

University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Transcendentalism in Selected Works by Herman Melville
Jan Železný

Bachelor Thesis
2019

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2017/2018

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Jan Železný**
Osobní číslo: **H16233**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**
Název tématu: **Myšlenky transcendentalismu v díle Hermana Melvilla**
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

V teoretické části se práce pokusí osvětlit ideové základy amerického transcendentalismu. Praktická část pak bude zkoumat, zdali a jak se myšlenky transcendentalismu konkrétně odrážejí v díle amerického romanopisce Hermana Melvilla. Výběr primární literatury je čistě na autorovi práce.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná**

Jazyk zpracování bakalářské práce: **Angličtina**

Seznam odborné literatury:

- Cowan, S. A. "In Praise of Self-Reliance: The Role of Bulkington in Moby-Dick." *American Literature* 38 (Jan 1967): 547-56.
- Emerson, R. W. "Essay and Lectures". *Library of America*, 1983.
- Freeman, John. *Herman Melville*. New York: Haskell, 1974.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden. Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America*. London: Oxford UP, 1980.
- Lawrence, D. H. "Studie z klasické americké literatury". Brno: Host, 1997.

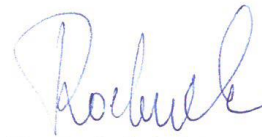
Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Michal Kleprlík, Ph.D.**
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2018**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2019**



prof. PhDr. Karel Rýdl, CSc.
děkan



Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2018

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracoval samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využil, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury. Byl jsem seznámen s tím, že se na moji práci vztahují práva a povinnosti vyplývající ze zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., autorský zákon, zejména se skutečností, že Univerzita Pardubice má právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití této práce jako školního díla podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona, a s tím, že pokud dojde k užití této práce mnou nebo bude poskytnuta licence o užití jinému subjektu, je Univerzita Pardubice oprávněna ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložila, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše.

Beru na vědomí, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb., o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších předpisů, a směrnicí Univerzity Pardubice č. 9/2012, bude práce zveřejněna v Univerzitní knihovně a prostřednictvím Digitální knihovny Univerzity Pardubice.

V Pardubicích dne 1. 4. 2019

.....

Jan Železný

ANNOTATION

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to compare Herman's Melville's work in relation to the philosophy of Transcendentalism. The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with introducing Transcendentalism and determining how it is influenced by philosophical and religious dogmas. The second part focuses on contrasting Herman Melville's work with the ideas of Transcendentalism. The overarching question of the thesis is to find out to what extent does the character of Captain Ahab from Melville's *Moby Dick* reflect the philosophy of Emerson and Transcendentalism. This is achieved by analyzing how the two authors reacted to the introduction of Romanticism and Classical German philosophy.

KEY WORDS

Melville, Emerson, Transcendentalism, *Moby Dick*

ANOTACE

Cílem této práce je porovnat dílo Hermana Melvilla s filosofií amerického Transcendentalismu. Práce je rozdělena na dvě části. V první části se zaměří na představení filosofických postojů Transcendentalismu a uvede je do historického kontextu. V druhé části se díla porovnají s prací Hermana Melvilla. Nejdůležitější část práce je zjistit do jaké míry se odráží filosofie Transcendentalismu na postavě kapitána Ahaba z Melvillovy knihy *Moby Dick*. Toho se dosáhne uvedením základních konceptů z Romantismu a z Německé klasické filozofie.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Melville, Emerson, Transcendentalismus, *Moby Dick*

Table of Contents:

Introduction	7
1. Transcendentalism	8
1.1. Nature	8
1.2. Self-reliance	9
1.3. The Over-Soul.....	12
1.4. Nature and the soul.....	13
2. Religious and philosophical influences	14
2.1. Unitarianism.....	15
2.2. Separation.....	17
2.3. Transcendental idealism.....	19
2.4. Immanuel Kant.....	21
3. Melville	25
3.1. The Confidence-Man	26
3.2. History.....	27
3.3 Nature.....	29
4. Moby Dick	31
4.1. Captain Ahab's monomania	32
4.2. Melville's answer	35
5. Conclusion	39
Resumé	40
Bibliography	43

Introduction

Emerson, the leading figure of Transcendentalism and Melville are both considered as one of the first great American literary figures. Living in the same time period, there is no doubt that both authors had been influenced by similar historical events. One of these events was the spreading of Romanticism throughout Europe and eventually through America. The introduction of romantic ideas fundamentally changed literature as an artform. Not only that, it affected the way people perceived reality altogether. The Romantic era marks a shift in consciousness and both Emerson and Melville were subjected to it.

Despite being from the same time period, there were some major differences between Emerson and Melville. There are some scholars, who argue that Melville could be labeled as a critic of Emerson and the Transcendentalism. In order to evaluate how true that statement is, it is necessary to analyze Emerson's work and put it in context. The way to tackle this issue is to ask how Emerson and Transcendentalism stand in relation with religious and philosophical doctrines of that time. Once that question is thoroughly addressed, it is possible to observe similarities and differences between the two.

1. Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is an American philosophical, literary and social movement of 19th century. The origin of the movement can be linked to a desire to form a new spiritual relation with God, which was outside of religious structures, namely outside of the Boston Unitarian church. By their new approach to faith, Transcendentalists revolutionized the concept of the individual and his connection with God. Transcendentalists believed that the only way to access spiritual connection is by looking inwardly and studying one own's being.¹

Ralph Waldo Emerson is considered a key figure of the movement. His work had shaped Transcendentalism throughout its development and made him become the living embodiment of Transcendentalist principals. Thoreau, as the second most known figure of the movement, can be perceived as the more practically oriented member of the group, applying his insights in the real world. Though they were politically active, both Emerson and Thoreau were considered as the more individual oriented members of the group. Their primary goal was to explore the individual's authentic relation with the universe.

Transcendentalists often differentiated in their views and never issued a collective manifesto. The reason for that could be the individual focused mentality of the members. Acknowledging that, arguably the best way to examine the main principles on which Transcendentalism is based, is to look at the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Although it is debatable whether Emerson developed a clear philosophical system of his own, he clearly represents a spiritual yearning, which the Transcendentalist movement is characteristic for. Emerson is most famous for his book titled Nature.

1.1. Nature

Ralph Waldo Emerson's collection of essays called Nature is considered as one of the most important literary works of 19th century. Published in 1836, it marks the beginnings of the new movement called Transcendentalism.²The book itself begins in the spirit of change. In the introduction, Emerson asks, "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?"³ Emerson invites the reader to create something new, independent of outdated lines of thought. He is optimistic in the present and believes that "The sun shines to-day also."⁴

Emerson sees the present as shaped by the past. Rather than experiencing things first hand, people view reality through the lenses of their ancestors and their cultural constructs. This is a

¹ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006),vii

² Tiffany K Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006),188

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays & Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 2008), 7

⁴ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

problem for Emerson. He believes that this fixation on the past is limiting to society and not necessary. It is entirely possible to start anew. Earth provides people with enough stimuli to do so⁵ Emerson unconditionally believes in the capabilities of men. Not only can people form a new connection with the world, but there are no limits to what they may achieve.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Emerson believes that there are no phenomena which cannot be explained. To Emerson,

Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design⁶

In the time period of Emerson's writing, Jean-François Champollion had deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphs., Similarly, Emerson suggests that any aspect of reality, as mysterious as it may be, can be made understood. Emerson trusts in the perfection of creation and its logical composition. In his view, it is possible to grasp the concept of creation in its entirety.⁷

According to Emerson, the only way to fully experience an authentic relationship with the universe is to stop looking into the past. Emerson suggests that one must start thinking independently and abandon old ways of thinking. The present moment offers infinite opportunities to do so, namely in the natural world. Emerson writes that "nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design,"⁸. Emerson presents the idea that the natural world reflects some sort of archetypal structures of the universe, observable to the eye. Emerson continues by inquiring, "To what end is nature?"⁹ This is a call to try to independently decipher these structures. It is the first sign of Emerson's overarching philosophy of nature and individualism.¹⁰ One must decipher these meanings in nature on his own. Emerson's idea of individualism is further analyzed in his essay *Self-reliance*.

1.2. Self-reliance

Emerson's philosophy is inseparable with the idea of the importance of the individual. His notion of a self-reliant individual is what shaped his outlook on life and separates him from the views of other Transcendentalists. Emerson's idea of self-reliance has later become linked with the more modern term individualism. The term individualism is defined as a "political and

⁵ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

⁶ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

⁷ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

⁸ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

⁹ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

¹⁰ Cyrus, Patel. "Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature," YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>

social philosophy that emphasizes the moral worth of the individual.”¹¹ The term essentially stresses the importance of the individual in society. Similarly, Emerson encourages the American public to become more self-reliant citizens. According to Emerson, it is the best way to achieve personal happiness and contribute to society.¹² It is evident, that Emerson values the importance of the individuals over their position in society.

The concept of society is seen as a necessary evil for Emerson. He characterizes it as a “joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater.”¹³ Society numbs the individual. People, who hide in the shelter that society provides simultaneously give up their authenticity and uniqueness. In Emerson’s words, “Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.”¹⁴ He, who wants to become full-fledged human being must stand out. The way to stand out and realize one’s true potential is to trust and believe in oneself unconditionally.

Emerson is convinced that every individual is genius in his own right, functioning outside of religious doctrines and cultural traditions.¹⁵ Emerson prioritizes capabilities of individuals over the power of social constructs. In one of his well-known quotes, Emerson proclaims, “To believe our own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, -- that is genius.”¹⁶ Emerson suggests that trusting to one’s conscience is not only the most beneficial thing to do for the individual, but for everyone else also. Putting trust into one own’s thoughts is crucial, no matter how out of line they may seem.

