THE IMAGE OF A POET AND THE DANCE OF MYSTICISM

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Abstract: Ralph Waldo Emerson is often regarded today as a thinker, essayist, and lecturer, but Emerson wanted to be a poet. Emerson admired the poet because he believed that the poet is the complete man, representing the three basic human verbs: "know" the truth, "do" it, and "say" it. Emerson's transcendental perception of truth and his questions on the world and the self-have affinity with the structure of Satori (awakening) in Zen Buddhism and Islamic mysticism as presented by Hitoshi Igarashi. Igarashi argues that harmony between the sense of presence and absence is essential for mysticism to reach the truth. Emerson's thought has elements that correspond to these two senses. However, he tends to focus on the latter. His self-identification as a poet "of lower-class" may be derived from the disharmony between them.

I. Introduction

In his essays and lectures, Ralph Waldo Emerson frequently repeats the image of a poet.[1] Even in lectures on subjects that might seem unrelated to poetry, for instance, "The American Scholar" (1837) and "An Address"[2] (1838), he repeats the image. Of course, he wrote some essays expressly about poets, that is, "The Poet" (1844) and "Shakespeare; or, the Poet" in *Representative Men* (1850).

The poet's image was essential to Emerson in the public sphere of his lectures and writings and the private sphere of letters. In a February 1835 letter to his fiancée, Emerson presents himself as a poet:

> I am born a poet, of a low class without doubt yet a poet. That is my nature & vocation. My singing be sure is very 'husky,' & is for the most part in prose. Still am I a poet in the sense of a perceiver & dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul & in matter, & especially of the correspondences between these & those (Emerson, 2001, 541).

Emerson also expressed his obsession with the poet's image in a letter to his friend Thomas Carlyle: "I do not belong to the poets, but only to a low department of literature, the reporters; suburban men," (Carlyle, 2009, 120–121). He expresses a more pessimistic view of poets than in the letter to his fiancée. Emerson's longing to be a poet and disappointment in him confessed to his fiancée and friend shows that he measured his growth and development according to his image of a poet. Through Emerson's anguish about his obsession with the poet's image, the author here describes the truth Emerson pursued and its mystical elements according to Hitoshi Igarashi's (五十嵐一) unique perspective on mysticism. However, before discussing the specific relationship between

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[1] For analysis of Emerson's poetry and its background, see Matthiessen, 44–55.

[2] "An Address" was presented to graduates at Harvard Divinity School—for convenience's sake, sometimes called the "Divinity School Address."

Emerson's image of a poet and mysticism, the author first outlines mysticism's general elements.

Mysticism is derived from the Greek verb "*muein*" (to close one's lips or eyes) and has since had many uses and definitions. Today, mysticism is defined as the experience of union with the transcendent Absolute (existence) and the ecstasy that accompanies it, or simply, the transcendent recognition of the Absolute (existence).[3] It may also refer to a religious or intellectual system that pursues a transcendent perception of ecstasy. According to Bertrand Russel, our cognition is always transcendental, beyond reason, and the logical consistency ascribed to it is rational cognition. In contrast, mystical cognition means to abandon the scientific attitude and impose an ethical framework on our cognition.[4] In addition, a book of mysticism published in France in 1950 attempted a more detailed definition of mysticism by integrating psychological and physiological analysis of irritability and tantrums with religious studies.[5]

Besides its wide variety of definitions, mysticism has a broad historical and geographical background: ancient Indian philosophy, Hinduism, Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah), Islamic mysticism (Sufism), Christian mystical philosophy (Church Fathers/Middle Ages–Renaissance), Neo-Platonism, and Zen Buddhism. To all this, Emerson added his definition of mysticism. For example, in "Representative Men," he describes Swedenborg as a representative of mystics. However, as we see later, his definition does not match the mysticisms mentioned above. In Emerson's study, Patrick F. Quinn (1950) distinguishes mysticism from humanism and magic, indicating that Emerson seemed unfamiliar with mystics' writings by, for instance, Dionysius the Areopagite and Meister Eckhart. Through analysis of texts from *Nature* (1836) and Emerson's journals, Quinn concludes that Emerson is not a mystic. As Quinn (1950) states, the term "mysticism" has so many complex definitions and usages that it cannot be considered explicit content. If Emerson is thus read about mysticism, our discussion will become too complicated. Nevertheless, mysticism's concept and structure can serve as an effective tool for understanding Emerson's abstract and challenging thought and the background that supports it. In this paper, the author adopts Hitoshi Igarashi's unique mysticism as a tool to present a novel interpretation of Emerson's transcendental thought.

