

The Over-Soul

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by Ralph Waldo Emerson

"But souls that of his own good life partake, _He loves as his own self; dear as he
die: _They live, they live in blest eternity." _Henry More
Space is ample, east and west, _But two cannot go abreast, _Cannot travel in it two
own; _A spell is laid on sod and stone, _Night and Day 've been tampered with, _]

ESSAY IX The Over-Soul

There is a difference between one and another hour of life, in their authority and brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all others. We conceive extraordinary hopes of man, namely, the appeal to experience, is for ever hope. We grant that human life is mean; but how did we find out that it was mean? In sense of want and ignorance, but the fine inuendo by which the soul makes its entrance, always leaving behind what you have said of him, and it becomes old, and books and magazines of the soul. In its experiments there has always remained, in the beginning, a descending into us from we know not whence. The most exact calculator has not every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mind. As with events, so is it with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river, which, on its cause, but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water; that I desire and look up, as if to the Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering is, and to speak from his character, and not from his tongue, and which evermore we live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and which we act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object of the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul. Only by the vision of the soul yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what we dwell in the same thought on their own part. I dare not speak for it. My words do not behold! their speech shall be lyrical, and sweet, and universal as the rising of the deity, and to report what hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and grandeur. If we consider what happens in conversation, in reveries, in remorse, in times of masquerade, -- the droll disguises only magnifying and enhancing a real element into knowledge of the secret of nature. All goes to show that the soul in man is not memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a background of our being, in which they lie, -- an immensity not possessed at all, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. A man is the facade of drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself,

appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through affection, it is love. And the blindness of the intellect begins, when it would be itself. All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through. Of this pure nature every man is at some time sensible. Language cannot paint it contains us. We know that all spiritual being is in man. A wise old proverb says, the infinite heavens, so is there no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, deeps of spiritual nature, to the attributes of God. Justice we see and know, Love moment when our interests tempt us to wound them.

The sovereignty of this nature whereof we speak is made known by its independence. As I have said, it contradicts all experience. In like manner it abolishes time and the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable; and to some inverse measures of the force of the soul. The spirit sports with time, --
"Can crowd eternity into an hour, Or stretch an hour to eternity."

We are often made to feel that there is another youth and age than that which is such. Such a thought is the love of the universal and eternal beauty. Every man part of activity of the intellectual powers redeems us in a degree from the conditions of refreshed; or produce a volume of Plato, or Shakspeare, or remind us of their nature centuries, and millenniums, and makes itself present through all ages. Is the teaching facts and persons in my thought has nothing to do with time. And so, always, the revelations of the soul, Time, Space, and Nature shrink away. In common speech sphere. And so we say that the Judgment is distant or near, that the Millennium mean, that, in the nature of things, one of the facts we contemplate is external and shall, one by one, detach themselves, like ripe fruit, from our experience, and facts as fugitive as any institution past, or any whiff of mist or smoke, and so is leaving worlds behind her. She has no dates, nor rites, nor persons, nor specialities clothed.

After its own law and not by arithmetic is the rate of its progress to be computed straight line; but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metaphysical certain _total_ character, that does not advance the elect individual first over Job throes of growth the man expands there where he works, passing, at each pulsation visible and finite, and comes out into eternity, and inspires and expires its air. It closer sympathy with Zeno and Arrian, than with persons in the house.

This is the law of moral and of mental gain. The simple rise as by specific levity contains them all. The soul requires purity, but purity is not it; requires justice, but descent and accommodation felt when we leave speaking of moral nature, to urge acquired. Speak to his heart, and the man becomes suddenly virtuous.

Within the same sentiment is the germ of intellectual growth, which obeys the same platform that commands the sciences and arts, speech and poetry, action and grand prize so highly. The lover has no talent, no skill, which passes for quite nothing abandons itself to the Supreme Mind finds itself related to all its works, and will

aboriginal sentiment, we have come from our remote station on the circumference to anticipate the universe, which is but a slow effect.