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,¹⁷” writes Emerson. Throughout history famous figures have been misunderstood and prosecuted for their opposing beliefs. Emerson believes that is necessary to be misunderstood. In fact, there is nothing wrong with holding two contradictory views at the same time. Emerson trusts in what he feels as right at any given moment and disregards if he is consistent with his views or not.¹⁸ Emerson’s writing is notorious for its frantic style and lack of clear philosophical statements. Instead, it is a sum of Emerson’s insights compiled together. Emerson clearly values sudden bursts of inspiration more than an overarching structure dependent on historical context.

¹¹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Individualism,” Encyclopædia Britannica. Last modified February 19, 2016.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/individualism>

¹² Tiffany K. Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 255

¹³ Emerson, *Essays*,

¹⁴ Emerson, *Essays*,

¹⁵ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 255

¹⁶ Emerson, *Essays*,

¹⁷ Emerson, *Essays*,

¹⁸ Emerson, *Essays*,

This attitude Emerson has towards writing is reflective of his view of the soul. Emerson says, “This one fact the world hates, that the soul becomes; for that for ever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to a shame, confounds the saint with the rouse, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside.”¹⁹ Emerson believes that the soul is ever-changing. It is only concerned with the present moment. According to this logic, there is no need to be consistent in one’s opinions. It is entirely possible to shift from one idea to a contradictory one within a few seconds. Similarly, history and traditions are of little value of Emerson. Even figures like Jesus or Judas are of minor importance when confronted with the now.

It is because of this view of history that Emerson’s essay *Self-reliance* also questions traditional social structures such as religion. Emerson encourages the readers to become self-reliant not only in their actions, but in their spiritual life also. According Emerson, organized religion involuntary forces people to form a relationship with the church as an institution, instead of just purely connecting them to God. Emerson believed that religious traditions and rituals are of little value. People should build their own relationship with God²⁰ Emerson had previously addressed this issue in his lecture called “Divinity School Address”. His controversial views caused a disturbance among the members of the Unitarian church.

The reason for the commotion were some of the radical statements Emerson made. Firstly, he disregarded the importance of Christian traditions such as the Lord’s Supper or the Communion. Secondly, Emerson characterized Jesus Christ as a mere historical figure – a man, rather than God’s only son.²¹ As shocking as these statements may seem, there was no intention for them to be blasphemous. Emerson only wanted to encourage his listeners to “dare to love God without mediator or veil.”²² Emerson’s faith revolves around looking inwardly into his own being and finding the divinity within. In his opinion an intimate relationship with God is the only thing one needs. He regards everything else as redundant.

Emerson did not see Jesus Christ as a holy miracle performer. He saw him as man who was true to himself and true to God. A man who saw the divinity within him and let it shine forth.²³ Emerson believed that this divinity was ever-present not only in Jesus, but in every man. Every man has the ability let God speak through him and become a vessel of God’s divine will. This was a fundamental component of Emerson’s idea of individualism. Emerson persuaded

¹⁹ Emerson, *Essays*,

²⁰ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 255

²¹ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 85

²² Emerson, *Essays*,

²³ Emerson, *Essays*,

everyone to trust in themselves for “God will not have his work manifest by cowards.”²⁴ This execution of God’s will is what fuels Emerson’s self-trust. According to Emerson, there is a spark of divinity within each individual, which bind everyone together in one unity.

1.3. The Over-Soul

The core of Emerson’s philosophy is centered around the idea of interconnectedness of all things. Every individual has access to divine energy, which channels through the entirety of the universe. Emerson usually refers to this energy as the Over-Soul or God. Emerson writes: “I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.”²⁵ This means that time and the material world are nothing but mere phenomena, reflections of the original source, which is unseen to the eye. Emerson believes that this Universal Being, which is at the core of all things, represents the absolute truth and one should devote his life in pursuing it.

The way to tap into this universal energy is to listen to one’s intuition. According to Emerson, the soul of an individual encompasses him with the ability to recognize universal truth and distinguish it from personal errors. A piece of information, which is true, will bear the reflection of the Universal soul. An individual must put trust into this divinity speaking from within. It is wrong to interfere with the rational mind and excessively overthink. Only when one quietly listens and then acts in compliance with the Universal soul, he stands together with God, all people and all things.²⁶

The soul lies at the heart of every man and reflects the eternal beauty of the universe. According to Emerson, it is not part of the body. Rather, it is an immaterial force operating it. Every aspect of the human body succumbs to it. This includes the intellect and the will.²⁷ Considering that every human being has a soul, everyone can act in accordance with God and become the manifestation of God’s will himself. Emerson writes that “the simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God.”²⁸ Everyone has access to the Universal soul and their actions can represent the Universal truth.

With his view of the universe, Emerson is often labeled as a pantheist. Pantheism is the belief that God is present in every part of creation. In the same way, it rejects the idea that God is separated from the universe.²⁹ Transcendentalism could be classified as pantheism in the form

²⁴ Emerson, *Essays*

²⁵ Emerson, *Essays*, 10

²⁶ Emerson, *Essays*, 391

²⁷ Emerson, *Essays*, 386

²⁸ Emerson, *Essays*, 398

²⁹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. “Pantheism,” last modified Jul 7, 2016

of Absolute idealism. God is ever-present, but only as a cause. The concept of God in all things serves as the foundation of Emerson's relationship with the universe. It is this belief which stands at the core of all his ideas and opinions. Emerson and the Transcendentalists valued their personal relationship with the universe above anything else. One of the ways how they achieved to connect with it is by observing the natural world.

1.4. Nature and the Soul

Transcendentalists used nature as a tool to help them understand themselves and their relationship with the universe.³⁰ To Emerson "all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence."³¹ Transcendentalists believed that when one sees the natural world with eyes unclouded, he can decipher the original meaning and the universal truth. Nevertheless, nature becomes beautiful only through the perception of the beholder. According to Emerson, "It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good."³² To appreciate nature, a perceptive observer is necessary. Through it, he will observe the internal divinity that is within him.

In his essay *Nature*, Emerson uses the term nature to refer to objects which are unaltered by men, such as the trees, the air or the river. He also uses the same term in its broader sense, which refers to anything outside of an individual's soul.³³ The term Nature in its other form is used to create a clear separation between himself as the subject and everything else. Emerson recognizes his soul as the only property that is uniquely his. Everything else, such as the natural world, his own body and other people fall into the category of Nature.³⁴

Emerson uses nature to connect with the outside world. He writes, "Standing on the bare ground, -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes."³⁵ By observing nature and the outside world, Emerson catches glimpses of the universal soul within him. It is noteworthy that some distinction between himself and the outside world remains even in the state of his communion with nature. Emerson's soul, as his only property is therefore the primary component of his being. Other aspects of reality, such as society and the material world are added on. This way of thinking is in line with the Emersonian concept of individualism.³⁶

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>

³⁰ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 188

³¹ Emerson, *Essays*, 9

³² Emerson, *Essays*,

³³ Emerson, *Essays*, 8

³⁴ Emerson, *Essays*, 8

³⁵ Emerson, *Essays*, 10

³⁶ Cyrus, Patel. "Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature," YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010.

In his later essay - Experience, Emerson tackles the idea of separating the me– the soul and the not me – everything else, once again. He writes, “In the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate, -- no more.”³⁷ Emerson is devastated after the loss of his son – someone clearly separate from his idea of self. Despite his dismal state, he arrives to the same conclusion as in his essay Nature. The death of Emerson’s son can be seen as the ultimate test of his philosophy. Ultimately, his philosophy prevails.³⁸ As Emerson states, “Grief too will make us idealists.”³⁹

Even though Emerson approves of his distinction between the subject and object, there is a small addition that he makes. In the essay Experience he writes, “We have learned that we do not see directly, but mediately, and that we have no means of correcting these colored and distorting lenses which we are, or of computing the amount of their errors.”⁴⁰ Emerson acknowledges that as humans, we are limited to see reality only through our subjective perception. Fundamentally, this idea reinforces his philosophy of differentiating between the self and everything else. If there is nothing but the subjective view, then Nature truly only serves as a tool through which we learn about ourselves.

In his later works, Emerson gradually shifts from his blatant optimism to a bleaker view of reality. Tested by tragedies in his personal life he finds means to cope with grief in his philosophy. Nevertheless, Emerson remains faithful to his idealistic mindset and trusts in the inherent goodness of life. Emerson believes it is enough to listen to one’s intuition, because in every individual there is a divine light, which connects him to the Over-soul. That enough empowers the individual to have the right to act in accordance with only his own personal convictions, unaltered by the opinions of others or by historical traditions. Additionally, the best way to connect to the universal source of ultimate truth is to observe the natural world.

2. Religious and Philosophical Influences

American Transcendentalism originated in New England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. During that time, New England was a great place for the development of new ideas and lines of thought. There were no restricting traditions or laws and there was a shared yearning for creating something original and new. To achieve that, there was an unlimited source of knowledge supplied by Europe. The prevailing system of thought in New England at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>

³⁷ Emerson, *Essays*, 473

³⁸ Cyrus, Patel. “Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature,” YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>

³⁹ Emerson, *Essays*, 473

⁴⁰ Emerson, *Essays*, 487

that time was the empirical philosophy of Sensationalism. Nevertheless, with the newly gained confidence gained by the emancipation from Britain, New Englanders searched for something new.⁴¹

One of the examples of the new was the philosophical doctrine from which the movement got its name. The Transcendentalists drew inspiration from classical German philosophy and Romanticism. European Romanticism was characteristic for being centered around literature and philosophy. One of the most influential philosophers, who gave rise to this massive shift of consciousness, was Immanuel Kant. Together with Fichte, they developed a new philosophical theory known as transcendental idealism, which influenced Europe and consequently America. The Transcendentalists regarded themselves as direct followers of the transcendental theory. Nevertheless, it was not only German philosophy what gave rise to Transcendentalism. At its core, Transcendentalism is primarily connected with religion. The first spark of transcendentalist thought appears in the theological system of the New England Congregational Church. This church, which separated from the Orthodox branches of Christianity, later influenced the development of Unitarianism.⁴² The grounds of the Unitarian church mark the beginning of Transcendentalism. Overall, the belief system of Transcendentalism dates back from the liberal Unitarianism all the way to American Puritanism and Calvinism.