II. A Poet Who Represents the Complete Man

First, how does Emerson define a poet? A poet whom Emerson admires is not merely a person "of poetical talents, or of industry and skill in metre" (Emerson, 2001, 185) but "stands among partial men for the complete man" (Emerson, 2001, 184). However, what does "the complete man" mean in the poetic context?

Francis Otto Matthiessen points out that the passage from Emerson's diary, "In all my lectures, I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man" (Emerson, 2010, 735) is the foundation for examining Emerson as

[3] As for mysticism's origins, its general definition, and understanding today, see Parrinder (2001).

[4] Russell argues the relationship among science, mysticism, and philosophy. See Russell, 5–40.

[5] For more detailed information, see Sérouya (1975).

an artist. IT is also an important clue for us in considering Emerson's image of a poet. He believes that man has a divine and universal soul, which he sometimes calls "God." Because the soul is universal, all people, things, and the world itself come from and return to it. This soul, familiar to Emerson's readers as the Over-Soul, believes in the individual's infinity.

By clarifying why Emerson comes to this understanding of human existence, we can find in his image the poet elements of Eastern mysticism that Igarashi suggests. As a precondition, note that Emerson does not recognize the essential nature of human existence in the wholeness of a collection of individuals but in the latent wholeness within the individual. Emerson's image of a poet reflects the thought "[the poet] apprises us not of his wealth, but of the commonwealth" (Emerson, 2001, 184), and "[t]he young man reveres men of genius, because, to speak truly, they are more himself than he is" (Emerson, 2001, 184). However, equating the poet with "the complete man" only in terms of the Over-Soul seems inadequate. Following Emerson's definition of the poet in more detail, the author discusses the background for Emerson's claim that the poet, whose main occupation is generally to write poetry, not only informs us of our universal "commonwealth" but also embodies "the complete man." Emerson writes about the poet's situation and why people long for him.

> He (the poet) is isolated among his contemporaries, by truth and by his art, but with this consolation in his pursuits, that they will draw all men sooner or later. For all men live by truth, and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression. (Emerson, 2001, 184)

In poetry, the poet knows the truth and conveys it to us (incomplete men). If that were true, poets would undoubtedly be valuable. However, here, what exactly is the truth? Only fragments throughout the essay clarify this question. Before considering what truth is, let us follow the core of Emerson's definition of a poet:For the Universe has three children, born at one time, which reappear, under different names, in every system of thought, whether they be called cause, operation, and effect; or, more poetically, Jove, Pluto, Neptune; or, theologically, the Father, the Spirit, and the Son; but which we will call here, the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer. These stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty. These three are equal. Each is that which he is essentially, so that he cannot be surmounted or analyzed, and each of these three has the power of the others latent in him, and his own patent.

> The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre. For the world is not painted, or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe. Therefore the poet is not any permissive potentate, but is emperor in his own right (Emerson, 2001, 184–5).

Notably, Emerson reduces human nature to three verbs: the "Know(er)," the "Do(er)," and the "Say(er)." First, his debut essay *Nature* (1836) evidences how important "know" was to Emerson. He was trying to "find" (Emerson, 2001, 27) in nature, under the name of "science" (Emerson, 2001, 27) "a theory of nature = an idea of creation" (Emerson, 2001, 27). Moreover, Emerson says when one

"returns to reason and faith" "in the woods" and "stand(ing) on the bare ground," one "becomes a transparent eyeball" and part or particle of God" (Emerson, 2001, 29). The eyeball's role is to see, to know things. Indeed, in many other texts,Emerson also emphasizes the importance of "to know" to human beings.

III. Socratic Questions as a Starting Point for Transcendental Perception

Now, let us look specifically at "knowing" the truth. In *Nature*, Emerson says, "the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul" (Emerson, 2001, 28). The "Nature" he deals with here includes Nature in its general sense and art as its antonym. Emerson further defines Nature as the NOT ME, separated from the soul (ME), also stating that "Nature is the symbol of spirit" (Emerson, 2001, 35). In his early stages, Emerson pursued finding (knowing) the correspondence between Nature and spirit—which became the basis for his assertion of individuals' infinity. If Nature symbolizes spirit, only spirit (soul) exists in this world. However, Emerson does not regard Nature as secondary at all: "neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man" (Emerson, 2001, 36). According to Emerson, nature and spirit (soul) are interdependent.

