

The Abandonment of Reality: Emerson's Legacy of "Man-Thinking"

M A R I O N M O N T G O M E R Y

"When Emerson decided, in 1832, that he could no longer celebrate the Lord's Supper unless the bread and wine were removed, an important step in the vaporization of religion in America was taken, and the spirit of that step has continued apace. When the physical fact is separated from the spiritual reality, the dissolution of belief is eventually inevitable."

—*Flannery O'Connor, "Novelist and Believer," Sweetbriar: 1963*

EMERSON FOR a century and a half has been able to influence not only our letters but our institutions more deeply than the serene, seemingly benign surface of his prose has allowed us to see. For his prose has commanded a generous deference lest the critic appear unmannerly, if not obtuse. One of the ironies of Solzhenitsyn's shocking Harvard speech, as our Russian guest probably did not know, was that he spoke sharply against one of the fathers of our own "Smatterers." A hundred and forty years before Solzhenitsyn spoke disturbingly to the American intelligentsia, Emerson had assured the American Scholar from a Harvard podium, "The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature...." Thus the power which

Emerson sees governing all form, to which he would give the title of divinity, again and again turns out to be the action of his own thought as it enunciates his version of order through his words. It is abstraction imposed upon reality in a typically gnostic manner. Thus the ancient problem of good and evil, about which Hawthorne has so much to say, is conveniently reduced by Emerson to an assertion that good and evil are but "shadows" of man's thought. For Emerson, "Fact" and not will is the turning point of thought in the world, the grain upon which thought exercises its divine formative power to build a pearl in which is reflected its own vague image. Evil is but a thought-flow gone astray from the centering grain of fact.

But *grain* here is too concrete, since to Emerson fact is nature purified by abstraction; the act of abstraction is nature's own salvation, fact being nature's essence. The sum of Emerson's address to nature and man, then, is that power is generated by thought's saving form, form itself being an effect of the action of the individual intellect centered on fact: intellect Emerson elevates and obscures in a mistiness of sentimentality by calling it *soul*. In consequence of his position, there occurs in his

thought the series of separations spoken of by Flannery O'Connor as marking modern Manicheism: nature is separated from grace, reason from imagination, judgment from vision. It is this modernist separation in Emerson that leads the late Randall Stewart to regret Emerson's considerable influence on American thought. "[Emerson's] doctrine is radically anti-Christian, and has done more than any other doctrine to undermine Christian belief in America." Of course, we need not conclude his eroding influence supreme, for Emerson shares doctrine with a numerous body whose name is legion. But it is nevertheless considerable. He too elevates the self as the supreme reconciler of itself to a collective Other. The self as reconciler is necessary to him since he believes that persons may never communicate significantly; each soul is irremediably isolated from other souls, with the accompanying necessity that each must become the whole of the world. In compensation to the isolated soul, Emerson translates the old mystery of the Church as the bride of Christ, within which mystery the older fathers found the community of man possible. For Emerson, "The universe is the bride of the soul."

Let us note first that Emerson is on occasion dark almost to the point of pessimism about the position of man in nature as he finds himself burdened by consciousness. Unlike his usual mood, the tone in his essay "Experience" (1844) is somber. The message is that we revolve like ancient women in vacant lots gathering fuel. "There will be the same gulf between every me and thee as between the original and the picture.... Two human beings are like globes, which can touch only in a point, and whilst they remain in contact all other points of each of the spheres are inert.... Life will be imaged, but cannot be divided nor doubled." There can be, in other words, only one life at last: that of the individual consciousness, whose isolated existence appears cause enough for despair. "Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, Surprise, Reality, Subjectiveness—these are the threads of the loom of time, these are the lords of life. I dare

not assume to give them order.... I am a fragment, and this [picture of experience] is a fragment of me.... All I know is reception; I am and I have: but I do not get, and when I have fancied I had gotten anything, I found I did not." Such is man's circumstance, sufficient to call terror out of the abyss of consciousness. For the arresting problem is that each one seems within himself to be at once a world set apart, yet not a world but only a fragment which knows only "reception." One is neither autonomous nor self-sufficient, though separate and self-dependent.