2.1. Unitarianism

The First Great Awakening of the 1740s marks a distinctive moment of separation of religious doctrines, which consequently shaped Transcendentalism. One of the main disputed over issues during The Great Awakening was the theological doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity represents one of the five points of Calvinism. It is the belief that all people are inherently depraved as a result of Adam's original sin. Every person born into the world is therefore sinful by nature. According to Jonathan Edwards, who was a central figure of The Great awaking, people are by definition unable to act in any way good unless it is with the interference of God.⁴³ Another question which was addressed during The Great Awakening was the doctrine Unconditional Election. Unconditional Election revolves around the idea that there are certain people who are predestined to receive God's salvation and others who are inevitably damned. The Liberals rejected these beliefs in favor of a more rational approach to religion.

⁴¹ Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Transcendentalism in New England* (New York: G. P. PUTAM'S SONS, 1897), 106

⁴² Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Transcendentalism." Last modified May 6, 2017 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/transcendentalism/#1>

⁴³ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 432

The Unitarians started as a separate wing of the Liberal church. One of the characteristic features of the Unitarian church relates to the origin of their name. The term Unitarian, which was originally used as slander against them, is derived from the members' rejection of the holy trinity. Instead, the Unitarians focused on a more unified view of the holy, seeing it as a conjoined entity. This, together with their rational approach to Christianity, formed the basis of their belief system. William Ellery Channing, who was one of the first Unitarian preachers and was greatly admired by Emerson, incorporated these creeds in his work. His work helps to clarify the difference between Unitarianism and Transcendentalism.

Channing's sermon titled "Likeness to God" describes his understanding of God. In that aspect, there are some noticeable similarities with the Transcendentalists. In his sermon Channing says, "We discern God in every thing, from the frail flower to the everlasting stars."⁴⁴ Channing depicts God as an ever-present entity, spread throughout the universe. He continues by saying that "God's infinity has its image in the soul; and through the soul, much more than through the universe, we arrive at this conception of the Deity..."⁴⁵ Channing's concept of God is virtually identical to the one of the Transcendentalists. Nonetheless, there is one more distinguishable feature Channing adds.

Before ending his sermon, Channing issues one final warning to his audience,

To resemble our Creator we need not fly from society, and entrance ourselves in lonely contemplation and prayer. Such processes might give a feverish strength to one class of emotions, but would result in disproportion, and sickness of the mind. Our proper work is to approach God by the free and natural unfolding of our highest powers – of understanding, conscience, love, and the moral will.⁴⁶

Channing was a firm believer in John Locke's empirical philosophy and its application in Christianity.⁴⁷ His views are further described in his sermon titled "Unitarian Christianity".

In his sermon Channing explains that Bible is to be understood through reason. The Unitarians regarded the New Testament as their main source of knowledge. Reading it demanded the use of reason on the basis that it is written in human language and of need of interpretation. God has given men the ability to use his rational mind to do so. The task of religion is to accurately interpret Bible's ethical code. This is precisely where the core of religion lies for Channing. God is ingrained in the moral code he imposes. Channing suggests that when people love God,

⁴⁴ Perry Miller, *The Transcendentalists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 25

⁴⁵ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 25

⁴⁶ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 25

⁴⁷ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 25

but do not exercise his will in accordance with the Holy Scripture, then it is worthless. Channing warns to not sacrifice aimless emotion for reason.⁴⁸ The usage of reason as tool to understand God had eventually led to the separation of Unitarians and Transcendentalists.

2.2. Separation

The initial incentive for this split of the Transcendentalists and Unitarians came from the grounds of Harvard University. There, in September 1836, three men expressed their dissatisfaction with the current system of education. These three men – Ripley, Hedge and Emerson later formed what became known as the Transcendental Club. Emerson published his collection of essays “Nature” the same month. The text received very little public attention. However, there was another text by a Transcendentalist named Orestes A. Brownson which received much more recognition at the time.⁴⁹

In the text Brownson offers solution to problems that the philosophy of sensualism is causing. At the beginning, Brownson explicitly proclaims that “Providence ... has made it our duty to bring out the ideal man”⁵⁰. He continues by arguing that reason is not part of the self, but it is a mere manifestation of God as a unity. Reason can be used as a tool to perceive God only because it is part of God. It diverts from the capability to understand God first-hand. To demonstrate it on an example, Brownson suggests that people in their young age believe in God unconditionally. After they’ve grown, they begin to question why they believe and start to use their reason to reflect on their belief. Thus, they replace faith with philosophy.⁵¹

Towards the end of the text, Brownson proposes the idea of unification. His aim is to observe historical doctrines and unify all aspect of humanity into one large system. He ends the text by proclaiming,

We must bind together the past and the future, reconcile progress and immobility, by preserving what is good and studying in advance, that is, by meliorating instead of destroying; enable philosophy and theology to walk together in peace and love, by yielding to theology the authority of the spontaneous reason, -inspiration, - and vindicating for philosophy the absolute freedom of reflection.⁵²

⁴⁸ Introduction to W.E.Channing’s “Unitarian Christianity.” Accessed March 19, 2019.

<http://people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/channsh.htm>

⁴⁹ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 107

⁵⁰ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 108

⁵¹ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 108-112

⁵² Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 114

There is an argument that the split of the Transcendentalist movement from Unitarians and their intellectual approach to religion set the Transcendentalists back to the ways of Puritanism. Perry Miller suggests that thanks to Unitarianism, Emerson and the Transcendentalists were able to enjoy the essence of Calvinism without the doctrine of Total depravity.⁵³ The metaphysical core of Transcendentalism and Calvinism both stem from Platonism.⁵⁴ In other words, the abandonment of reason led the Transcendentalists back on the road of the Calvinist belief system. This time, however, it was stripped from the doctrine of Total depravity. This enabled the Transcendentalists to enjoy and praise God and his manifestation in nature and not wallow in self-accusation over their own inferiority.

If we were to return to Emerson's essay "Experience" and his act of coping with his son's death, we could observe a slight resemblance to the Puritan mindset. Emerson's apparent grief is confronted with his philosophy of distinguishing the self as the soul and everything else. Nevertheless, Emerson's belief system remains unscathed. Similarly, the Puritans were also willing to go to extreme measures in order to preserve their faith.⁵⁵ Transcendental philosophy is deeply ingrained in Emerson. The concept of religious faith is inseparable from Transcendentalism. The doctrine is built on spirituality and uses philosophy and reason to unify ideas together in search of a common truth.

This idea of the unification of different concepts is ever-present in Emerson's work. In the introduction of *Nature*, Emerson writes, "Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence. Its test is, that it will explain all phenomena."⁵⁶ Emerson is in search of universal truths. During his thought processes, Emerson takes seemingly unrelated ideas from diverse cultures and connects them together to find the common truth. Emerson borrows wisdom from a wide spectrum of different schools of thought. Therefore, he could be characterized as a cosmopolitan thinker to a certain degree. However, this notion is denied on the basis that Emerson's multicultural sources only serve his purpose of finding universal meaning in them.⁵⁷ Overall, it is apparent that Transcendentalism was deeply connected with religion. Emerson and the other Transcendentalists had to intentionally distance themselves from associating

⁵³ Miller, Perry. "Jonathan Edwards to Emerson." *The New England Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1940): 589-617. doi:10.2307/360061.

⁵⁴ Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Transcendentalism in New England* (New York: G. P. PUTAM'S SONS, 1897), 107

⁵⁵ Cyrus, Patel. "Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature," YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>

⁵⁶ Emerson, *Essays*, 7

⁵⁷ Cyrus, Patel. "Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature," YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>

themselves with religious doctrines, because of the negative connotations it brought with it.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Transcendentalism carried traces of the old doctrines it was based on. Though becoming separate from the Unitarians, one could suggest that the Transcendentalist concept of linking the soul with reason is reminiscent of their rational approach to faith. The only difference is that the Transcendentalists had moved the source of the absolute truth from the Holy Scripture to the individual.

2.3. Transcendental idealism

The philosophy of transcendental idealism came onto the continent as something new. Nevertheless, there had been a sense of anticipation building and waiting for its arrival. There was a gap created by the limits of empirical philosophical branches, which transcendental idealism came to fill. One of the first Transcendentalists who came in contact with transcendental idealism was the Harvard professor Frederic Henry Hedge. In the emerging stages of the philosophy, Hedge wrote an article called “Coleridge”, named after an English writer and philosopher.

The American audience gathered majority of their information about transcendental idealism from Coleridge since the primary texts were written in German and hard to decipher. The article Hedge wrote was an acknowledgment of Coleridge’s authority. The publishing of the article was in a sense revolutionary, because Hedge openly proclaimed his association with the idealistic philosophy, which was a polarizing theme at the time. The article was generally not received well. Nonetheless, there were a few, who praised it. For Emerson it was “a living leaping Logos”. Published in 1833, it marks the first clear sign of recognition of the transcendental philosophy on the American soil.⁵⁹

Hedge begins by stating that Coleridge is more than a fitting interpreter of the works of Immanuel Kant, however hard that task might be.⁶⁰ According to Hedge, the reading of Kant is not for everyone. Those who denounce it can keep reading “philosophy which talking of mind, but thinking of brick and mortar”⁶¹, exclaims Hedge. Kant’s philosophy is not for them. Kant’s disciples wrote for people that “seek with faith and hope a solutions of questions ... which relate to spirit and form, substance and life, free will and fate, God and eternity.”⁶² To Hedge, Kant represents a ray of sunlight in the dark cold clouds of empirical philosophy. It is clear that

⁵⁸ Cyrus, Patel. “Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature,” YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>

⁵⁹ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 66-67

⁶⁰ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 69

⁶¹ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 70

⁶² Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 70

Hedge values Kant's philosophy not only for its insights, but also for it being in contradictory to the previous system of thought.