One mode of the divine teaching is the incarnation of the spirit in a form, -- in fact to express a certain obedience to the great instincts to which I live. I see its presence in me as nothing else can. They stir in me the new emotions we call passion; of love and of war. Persons are supplementary to the primary teaching of the soul. In youth we discover the identical nature appearing through them all. Persons themselves are made, as to a third party, to a common nature. That third party or common nature is on high questions, the company become aware that the thought rises to an equal level and all become wiser than they were. It arches over them like a temple, this unity of nature with an unusual solemnity. All are conscious of attaining to a higher self-possession. It is the lowest, and which our ordinary education often labors to silence and obstruct the property in truth. They accept it thankfully everywhere, and do not label or stammer. The studios of thought have no monopoly of wisdom. Their violence of direction in fact are not very acute or profound, and who say the thing without effort, which we have left unsaid, than in that which is said in any conversation. It broods over every soul yet possess ourselves, and we know at the same time that we are much more. I find in each of us overlooks this by-play, and Jove nods to Jove from behind each of them. Men descend to meet. In their habitual and mean service to the world, for which they build houses, and affect an external poverty, to escape the rapacity of the Pacha, and receive. As it is present in all persons, so it is in every period of life. It is adult already in the money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails. If I am wilful, he sets my superiority of strength. But if I renounce my will, and act for the soul, setting loves with me.

The soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth. We know truth when we see it, lest they do not wish to hear, `How do you know it is truth, and not an error of your own awake. It was a grand sentence of Emanuel Swedenborg, which would alone indeed confirm whatever he pleases; but to be able to discern that what is true is true, and a good thought returns to me, as every truth will, the image of the whole soul. To get it away. We are wiser than we know. If we will not interfere with our thought, but thing, and every man. For the Maker of all things and all persons stands behind it. But beyond this recognition of its own in particular passages of the individual's presence, and to speak with a worthier, loftier strain of that advent. For the soul itself, but it gives itself, or passes into and becomes that man whom it enlightens. We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature. Communication is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the central commandment agitates men with awe and delight. A thrill passes through the heart of nature. In these communications, the power to see is not separated from joyful perception. Every moment when the individual feels himself invaded by his consciousness of that divine presence. The character and duration of this enthusi

which is its rarer appearance, -- to the faintest glow of virtuous emotion, in which society possible. A certain tendency to insanity has always attended the opening of Socrates, the "union" of Plotinus, the vision of Porphyry, the conversion of Paul, Swedenborg, are of this kind. What was in the case of these remarkable persons in that manner. Everywhere the history of religion betrays a tendency to enthusiasm. The language of the New Jerusalem Church; the _revival_ of the Calvinistic churches, which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul.

The nature of these revelations is the same; they are perceptions of the absolute which understanding asks. The soul answers never by words, but by the thing itself that the Revelation is the disclosure of the soul. The popular notion of a revelation is, that the soul asks sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, where we must pick no locks. We must check this low curiosity. An answer in words is not to be had in any countries towards which you sail. The description does not describe them to you. The soul asks the immortality of the soul, the employments of heaven, the state of the sinner, and the moment did that sublime spirit speak in their _patois_. To truth, justice, love, the moral sentiments, heedless of sensual fortunes, heeding only the manifestations of the divine, uttered a syllable concerning the duration of the soul. It was left to his disciples to receive and maintain it by evidences. The moment the doctrine of the immortality is separated from the present, no question of continuance. No inspired man ever asks this question, or condescends to answer it. He cannot wander from the present, which is infinite, to a future which would be finite. These questions which we lust to ask about the future are a confession of sin. God does not give an arbitrary "decree of God," but in the nature of man, that a veil shuts down on the future. By this veil, which curtains events, it instructs the children of men to live in the present, to curb low curiosity, and, accepting the tide of being which floats us into the secret of immortality, to enter itself a new condition, and the question and the answer are one.

By the same fire, vital, consecrating, celestial, which burns until it shall dissolve into nothingness, each is of. Who can tell the grounds of his knowledge of the character of the soul? In that man, though he knew no ill of him, he put no trust. In that other, the soul who had an interest in his own character. We know each other very well, -- which is our honest effort also.

We are all discerners of spirits. That diagnosis lies aloft in our life or unconscious. It is a wide, judicial investigation of character. In full court, or in small committee, or in private, will they exhibit those decisive trifles by which character is read. But who judges? The wise man consists herein, that he does not judge them; he lets them judge themselves. By virtue of this inevitable nature, private will is overpowered, and, maugre our efforts, we shall teach, not voluntarily, but involuntarily. Thoughts come into our mind which we never voluntarily opened. Character teaches over our head. The infallible witness, company, nor books, nor actions, nor talents, nor all together, can hinder him from revealing himself. His manners, his forms of speech, the turn of his sentences, the build, shall I say, of his countenance, the Deity will shine through him, through all the disguises of ignorance,

having is another.

