Emerson's Views on Reform^{*}

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As the most influential representative of New England Transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson has been commonly known as a man of letters and a prophet of religion. Yet, at the same time, he was also questioned by some scholars who argued that Emerson remained aloof and indifferent to both politics and reforms. Scrutinizing the addresses, essays as well as other published writings of Emerson, we can have a better understanding of his deep thought and wisdom concerning reform, and fully realize his great influence. Based on analyzing two essential aspects of Emerson's views on reform, this paper points out that Emerson's views on reform are of historical importance; and his views can also provide realistic reference and guidance to the current social reform in China.

Keywords: reform, optimism, human-oriented, morality

Introduction

When it comes to Emerson, most people tend to think of his thoughts on over-soul or transcendentalism, while paying little attention to his ideas on reform and their significance on American society. For this reason, Emerson's views on reform, some of which are still viable and have practical significance, will be elaborated on in this present study. In the first place, Emerson's views on reform do not only stem from his strong sense of social obligation and patriotic passion, together with his optimistic attitude as a great scholar, but are deeply rooted in the special historical era when America is experiencing unprecedented changes in all respects. In terms of economy, the expansion of mass production of machinery greatly promoted the development of the capitalist economy, yet people tended to be more self-concerned. In the case of politics, the democratic system has been consolidated but was still confronted with challenges in that the democracy of the common people was manipulated by some rulers who cared only about their own benefits, ignoring the public welfare and social justice. As for religion, it has become a mere formality rather than a mode to cultivate people to be kind and benevolent in heart. In all, the mid-19th century America was in urgent need of reform and a surge of social reform that swept across America did occur in various forms. Reforms in those years were characterized by perfectionist ideas of improving American society. Under such circumstances, Emerson, instead of being indifferent to politics and reforms as has been claimed to be, put forward his views on reforms positively and enthusiastically. In this study, Emerson's (2001) views on reform consist of two aspects. First of all, Emerson

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believes that the reform should begin with the reform of the self or the individual. The improvement and innovation of the individual should be the base of the reform in other aspects. As far as Emerson is concerned, the individual is both the reformer and the reformed, and with their initiatives, potentialities, they could reach the perfect condition. Since each individual is a participant, the improvement of the self will be conducive to the whole development of the society; secondly, Emerson's views of reform attach great importance to the hearts, the morals of human beings. Reforms should be committed to lifting up the individual's spiritual world and sense of sentiment and love, because only in a society where each is bonded together on account of love rather than material benefits can survive and thrive. With his emphasis on the self and the morals of human beings, Emerson would like to elevate the individual and purge their soul so that the national quality and the national moral standards can be raised, which are also the hopes of success for all social reforms. For Emerson, the essential cure of social problems is through self-improvement and the promotion of individuals in both heart and soul, which give fresh life to the whole society, and these are just what Emerson's Human-oriented reform and Morality-oriented reform are committed to achieving.

Being a distinguished philosopher, an essayist, and a poet in the 19th century of America, Ralph Waldo Emerson has constantly enriched his philosophy by virtue of the fusion of West and Eastern cultures with his boldness and creativity. His independent claims and innovative ideas give impetus to the development and perfection of American's national spirit of being independent, liberal as well as innovative. As the representative of New England Transcendentalism, Emerson has been hailed as "the Leader of American Renaissance" and also referred to as "a Prophet of the American Spirit" by President Abraham Lincoln. Although generations of scholars and historians have so well agreed with the general public to link Emerson's name with a man of letters and a spiritual leader, some scholars, at the same time, put forward arguments against him for being indifferent to politics and social reforms. Here comes Professor Girard who holds that Emerson is not a true Transcendentalist "because of his platonic cast of mind, his egotism and indifference to practical reforms and reformers" (Michaud, 1919, p. 73). Nevertheless, with reference to Emerson's numerous essays and lectures such as *Man the Reformer* (1841) and *New England Reformers* (1844), it is not difficult to find out that Emerson is in fact a faithful supporter of reform. With a positive and optimistic attitude toward reform, Emerson (1983) emphasizes that a full range of social reform should be initiated from the individual, the reform of whom should be based on the promotion of his or her soul. Thus, what Emerson is always advocating is a long-term and in-depth reform rather than an absurd and pedantic one.

