reflex—avoidance of the direct gaze—gets played off against the image of the prescient romantic child.) Throughout his mature work, Emerson commits himself to decentering standard perception in order to sharpen intellectual awareness.

Emerson and Pragmatism, Emerson and Nietzsche

So Emerson may be a kind of philosopher after all. How then do we place him on the modern map? As suggested above, two lines of descent have lately come in for special attention: the Pragmatist and the Nietzschean.[18] William James and John Dewey, who together with Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead rank as the founders of American Pragmatism, wrote laudatory tributes in 1903, upon the centenary of Emerson's birth. James and Nietzsche read, reread, marked, and annotated their copies of Emerson's books; and in their emphases of thought and turns of expression both sometimes sound so Emersonian as to tempt one to think of them both what Nietzsche once declared, that Emerson felt like a kindred spirit ("ich Emerson wie eine Bruder-Selle emfinde").[19] Here for example are a few Emerson-Nietzsche echoes:

> [I admire] the Buddhist, who never thanks, and who says, "Do not flatter your benefactors."
>
> (Emerson, "Gifts," *W* 3: 95)
>
> Buddha says: "Don't flatter your benefactors!"
>
> (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* aphorism 142)

> We do not determine what we will think.
>
> (Emerson, "Intellect," *W* 2: 195)

> A thought comes when "it" wishes and not when "I" wish.
>
> (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* aphorism 17)

> The virtues of society are vices of the saint.
>
> (Emerson, "Circles," *W* 2: 187)
>
> The virtues of the common man might perhaps signify vices and weaknesses in the philosopher.
>
> (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* aphorism 30)

> [A friend] is the child of all my foregoing hours, the prophet of those to come, and the harbinger of a greater friend.
>
> (Emerson, "Friendship," *W* 2: 126)
>
> May the friend be to you a festival of the earth and a foretaste of the Superman.
>
> (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* part 1)

> "If I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil."
>
> (Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *W* 2: 30)
>
> I whisper this advice in the ear of him possessed of a devil: "Better for you to rear your devil!"
>
> (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* part 1)

A similar list could be drawn up of Emersonian echoes in James.

Neither Nietzsche nor James reckoned Emerson a figure in the pantheon of western philosophy on the order of Kant or Hegel. They approached him as a thinker, and in James's case also as a historical force, rather than as a "philosopher." But they

and Dewey all saw him as giving encouragement to their own leading ideas. Ironically, more often than not, Emerson's significance for American Pragmatism has been treated with little or no reference to the line to and through Nietzsche, and vice versa. This is another example of the divergence between Americanist and cross-national ways of reading Emerson—a divergence even more problematic than the one discussed in Chapter 4 between Emerson the super-Protestant prophet of secularized individualism and Emerson the western advocate for nonwestern religious thought.

As there, so here, the problem starts with the habituated self-evidency of the Americanist approach. The notion of Emersonian thought as an anticipation of Pragmatism circulated first and still predominates. Older histories of American thought regularly identify Pragmatism as the United States's most distinctive contribution to philosophy with a nod to Emerson, however curtly, as a precursor. If the nod is curt, that is partly because the Pragmatists themselves tended to place his "liberal Platonism" on the other side of the paradigm shift from romantic-idealistic to empirical-scientific ways of doing philosophy.[20] The Emerson-to-Pragmatism sequence is obviously the version that better fits the framework within which professional Emersonians, almost always Americanists, have tended to work. The late-twentieth-century revival of interest in Pragmatism has given new prestige to the Emerson-to-Pragmatism story, and it has been made all the more compelling by the recent "detranscendentalization" or "pragmatic turn" in Emerson studies itself—the intensified interest in his midcareer social activism and preoccupation with conduct-of-life issues relative to moral and spiritual abstractions.

All this has reinforced the impression of Emerson preparing the way for James's and Dewey's understanding of moral and spiritual "truth" as justified by its productive value for individual lives and (for Dewey, especially) the amelioration of community and society. Thus Cornel West identifies Emerson, despite his Brahman ethnocentricism, as ancestor to the activist cultural pluralism that Dewey brought to the brink of maturity; and Louis Menand's group history of Pragmatist intellectuals identifies Emerson as the leading antebellum thinker in their image of the era.[21] These accounts harmonize well with the prior tendency of literary scholars to identify U.S. literary distinctiveness with the poetics of experimental energy that Emerson was the first major American figure to express. Thus Richard Poirier, always an advocate of centrality of the performative in American writing, has placed increasing emphasis on the "pragmatism" of Emersonian and American poetics generally; and Jonathan Levin groups together an even more diverse cohort of major American writers from Emerson to Henry James to Stein and Stevens, as practitioners of a "poetics of transition" congruent with the philosophical styles of William James, Dewey, and Santayana.[22]