What one encounters in Emerson's essay is the phenomenological dilemma which was to trouble Eliot's and our world after the problem had been so extensively developed out of the nineteenth century as to become pervasive of Western thought. The dilemma is that consciousness has in it the troublesome sense that some unity has been lost by the act of consciousness turning in upon itself. At the point of self-consciousness, the desire for unity haunts the self as if a faint memory of a lost state in Eden. Now consciousness finds itself burdened as well by conscience; for it seems the destroyer of its own unified world; it feels compelled to recover that world as a moral act no less than an intellectual one. Yet intellectually it finds itself forever trapped in the self, that "original" Emerson speaks of in which pictures drift as if faint projections of and by that very original. Though the projections are "notional" of existing selves or globes or objects separate from the "notioning" self, consciousness through all its gathered faculties can conclude the notions no more than an effect of fancy curling about and clinging to the ambiguous images it contains. Still there is that painful briar of conscience struck into consciousness along with the lovely rose of the self, as Eliot recognizes in his early poetry. Indeed it seems a splinter wounding awareness; it seems an alien presence out of some remote and mythical history perhaps. Perhaps it may be merely a Puritan inheritance. Whatever and however, conscience stirs one. In Eliot's words from his "Prelude," it

becomes "impatient to assume the world."

The distance between Emerson's thought in "Experience" and Eliot's at the outset of his journey, when he is writing "Preludes" and "Prufrock" and a dissertation on F. H. Bradley's *Knowledge and Experience*, is not great. But by the time the young Eliot has encountered the phenomenological dilemma and pursued it in intellectual history back to Leibnitz and even Descartes, a despair has begun to assume the Western mind. The hopefulness that had been Emerson's has rapidly dissipated as Western thought accelerates from the wonders of introspection to the terrors of alienation. Emerson can affirm, perhaps with too much protest to convince of his comfortable assurance, that "Into every intelligence there is a door which is never closed, through which the creator passes." But as we read Emerson the question arises, who is the creator he means? Is the movement he affirms *outward from* or *inward to* the consciousness through the door he declares. If "In self-trust all the virtues are comprehended," self-sufficiency may itself be elevated to virtue when it is merely an illusion. This transcendental spokesman insists on one occasion that "It is one soul that animates [all] men." But on another he must declare a separation of men so profound that each must use his own key to unlock the world of the self; from thence each enters upon a void which is to be filled by the self, becoming an enlarged but still separate world. Still, "we cannot say too little of our constitutional necessity of seeing things under private aspects, or saturated with our humors.... That need makes in morals the capital virtue of self-trust. We must...by more vigorous self-recoveries, after sallies of action, possess our axis more firmly."

Such strong moralistic faith in one's existential self justified Emerson's judgment that each man may trust himself, a circular argument that entraps. "I possess such a key to my own [facts] as persuades me, against all...denials, that [all men] also have a key to theirs," although "I cannot dispose of other people's facts." There is, however, another way of putting the mat-

ter than Emerson's, one less self-assured:

I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a
prison...

Before *The Waste Land*, there was Bradley; before him Husserl. But we find Emerson prophetic of Husserl and of the ensuing phenomenological byways of existence, the tangle of knowledge with experience that entraps consciousness:

It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery we have made that we exist. That discovery is called the Fall of Man. Ever afterwards we suspect our instruments. 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.... Perhaps these subject-lenses have a creative power; perhaps there are no objects. Once we lived in what we saw; now, the rapaciousness of this new power, which threatens to absorb all things, engages us. Nature, art, persons, letters, religions, objects, successively tumble in, and God is but one of its ideas. Nature and literature are subjective phenomena; every evil and every good thing is a shadow which we cast.

Emerson's conception of the Fall of Man will be explored by Husserl and his successors more scrupulously than Emerson does; for in spite of his insistence upon the isolation of the individual consciousness from its kind in the world, Emerson assumes the persuasiveness of analogy and rhetorical strategies in general in breaching closed worlds.

Eliot was to find phenomenology inadequate at a most personal level, and dramatizes the inadequacy in his poetry. He might have quoted from Emerson's "Experience" in his note to *The Waste Land's* "key" lines which we quote above. What Eliot gives us instead in his note is a passage from Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* which puts the dilemma more

clearly, less hopefully, but also less ironically than has been his manner up to *The Waste Land*:

My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it.... In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.

Here is Bradley's version of Emerson's "experience" of the untouching spheres, put at the extreme position to which nineteenth century thought leads, the swamp of despond from which the young Eliot attempts to extricate himself by intellect.