Important here is that Emerson explores Nature to "understand man"; *Nature* describes how Nature symbolizes the human spirit, but its ultimate purpose is to understand "man" or "the human spirit." For Emerson, the human being is the ultimate enigma. It is why in the essay's beginning, he criticizes people's retrospective attitude: he thought that by looking at the world through his predecessors' eyes, he could not intuitively see "an occult relation" (Emerson, 2010, 276) between Nature and man. Therefore, Emerson tried to "know" the relation directly by experiencing the NOT ME through science, natural history, Nature in general, religion, and so on. The poet embodies "the complete man" in that he recognizes the metaphor of the human spirit in Nature and expresses it.

However, why did Emerson need to "know" man through his transcendental perceptions in the first place? Before we examine the affinity between Emerson's need for understanding and Igarashi's mysticism, let us review the basic structure of mysticism that Igarashi presents. Igarashi indicates a specific type of question at the entrance to mysticism. These include the following: the boy's question at the beginning of Suhrawardi's story (hekâyat), "What is knowledge?"; the Egyptian Pharaoh's question to Moses, "Who is the Lord who rules the two worlds?"; and "What is Buddhism (the path to Satori [awakening])?" posed by Teishinni（貞心尼）in her letter to Ryōkan（良寛). According to Igarashi, these Socratic questions, "What is (ti esti) –?" leads to "an attitude of pursuing the true self and continuing to inquire into the reality of what the true self is" (Igarashi, 1989, 79). This attitude "should be the basis common not only to philosophy but to all religious sects" (Igarashim, 1989, 79). The first of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures (十牛図), representing stages of progress toward Satori, mainly used in Zen Buddhism, also symbolizes existential questions leading to mysticism. As Shizuteru Ueda (上田閑照) explains, "The true self begins in reality as one becomes the very question, 'What is the self?'" (Ueda, 2008, 283). The Upanishadic proposition "That art thou" inherently holds the question "What am I?" Moreover, such questions form the condition for mysticism's manifestation.

IV. The Question of Emerson

Next, the author analyzes the structure of Emerson's question, relying on his outlook on the universe. Although Emerson is described as optimistic, he sometimes reveals a pessimistic attitude, especially pronounced in his youth and adolescence. As an adult, he quit his job as a pastor, which he felt was his true calling, and made a long trip to Europe, with his future uncertain. On his way home, he expressed his anxiety and hope for life, writing, "[I] wish I knew where & how I ought to live. God will show me" (Emerson, 2010, 289). We should remember that this anxiety about his life permanently resides behind his transcendental thoughts. In "Self-Reliance," which stresses the importance of believing firmly in oneself, Emerson expresses both hope for and anxiety about life in this world:

> Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark (Emerson, 2001, 121, emphasis added).

For Emerson, this world was "Chaos and the Dark." Of course, he was not in despair, but he did not think he could manage alone. Still, he believed something existed that could show him the path he should take. Thus, Emerson believed in Reason from Kantian philosophy: Reason makes transcendental perception possible, including in himself as an individual, and the guiding hand that shows the path is the universal self. In "Thoughts on Modern Literature" in the journal *Dial*,[6] Emerson wrote about this universal self: "a man may say *I*, and never refer to himself as an individual" (Emerson, 2001, 340). "*I*" could be replaced by the Over-Soul, or, depending on the context, "God." The "Doer" achieved greatly because he recognized and embodied "*I*" through his action. In the same way, the "Sayer" embodies the "the complete man" because he recognizes "*I*" and expresses it—"an occult relation" between nature and "I"—in poetry with brilliant words. Emerson tried to stand on "the bare ground" with his own feet and live the "truth." It is why he places so much emphasis on "know" as the starting point. Moreover, in order to solve the question "how to embody the complete man," it is necessary to know "*I*," the subject of the verbs "know," "do," and "say," and the truth itself. This search for a way of being/living symbolized by the three children of the Universe inevitably led Emerson to Socratic questions, as exemplified by the following quotation. In "An Address," which compares a minister to a bard of the Holy Ghost, Emerson links "the sentiment of virtue" (Emerson, 2001, 70) that arises when he recognizes the reality of the world to a Socratic question:

[6] *Dial* was the chief publication of those who sympathized with Transcendentalism.