Emerson's ideas on reform developed under the profound historical background. The American society in the 19th century was in urgent need of carrying out all-round reform. On the one hand, America enjoyed the prosperity of the rapid economic development; on the other hand, its negative effects were gradually brought about. The pursuit of wealth and profit stained people's upright nature so that Emerson (2001) wonders "this whole business of Trade gives me to pause and think, as it constitutes false relations between men" (p. 223). People were in the midst of serious faith crisis and were experiencing a spiritual wasteland, merely memorizing the name of Jesus while ignoring the role of Jesus in showing love and benevolence toward human beings. The national spirit of this epoch was on the verge of a total collapse. With the loss of beliefs, confidence, and even passion, people began to doubt the future. Faced with such predicaments, Emerson did not lose his faith; instead, he optimistically and confidently expressed his ideas on reform, which, according to Emerson, should be started

from that of human beings before it spread to religion, politics, arts as well as literature. Emerson's program of reform is a thorough one which requires the church, the society, and the art, together with the literature to be reformed and renewed "by starting from our best and most personal intuition" (Michaud, 1919, p. 76). Emerson never showed indifference to reform but that he feared any halfway reform would fall short of his high aims. To this point, Professor Gray (1917) once argued: "It was not his lack of sentiment, his aloofness and coldness, that kept Emerson out of the Brook Farm Association, but rather the fundamental consistency of his thought" (p. 87).

Emerson's Human-Orientated Reform

Reformers during the American romantic period shared the general attitude of respect for the infinite potentials of individuals, believing that the reform simply meant removing impediments in the process of approaching perfection. Such beliefs promoted men to have more faith in each individual as a reservoir of possibilities, and the necessities and probabilities of individual development. Emerson (2001) stated his viewpoint on reform when he wrote:

As every man at heart wishes the best and not inferior society, wishes to be convicted of his error, and to come to himself, so he wishes that the same healing should not stop in his thought, but should penetrate his will or active power. (p. 230)

Therefore, "reform, for Emerson, began from the self" (Smith, 2006, p. 218). As far as Emerson is concerned, any individual who has not made any change to perfect himself will never succeed in reforming the whole society or even bringing a minimal change to the perfectibility of the society, no matter how hard he tries, because the society is constituted by individuals whose imperfection will affect the sound development of the society as a whole. In consequence, the all-round reform in society should be set out from the reform and perfection of the individual, which is the only way to guarantee the social reform successful and effective. In fact, the impulse of reform is deep in Emerson, who consistently believes in man's infinite potentialities of being reformed and human's continuous progress, which spurs him to come up with a special reform scheme starting with the reform of individuals.

Emerson has great expectations for the social reform which should rest on the individual's self-renovation and then be extended to all the aspects of the society. The epoch which Emerson lived in was noted for its reforms by different people and various reform movements stepping onto the historical stage with a spectacular scale from the 1850s. It was generally believed that the American society was in demand of a fundamental and immediate change to achieve good momentum for development. Dozens of Fourier farms with socialist characteristics were established across America, among which the Brook Farm Community was close to Emerson's house. However, Emerson himself was chary of joining such farms or movements aiming at reforms, and never became a participant of such reform.

As to this point, it was not timidity or unbelief of reform or his conservatism towards reform that held Emerson back, but the doubt that whether a man who was not renovated could do anything good to the whole association once he became a member of it. Another point that Emerson took into consideration was that such communities adopted shareholding economic cooperative form, the collectivism of which was quite opposite to Emerson's individualism. In these communities, in order to be in accordance with the interests of the whole, the individual would inevitably tend to erase his unique thoughts and personality, which was just what Emerson

always detested. Emerson (2001) held that every one is a unique being in the world and should have his own ideas; the group living forms would do no good but serve as a hindrance to the general development, in that the more excellent ones sometimes have to sacrifice their own benefits to strike a balance in the group. Emerson does not deny the possible advantages of collaboration, but at the same time he gives the warning that the collaborated community could never equal an individual in terms of the strength and wisdom for reform. Any social reform should focus on the renovation of the individual rather than the group and Emerson "saw clearly that man would have to be changed from within, if at all, and that institutions would be the result, not the cause" (Silver, 1940, p. 17). The reforms from the community are partial and men who immerse themselves in them will lose their aspiration for self-perfection and self-renovation, to which Emerson always attaches great importance. Thus, Emerson's human-oriented reform concerns the long-term development of the society.