Meanwhile, however, other Emersonians have used much of the same evidence to press the case for Emersonian experimentalism as a poetics of "pure power," and for Emerson as a proto-Nietzschean philosopher of "the empowered Will."[23] This is the Emerson who not only pits himself against intellectual dog-

maticism but who also so resents "man" being the "dwarf of himself" that, if he could, he would become superman—a term some suggest Nietzsche derived from Emerson's Over-Soul, or another Emersonian source.[24] Indeed the case for Emerson's formative influence on the young Nietzsche is more decisive than even for the young William James. Two of Nietzsche's earliest essays, "Fate and History" and "Freedom of Will and Fate," both not only quote Emerson (alone among modern thinkers) but also focus on the core issues of the Emerson essays to which their titles allude ("History," "Fate," "Power"): To what extent can humans comprehend, alter, remake history? How do fate and freedom collide and fuse within the individual? These juvenile pieces anticipate such mature Nietzschean theories as eternal recurrence (Emerson: "Nature is an endless combination and repetition of a very few laws" [*W* 2: 9]), will to power (Emerson: "Life is a search after power" [*CW* 6: 53]), and *amor fati* (Emerson: "Let us build altars to the beautiful necessity" [*CW* 6: 48]).[25] In the process, Nietzsche retrospectively illuminates the continuity that Americanists tend to miss between the "early" Emersonian agon of "History," which charges us to take possession of it by aggressive rereading and reenactment, and the "late" agon of "Fate," which also turns on the antagonism between sociohistorical inertia and empowered individual. The highly metaphorical, hyperbolic-ironic, aphoristic prose of Nietzsche's mature writing puts him, furthermore, stylistically much closer to Emerson than to James and Dewey, given their more conventional modes of exposition.

Up to a point the question of which legacy to favor is purely

academic. Nietzsche himself has sometimes been put in the Pragmatist camp, as part of a broader early modernist break from prior foundationalism and formalism. A fair amount of Nietzsche might have been written by a slightly inebriated James or Dewey, such as: "The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment . . . The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving."[26] All three were excited by Emerson's emphasis on active thinking over formal reasoning and philosophical systems. But can Emerson really be Dewey's "prophet and herald of any system which democracy may henceforth construct" *and* the harbinger of Nietzsche's philosophy of power, as each believed? (Aphorisms like "If the poet write a true drama, then he is Caesar, and not the player of Caesar" [*W* 2: 95] Nietzsche pounced on with gusto.).[27]

To go with the Pragmatist Emerson is to opt for the more citizenly and egalitarian side that honored the capacities of ordinary people and believed intellectuals should constructively engage the issues of the times, to opt for the scholar who increasingly became the involved public citizen. To go with the Nietzschean side is to stress Emerson's schismatic, trouble-making side: his distrust of the social self, his preference of contemplation to civic engagement, his penchant for the obscure and the vatic, the thinker who professed to want to express his inmost thoughts regardless of popular opinion. The vision of a Nietzschean Emerson also opens up the fascinating prospect of further, indirect continental percolations working through Nietzsche to Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida: the case for Emer-

son as a harbinger of Postmodernism. But imagining Emerson as proto-Nietzsche also requires fully confronting his antipopulist side; his scorn for stupidity; his admiration of bold displays of personal power, even to the point of seeming to delight in the ruthlessness of capitalists, generals, and emperors.

Insofar as you believe that "Pragmatism seems designed to refuse to take skepticism seriously," as Stanley Cavell asserts, the Nietzschean version may seem not only the more exciting but also the only respectable choice.[28] But insofar as you see Pragmatism itself starting from the position of questioning orthodoxy—on which ground both James and Dewey praised Emerson—the choice no longer looks inevitable, nor the difference between the alternatives so clear-cut. Indeed, Poirier's definition of Pragmatist poetics is hard to distinguish from Cavell's perfectionist skepticism: "an exemplary act or instrumentality for the continuous creation of truth, an act that must be personal and private and never ending."[29]