One hears in the Emerson passage, and in "Experience" generally, two additional anticipations of the modern intellect. In the languid, almost defeated tone of a considerable portion of the essay, we find ourselves not far removed from an image of that spiritual state increasingly dear to modernist intellect, especially to our poets since the time of Baudelaire: *ennui*, accompanied by ironic understatement. And in the thought accompanying the tone, one hears a faint prophecy of Heidegger. For Heidegger, the way to a recovery from the shock of the awareness of our own existence is to empty the awareness; such a self-negation by introspection summons Being-itself into "presence." On another occasion we shall consider Heidegger's argument at some length in relation to Emerson's Southern contemporary, Edgar Allan Poe, concluding it the argument of a closed system. As seen from inside consciousness, or rather through a *fiction* of seeing from inside consciousness, the argument allows little ground for the mystery of any transcendence of being or of any rescue not determined by the action of the self. Additionally, Being-itself appears contained within the limits of the finite for Heidegger. Now what we may discover in Emerson's thought, perhaps to our surprise, is

that it too presents a closed world in spite of all his talk of transcendentalism. Emerson has substituted for the closed cosmology of the Egyptian prince, which Voegelin presents in *Israel and Revelation*, a closed cosmology in which each isolated consciousness is the prince of its world. The consciousness can give to, sympathize with, and control only the self. To the self, life is "a flux of moods," but there is "that in us which changes not and which ranks all sensations and states of mind. The consciousness in each man is a sliding scale, which identifies him now with the First Cause, and now with the flesh of his body; life above life, in infinite degrees." Emerson's *infinite* is, however, limited by consciousness. And First Cause is a creature of consciousness like any other. "Fortune, Minerva, Muse, Holy Ghost—these are quaint names, too narrow to cover this unbounded substance.... the metaphor of each has become a national religion," though one must not forget that these are but "ideas" out of the "rapaciousness of [the] new power," the power bred reactively by introspective consciousness.

When Emerson says that *God* is but one of the ideas in consciousness or that *Minerva* or *Holy Ghost* are only "quaint names," we see in him that very ancient error of nominalism which Richard Weaver sees William of Ockham disseminating in Western thought. As with most ideas of consequence, this one appears more anciently. Roscelin, for instance, in opposing St. Anselm had declared that universals are not *res*, actual existences, but merely *voces*, words, or *nomina*, names. Those names are convenient to intellectual discourse, but they "name" no reality. Whenever such argument occurs, whether in Roscelin or Ockham or Emerson, it signals a point of intellectual crises at some tangent to the equally ancient controversy over Plato's "idea" as reality as opposed to the shadow of idea mistaken as reality. In such Nominalist thought as Emerson's the destructive shift is from the transcendent to man's mind as both the residence and cause of reality. Universals are not real, but under that vague term *universal* the

very ground of being becomes too easily consumed; what becomes most real is man's *naming*, in that naming allows discourse. Thus *idea* is given a different reality from its Platonic burden, one which infects the popular spirit in a most subtle way. Mind need not deny the "reality" of "nature" under nominalism; it only denies "universals," of which nature (it is suggested) is mistakenly taken as cause through intellectual error. In the fogginess of that intersection of *universal* and *nature* in the popular mind, the ground of being (the *esse*) becomes dissipated.

The rise of nominalism as authority in the popular spirit accompanies a transition in the meaning of *hypothesis*, a transition Owen Barfield explores in *Saving the Appearances: A Study of Idolatry*. In its classical and medieval sense, hypothesis was not presumed a statement of truth or about truth but an image of "appearances" for the sake of mind, so that mind might proceed in the world and with the world—a necessary concession to and acknowledgement of the limits of man's powers of vision or reason. That is, the image was not presumed the reality, which presumption would be a form of idolatry: "the Greek and medieval astronomers were not at all disturbed by the fact that some appearances could be saved by two or more quite different hypotheses, such as...in the case of Venus and Mercury, by supposed revolution round the earth or supposed revolution round the sun." (Copernicus, Barfield reminds us, did not want to publish *De Revolutionibus Orbium* and did so at last "by the importunity of two eminent Churchmen.") The signal shift, however, comes with Galileo; for what occurred was not a "new theory of the nature of the celestial movements...but a new theory of the nature of theory; namely, that if a hypothesis saves all the appearances, it is identical with truth." The classical or medieval mind would not be so disturbed by the conflict between the theory of light as particles and the theory of light as waves, as the modern mind is considerably disturbed. For the modern mind is so cast that it must contend with