In Emerson's (2001) view, the reform for a regeneration of American society should begin, not in the legislative enactments or political manipulation, or the non-governmental experiments of the various communities, but "in a calculated appeal to the American urge for individual self-improvement" (Thomas, 1965, p. 660) and self-renovation. On the issue of self-improvement and self-renovation, Emerson (2001) had great confidence and spoke highly of man's infinite potentialities and he stated that all of his lectures revolved around one doctrine: the infinite potentialities of the individual. In his essay *Self-Reliance*, Emerson (2001) stressed once again the individual's abilities and the important status of the individual in reform and revolution as follows:

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits, their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views. (p. 132)

Valuing the importance of the individual, Emerson is opposed to any confinements or restrictions which the authoritative or the ruling power would impose on the individual. He argues that the individual should strive to break away from any restrictions to attain full development, which is the first step for the reform of a wide range. With the immeasurable potential, the personal renovation and development will contribute more to the development of the society than the economic, political, and system reforms do.

Not only does Emerson emphasize the necessity and possibility of self-renovation over reform issues, but he points out that the approach to achieve this goal is through education. Emerson pays high attention to the education of the individual and sets the target that education should serve the reform. Emerson (2001) advocates the removal of any restrictions of the so-called standardized and mechanized education and is supportive of the free will of the individual, who will get feelings of pleasure, freedom and inspirations in the process of receiving education. Only by such means can the individual get self-renovation and self-improvement and at the same time, maintain his energy and passion for the social reform. According to Emerson (2001), nothing grand can be compared to the education of the individual. The highest aim of the government is to educate people, make sure that each individual could be cultivated, so that the whole society could benefit from it. In the same way, a true reformer will tend to educate the individual and make each one models of good behavior.

Emerson's human-oriented reform for one thing emphasizes the importance of self-renovation, and for another clearly shows that men are both reformer and the objects with great potential to be reformed. Only by virtue of constant human-oriented reforms could other reforms in every field be fully and successfully

implemented. Emerson's assertion of reform is in consistence with the idea that the most glorious cause in the world is to make each individual stand up from the backbone, for the development and progress of a society can be best represented in that of each individual.

Reflecting his respect and confidence in the individual's potential and capacity, Emerson's view of humanity-oriented reform has profound guiding significance for America in the mid and late 19th century when many major issues in politics, economy, and culture were to be urgently addressed by reformers. With the burgeoning industrial revolution and the flourishing frontier movement still underway, American was enjoying its economic prosperity and political democracy, but at the same time, was still confronted with more opportunities and challenges. The mass production mode on one hand helped to achieve unmatched levels of efficiency, but on the other hand, made people the "servants" relying too much on machines. They gradually lost their autonomy and passions for creativity and were stifled in the roar of the machines. The individual got used to blindly submitting to the authority, while lacking of self-reliance, originality, and independent-thinking. Under such circumstances, Emerson (2001) is so insightful that he warns that reforms carried out by the government in economy, politics or religions are far from being enough, and a thorough-going reform for the whole society ought to start from the reform and renovation of the individual who is the most important participant for all the activities. Without the individual's initiative and creativity, the society will lose its vitality for sound, harmonious, and further development and the reforms in other fields will turn out fruitless.