> But when the mind opens, and reveals the laws which traverse the universe, and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once into a mere illustration and fable of this mind, What am I? and What is? asks the human spirit with a curiosity new-kindled, but never to be quenched. Behold these outrunning laws, which our imperfect apprehension can see tend this way and that, but not come full circle. Behold these infinite relations, so like, so unlike; many, yet one. I would study, I would know, I would admire forever (Emerson, 2001, 70).

Speaking of subjectivity in "Thoughts on Modern Literature," Emerson refers to Socratic questions a poet should ask.

> The poet is not content to see how "fair hangs the apple from the rock," "what music a sunbeam awoke in the groves," nor of Hardiknute, how "stately steppes he east the way, and stately steppes he west," but he now revolves, What is the apple to me? and what the birds to me? and what is Hardiknute to me? and what am I? (Emerson, 2001, 339)

Although this article comments on literary forms changing over time, the quotation brilliantly discloses Emerson's changing questions. Transcendental/mystical perception does not come entirely out of the blue. Still, there is no need for Greek philosophy, Kantian philosophy, or Christian theology—"supreme metaphysics"[7] in Igarashi's words. Instead, the first step is to be moved through the senses. Then comes curiosity about the relationship between the Self and various objects of perception. This curiosity converges with the Socratic, religious, and mystical question "What am I?" Emerson's profound awareness of the world leads him to discover "what kind of being I am," in order to know how to be/live in the world: How ought I to live? What am "I"? The converging direction of the former to the latter question is what led Emerson to the Over-Soul, to transcendental, mystical perception: from the question of "where & how I ought to live?" to the Socratic question of "what am I?" Moreover, when we "know" the answer to this question, we can live in the midst of "Chaos and the Dark" by following the "workings of the Almighty" as the true Self. Based on the "truth" of the infinite "I," Emerson hoped to embody the basic verbs of human existence: "know" the truth, "do" according to it, and "say" it. It, for Emerson, was a virtue. In "Self-Reliance," Emerson complains, "Virtues are in the popular estimate rather the exception than the rule" (Emerson, 2001, 123). The rule, as a virtue, gives an order to Emerson's life.

Emerson describes the hope for a life that sprouts when he reads a poem by a poet who is "the complete man," as follows:

> With what joy I begin to read a poem, which I confide in as an inspiration! And now my chains are to be broken; I shall mount above these clouds and opaque airs in which I live—opaque, though they seem transparent,—and from the heaven of truth I shall see and

[7] Igarashi criticizes "supreme metaphysics" as elitism and typical of mysticism that strays from the right path.

> comprehend my relations. That will reconcile me to life, and renovate nature, to see trifles animated by a tendency, and to know what I am doing. Life will no more be a noise; now I shall see men and women, and know better than my birthday: then I became an animal: now I am invited into the science of the real (Emerson, 2001, 186).

The direction of Emerson's gaze is clear: he ascends from Socratic, or mystic, questions to heaven but does not continue to gaze at God above. Emerson looks at his living environment and his actions from his heaven, that is, at the world.

However, immediately after this, Emerson complains, "Such is the hope, but the fruition is postponed" (Emerson, 2001, 186). Thus, it seems that asking the right questions is not the only condition for becoming "the complete man." There is also a need for what Igarashi calls "the dance of mysticism," the harmony of heaven and the world, fulfillment in this world of virtue, or the fundamental verbs represented by the three children of the Universe. Emerson must have been aware of this and, ultimately, seeking it.

V. From a Question to Satori—The Sense of Absence and 退一歩（To Retreat and Look Back）

"What am I?" Without this question, mysticism would not be possible. It is not to say that mysticism is always possible when asked this fundamental question. Indeed, perfectly clarifying in words the path from this question to transcendental/mystical perception is probably impossible. It is where the impossibility of language, which the Buddha referred to as "四十九年一字不説 (for 49 years, even one word has not been preached)" is always present. In this essay, the author uses a few examples and proposes a minimum hypothesis useful in analyzing Emerson's image of the poet.