contradictory "truths" that seem irreconcilable, yet it lacks a comfort of spirit necessary to accommodate itself to the world of paradox which is a reflection of man's insufficiency in the presence of mystery. The transition from Newton's world to Einstein's has proved intellectually traumatic for this reason, given the rigidity of "the new theory of theory." To live with paradox is to acknowledge the limited power in the human mind, the most difficult burden of all to the modern spirit since it is so resolutely set upon the conquest of all being. In that program of conquest, there is scant time for the measure of hypothesis or theory within a larger perspective upon existence—with an openness to creation. For what modern man has discovered is that power is generated by the closing of the self, as in the internal combustion engine. We scarcely remember the quiet wisdom presented us as an inheritance in Genesis: God brought creatures before Adam "to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." The *creatura* exists before the naming.

The shift of power over being through nominalist usurpation of *esse* is accompanied by a vacuum between the Bringer of creatures and that special creature man, a vacuum which man fills by action. Writing on the effects of this willful presumption in "Postscript: On Paradise and Revolution," Voegelin points out to us that "in the vacuum left when the reality of the Holy Ghost has been successfully eclipsed there will unfold the new Freedom of the Vacuum...—as Hegel has called the state of consciousness peculiar to closed existences.... But Hell is quite accommodating; the closed Eden is not the preserve of artists and poets. Behind them through the men of action 'who make their strength their God.'" And the ultimate strength of those men in the modern world is the authority of theory which they propound as if creator. The power residing in name, that primitive mystery we encounter in Yahweh or in Odysseus (the name *Noman* is an escape from entrapment as

much as Odysseus' actions in Polphemus' cave), is lowered from the mystery of an openness to existence to the science of closing power over existence by modernist thought, but with an accompanying destruction: for "A human vacuum [such as conceived by Hegel] is not the divine *Nihil*," says Voegelin, "but man's deformation of his humanity in its social and historical context.... Above all, the worlds created are marked by the opacity of a consciousness that no longer can draw the line between reality and imagination." That is the confusion we examine in Sartre's argument, in connection with his most difficult act of collaring the Holy Ghost and throwing Him out of the cellar of his mind. Nominalism, then, necessarily contributes to the separation of mind from nature; its abstract position is one within which names are given an authority by a faith that the mind creates the object by its act of naming. Such is one species of the intellectual act of separation toward alienation, the separation of grace from nature and of imagination from reason which Flannery O'Connor remarks as peculiar to modernism and which she explicitly remarks in Emerson.

Such metaphors as Minerva or Holy Ghost are attempts to name a "vast-flowing vigor" (says Emerson, quoting Mencius), a vigor which one is advised "will fill up the vacancy between heaven and earth. This vigor accords with and assists justice and reason, and leaves no hunger." Having quoted Mencius, having pointed to metaphors as Fortune and Minerva and the Holy Ghost, to name the vigor as various, Emerson concludes: "In our more correct writing we give to this generalization the name of Being, and thereby confess that we have arrived as far as we can go." *Being* for Emerson is sensed in the wash and flow between "power and form," in the closed world of the consciousness of individual man. Being's only certification lies in the consciousness' own rapaciousness of power. Nevertheless, that power must operate with the sense that "an innavigable sea washes with silent waves between us and the things we aim at and converse with." In Emerson

there is no such distinction as that St. Thomas makes between *ens* and *esse*, as there is no allowance made that "First Cause" may indeed be First Cause in a truly transcendent way: that is, the real author of the ground of being which Emerson perceives as unexplained flux. For Emerson, then, there can be no possibility of a community of individual worlds, though he finds compensation in the self's firm axis, possessed more firmly after the consciousness' rapacious "sallies of action," from which it returns to its own center and possesses that center more firmly.

Given the entrapment of his closed system, what then? Self-comfort lies in believing that that rarest of creatures and the ultimate hero—Man Thinking—is "the world's eye. He is the world's heart." Yet even Emerson's hero feels compelled to recover a life that existed before his Fall into consciousness, a life which "has no memory," in which the moment dissolves all time to an unreflective present. At his height, Man Thinking is yet incomplete. Here we come to Emerson's second anticipation of modernism, to a position developed, despite Heidegger's protests, out of Heidegger's own thought. Life is to be recovered by continuous action, by those "sallies of action" that define the central axis of the self. The "Hardest roughest action is visionary," says Emerson. "People disparage knowing and the intellectual life, and urge doing," but Man Thinking is the ultimate doing. That is the cheering message Emerson thinks he brings us. The solution to the dilemma of the self divided against itself lies in thought; more specifically perhaps it lies in the visionary statement of Parmenides that "thought, and the object of thought are the same." Like Heidegger, Emerson believes that this anciently stated paradox is most timeless in its significance. Yet it must be solved and its solution lies in an integration of thought and object which would dissolve self-awareness. The *power* whereby that new *form* is to be accomplished (key terms in "Experience") is in the consciousness:

A subject and an object—it takes so

much to make the galvanic circuit complete, but magnitude adds nothing. What imports it whether it is Kepler and the sphere, Columbus and America, a reader and his book, or puss with her tail?