Emerson's assertion of the individual is like sunshine illuminating the newly-established country on her road to search for development and the national spirit. Emerson focuses his attention on the subjectivity and initiative of the individual, which, at the same time, inspires people's self-confidence and strengthens their hope for a better future with self-renovation and self-development. What's more, the humanity-oriented reform helps to awaken the individual's sense of responsibility and encourage them to make more contributions to the whole society with their self-independent thinking and talent rather than follow suit and live a mediocre life without any purpose. Emerson believes in the possibility of perfection for each person, whose self-improvement would be the best fuel for the development of the whole society. Emerson's ideas and schemes for reform provide guidance for the pioneering Americans in their efforts for self-reliance and self-independence.

Emerson's Morality-Oriented Reform

As the representative of New England Transcendentalism in the 19th America, Emerson (1983) is opposed to the idea that human beings are born to be evil and he believes in the goodness in human nature, which, actually, is a joint effect of various religious ideas and philosophical thoughts. Born in a clerical family, Emerson was introduced to the Unitarianism that lashed out at the doctrine of the original sin advocated by Calvinism. Under the influence of both creeds, Emerson develops his own understanding of human nature and holds that the so-called evil of human beings is an outcome due to social factors such as the inappropriate interpersonal relationships and wrong education. Thus, as a matter of morality, the wickedness of human beings could be cured by means of self-renovation in heart and soul. Apart from this, Emerson also draws inspirations from oriental philosophy, among which the Confucius' emphasis on ethics and personal cultivation in morality has interested Emerson a lot. Although Emerson does not make an overall evaluation on the ethical function of Confucianism in administrating the state affairs and securing the social stability, he is actually quite supportive of "the policy of

benevolence” and the concerns of ethics in Confucianism.

Emerson stands for reform yet stands firmly against violent revolution. The reform or revolution that Emerson calls for is “the one based on love” (Rautenfeld, 2004, p. 72). He thinks that revolutionary means may be conducive to reduce the temporary poverty and injustice, but if there is no spiritual improvement in the individual, the society will benefit little from the revolution in the long run. New political system and institutions could be set up as a result of the violent revolution, yet new injustice and evil will emerge if people are still in the spiritual wasteland. Thus, what Emerson tries to support is the spiritual reform of the individual, aiming at fostering noble spiritual sentiments, which, according to Emerson, is the cure for the declining society. As to this point, Emerson (2001) claims that “nothing shall warp me from the belief, that every man is a lover of truth” (p. 231).

Then we can infer that Emerson’s reform is closely related to the mind, the heart and the sentiment of the individual, whose morality and ethics could become an effective accelerator for all the goals that the social reforms are engaged to achieving. When the individual’s ethical and moral standards are raised, the improvement of the whole society will be promoted, just as Emerson (2001) claims: “Let man then learn the revelation of all nature, and all thought to his heart; this, namely; that the Highest dwells with him; that the sources of nature are in his own mind, if the sentiment of duty is there” (p. 173). What Emerson refers to by “sentiment” here is the benevolence and the tender heart of human beings. The charity, the universal love, and the moral sentiment that Emerson calls for are the representations of his view of morality-based reform.

As far as Emerson is concerned, most of the political reforms in his day are meaningless and superficial, and it is foolish to believe that the salvation of the country and the human race could be attained by the election, by the systematic changes, for “the general run of reformers wanted merely to change existing institutions or to improve the material conditions of the poor... physical betterment without moral improvement had no significance” (Padover, 1959, p. 344). Instead, Emerson advocates a reform in the very nature of man. “He wishes to raise the moral character of the human being to make him capable of true brotherhood, to elevate his soul to a level where selfishness and materialism would be replaced by the ideals of love and sharing” (Padover, 1959, p. 344).

Emerson’s confidence in the benevolence and morality of people embodies his high hope for reform, the aim of which is to establish a society where each person has a kind heart and can be sympathetic with other people around. In a society where the individuals are merely seeking power or wealth, the members tend to be alienated and aloof to each other, the result of which is to produce an abnormal society in collapse. To fulfill his goal of a benevolent society, Emerson appeals that “we are all the children of genius, the children of virtue, —and feel their inspirations in our happier hours” (Emerson, 2001, p. 228). In conclusion, as for Emerson, the reform based on morality is more effective than any political or institutional reforms.