According to Igarashi, the next step for those who have come to the entrance of mysticism—"What is –?" —is not to experience ecstasy through alcohol, drugs, or asceticism. In the hekâyat of Suhrawardi, a boy asked an elderly teacher whom he met in the desert, "What is knowledge? The teacher answered, "*aleph, bar*" ("alphabets" in English). While playing with a ball (手毬 as Ryōkan often did with children around him, Teishinni (貞心尼) used the haiku form to request that Ryōkan (良寛) teach her the way of Buddhism. Ryōkan sang back, "つきてみよ（Let's play ball）/ ひふみよいむなむ（one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight）/ ここのとを（nine, ten）/ 十とおさめてまたはじまるを（end with ten, and start again from one [in this repetition is the way of Buddhism]）" (Ryōkan, 2009, 234). When Dōgen (道元), who had been caught up in supreme metaphysics,[8] asked a master in the Song Dynasty who had trained in various countries for more than 40 years what the meaning of writing (文字) was and

[8] At that time, Dōgen had mistaken religious practice for reading books written in supreme and difficult scriptures or listening to sermons by authoritative masters.

what 弁道[9] was, the master replied that the meaning of writing was "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" and that the meaning of 弁道 was "遍界不曽蔵."[10]

What do "*aleph*, *bar*," "ひふみよ," and "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" have to do with mysticism? Based on the discourse of the 13th-century mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Mohammad Rūmī, Igarashi explains that the act of acquiring such basic knowledge is a miracle.

> It would not be strange or miraculous if any one of us gathered here could get from here to the sanctuary in Mecca in a day or even in an instant. Even the hot wind blowing in the desert performs such a miracle. The wind can blow anywhere in a day, in a moment, in any direction. What is truly miraculous is that a person can be raised from a low level to a high level. It is a miracle that you started from such a low place and have reached such a high place. That is a miracle. It is a miracle that someone who has not originally known anything becomes intelligent and an inanimate object becomes a living being. If you think about it, you were originally a clod of earth and inorganic matter brought to the plant world. From the plant world, you traveled to become a coagulated blood and embryo, and from there, coming to the animal world, and from the animal world, and finally reached the human world. Isn't this what a miracle is all about? (Igarashi, 1989, 42–3; author's translation)

Rūmī says that what we have been doing since we were babies, acquiring knowledge, is a miracle; Emerson emphasized more the miracle of being blessed with "the opportunity to know existence" here and now than being transformed from a clod into an animal. Neither Rūmī nor Emerson needed psychic powers, supreme metaphysics, or ecstasy. We are just acquiring knowledge that we are doing "here and now" is a miracle and a step toward mysticism. However, Igarashi points out that acquiring knowledge is the sense of presence and that it is half of mysticism. The sense of presence is not enough for us to make mysticism happen and reach Satori or the truth. The sense of absence must accompany the sense of presence. "If it were not for the sense of absence," says Igarashi, "then the destination of mysticism would be 'supreme metaphysics.'" Indeed, the person with the most knowledge is the closest to Satori, or the truth had already been denied by Greek philosophy, as revealed in the oracle Socrates received at Delphi.

Igarashi says that the sense of absence begins when the sense of presence is accompanied by the question, "Have you forgotten something?" You start to think you know more and more about the world as you learn "*aleph*, *bar*." However, something is missing in the process. You do not know what is missing, but you have a certain anxiety about what you are missing. You put it more generally about the limitation of your knowledge and of knowledge itself. It is what Igarashi calls the sense of absence. The destination of mysticism is not the farthest place knowledge can take us. To understand the sense of absence in a more multifaceted way, the author refers to Daisetsu Suzuki's concept of 退一歩,

[9] Bendō: To practice the Buddha's Way in Buddhism, to thoroughly complete the practice of the Buddha's Way.

[10] Everything in this world exists as it is and has never hidden the truth.

which means to retreat and look behind. Pointing out that recognizing the world by segmenting objects with words and logic is a typical attempt in philosophy and religion. However, Suzuki explains at what point religion differs from philosophy.