Hedge continues the article by celebrating the contribution of German philosophy to human advancement. He admires Kant for creating a clear separation between the subject and object, between reason and understanding and between phenomena and noumena – the two terms introduced by Kant. Hedge states that Kant's findings have created a sense of moral liberty unprecedented by anything before him.⁶³ Hedge clearly feels a sense of liberation attributed to discovering Kant's theory. His primary motive is to distinguish himself from the empirically oriented doctrines. A shift of consciousness seems to be at motion, which separated people into two polarly opposed camps. Emerson addresses his perception of transcendental idealism in one of his essays called titled "The Transcendentalist".

In his essay, Emerson clarifies that what they call Transcendentalism is a form of Idealism as it is perceived in the current age. According to Emerson, there are two types of people in this world: Materialists and Idealists. The materialists rely solely on sensual data and that which can derived from it. The Idealists, however, believe that there is something beyond. They believe that objects are mere representations of things, which the eyes cannot see. The Idealists do not dwell on factual information or on man's primal desires. They are interested in the power of thought, miracles and individual culture.⁶⁴

In the beginning of the essay, Emerson explicitly proclaims that idealism is superior to materialism. Emerson's argument is that there is no legitimate way of proving that things are as they are perceived by the senses. The idealist accepts this reality and concerns himself with what is beyond the illusion. Therefore, Idealism is a logical progressive step from Materialism. Emerson explains the Idealism of the current state is known as Transcendentalism. The name is derived from a term introduced by Immanuel Kant. Kant suggested that there is a set of ideas, which is not acquired by experience, but which governs experience. He refers to these ideas as transcendental.⁶⁵

In short, Emerson argues that for the idealist, experiencing reality starts from the self. Everything in the world is the reflection of one's own self. Emerson writes,

His thought, -- that is the Universe. His experience inclines him to behold the procession of facts you call the world, as flowing perpetually outward from an invisible, unsounded centre in himself, centre alike of him and of them, and

⁶³ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 71

⁶⁴ Emerson, *Essays*

⁶⁵ Emerson, *Essays*

necessitating him to regard all things as having a subjective or relative existence, relative to that aforesaid Unknown Centre of him.⁶⁶

This concept of the subject becoming the focal point of attention seems like Kant's most important contribution to Emerson. Emerson suggests that due to this state of reality, a person does not need to respect external phenomena, but their perceptions in his own mind.⁶⁷ Additionally, Emerson adds the concept of God into the mix. As he states,

From this transfer of the world into the consciousness, this beholding of all things in the mind, follow easily his whole ethics. It is simpler to be self-dependent. The height, the deity of man is, to be self-sustained, to need no gift, no foreign force. Society is good when it does not violate me; but best when it is likeliest to solitude. Everything real is self-existent. Everything divine shares the self-existence of Deity.⁶⁸

In order to determine if Emerson's views are justified and if they differ from the Kantian transcendental theory, it is necessary to understand Kant's theory's original implications. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Emerson never was a direct scholar of Kant. His understanding of Kant's philosophical views was significantly altered by Kant's contemporaries and followers, through which he studied him. That being said, comparing the two might be a useful tool for getting a deeper understanding of Emerson and his ideas.

2.4. Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant has introduced transcendental idealism as an answer to the limits of radical empiricism and of rational psychology and their understanding of objective reality. According to Kant, the only way to resolve the problem of objectivity is to assume that an object as one experiences it, is fundamentally dependent on the subject's intuitions (sense of perceiving the objects). He proves this viewpoint in his book titled *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the book Kant implies that a subject is always observing an object based on a set of intuitions. The object perceived is bound to these intuitions and cannot exist outside of them. Because of this dependency, it is possible to derive concepts and principles from the object, which relate to the subject perceiving it. In short, by examining objects, we observe a priori laws through which we perceive them.⁶⁹ These laws are in a sense "transcendental".

⁶⁶ Emerson, *Essays*

⁶⁷ Emerson, *Essays*

⁶⁸ Emerson, *Essays*

⁶⁹ Wolfgang Röd, *Německá klasická filosofie* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2015), 14

If we assume the standpoint that all things are mere appearances dependent on the subject perceiving them, then a person creates outer phenomena based on the set of intuitions he has. Although bound to our intuitions, we see them as real. However, Kant offers a proposition that outside phenomena could be non-existent all together. Simply put, there is not enough evidence for us to distinguish between a dream and reality. Kant calls this view empirical idealism. Even though empirical idealism is possible, Kant's viewpoint opposes it. Transcendental idealism does recognize objects as real. It is because they provide the stimuli for the representations they create. That being said, they are still do not exist as things in themselves. They exist only in relation to being experienced.⁷⁰

To further analyze the limits of identifying objects, Kant introduces two terms: phenomena and noumena. Phenomena are appearances (objects of intuitions), which could be assigned to certain unifying categories based on our perception of them. These categories anticipate the form of the object of intuition. They are generated in accordance with sensory data we receive. On the contrary, noumena cannot be placed to categories, because they are not derived from sensory perception. They function outside of sensible intuitions. The only possibility that noumena could exist would be if there was a way to perceive objects outside of the world of the senses. It would also imply that there is another type of intuition, which does not require empirical data. Humans are not capable of such intuition.⁷¹

Nevertheless, if we assume the theoretical position that an object is able to not submit to our sensible intuition, then the term noumena acquires a whole new meaning. Such object would exist without the properties of space and time, because our subjective intuitions are subtracted from it.⁷² Accordingly, such noumenal object would not be limited by the faculties of time and space and therefore be completely unrestricted. One could argue that such entity would bear the characteristic of a divine power. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to grasp it by human reason.

Additionally, the terms phenomena and noumena are also applied in Kant's work on ethics. Regarding moral freedom, Kant creates a distinction between phenomenal causality and noumenal causality. Phenomenal causality refers to being restricted by the faculties of time and space, as everything is. However, Kant adds an additional attribute to humans regarding their relationship with the laws of time and space. He suggests that humans have free will in the

⁷⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press), 512

⁷¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press), 346 - 348

⁷² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press), 159.

sense that they have the ability to act in accordance with those laws. This attribute is unique for humans and functions independently of the limitations of time and space. Thus, two contradictory statements are made. First, that everything is determined by the natural laws, which relates to phenomenal causality and second, that humans possess an element of free will, which relates to noumenal causality.⁷³ Kant's theory makes humans partly determined due to the natural laws they are subjected to and partly autonomous due to their inherent freedom of choice they possess.

Emerson did not extensively regard the question of determinism and free will as much as he stressed succumbing to the laws of nature and following its divine principles. In his essays called "Spiritual Laws", Emerson described the issue of predestination as pointless.⁷⁴ The only question is whether one listens to the callings of the Over-Soul. However, if the laws of the ever-present oversoul simultaneously apply to the individual and to everything around him, then following it means travelling on a fixed path. Thus, the view becomes problematic. It could be suggested that Emerson would approve of the notion that a person can intentionally disobey the divine intuition, even though it would be leading to his own demise.

Fundamentally, arguably the biggest difference between Emerson and Kant is that Emerson attached God to the center of the self. This has led to a dramatical change of dynamics. Unlike Kant, who oscillates in uncertainty, Emerson is well grounded. Kant bases moral principles on the notion of the noumenal self, which allows freedom of will and moral responsibility. Emerson trusts in the inherent goodness of the universe, which reveals itself through the individual and thus leads to ethical conduct. To summarize, the main difference comes from Emerson's having God as the governor of human reason, though that position could be easily derived from applying the transcendental theory and assuming that the universe is inherently good, and it presents itself in favor of the individual.

There were people who had noticed this discrepancy between the Kant's system of transcendental idealism and the way American Transcendentalists have adopted it. In 1878, three professors of the Princeton Theological Seminary published two articles regarding German transcendentalism and its relation to its American relative. It is important to note that all three men were devoted Calvinists and the aim of the texts was to slander the Transcendentalists. Nevertheless, the same article was later published by the Unitarians also.

⁷³ Wolfgang Röd, *Německá klasická filosofie* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2015), 109-110

⁷⁴ Essays spiritual laws, predestination

The dissatisfaction with the Transcendentalists was so vast that the Calvinists and the Unitarians joined forces together to counterattack it.⁷⁵

The authors claim that unlike the American Transcendentalists, Kant has never attributed divine faculties to reason. On the contrary, Kant understands reason only as a cognitive ability, not as a source of divine intuition. The writers suggest that Transcendentalism teaches to look upon all phenomena -material or of the mind alike as manifestations of God. Therefore, any emotion is the act of God and any indulgence his will. The authors propose that the traditional concept of God as a savior is replaced with an abstract version of God, who personifies reason, space and time, the subject and the object simultaneously, and who only appears as a manifestation of human consciousness.⁷⁶

Although this criticism might have been perceived as fair by some, Transcendentalists never claimed that their movement is a direct following of Kant's philosophy. Furthermore, the divine intuitions described by the Transcendentalists functioned outside of the boundaries of reason. This was based on the theory about the limitation of empirical doctrines proposed by Kant and further developed by the other German philosophers. There were very big differences between how the different German philosophers conceptualized religion. One of these differences of perspectives can be observed through the work of Kant and Fichte.

Kant states that human reason does not have the capability to comprehend God and his relation to the world. The only reason to accept God is for moral reasons. This relates to the question of religion. According to Kant, religion should be practical and rational. It should impose moral principles and nothing outside of it.⁷⁷ Kant's views on religion comply with the views of Unitarians. Nevertheless, this does not imply that Kant would approve of their ethical values. Fichte's idea of God differs, though he is a supporter of Kant's transcendental theory.