“Emerson’s concern for public and political relations is often overlooked” (Rautenfeld, 2005, p. 185) and Emerson has frequently been dismissed as a man who is not interested in politics, the statement of which is correct if the term is limited to refer to the politics of parties and elections. But it could not simply conclude that he is indifferent to the political and social issues involving the direct interests of the common people. On the contrary, Emerson is committed to calling on the authority and the public to treat and resolve the controversial issues in the political and social arenas through his morality-based reform plan. For example, condemning the injustice, the cruelty and evil nature of slavery, Emerson is in fact treating slavery issue from a moral perspective. Thus, he dismisses scornfully any personal attempt to abolish slavery for economic reasons in that the slaves are

equal beings deserving love and sympathy, rather than being the tools for economic interests.

In Emerson's (2001) view, the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of the afflicted slaves are the moral demands for human beings as well as man's quest for the fulfillment of humanity. It means the spiritual reform of the individual is more important and urgent than the political measures, for when a man would like to open his eyes wider to the considerations of benefit to the others with his benevolence and kindness rather than focus on the interest of himself, he can also act in the interest of the whole society and even the entire country. Instead of depending on the social reforms aiming at setting up a democratic and harmonious society where everyone could enjoy freedom and democracy, Emerson believes in the moral sense of each individual, and "it is the moral sense that draws individuals together, integrates society, and makes possible the democratic way of life" (Stovall, 1942, p. 443).

Emerson attaches great importance to the benevolence in human nature and emphasizes the moral character of the individual. As to the reform and the revolution of the government, it is argued by Emerson as follows:

The end of all political struggles is to establish morality as the basis of all legislation. It is not free institutions, it is not a republic, it is not a democracy, that is the end-no, but only the means. Morality is the object of government... the government of the world is moral.... (Emerson, 1904, pp. 288-289, as cited in Blau, 1977)

To Emerson, any political reform, legislation of the government, and parties are local, partial, and temporary, and only the perfect morality and a generous spirit could result in an eternal sound and steady society. In a society where each individual can cultivate his or her noble moral sentiment under the stimulus of morality-based reform, the relationships between each other are established on account of love and justice instead of material benefits or the pursuit of power, just as Larson (2004) said:

The platform of social reform may be worth pursuing, but it is doomed to fail unless the reformer can lift us up to "some higher platform" that transcends mere individualism and allows us to glimpse "the secret soul" that brings all individuals into "perfect" union. (p. 336)

In the 1850s, America was immersed in a strong business atmosphere, under the influence of which people all tended to deal with any matter with money or profit as the criteria and make money at any cost, leaving the moral standards behind. In such a society where money-making, and extravagance became the common pursuit, people were indulged in any high-risk commercial activities, regardless of the interests of others. With a strong hatred to such phenomena, Emerson expressed his deep concern about the negative effects on the development of both man and the society. For example, the commodity commercial system put people in danger of becoming merciless and selfish savages seeking for fortune and pleasures. The establishment of relationship among men did not spring from the high sentiments of human nature and was not measured by the exact law of reciprocity, but based on a system of "distrust, of concealment, of superior keenness, not of giving but of taking advantage" (Salter, 1903, p. 416).

The indifferent commercial system was eroding every aspect in the country and was also destroying man's benevolent nature to such an extent that the laws, the legislations, and even the reform plans were not set up out of care and affection but out of selfishness and self-protection. Facing such moral predicaments, Emerson (2001) believes that it is the most significant thing to launch the wind of spiritual reform aiming at arousing and enhancing people's morality, making man believe that there are infinite virtues in them and that all the reforms

should be committed to removing the impediments that may hinder the effect of man's perfection.

In all, Emerson is a rebel against the prevalent materialism while energetically supports the spiritual reform for moral perfection. He wants to fully and extensively reform the society by means of the moral reform so as to lay a foundation of the all-round social morality. Not only has Emerson pointed out the drawback of the materialism, but he has provided guidance for the newly rising nation to carry out reforms, encouraging people to believe that the self-renovation based on moral perfection could contribute a lot to the development of a nation towards equality, democracy, and prosperity. In a newly-established nation with a new political system, the affection, the benevolence, and the dignity of man could be the powerful weapon to fight against any inequality and injustice brought about by money-seeking and emotionless mass production.