> Religion does not only attempt an endless segmentation, but has an option to retreat and look back: 退一歩. This "retreat and look back" is important, and it must be done. If you are to take a step back, it would be all right to go back halfway without going too far, but this is only possible in theory. Only when you go as far as possible can you step back. (Suzuki, 1954, 174; author's translation)

Religion—in our context, transcendental, mystical perception—is not grounded in incredible miracles such as the resurrection of Christ or Muhammad'sinstantaneous movement to Mecca. Using your intellect to go as far as you can and segment the world to the extreme with knowledge are the exact directions as philosophy. What separates religion from philosophy is the subsequent "retreat and look back," the awakening of the sense of absence that comes with the question, "Aren't you forgetting something?" Collecting texts on God from religions and philosophies around the world, reading, and summarizing them all, you may gain much knowledge about the concept of God. However, does that mean you know God? Not. So, should we not try because we know the outcome? Can we go back halfway? Suzuki says not. Only when we try using our intellect to the fullest, going as far as possible, and then looking back, do we see (know) some things that have fallen along the way. This state is to know the religious truth and make mysticism happen. Igarashi compares the sense of absence to *deus absconditus* or the hidden God. Suzuki goes on to analyze the psychology of people who have reached 退一歩（to retreat and look back) as follows:

> When we dissect the psychology of those who have truly experienced religion, we find that, although they say they do not understand, they actually do understand. Not to understand is to understand. I think it would be more appropriate to say so. If we understand that we do not understand, it means that we do understand, I think (Suzuki, 1954, 174–5).

It sounds like having the wisdom to realize one's own ignorance, but it is not. Igarashi and Suzuki deal with religious perception. The object of that perception is Satori, the truth, God, and the world's reality. The object of the sense of "understand" that co-occurs with recognizing "not understand" is the work itself. It can be called the fundamental existence that makes the self-asking the question "What am I?" exist. For example, Saigyō Hoshi (西行法師) once wrote at Ise Jingu, known formerly as Ise Grand Shrin, "何事の(what) / おわしますをば (exists) / 知らねども (though I do not know) / かたじけなさに (for its gratefulness) / 涙こぼるる (tears flow)" (Saigyō, 2010, 136).[11] The poet says he does not know, but in fact, he does. He knows something cannot be captured by

[11] That Saigyō wrote this poem had not been proven, although it is said to be an excellent example of his poetic work's essence and one of the most famous poems.

words or logic. That is why tears flow naturally, and poems come from his mouth. The words "I don't know" never come from the mouths of people who have never asked, "What exists there?"; those who have never profoundly explored "What exists there?"; those who have never questioned and explored deeply "What am I and the world in which I live?" Only when they have gone as far as possible with the sense of presence can they notice that something is missing yet exits there. Only when they have awakened to this sense of absence can they know that knowing about it is impossible.

In the next section, in reading Emerson's texts, we see Emerson's version of the sense of absence or 退一歩.

VI. Understanding and Reason: The Sense of Presence and the Sense of Absence

The following is quoted from Emerson's essay, "The Poet."

> For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem. (Emerson, 2001, 185)

"Those primal warblings" is the truth that orders Emerson's life and the source of the image of the poet Emerson admires. Again, "those primal warblings" do not come suddenly. We must be fully prepared for them. From Igarashi and Suzuki's mystical, religious perspective, the sense of presence, and understanding of Emerson's words, to hear them. It may sound contradictory because Emerson says that Reason,[12] not Understanding, perceives truth.

Undoubtedly, however, Emerson continued to use his Understanding tirelessly while waiting for the moment Reason works. As Mattheissen observes, "on the level of the Understanding, which he regarded as a mere appearance, his tenacious perception has left us the best intellectual history that we have of his age" (Mattheissen, 1941, 3). Later generations were well aware that he had used Understanding as far as possible. Perhaps Emerson himself was unaware of his tremendous intellectual quest's impact. He kept a diary for some 60 years, beginning at 17. Of course, this diary does not record just the day's events: Emerson writes through the "fire of thought" (Emerson, 2001, 76) about what he experienced and what he learned. Daily, he exercised Understanding and questioned what the world is and what I am. His lectures and essays emerge from his diaries, which evidences his continual attempt at Understanding.

