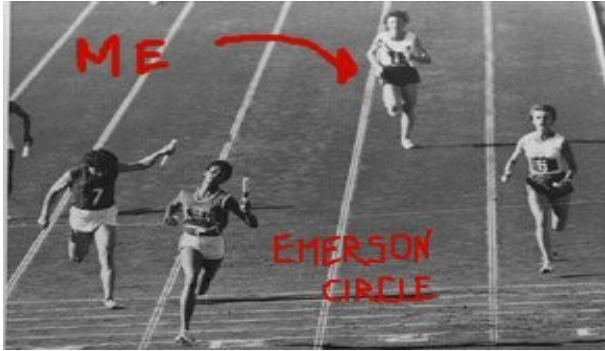


# EMERSON IMMERSION

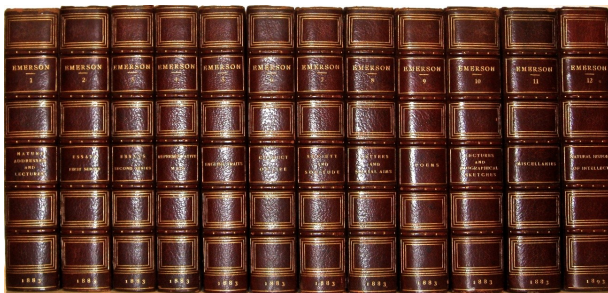
JEANNETTE BLAQUIERE

I found it a bit amusing that the first meeting of the Emerson Circle I opted to attend concluded with a project being assigned . . . just my luck.

## INTRO



Well, as the newest and greenest member of the Emerson Circle, I felt the need to catch up with the rest of the pack; and what better way of achieving that goal then by delving in head first . . . an Emerson immersion, if you will.



By familiarizing myself with his earlier works, his writing style and influences, I figured then, and only then, could I consider reflecting on certain passages. Especially those found in the essay, "Experience."



In case you're wondering what's going on, I've chosen a relatively new form of expression called Pecha Kucha for this evening. ( I've had some experience with this method of communication, and I'm hoping this evening would be more successful.)



Assuming the attention span of audiences peak at around 6 minutes, the ideal Pecha Kucha format is 20 slides X 20 seconds = 6 minutes. Of course, formats are meant to be broken from time-to-time --- for the sake of emphasis; but I saw to it that this presentation maintained its Pecha Kucha-ness (for lack of a better term).



The ideal delivery would be for me to memorize the script and not have to rely on written materials ; but since the script was completed only a little while ago, I have to rely on a less ideal method --- otherwise . . .

## PECHA KUCHA

What better way to start the immersion than from the beginning . . . **Nature.**



“Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul . . . Nature in the common sense refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf.”

(This seems familiar enough. There seems to be some commonalities between Emerson's philosophy and philosophy that has shaped my train of thought for years.)

Beauty/Aesthetics, now that's a topic I can reflect on . . .



For Pythagoras, the harmony of Nature is to be found in the science of numbers . . . numbers whose origins can be found in the appreciation of music (ie. The major triad). From there, his school went on to devise a set of proportions, the golden ratio ( $\phi = 1.618$ ), which managed to shape man's opinion of beauty right up until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



Plato went on to speak of the appreciation of “absolute beauty” in the “Symposium” --- *'beauty that is both external and eternal . . . not tainted by anything perishable.'* For me Plato was possibly contemplating the origins of the Platonic solids; which also had their influence over aesthetics and the emotional response to it.

(It's time for me to move on from my comfort zone because . . .)

**“Beauty may be distributed in a threefold manner:**

- 1. The simple perception of natural forms is a delight. The influence of the forms and actions in nature is so needful to man . . . in their eternal calm, he finds himself. . .**
- 2. The presence of a higher, spiritual element is essential to its perfection. The high and divine beauty is that which is found in combination with the human will. Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue . . . We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it.**
- 3. Beauty of the world may be viewed, namely as it becomes an object of the intellect. Beside the relation of things to virtue, they have a relation to thought. The intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God.**

**Emerson**

(. . . I have no idea how Emerson arrived at these conclusions. Maybe the influence these two philosophers had over him . . .)

### **Plotinus**

“A contemplation of the world's beauty can be the first step toward an eventual contemplation of, and union with, the One.”

At the core of the whole universe is the One, the origin of everything and to which everything will return.

Intellect is in a state of of eternal contemplation of the One . . . it creates the Soul.

The Soul contemplates intellect and is the link between the intelligible realm and that of humans . . . it is eternal yet operates in time and history.

### **Coleridge**

“Beauty is unity in variety. Science is nothing else than the search to discover unity in the wild variety of nature or in the variety of our experience.”