Fichte connects the idea of God with the universe itself. He states that there is a transcendental moral law in the universe, which can be understood as God. This law imposes conditions on each individual. One has to act in accordance with what he perceives as right and not look at the consequences of his actions. This reasoning is based on Kant's transcendental theory, which states that there is nothing outside of our sensible intuitions of objects. Accordingly, reality as it is perceived by the individual is purely subjective. Reason as an imposer of moral law has no

⁷⁵ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 231-236

⁷⁶ Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 231-236

⁷⁷ Wolfgang Röd, *Německá klasická filosofie* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2015), 172

value in such reality, because it is not ingrained in it and therefore has no structure to depend on.⁷⁸ This line of thinking is very similar to the Transcendentalists.

Overall, the Romantic era has inverted the position of Christianity from a religious doctrine to a cultural symbol. This had been partly reinforced by introducing mystical aspect to Christianity. Thus, the importance of religious Scriptures slowly faded as it was being replaced with a more philosophical approach to religion. A philosophy, which was inherently connected with poetry and with the unification of ideas in search of a higher truth. In general, the approach to religion in the Romantic era oscillated between Christian theism and religious pantheism.⁷⁹ The authors have pantheistic tendencies but are often reluctant to leave Christianity behind. The Romantic concept of religion originates from Transcendental idealism. However, it is embroiled with the mysticism of Schlegel and Novalis and further reinterpreted by Fichte and Schelling. The interconnection of philosophy, poetry and religion creates a new position for a man. A position where the subject is connected with universal, which is infinite and boundless. The only unifying concept is that it cannot be unified.⁸⁰

3. Melville

Melville's relationship with the Transcendentalists, namely Emerson is directly described in his correspondence. In one of his letters Melville begins by stating, "Nay, I do not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow, but prefer rather to hang myself in mine own halter than swing in any other man's swing."⁸¹ The metaphor of the rainbow is a reference to a satirical cartoon of Emerson swinging in an inverted rainbow.⁸² Although Melville did wish to use the other man's swing, his explicit refusal to do so might have been exactly in line with the Emersonian concept of the self-reliant individual.

Even though Melville does not share Emerson's vision, there is a sense of understanding and admiration towards him. Whatever the contents of Emerson's teachings might be, he labels him as a "more than a brilliant fellow"⁸³. Melville had attended one of Emerson's lectures. Though he expected him to be full of "transcendentalism, myths & oracular gibberish"⁸⁴, he was surprised to find him quite intelligible.⁸⁵ Melville perceives Emerson as a unique individual and

⁷⁸ Břetislav Horyna, *Dějiny rané romantiky* (Praha: Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 2005), 308-318

⁷⁹ Břetislav Horyna, *Dějiny rané romantiky* (Praha: Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 2005), 79-82

⁸⁰ Břetislav Horyna, *Dějiny rané romantiky* (Praha: Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 2005), 88

⁸¹ Herman Melville, *Correspondence (Writtings of Herman Melville)* (Evanson and Chicago: Northwest University Press, 1993), 121

⁸² Melville, *Correspondence*, 120

⁸³ Melville, *Correspondence*, 121

⁸⁴ Melville, *Correspondence*, 121

⁸⁵ Melville, *Correspondence*, 121

for that, he has his respect. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that he respects him as a thinker. Melville writes this about Emerson, “for the sake of the argument, let us call him a fool; - then had I rather be a fool than a wise man.”⁸⁶ Melville does not necessarily approve of the validity of Emerson’s teachings, yet he holds no animosity towards him.

In the last part of the letter, Melville points out a flaw he sees in Emerson. He claims that Emerson lives under the false pretenses that he might have positively contributed in the development of America, had he lived in those days. Melville suggests that it is much easier to criticize and tear down than to build.⁸⁷ This point relates to the authors’ different conceptualizations of history and their contribution to it. Lastly, Melville subtly suggests that Emerson somewhat disassociates himself from others and is slightly out of touch with reality. In one instance, he calls him “Plato who talks thro’ his nose”⁸⁸. This type of characterization of Emerson is also present in one of Melville’s works titled *The Confidence-Man*.

3.1. The Confidence-Man

The Confidence-Man is Melville’s last novel. In several chapters of the book, there are two characters, who can be perceived as satirical caricatures of Emerson and Thoreau. Emerson is portrayed as a cold, emotionless, distant individual named Mark Winsome, first appearing under the name Mystic. Thoreau, who is named Egbert in the novel, acts as the Mystic’s devoted follower and the living embodiment of his philosophical beliefs. Egbert is characterized as the puppet of the ventriloquist Winsome, who guides every step Egbert makes. In the book, Melville questions some of Emerson’s and Thoreau’s beliefs and generally pokes fun at their character flaws.

As for Emerson, Winsome personifies his characteristic frantic philosophical system and intricate manner of speech. Similarly to Emerson, Winsome is also not too keen on being consistent in his views. Despite his elaborate speeches about the universal beauty and his poetic notions, there seems to be a lot of coldness around Winsome’s presence, especially when it comes down to relating to others. In one instance, when confronted with a beggar, Winsome looks at him with disdain and refuses to give him anything, claiming that he suspects him for a cunning impostor.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Melville, *Correspondence*, 121

⁸⁷ Melville, *Correspondence*, 121

⁸⁸ Melville, *Correspondence*, 121

⁸⁹ Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg), 304-306

Moreover, there is a heated debate between one of the characters and Egbert, who has an elaborate explanation for justifying that it is never acceptable to lend money to a friend.⁹⁰ Melville seems to be proposing that there is a discrepancy between what Emerson and Thoreau preach and how they incorporate it into their own life. Melville portrays them as being so wrapped up in their philosophical theories that they cannot relate to their fellow human beings. Additionally, they always seem to justify their actions through some elaborate theories, though the actions might be generally considered as rude or lacking in empathy.

Shortly after being introduced, the character Mark Winsome engages in a series of hypothetical questions with one of the other characters -the Cosmopolitan. The discussion revolves around Winsome asking the Cosmopolitan if he has ever wondered what it is like to become a snake. After, he inquires whether a man deserves to be pitied if he gets bitten by a snake, though he is warned by his rattle. He finishes by asking if a snake is accountable for his actions. The Cosmopolitan does not approve or deny of this claim.⁹¹

The Cosmopolitan does not let Winsome react and states that suggesting that the snake is not accountable for his actions would imply that the same could be said of men. The Cosmopolitan argues his claim by asking How can a man be held responsible for his actions if a snake has a free license to kill whomever he pleases. Such position would seem asymmetrical to the Cosmopolitan.⁹²

It is feasible that Melville had some unresolved questions regarding the ideas of free will and determinism. Regarding Emerson and Thoreau, Melville seems to point at their inconsistency between their philosophical doctrines and their personal lives. Nevertheless, everything is in the spirit of comedy and there are no outrageous claims aimed at either of them. Altogether, *The Confidence-Man* and Melville's personal correspondence mark the only implicit or explicit mentions of either Emerson or Thoreau. The only other way to analyze the relationship between Melville and the Transcendentalists is to analyze the common themes and differences in Melville's work. For the sake of brevity, this work will look at difference rather than similarities between the two. The first issue examined will be the Melville's and Emerson's different perception of history. All of the comparisons will be drawn from Melville's *Moby Dick*.

3.2. History

Melville's approach to history differs from that of Emerson and the Transcendentalists. In the introduction to *Nature*, Emerson enthusiastically encourages to cast out all the old ways of

⁹⁰ Melville, *The Confidence-Man*, 315-350

⁹¹ Melville, *The Confidence-Man*, 296-298

⁹² Melville, *The Confidence-Man*, 298-299

thinking and build a new relationship with the world. Melville is more skeptical about this notion of leaving the past behind altogether. Nevertheless, that does not imply that he is reluctant to change. Melville is more sensible to old lingering ideologies that are present even in the times of change. He is proposing that one must position himself in history and not completely abandon it.

This is apparent from the very beginning of the book, where Melville presents an etymology and collection of extracts about whales. The collection of extracts ranges from the Old Testament all the way to the scientific research of Darwin.⁹³ By doing this, Melville frames whales in historical context and simultaneously establishes the position of his book and gives it a sense of importance. One might even say that the book compares itself to these historical works and their diversity. This does not necessarily mean that Melville intends to follow historical tradition.

In the very first chapter of the book, the character Ishmael is forced to escape New York in order to be alone at the Sea.⁹⁴ Similarly, Ishmael, who arguably portrays Melville to an extent, shares his name with a biblical figure – the son of Abraham, who was banished and forced to live as an outcast in the desert. These symbols might signify Melville's separation from the American literary tradition and history. Nevertheless, Melville still acknowledges the historical influences, which shape the characters' behavior. One example of that would be the puritan way of thinking, which loomed over the American culture.

There is a chapter in the book, where the narrator – Ishmael discusses his share of the voyage he is undertaking with two captains. The two captains argue over how much of the share (lay) Ishmael deserves. One captain – Peleg proposes the 275th lay, which is reasonably good. Nevertheless, the other captain – Bildad objects and proposes the 777th lay, which is horrible for Ishmael. Bildad chooses the number intentionally for its biblical significance and supports his proposition by quoting a biblical verse.⁹⁵ Peleg and Bildad are later introduced to Ishmael's friend – the tattooed cannibal named Queequeg. Although Peleg and Bildad are first concerned about Queequeg's religious beliefs, after seeing his harpooning skills, they quickly sign him onto the ship.⁹⁶

Captain Peleg is a demonstration of how religious doctrines can be used to one's advantage in other spheres besides the church. Peleg uses the Bible as a tool to justify his unfair proposition

⁹³ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2015), xxiii - xli

⁹⁴ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 1

⁹⁵ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 76-77

⁹⁶ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 88-89

in a field, where religious beliefs have no place. Overall, his code of business conduct is borderline unethical. Melville demonstrates how the lingering of the puritan belief system in America is used for pragmatic purposes. The old value systems do not disappear, but they keep shaping culture in different ways. Emerson and the Transcendentalist did not necessarily perceive history this way. More so, their intent was to set themselves apart from history, as it was a common theme in the Romantic age.