However, as we have seen, the workings of a thoroughgoing Understanding—a sense of presence—are not enough to reach the horizon of mysticism. "To lose and miswrite," as we saw earlier, is essential. Emerson knows about "those primal warblings," or more correctly, he knows that he failed

[12] Emerson borrows "Reason" and "Understanding" from Kantian philosophy. Emerson explains their different works of them in Chapter V. Discipline, *Nature*. "The understanding adds, divides, combines, measures, and finds nutriment and room for its activity in this worthy scene. Meantime, Reason transfers all these lessons into its world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind" (Emerson, 2001, 39).

to write them. Moreover, an unprepared mind would not know that he had failed to write "those primal warblings." He would not be aware of the possibility that they could be heard here and now or even that they exist.

Understanding and Reason are not separate. When they become two sides of the same coin, they function as a system that can take those who ask Socratic questions and exercise understanding to a transcendent, mystical perception where Reason works. Igarashi calls the interaction of the sense of presence and absence—Understanding and Reason—the dance of mysticism. There was certainly a moment when this inextricably linked system came together in Emerson. In his essay, "The Over-Soul," he points out that even a philosophy with a history of six thousand years does not fully understand the human soul, and that at the end of its quest, "a residuum it could not resolve" exists. He also writes in his journal,

> When I was quite young I fancied that by keeping a Manuscript Journal by me, over whose pages I wrote a list of the great topics of human study, as Religion, Poetry, Politics, Love, &c in the course of a few years I should be able to complete a sort of Encyclopaedia containing the net value of all the definitions at which the world had yet arrived. But at the end of a couple of years my Cabinet Cyclopaedia though much enlarged was no nearer to a completeness than on its first day. Nay somehow the whole plan of it needed alteration nor did the following months promise any speedier term to it than the foregoing. At last I discovered that my curve was a parabola whose arcs would never meet, and came to acquiesce in the perception that although no diligence can rebuild the Universe in a model by the best accumulation or disposition of derails, yet does the World reproduce itself in miniature in every event that transpires, so that all the laws of nature may be read in the smallest fact (Emerson, 2010, 721).

The shift of perception here is a sense of absence supported by Understanding—the sense of presence. The young Emerson's attempt is not in vain. With the questions "What am I?" "What is the world?" Emerson was able to "know" the impossibility of Understanding, segmenting the world and putting on knowledge, and the truth that lies beyond the impossibility. Those who do not understand the importance of the sincere, persevering exercise of Understanding in the diary's first half may dismiss Emerson's outlook on the world in its second half as the ravings of a mystic. But it is not raving at all. As we have seen, Emerson's conversion is a kind of Satori (awakening) supported by the sense of absence, born from the very honest question of a person who is willing to take on the suffering and struggles accompanied with both practical and Socratic questions "where & how I ought to live" and "What am I?"

VII. The Real Tragedy of Emerson: Understanding and Reason Remain Divided

As noted, Emerson shows us various aspects of mysticism that Igarashi presents, from fundamental questions to the sense of absence. Even so, one tragedy separates Understanding and Reason, leaving Emerson's hope postponed. As Mattheissen notices, Emerson "regarded Understanding as a mere appearance" (Mattheissen, 1941, 3). The key verb of knowing, the starting point for Emerson's quest to become the poet who represents "the complete man," is the exercise of

Understanding, the pursuit of basic knowledge such as "*aleph*, *bar*," "ひふみよ," and "1, 2, 3, 4, 5," and along the way, to listen to "those primal warblings" with the sense of absence: "Aren't you forgetting something?" However, Emerson tends inevitably to focus primarily on the moment. Reason comes to work and to find the meaning of life only in moments of transcendental, mystical perception. In the essays "Fate" and "Illusion" from his last series, *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson repeatedly states, "Life is an ecstasy" (Emerson, 2001, 275, 291). He attempts to see ecstasy as the essence of human life. This tendency was "regarded by many as an incomplete pseudo-mysticism" (Mattheissen, 1941, 58).

Emerson saw the reality of the world behind his "parabola whose arcs would never meet." He has indeed given us a glimpse of the moment when Understanding and Reason intertwine, hinting at "those primal warblings." However, Emerson was not aware of the system in which Understanding and Reason—the sense of presence and absence—interact and open the horizon to mysticism. As the author mentioned here in the beginning, whether or not Emerson is a mystic is not a significant problem, and this paper's purpose is not to determine the answer. However, from Igarashi's viewpoint, Emerson can be a mystic. Emerson was divided between Understanding and Reason, so he failed to build a bridge to the dream of becoming the poet of "know" the reality of human beings and the world, of "do" based on it, and of "say" it.

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