Magnitude or *import* within the circuit itself is of no consequence, we might observe, because true magnitude, the truly heroic elevation, lies not in the subject-object, but in the receiving observer as he apprehends the galvanic circuit of subject-object. For here is Emerson raising himself to the level of Man Thinking, who appears to perform an alchemy, who projects a unity of subject-object—Kepler-sphere; puss-tail. The catch is that one has a new complexity in respect to the action of thought, a new problem of subject-object: Emerson as subject, Kepler-sphere as object. The problem results from the extraction of awareness from the vision, the recession of the medium from its burden. It is the problem which Whitman, for instance, is constantly engaging as the problem of point of view, the metaphysical and not simply technical problem in his art: the problem of the recessive observer.

Emerson is more confident in the face of this problem than Whitman in his various songs of the self, and he puts his confidence with authority to the "American Scholar": one forces oneself to solve the phenomenological impasse by engaging the stream of life. Indeed, one may conclude more happily that "every thing that tends to insulate the individual...tends to be true union as well as greatness," so long as the hero—Man Thinking—does not forget that "The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature...." The law, let us not forget, is action of intellect within consciousness. It is a law discovered in this new age of the world which Emerson is at pains to name and celebrate: "the age of Introversion." Man's divinity is measured by his action sparked by introspection—by reaction to the realization that, save action itself, the "world of any moment is the merest appearance." In brief, Emerson's solution to

the phenomenological dilemma is essentially that of Jean-Paul Sartre, though he puts it more cheerfully than Sartre and though Sartre is a more careful scholastic in building the position.¹ The "creative power" of the "subject-lenses which we are" reveals itself as action of the will, whereby our world comes into existence as we will it to be. Each man is his own creator; in the act of that creation, he becomes his own saviour, though he "quaintly" name God or Jesus in the action. For "Jesus, the 'Providential man,'" is only "a good man on whom many people are agreed that these optical laws [of the individual's projecting will] shall take effect."

There is evidence in Emerson's argument also of the continuing battle between the advocates who divide man's little world between active work and passive faith as the modes of self-rescue, the old war which leads in our day to Sartre's position which is an extension of the Puritan "work" ethic as I argue elsewhere. That Emerson is himself heavily committed to labor as the first necessity of rescue needs only our attention to the emphasis he gives it in "The American Scholar." Man Thinking, the ultimate hero, *transmutes* all experience into thought, "life into truth," a never-ending *process*. (The emphasis is Emerson's.) For Emerson action—man's proper work—is that of the mind whereby mind sees "mediately" through the "colored and distorting lenses which we are." That action is the way to the truth, by the light of mind. (*I am the way and the truth and the light, Emerson contends.*) But the way is one of indirection. The distorting lenses are perhaps rectified in some degree by a stoical indifference, especially insofar as nature herself is taken as indifferent. "Life itself is a bubble and skepticism, and a sleep within a sleep. Grant it...." (Poe, we remember, says much the same.)

That hardly sounds like the Emerson we know, for generally he sees nature as infinitely benevolent and yielding, as "the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal and one is print." Here we may note an inversion of Lockean epistemology, though the impetus is more

particularly Swedenborgian. Nature is *Doppelgänger*, the "other me." Or perhaps it is a species of prime matter, as it were, through which intellect "transmutes life into truth," the shadowy "other" mysteriously incarnating the self in the shadow. What Emerson is intent upon is a shift from an older Puritan drift which takes nature as a stepping stone to the infinite. We remember that he is speaking at Harvard, where more than a hundred years earlier the new Puritan science of technometria was established as a master plan whereby the new world could be transformed into New Eden. Emerson's shifting of those old grounds in "The American Scholar" allows the individual mind by its own action to possess and control the infinite, to "fill up the vacancy between heaven and earth" as Mencius says.