3.3 Nature

Melville's work is inherently connected with nature and one could more so draw parallels between him and the Transcendentalists in this topic. Nevertheless, there is a few instances where Melville seems to target the Transcendentalist's way of perceiving nature. One of the chapters in *Moby Dick* describes Ishmael atop of the ship's mast-head. Melville uses this opportunity to illustrate the feeling of watching the serenity of the sea from this elevated viewpoint. What ensues can only be classified as Melville's transcendental moment. He writes,

...by blending cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly-discovered uprising fin of some undiscernible form, seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it.⁹⁷

The state Melville describes could be compared to Emerson's famous passage about becoming the transparent eye-ball. Melville's character too seems to lose his identity while interconnecting with the beauty of the universe. What more, Melville also points to the soul as to the source of everything that is manifested. It is apparent that Melville is familiar with the feeling, which the Transcendentalists praised and labeled as the fountain of their wisdom. Nevertheless, what follows could be interpreted as a warning or a direct criticism of such state. In the next passage, Melville suggests that atop of the Mast-head it takes only one wrong step in this state of immersion and "identity comes back in horror. Over Cartesian vortices you hover"⁹⁸. Melville indicates that when one spends his time with his head up in the clouds connected with the natural world, reality can come rushing in. Melville also suggests that very little whale spotting is done in such state, though it is the very thing one is supposed to do atop the mast-head.⁹⁹ Perhaps it is Melville's hardships he had encountered on his voyages, which

⁹⁷ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 157

⁹⁸ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 157

⁹⁹ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 156-157

keeps him mindful of dwelling in such states, though he is undoubtably capable of experiencing them. In Melville's words, "Heed it well, ye Pantheists!"¹⁰⁰

There is one notion where the views of Melville and Emerson differ. The whale is an ever-present symbol throughout the book. Its enigmatic nature makes it hard to decipher its meaning. Looking at it, one cannot even comprehend its size, let alone its nature. Melville writes,

Champollion deciphered the wrinkled hieroglyphics. But there is no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of every man's and every being's face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing fable. If then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can.¹⁰¹

This is Melville stating his opinion on the same historical event as Emerson did in the introduction of nature. Unlike Emerson, who was bursting with optimism about the power of man to untangle the mystery of creation, Melville is more skeptical. Melville does not believe that science can provide answers to life's most fundamental questions. Moreover, he is convinced that it never will. As Melville states,

He swam the seas before the continents broke water; he once swam over the site of the Tuileries, and Windsor Castle, and the Kremlin. In Noah's flood he despised Noah's Ark; and if ever the world is to be again flooded, like the Netherlands, to kill off its rats, then the eternal whale will still survive, and rearing upon the topmost crest of the equatorial flood, spout his frothed defiance to the skies.¹⁰²

It is evident that in *Moby Dick* Melville describes nature through the idealistic lens characteristic for the Romantic period, though he is often cautious of it. Additionally, there are times where he provides the reader with scientific observations and anatomical systems. Nevertheless, one thing is certain. The world has and always will remain shrouded in mystery for Melville.

To summarize, Melville seems to not take that much issue with Emerson and Transcendentalism. There are some jabs he takes at their account and he clearly sets himself apart from the movement, but overall Emerson and Melville are alike in many ways. The similarities would outweigh the differences. The question is, where does the notion of Melville

¹⁰⁰ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 157

¹⁰¹ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 348

¹⁰² Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 461

being a critic of Emerson come from. A possible answer might be found in Melville's most famous work *Moby Dick*.

4. *Moby Dick*

In the midst of the writing process of *Moby Dick*, Melville writes to Nathaniel Hawthorne about his progress,

The tail is not yet cooked – though the hell-fire in which the whole book is broiled might not unreasonably have cooked it all ere this. This is the book's motto (the secret one), - Ego non baptiso te in nomine – but make out the rest your-self.¹⁰³

The Latin phrase refers to the first half of “Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli”¹⁰⁴, which was shouted by the notorious Captain Ahab as he plunged his harpoon into the elusive White Whale. The Latin phrase roughly translates into: “I do not baptize thee in the name of the father, but in the name of the devil.”¹⁰⁵

The question of the meaning behind Melville's *Moby Dick* has been debated over for generations. The book is overflowing with esoteric symbolism and mystical language. One could even suggest that Melville himself was not quite sure what he was writing. In his letter to Mrs. Hawthorne Melville reveals,

I had some vague idea while writing it, that the whole book was susceptible of an allegoric construction, & also that parts of it were. But the specialty of many of the particular subordinate allegories, were first revealed to me, after reading Mr. Hawthorne's letter...¹⁰⁶

Herman Melville was an obscure character. David Herbert Lawrence describes him as “abstract, self-analytical and abstracted.”¹⁰⁷ Melville is “more spell-bound by the strange slidings and collidings of Matter than by the things men do.”¹⁰⁸ This description could be as much fitting for Emerson as it is for Melville. Undoubtedly, Melville had a hint of transcendental in him. In a moment of bliss, after receiving a letter of Hawthorne's approval of his book, he writes, “I felt pantheistic then – your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours, and both in God's.”¹⁰⁹ In

¹⁰³ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 581

¹⁰⁴ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 486

¹⁰⁵ Melville, *Moby-Dic*

¹⁰⁶ Melville, *Correspondence*, 219

¹⁰⁷ D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London: Martin Secker, 1920), 146

¹⁰⁸ D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London: Martin Secker, 1920), 146

¹⁰⁹ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 581

another instance he declares that the notion of “Living in the all” is ludicrous. Yet he admits that there is great deal of this feeling in him.¹¹⁰

Melville was familiar with German writers like Goethe. Additionally, it is known that he was well versed in German metaphysics in general. Later in his life he became increasingly interested in the question of determinism and free will. Having been raised in a Christian household, Melville was in contact with the notion of fixed fate since a young age.¹¹¹ Melville struggled with transcendental idealism and with Calvinism alike. We can see the clashing of both doctrines in *Moby Dick*. Additionally, we can compare both in relation to Transcendentalism. A particularly interesting character to compare Transcendentalism with is captain Ahab.

4.1. Captain Ahab’s monomania

Transcendental idealism is a dramatic notion. It tears down the walls between objective and subjective reality and places the human consciousness in the foreground as the main agent through which we experience reality. The Cartesian split has thrown human kind into uncertainty. Captain Ahab’s mission to hunt the White Whale can be a representation of the need to get a steady grip on life, no matter the cost.

Captain Ahab is a larger than life figure, who bends the will of everyone around him and eventually leads his crew to a path of destruction. Consumed by his lust for revenge, he becomes a vehicle for its means, unable to alter his own fate. He is the “madness maddened”¹¹². The type of madness “that’s only calm to comprehend itself.”¹¹³ With cold rationality, Ahab takes systematic steps in executing his mission, though he fully realizes it is to the detriment of everyone around him, including himself.

There is a passage in the book, where Ishmael tries to decipher Ahab’s madness. Ishmael suggests that there was some element of Ahab – “living principle or soul in him”¹¹⁴, which disconnected from his body at times, becoming an entity of its own. Ishmael continues by stating that it is precisely this element which fuels Ahab’s crazed state. Ishmael says,

But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with the soul, therefore it must have been that, in Ahab’s case, yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself

¹¹⁰ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 579

¹¹¹ Gay Willson Allen, *Melville and his world* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 95

¹¹² Melville, *Moby-Dick* 166

¹¹³ Melville, *Moby-Dick* 166

¹¹⁴ Melville, *Moby-Dick* 200

against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own.¹¹⁵

This connection between the body and the soul could be directly correlated with the Emersonian distinction between the me and the not me. Emerson sees the soul as the only component, which is uniquely his own. It is the soul, which holds supreme power over Emerson and all the actions he takes. Emerson's soul is the door to the absolute. Similarly, Ishmael seems to point out that it is the soul, which is the source of Ahab's monomania and which governs all of his actions.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, if we omit the actions they take in response to their soul's callings, the biggest discrepancy between Emerson and Ahab is the source of their motivations. Their reasons for listening to their souls' intuitions are diametrically opposed.

As for Emerson, his soul is the door to the omnipresent Over-soul. Emerson believes that the soul is the source of divine intuitions. Following it means acting in line with the universal truth, in other words: with God. On the contrary, Ahab's soul's craving is its lust for revenge. Ahab's objective is to kill the White whale. What the Whale symbolizes for Ahab is open for interpretation. It might be God – the weaver of Ahab's fate or it might be the very fabric of reality – the noumenon. Either way, Ahab intends to “strike through the mask”¹¹⁷ and shove his unholy harpoon through its heart.

Though on the opposite side of the spectrum, there is one quality Emerson and Ahab share. Both Emerson and Ahab are extremely invested in their perception of reality. A possible problem with the Transcendentalist conceptualization of reality is that it connects the Kantian transcendental philosophy of reason with God – the absolute authority. The transcendental theory states that the subject is responsible for how he perceives reality. Though transcendental idealism acknowledges objects to be real, it positions them as secondary in relation to the subject. Thus, everything becomes a matter of subjective perception. In such state, it could be seen as necessary to ground oneself in something stable. The Transcendentalists had felt that cognitive ability is insufficient and chosen the pantheistic version of God. However, in a state, where God is manifested through the subject, the individual becomes the ultimate lawmaker with divine supremacy.