(I'm beginning to understand the link between beauty and virtue . . . now onto the “Divinity Address”)



**“Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion . . .”** (unless you consider fear as a valid mode of communication)

**“ . . .As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus.**

(Jesus' message was lost once he was turned into a deity) **The Soul knows no persons.”**



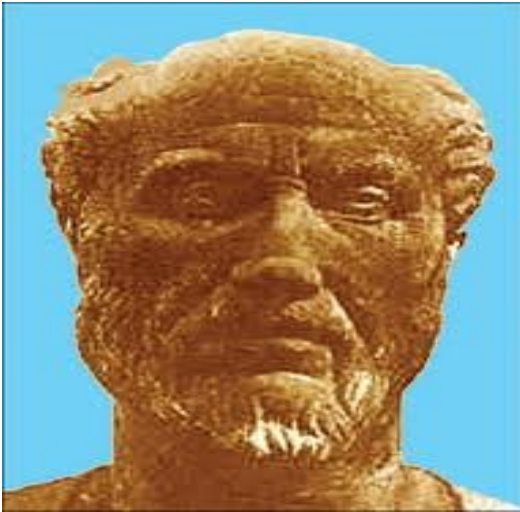
(It gets better)

**“That is always best which gives me to myself . . . that which shows God in me fortifies me. That which shows God out of me, makes me a wart and a wen.”**

One can only imagine Emerson's fate if such an address was given in Europe. This speech was clearly meant for an American audience --- a speech delivered by a spiritual leader in his formative years meant for a country in its formative years.



By 1835 Emerson was resolved to doing his work and his work only. He was discovering his own voice and his own writing style. His reflections on Milton, *“the poet's life is the real poem”*, inspired his way of life --- a living testimony to his philosophy.



The real connection for me was discovering how Emerson relied on biographies as a means of linking into the intellect of those he admired. (A favorite hobby of mine.)

for Emerson: Plotinus, Plato, Goethe, Coleridge, Kant, Shakespeare, etc.



for me: Gehry, Corbu, Wright, Plato, Rand, Pythagoras, etc. . . and now Emerson.



Self-reliance urges its readers to rely on intuition while Spiritual Laws urges us to find our own path . . .



**“Each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him.”**

You'll know whether you're on the right trail.



Now I'm prepared to reflect on “Experience”



**“Of what use is genius . . . if the web is too finely woven . . . so that that life stagnates from too much reception without due outlet?”**

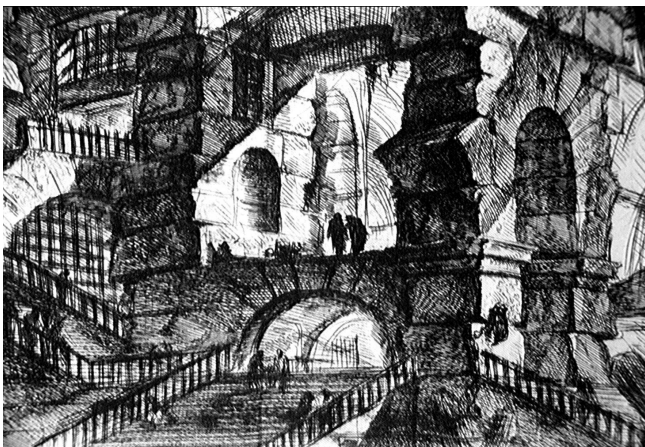


We all know what happened in 2008. Geniuses on Wall Street though it profitable to speculate on the real estate industry. . .

Thanks to that brilliant move, millions have been adversely effected.



Entire industries have come to a halt leaving scores of people running from their own despair.

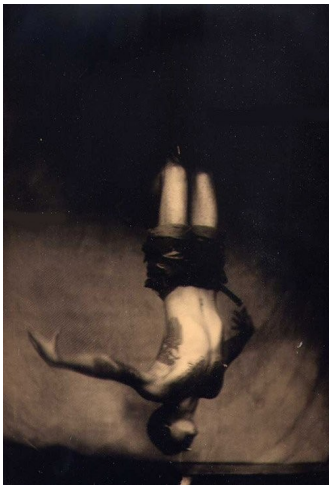


That staircase that seemed to offer some direction in my life has become completely chaotic. Very little in the business world makes any sense any longer.

But recently I learned the difference between manmade chaos and the sort that Nature can provide.



Just two years ago, illness threatened to permanently alter our family portrait. First cancer threatened my husband's life; then a year later cancer scare threatened my daughter as well.



This clearly turned our world upside down. .

All that was bothering me before seemed trivial in comparison.



Once my family was no longer threatened, thank God, my perspective changed for the better.

**“I am grown by sympathy a little eager and sentimental, but leave me alone and I should relish every hour and what it brought me . . . I am thankful for small mercies.**

But I still needed to address the manmade chaos.



I need to “. . . embrace solitude as a bride in order to become acquainted with my thoughts.” Without this time to contemplate, it'd be difficult for me to think outside of the box in order to beat the current state of affairs.

Emerson, in a somewhat humorous way, offers a small solution: “Why should I fret myself because a circumstance has occurred which hinders my presence where I was expected? ... I exert the same quality of power in all places.” Free time, which at this point of life is never in abundance, needs to be used more wisely.



*“Life itself is a mixture of power and form and will not bear the least excess to either. To finish the moment, to find the journeys end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom.”*