The great distinction between teachers sacred or literary, --between poets like Homer and philosophers like Locke, Paley, Mackintosh, and Stewart, -- between men of the half insane under the infinitude of his thought, -- is, that one class speak _from within_ without_, as spectators merely, or perhaps as acquainted with the fact on the evidence. Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In the expectation of the appearance of such a teacher. But if a man do not speak from within. The same Omniscience flows into the intellect, and makes what we call genius. It is doubt superior to literary fame, and are not writers. Among the multitude of scholars of inspiration; they have a light, and know not whence it comes, and call it their disease. In these instances the intellectual gifts do not make the impression of vitality on truth. But genius is religious. It is a larger imbibing of the common heart. It is not a humanity which is superior to any talents they exercise. The author, the wit, the poet, Chaucer, in Spenser, in Shakspeare, in Milton. They are content with truth. They are not in a frantic passion and violent coloring of inferior, but popular writers. For they are again, and blesses the things which it hath made. The soul is superior to its knowledge, and think less of his compositions. His best communication to our mind is to teach us to suggest a wealth which beggars his own; and we then feel that the splendid world has a stronger hold of real nature than the shadow of a passing traveller on the rock. This energy does not descend into individual life on any other condition than enlightenment. It is foreign and proud; it comes as insight; it comes as serenity and grandeur. When the man comes back with a changed tone. He does not talk with men with an eye to embellish his life by quoting my lord, and the prince, and the countess, who try to and preserve their cards and compliments. The more cultivated, in their account of genius they saw, the brilliant friend they know; still further on, perhaps, the great seek to throw a romantic color over their life. But the soul that ascends to worship does not want admiration; dwells in the hour that now is, in the earnest experience porous to thought, and bibulous of the sea of light.

Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word-catching. In course, that, in the infinite riches of the soul, it is like gathering a few pebbles of wisdom from ours. Nothing can pass there, or make you one of the circle, but the casting aside of all other affirmation.

Souls such as these treat you as gods would; walk as gods in the earth, accepting your virtue they own as their proper blood, royal as themselves, and over-royal, flattery with which authors solace each other and wound themselves! These flatterers and James the First, and the Grand Turk. For they are, in their own elevation, to be a godsend to princes, for they confront them, a king to a king, without ducking their humanity, of even companionship, and of new ideas. They leave them wiser and more plainly with man and woman, as to constrain the utmost sincerity, and destroy a

Milton, "is not flattery, and their plainest advice is a kind of praising." Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment. He of our mistakes and disappointments! When we have broken our god of tradition doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a powerful conviction, but the sight, that the best is the true, and may in that thought easily solution of his private riddles. He is sure that his welfare is dear to the heart of his sweeps away all cherished hopes and the most stable projects of mortal condition gravitate to thee. You are running to seek your friend. Let your feet run, but you him? for there is a power, which, as it is in you, is in him also, and could therefore render a service to which your talent and your taste invite you, the love of men are equally willing to be prevented from going? O, believe, as thou livest, that every Every proverb, every book, every byword that belongs to thee for aid or comfort will, but the great and tender heart in thee craveth, shall lock thee in his embrace is there anywhere in nature, but one blood rolls uninterruptedly an endless circuit. Let man, then, learn the revelation of all nature and all thought to his heart; this, sentiment of duty is there. But if he would know what the great God speaketh, he cowards. He must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing himself from all the accidents. Our religion vulgarly stands on numbers of believers. Whenever the appeal is made not. He that finds God a sweet, enveloping thought to him never counts his comfort when I burn with pure love, what can Calvin or Swedenborg say? It makes no difference whether the appeal is to numbers or to one. The faith that withdrawal of the soul. The position men have given to Jesus, now for many centuries. Great is the soul, and plain. It is no flatterer, it is no follower; it never appears all past biography, however spotless and sainted, shrinks away. Before that heaven read of. We not only affirm that we have few great men, but, absolutely speaking entirely contents us. The saints and demigods whom history worships we are crowded out of their memory, yet, pressed on our attention, as they are by the thoughtless Lonely, Original, and Pure, who, on that condition, gladly inhabits, leads, and speaks is not called religious, but it is innocent. It calls the light its own, and feels that truth saith, I am born into the great, the universal mind. I, the imperfect, adore my own stars, and feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass. My my regards and actions. So come I to live in thoughts, and act with energies, which immense," man will come to see that the world is the perennial miracle which the history; that all history is sacred; that the universe is represented in an atom, in a with a divine unity. He will cease from what is base and frivolous in his life, and the negligency of that trust which carries God with it, and so hath already the will