Melville's Ahab could be perceived as the Emersonian self-reliant individual gone rogue. The transcendentalist love for God and the universe is replaced with hate, but the superiority of one's own private opinion prevails. After his injury, Ahab had “piled upon the whale's white

¹¹⁵ Melville, *Moby-Dick* 201

¹¹⁶ Melville, *Moby-Dick* 197

¹¹⁷ Melville, *Moby-Dick* 162

hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down...¹¹⁸, and thus he began his unholy quest. Ahab's intention was to face this "God of malice" he had envisioned. This is where the similarity between Emerson and Ahab lies. As Emerson sees beauty of God in everything that light touches, so does Ahab see everything that is evil in Moby Dick.

At heart, Ahab needs to be acknowledged by the universe. He cannot stand the notion that his injury was caused by a random occurrence. As the center of his reality, he has to matter. To achieve that, everything must succumb to his cause. For Ahab, and one could suggest that for Emerson also, everything in the world has to have some sort of meaning in relation to their own beings. Emerson is certain that everything that is beautiful and pure comes from the heart of his soul. Ahab is certain that everything that is evil and vile is represented by the White Whale. The only way to relinquish his anger is to kill Moby Dick. Unlike Emerson, Ahab is not assured in his truth by observing nature and everyday occurrences. The only way to achieve absolute certainty is to face the White Whale. Emerson encounters the divine behind every object he sees. Ahab only has Moby Dick as the gateway to encounter what is behind the veil of reality. The introduction of Kant's transcendental theory has brought a lot of uncertainty into the world. If objects are mere representations, which are casted onto the world by subjective intuitions, then it is feasible that they create special meaning for every individual. For Emerson, that is the essence of the divine. He puts his unconditional trust into its guidance. Ahab is not content with such idea. He has prescribed meaning to the White Whale, which makes it the agent or the perpetrator of the laws, which govern reality.

Ahab explains in one passage,

Hark ye yet again—the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask!¹¹⁹

Unlike Emerson, Ahab is not satisfied by allowing oneself to be governed. Essentially, He intends to face Emerson's Over-Soul head on. That being said, Ahab believes in the existence of evil and attaches the sum of it to Moby Dick. Emerson's Over-Soul does not encompass evil. This is where the two notions differ. Nevertheless, ultimately there is a resemblance. Both Ahab and Emerson need something to fall back on. Emerson needs his unique soul and Ahab needs

¹¹⁸ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 182

¹¹⁹ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 162

the Moby Dick as his personal nemesis. Both men need to have some assurance in reality, which relates directly to their subjective selves. As Ahab says, “I like to feel something in this slippery world that can hold, man.”¹²⁰

There is a character in Moby Dick named Bulkington appearing in the chapter titled “The Lee Shore”¹²¹ Bulkington spends his days in the mysterious uncertainty that is the sea and is fulfilled in doing so. Content only with his private heart, he drifts in the uncharted and formless. He does not need the stability provided by the shore. Bulkington knows the truth that “all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea.”¹²²“ Nonetheless, he dies all the same. Is Melville suggesting that one cannot survive without the stability provided by being reliant on some dogma, which guarantees certainty in the world? Melville may provide some cryptic answers to that question.

4.2. Melville’s answer

Melville’s novel is imbedded in uncertainty. The narrator, Ishmael disappears at will, the format constantly changes, sometimes the novel even seems to be self-aware. If we add the complexity of the language used, we can definitely agree that there are many different possible interpretations of the book. One might propose that Melville himself is aware of these multiple possibilities of interpreting his book. Moreover, he might even be aware of the limitation of interpretation altogether.

There is a passage at the very beginning of the book, where Ishmael has an internal dialogue about the possible meaning of a picture he sees at the Spouter-Inn.¹²³ Ishmael spends some time over what the picture could depict until he comes to a conclusion, partly based upon opinions of other people at the establishment. The question here is who is to say what the right interpretation is. Is it the observer, the consensus of opinion, the author or not even he can accurately decipher the picture? The proposition here is that the limit of interpretation stems from the subjective nature of perceiving reality.

Another instance where the notion of perception is tackled is in the chapter The Doubloon. When looking upon a coin, different characters describe their interpretation of its inscription - three mountains, a tower and a sun. Their interpretations reveal the nature of their own characters. For instance, when Ahab looks at the coin, he perceives the tower as “egoistical”

¹²⁰ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 468

¹²¹ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 105-106

¹²² Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 105

¹²³ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 10-11

and subsequently sees a reflection of himself in it.¹²⁴ Essentially, Ahab's interpretation is reflective of his subjective perception of reality as discussed in the previous subchapter. That being said, the revelation in this chapter comes from the character Pip, who is observing the scene.

Pip is a young boy, who loses his sanity after being abandoned in the ocean. After going mad, Pip becomes omniscient. Melville writes,

Wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad.¹²⁵

In this state, Pip watches the ship's crew from an elevated position and says, "I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look."¹²⁶ The notion implied here and the overarching argument is that Melville believes that life itself is a series of infinite perspectives of each individual with no absolute measurement of objectivity. We can further analyze this notion in several passages of the book. Hubert Dreyfus suggests that the key to understanding Melville's philosophy is through his metaphor of the color white.¹²⁷

In the chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale" Ishmael (or Melville) describes the color white as having a terrifying quality about itself, which invokes horror in him. Ishmael is so appalled by the concept of whiteness that he struggles to put it into a comprehensive form, yet he stresses that he needs to explain it, otherwise the following chapters might be useless. He concludes the chapter by stating,

Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour; and at the same time the concrete of all colours; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colourless, all-colour of atheism from which we shrink?¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 430-431

¹²⁵ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 416

¹²⁶ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 434

¹²⁷ Dreyfus, Hubert. "Philosophy 6 | Spring 2007 | UC Berkeley," Internet Archive. 2007.

https://archive.org/details/Philosophy_6_Spring_2007_UC_Berkeley/Philosophy_6_Spring_2007_UC_Berkeley_Lecture_30_Introductory_Lecture_Moby_Dick_19270.mp3

¹²⁸ Melville, *Moby-Dick*

The notion here is that existence in totality is the full spectrum of different individual perspectives. In its entirety it is inexplicable and daunting. Therefore, each individual holds onto their own “color”. Melville’s suggestion would be not to overly dwell on one’s own colored lens and realize that there is a full spectrum of different colors. The passage could also suggest that similarly to Kant, Melville also believes that the notion of God as the absolute truth is outside of human comprehension.

In another passage Melville describes watching a whale spout,

that vapor—as you will sometimes see it—glorified by a rainbow, as if Heaven itself had put its seal upon his thoughts. For, d’ye see, rainbows do not visit the clear air; they only irradiate vapor. And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray. And for this I thank God; for all have doubts; many deny; but doubts or denials, few along with them, have intuitions. Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye.¹²⁹

The appearance of the rainbow reminds Melville of the hidden reality behind observable phenomena. Melville might be suggesting that he is aware that empirical knowledge is limited. Additionally, He is joyful when once in a while he is presented with the notion that there is a hidden reality outside of human comprehension. That is represented by the rainbow. Rainbow is the dispersion of light, which is usually white. This reality outside of human comprehension could be linked with the idea of a God as Emerson conceptualized it. However, Melville is not overly fixated on the idea and believes that it keeps him level headed.

To conclude, Melville is very critical of the notion that something can be applied universally. He does not like absolutes and singular perceptions of reality. He could somewhat be regarded as skeptical and doubtful. In a sense, Emerson is on the side of the spectrum. Emerson promotes unconditional self-trust and security in one’s own being. This difference is nicely presented in a letter from Melville to Hawthorne. It reads,

This all feeling, though, there is some truth in. You must often have felt it, lying on the grass on a warm summer’s day. Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth. Your hair feels like leaves upon your head. This is the all feeling. But what plays the mischief with the truth is that men will insist upon the universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 374

¹³⁰ Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 579

5. Conclusion

Herman Melville's work is filled with ambiguities and cryptic symbolism. Perhaps that is the best way to understand him. Being content with the notion that some things remain inexplicable. Melville and Emerson were both changed by the introduction of German classical philosophy. Emerson, coming from a theological background, connected Kant's transcendental theory with God, as many of his contemporaries did. From there, he derived his philosophy of self-reliance. Herman Melville was more skeptical towards unconditional faith and battled with the idea. Thus, *Moby Dick* was born.

The character of captain Ahab could be the representation of some taking the principles of Emerson self-reliance to the extreme. Emerson's philosophy does not prescribe ethical norms, only unconditional self-trust based on the divine within. If we were to remove Emerson's divine intuitions, which we could assume come from Christian ethics and replace them with Ahab's malicious intent, we would arrive to the last chapter of *Moby Dick*. The idea is that Emerson's philosophy can have self-absorbing tendencies, as it presents reality in direct relation to the subject and places him in focal point of attention. It gives Emerson the autonomy to prescribe his own meaning onto the world.

If we were to take captain Ahab as an example, then his strife for personal meaning and will to be become acknowledged by the universe led the downfall of him and everyone around him. The individualistic spirit had drowned the American culture. *Moby Dick* survived, indifferent or not. Ishmael survived, even though he was not meant to at first. He was saved by Queequeg's coffin, which was covered with carvings of Queequeg's tattoos. Perhaps it was Ishmael's embracement of Queequeg's traditions and religion that helped him survive.

Emerson is famous for unifying ideas from different cultures and fields. He finds different ideas from history and connects them with his notion of the self-reliant individual. One could suggest that Emerson is looking for similarities in different fields of study to support his claim. In that sense, he is a universalist thinker. Melville, on the other hand, seems to be more embracive of other cultures and modes of thinking in terms of succumbing to their ways of life. In that sense, he is a cosmopolitan thinker. This does not mean that one is better than the other. Overall, Ahab's example is in no way intended to slander Emerson's views or deem them wrong. It just shows the possible limitations of his philosophical views.