A final word on the craftiness of indirection which Emerson advocates and practices. It is "New English" we might say. It appears in such apparently open creatures as Emerson, on whose strategy of indirection Matthiessen gives us cogent exposition. One is tempted to call it a "Yankee" version of the Mystical Way. It is, for instance, in Robert Frost, in the playful seriousness of his "For Once, Then, Something." He puts it in epigram for us as conclusion to "A Passing Glimpse": "Heaven gives its glimpses only to those / Not in a position to look too close." Heaven or nature "hates peeping," but hates as well direct assault. Such a sly manner of stalking truth seems improper to Hawthorne, but so does the more direct assault of Whitman, with its dissipation of the world. The still point which Emerson rationalizes, and which Whitman attempts to seize by a force of words which would burst the dam of the self, is far removed from the one Emerson's Concord neighbor sought, as it is far from that toward which Eliot is to climb painfully out of *The Waste Land*, up the stair of "Ash-Wednesday" and away from the closed world of the self's introspection or the atomized expansion of the self as in Whitman.

Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence to our argument here that Section III of "Ash-

Wednesday" begins "At the first turning of the second stair." Eliot's analogues are usually richly multiple, and here include St. John of the Cross, Dante's *Purgatorio*, and especially St. Augustine's account of vision at Ostia in the *Confessions* (Bk IX, Ch. 10). But we may note as well Emerson's opening words in "Experience," in which he puts the awakening to self-consciousness metaphorically: "We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight." One might also find Eliot's rejection of Whitman I believe in "What the Thunder Said," Section V of *The Waste Land*, lines 346-59, the prelude to the visionary paragraph that follows. One reads both passages against Sections 9, 13, 14 of "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed." When Eliot says, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," "The point of view I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul," we remember that he has been struggling for years with monadic thought out of Leibniz down to Bradley's attempt on the question of the unity of existence. But in that same period he is very conscious of Emerson as representing a species of monadic thought influential in Unitarianism, Eliot's own immediate family origin.

We may conclude of Emerson's position that it troubles Hawthorne and Eliot because it advances as the ultimate charity possible that which the self pays itself. The ultimate responsibility of the self is selfhood. To thine own self be true is its shibboleth. For to Emerson the self is its own and ultimate end, however generous he appears in the gestures of his analogies or his friendly use of a collective "we." "The great man makes the great thing." And all others find their being in him, through the institutions or things he makes. "All the rest behold in the hero or poet their own green and crude being—ripened; yes, to its full stature." The fullness of Jesus as a great man, the "providential man," is possible through the

sacrifice of the lesser men. The hero becomes great through his indifference to all save the divinity of self, accepting the sacrifices of lesser men to his own realization. Emerson concludes his "Experience" with an assertion which Hawthorne, the writer of "romances," must reject: "the true romance which the world exists to realize will be the transformation of genius into power." Incipient in the words is a Roger Chillingworth, an Ethan Brand. If Emerson's is a conclusion Hawthorne would hardly find compatible, we may ourselves, with the ironic light cast upon Emerson's arguments by the intervening years, find his innocence less endearing. We know, for instance, the transforma-

tions of genius to power out of a Nietzsche or Marx, as we know the chaos that follows from the principle that each man is the king of his only world. The subtle Machiavellian, seeing the potential of the transformation, will practice with persuasive rhetoric the principle which holds atom man to be random, suitable to be harnessed in sacrifice to the great man who would make the great thing—at great cost to the little worlds of mankind. The point is becoming crucial to Eliot when he writes:

The lengthened shadow of a man
Is history, said Emerson
Who had not seen the silhouette
Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.

¹John Courtney Murray argues in *The Problem of God* that "Sartre is a Scholastic. He stands to the prophecy of Nietzsche [that God is Dead] as the Scholastic stood to the prophecy of the New Testament.... The scholastic question was, is what faith affirms intelligible? Sartre begins with the myth of the death of God. It is apparently his one article of faith, accepted as true without question. His question then is Scholastic [since it stands on faith], whether what

faith affirms is intelligible...." Properly stated, his question is whether what faith affirms, that God is dead, is livable. His intention is to "'ex-ist' the death of God,...to make a phenomenological description of the man from whom God is absent." (114) "For man to be thus free [in the Sartrean sense] is for him to be God. And this is absurdity squared," a deliberate absurdity raised to its highest pitch by Sartre. For to Sartre, the "living God is the death of man." (116)