature is not found;  
Unit and universe are round;  
In vain produced, all rays return;  
Evil will bless, and ice will burn.”  
As Uriel spoke with piercing eye,  
A shudder ran around the sky;  
The stern old war-gods shook their heads,  
The seraphs frowned from myrtle-beds;  
Seemed to the holy festival  
The rash word boded ill to all;  
The balance-beam of Fate was bent;

The bounds of good and ill were rent;  
Strong Hades could not keep his own,  
But all slid to confusion.

A sad self-knowledge, withering, fell  
On the beauty of Uriel;  
In heaven once eminent, the god  
Withdrew, that hour, into his cloud;  
Whether doomed to long gyration  
In the sea of generation,  
Or by knowledge grown too bright  
To hit the nerve of feebler sight.  
Straightway, a forgetting wind  
Stole over the celestial kind,  
And their lips the secret kept,  
If in ashes the fire-seed slept.  
But now and then, truth-speaking things  
Shamed the angels' veiling wings;  
And, shrilling from the solar course,  
Or from fruit of chemic force,  
Procession of a soul in matter,  
Or the speeding change of water,  
Or out of the good of evil born,  
Came Uriel's voice of cherub scorn,  
And a blush tinged the upper sky,  
And the gods shook, they knew not why.

### The Rhodora

On being asked, whence is the flower.  
In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,  
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,  
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,  
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.  
The purple petals fallen in the pool

Made the black water with their beauty gay;  
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,  
And court the flower that cheapens his array.  
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why  
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,  
Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were made for seeing,  
Then beauty is its own excuse for Being;  
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!  
I never thought to ask; I never knew;  
But in my simple ignorance suppose  
The self-same power that brought me there, brought you.

### Brahma

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
I am the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

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