Resumé

Herman Melville je často brán jako kritik amerického hnutí transcendentalismu. Motivem práce je určit do jaké míry tomu tak je a následně zkoumat, jak se konkrétní myšlenky transcendentalismu projevují na Melvillově díle. Práce je rozdělena do čtyř kapitol. První kapitola se zabývá konkrétními ideovými základy transcendentalismu, druhá je podrobně analyzuje v náboženském a filosofickém kontextu, třetí se zaměřuje na obecné motivy transcendentalismu v Melvillově dílech a čtvrtá se soustředí výhradně na jeho dílo *Moby Dick*. První kapitola nejprve krátce uvádí základní principy transcendentalismu, načež představí *Ralph Waldo Emersona* jako ústřední postavu hnutí. Emerson a jeho kolekce esejí a přednášek tvoří základní zdroj informací o transcendentalismu, z kterého práce čerpá. Úkolem první kapitoly je blíže nastínit Emersonovy základní doktríny, zejména pak jeho uchopení filosofie transcendentálního idealismu. Nejprve je představena Emersonova konceptualizace dějin, jeho názor na důležitost jednotlivce a jeho postavení ve společnosti. V neposlední řadě je zmíněn Emersonův vztah k přírodě, skrze kterou nalézá cestu k veškerenstvu. V první kapitole jsou použity eseje: *Nature*, *Self-Reliance*, *The Over-Soul*, *Experience*.

Cílem první kapitoly je stanovit, jak Emerson pojímal rozdělení mezi subjektem a objektem. Jako příklad je uvedeno Emersonovo rozdělení duše a přírody, tedy oddělení své substance od všech ostatních hmotných fenoménů. Emerson bere svoji duši jako jeho jedinou jemu vlastní náležitost, skrze kterou se propojuje s Univerzální duší a posléze s okolním světem. Díky tomuto vztahu bere Emerson člověka jako primární jednotku, které se podmaňuje okolní svět. Emerson vnímá celý svět jako propojen. Univerzální duše prostupuje každým atomem světa a slučuje historii se současností. To vše tvoří dohromady dokonalou jednotu.

Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na analýzu transcendentalismu v náboženském a filosofickém kontextu. První část kapitoly popisuje historický vývin předcházející vzniku hnutí a jeho první představitele. Jako zdroje jsou použity dobové publikace členů unitářského náboženství a prvotních členů transcendentalismu. Druhá část kapitoly zkoumá vliv filosofie transcendentálního idealismu na utvoření hnutí. Jako zdroje používá publikace členů, naučné texty o romantismu a o německé filosofii a díla vybraných německých filosofů. Filosofické bádání Immanuela Kanta a Johanna Gottlieba Fichteho je bráno jako základní kámen, na kterém jsou postaveny dějiny romantiky a následně transcendentalismu. Jsou proto použity texty obou myslitelů

Cílem druhé kapitoly je pochopit do jaké míry ovlivnilo náboženské smýšlení původních členů transcendentalismu podobu jejich filosofických názorů. Immanuel Kant představil

transcendentální teorii jako odpověď na limitovanost lidského poznání empirickými metodami. Podle Kanta jsou externí objekty vnímány pouze skrze závislost na subjektivní percepci. Subjekt je vybaven systémem, pomocí kterého si vykládá předměty zkušenosti. Emerson a transcendentalisté přebírají tento koncept, nicméně ho podobně jako jiní filosofové obohacují o ideu boha jako entitu v centru subjektu, skrze kterého je objektivní realita manifestována. Toto uchopení filosofie transcendentálního idealismu s sebou může přinášet potenciální problémy.

Třetí kapitola představuje dílo Hermana Melvilla a jeho vztah k Emersonovi a k transcendentalismu. Jsou uvedeny Melvillovy zmínky o Emersonovi v jeho osobní korespondenci. Následně je analyzováno satirické vyobrazení Emersona a Thoreaua v Melvillově díle *The Confidence-Man*. Jako poslední jsou rozebrány motivy transcendentalismu v Melvillově díle *Moby Dick*. Konkrétně je porovnáváno jejich rozdílné nahlížení na historii, jejich vztah k přírodě, jejich vztah k náboženství a filosofii a v neposlední řadě jejich rozdílný názor na limity lidského poznání. Obecně by měly být obě díla uvedené v kontextu motivů romantické literatury. Hlavní zaměření je však na filosofii.

Cílem třetí kapitoly je dokázat, že Melville necítil pro Emersona nebo transcendentalismus nepodmíněnou zášť. Jeho dílo *Moby Dick* by tedy nemělo být chápáno jako kritika transcendentalismu nebo jejich principů. I přesto jsou mezi Melvillem a Emersonem patrné rozdíly, které stojí za to zmínit. Obecně vzato je však patrné, že mezi Melvillem a Emersonem převládají spíše podobnosti, i přes to, že by Melville možná nerad přiznal. Melville může být do jisté míry chápán jako více pesimistická a sebekritická verze Emersona. Oba v sobě nesou prvky mysticismu a znalosti klasické německé filosofie. Na rozdíl od Emersona má Melville větší problém s ideou boha a konceptem svobody vůle a predestinace.

Čtvrtá kapitola se zaměřuje výhradně na Melvillovo dílo *Moby Dick*. V první části kapitoly je důkladně rozebrána postava kapitána Ahaba. Jsou popsány jeho potenciální motivy a symbolika Bílé velryby. Popis Ahaba a Bílé velryba je porovnán s filosofií Emersona a s Kantovou transcendentální teorií. Velký důraz je kladen na Emersonovo rozdělení duše od ostatních jevů. To je porovnáváno s Ahabovým chtičem po pomstě, který nabyl vlastní podoby. V druhé části kapitoly je představena Melvillova filosofie „polyteismu“, která se opírá o schopnost vnořovat se do rozdílných způsobů percepce reality. Hlavní kapitoly, o které se teorie opírá jsou: *The Whiteness of the Whale*, *The Doubloon* a *The Castaway*.

Cílem čtvrté kapitoly je představit postavu kapitána Ahaba jako zosobnění Emersonova konceptu soběstačného jedince a jeho dopad na americkou kulturu. Transcendentální idealismus limituje veškeré poznání na subjektivní. K tomu Emerson připojuje idea Boha, a

tudíž se individuální pohled jednotlivce staví do středu reality a oplývá absolutní autoritou. Na proti tomu staví Melville koncept, který říká, že realita je tvořena nekonečným množstvím subjektivních náhledů na realitu a žádná z nich nemá absolutní platnost. Otevřený jedinec je schopen vnořovat se do rozdílných pohledů a uvědomuje si, že žádná není univerzálním měřítkem skutečnosti.

V závěru jsou Melville a Emerson porovnání jako dva typy „kosmopolitních“ spisovatelů. Oba autoři jsou známí svým čerpáním ze zahraničních zdrojů. Zatímco Emerson syntetizuje různé druhy informací za účelem nalezení univerzálních pravd, Melville se snaží vcit'ovat do úhlu pohledu ostatních kultur a náboženství. Emersonovo uchopení filosofie transcendentálního idealismu v sobě obnáší potencionální problematiku rozlišení mezi subjektem a objektem. Dalo by se dokonce říci, že má solipsistické tendence. Postava kapitána Ahaba představuje tento případ. Naštěstí Melville přichází s řešením. Melvillova filosofická teorie je v knize Moby Dick představena pod metaforou bílé barvy. Melville se domnívá, že lidský rozum není schopný uchopit koncept objektivní reality. Navrhuje, že každý člověk je limitován pouze na svojí subjektivní percepci. Stejně tak jako bílá barva je spektrum všech barev, tak i absolutno je součin všech subjektivních percepcí. Kdokoliv spočine zrak na ono bílo, oslepne. Melvillova rada je se příliš nefixovat na svůj omezený pohled na realitu a uvědomit si, že existuje nekonečné množství alternativních úhlů pohledu se stejnou validitou.

Bibliography

Books

- Allen, Wilson Gay. *Melville and His World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.
- Edwards, Jonathan. *Freedom of the Will*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays & Lectures. 15th print*. New York, N.Y.: Library of America, 2008.
- Frothingham, Octavius Brooks. *Transcendentalism in New England*. New York: G. P. PUTAM'S SONS, 1897.
- Horyna, Břetislav. *Dějiny rané romantiky*. Praha: Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 2005.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Lawrence, D.H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. London: Martin Secker, 1920
- Melville, Herman. *Correspondence (Writings of Herman Melville)*. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1993.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2015.
- Melville, Herman. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*. Urbana, Illinois: ProjectGutenberg, 2007. www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19033.
- Miller, Perry. *The Transcendentalists*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Röd Wolfgang. *Německá klasická filosofie*. Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2015.
- Wayne, Tiffany K. *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism*. New York, N.Y.:Facts On File, Inc., 2006.

Journal articles

- Miller, Perry. "Jonathan Edwards to Emerson." *The New England Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1940): 589-617. doi:10.2307/360061.

Websites

- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Individualism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Last modified February 19, 2016.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/individualism>.
- Cyrus, Patel. "Open Ed: Cyrus Patell, American Literature." YouTube video. Posted September 9, 2010.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwj96HsP5Qs&list=PLE094311E2D7A31CD&t=0s&index=2>.

Dreyfus, Hubert. "Philosophy 6 | Spring 2007 | UC Berkeley." Internet Archive. 2007.
https://archive.org/details/Philosophy_6_Spring_2007_UC_Berkeley/Philosophy_6_Spring_2007_UC_Berkeley_Lecture_30_Introductory_Lecture_Moby_Dick_19270.mp3.

Introduction to W.E.Channing's "Unitarian Christianity." Accessed March 19, 2019.
<http://people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/channsht.htm>.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Pantheism." Last modified Jul 7, 2016
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Transcendentalism." Last modified May 6, 2017
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/transcendentalism/#1>.