Legacy diagnostics are further complicated by the allegiances of the commentator, which in turn reflect the state of the culture. Until Pragmatism's revival in the 1980s, few Emersonians took much interest in it. It fell to specialists in American philosophy to tell the story of Emerson's connection with the movement. Until the Emerson revival of the 1970s and 1980s, even those specialists could not be counted on to treat Emerson as anything better than an amateur warmup act. And until Nietzsche was rescued from the stigma of Aryanism, Emersonians either ignored the link or treated it as an impertinence.[30] Con-

versely, the 1970s revolution in literary theory—strongly influenced by continental philosophy—helped promote respect for Emerson's fragmentary, self-reflexive prose as an anticipation of deconstructive thinking, in light of which the Emerson-Nietzsche connection seemed to make much more sense. And so on.

Any satisfying resolution to the legacy question must obviously not be an either/or answer but some kind of both/and. The difficulty and the importance of finding such can be seen in the work of the contemporary Emersonian who has most seriously studied both lines of descent, Herwig Friedl.[31] Friedl's essays all take a Heideggerean approach to Emerson as a philosopher of being, but they differ so sharply in their focus as to amount almost to a difference in genre. Concerning Emerson-Nietzsche, Friedl discusses ideas without reference to issues of national culture or cultural nationalism. On Emerson-Dewey he takes a markedly cultural-contextual tack, tying ideas specifically to democratic ideology. Here we see the occupational hazards of both kinds of legacy analysis. On the one hand, one neglects the possibility that Nietzsche's opinions about Germanness, European identity, and cultural nationalism more generally might have had something to do with his attraction to Emerson; on the other hand, one tends to reduce Emerson's agenda to thinking America. The first approach abstracts, the second parochializes.

Yet Friedl's work also benefits from his having thought about Emerson in more cosmopolitan terms than is usual, especially his account of Emerson and Dewey "thinking democracy and

thinking America as a dispensation of Being" that "disavows the possibility of a national identity in the sense of a stable and solidified totality of beings."[32] The nominal purpose here is to define Emerson and Dewey as spokesmen for a distinctively American understanding of nationality. But the Heideggerean terms of analysis demand separation of "being" from any national incarnation—however fluid—and thereby give the fullest possible reach to Dewey's praise of Emerson as harbinger of "all historically possible democratic systems of thought" (Friedl's paraphrase of Dewey's "any system which democracy may henceforth construct").[33] The implication, though barely hinted at here, is that to think seriously about American being you can't just think about being in America. This comports with Dewey's later insistence that "the democratic state" is not limited to the United States, and the democratic "great community"—which ultimately counts for much more than any state—is both much smaller (for example, a neighborhood) and much bigger (say, a family of nations).[34] Would that Friedl had been willing to take the step that Dewey almost took here, and treat Pragmatism in the awareness that it can root itself just as logically outside of the United States—for example, in the form of Jürgen Habermas's post-Marxist vision of a public sphere regulated by an ethics of dialogue. Emerson's (and, for that matter, the Pragmatists') Pragmatism deserves more often to be imagined as a candidate for the praise that Richard Rorty accords George Santayana: he felt "no reason to think that the promise of American democracy will find its final fulfillment in

America, any more than Roman law reached its fulfillment in the Roman Empire."[35]

At the Heart of Emerson's Philosophy of Mind: "Intellect"

How then to define what is most distinctive about Emerson's philosophy of mind? It is only fair to start with the contemporary philosopher who has taken Emerson most seriously and has written most profoundly about his major essays: Stanley Cavell. Cavell is one of Emerson's most Emersonian readers, himself an artist in the medium of a sinuously self-reflexive prose that, like Emerson's, models active thinking.

Cavell reads backwards to Emerson (and Thoreau, on whom he wrote first) from a Freudianized Wittgenstein and a Nietzschean Heidegger. Through these lenses, on one hand he focuses with great subtlety on Emerson's sense of the uncanniness of the ordinary. On the other hand, Cavell throws out the broader suggestion that Emerson becomes a "contributor to the Idealist debate" after Kant by questioning Kant's view of knowledge as an actively initiated construct that makes the thing in itself unknowable.[36] Cavell's Emerson, indeed all modern philosophy worthy of the name he believes, starts from a sense of loss, proceeds "aversively"—taking skepticism "not as something to be overcome" but as inherent to "our investment in words, in the world"—yet seeks all the while to comprehend the world with a "tone of moral urgency" that can't be grasped by thinking of what's going on as "a *separate* study to be called