Historical and Practical Significance of Emerson's Views on Reform

Eileen Chang has translated Emerson's essays into Chinese. She once said that Emerson's works, even today, still held their effectiveness and significance and there was no reason to deny this point. It is not exaggerated to say that Emerson's ideas and philosophy do not become outdated but prove to be more enlightening and involve more reference value in modern society. His optimistic attitude towards reform, his respect and emphasis on the individual's value and morality are the common wealth of mankind, transcending the national boundaries and time boundaries.

Emerson's positive and optimistic attitudes towards reform and his reform views based on humanity and morality have not only played an indelible historical role in the mid-19th century America's political, economic, and ideological revolution but also have profound enlightenment for the various aspects of the contemporary American society. Today America is experiencing the unprecedented growth in politics, economy, and culture; meanwhile, the material prosperity also causes some moral confusions and uncertainties. Individuals are facing the risks of succumbing to the lust for money or material benefits. For instance, the root cause of the subprime lending crisis in America since the year 2007 is the basic contradiction of capitalism. Furthermore, the abuse of power and the moral corruption of the staff, financial executives, and the government regulators who try seeking excessive profits should not be simply ignored. Therefore, it is quite necessary and essential that both the government and the individual lay stress on the shaping of the personal character and high morality in that the long-standing development of a society depends on the full play of both the individual's talent and the good social morals. In a word, Emerson's concept of reform is in response to the demand of the mid-19th century and also prompts the modern American people to pay more attention to the self-development in both intelligence and morals.

Since the reform and opening-up in 1978, China has achieved remarkable accomplishments in various fields like politics, economy, culture, attracting world-wide attention. With the success, there are also challenges and problems facing China and her people. All types of desires for money and worldly pleasures result in many tough social problems. For example, some people are lack of sense of innovation and spirit of self-reliance; some others short of morals are growing more and more indifferent to people around. These practical challenges urge both the government and the common people to reconsider the reform with a purpose to maintain sound, harmonious, and long-term development. Facing both historical opportunities and challenges, the Communist Party of China put forward the Scientific Development Concept, which is a man-orientated view of reform for an overall,

harmonious, and sustainable development. Then the government work report of the 17th Congress of the CPC (Communist Party of China) explicitly pointed out the core of the scientific development policy was humanity-orientation. With great emphasis on man's value and dignity, these ideas on reform attach importance to the subjectivity and creativity of man, showing China's resolution and power in reform in accordance with the ever-changing development situation of the society. China's reform programs, to some extent, echo Emerson's humanity-oriented reform.

Emerson's morality-based reform view plays an enlightening role in solving the problems of moral deficiency and lack of responsibility, which are threatening the sound and orderly development in China. The contemporary society now seems to have fallen into a moral predicament where the Confucius moral sermon that benevolence means unselfish love to others is gradually neglected by people's material pursuit. Thus, it is crucial that a spiritual reform be carried out in China to arouse the goodness in human nature and enhance the moral levels of the people. According to Emerson (2001), the benevolence and affection are the soul of reform, which will make people voluntarily comply with moral principles rather than pursue the material power. High morals are the most powerful remedy for the social ills. The roles of morals in regulating people's behaviors and promoting the overall development of both man and the society can never be overlooked, because "a consistent pursuit of one's own virtuous activity would ultimately have a beneficial effect on all of society, indirect as the process may seem" (Gougeon, 1989, p. 46). Hence, the direction of reform ought to lead people to shape the deity of characters with high moralities, and the social reform should avoid leading to moral dilemmas. Good social morals are not only the embodiment of the civilization and progress of the society, but also the important guarantee of a long-term stability and development of a country.

Therefore, it is essential that the reform in China draw some inspirations from Emerson's human-oriented and morality-based reform perspective and regard the reform as a process in which the individual is both the reformers and the objects being reformed, and the individual's benevolence and morals are to be awakened and enhanced. The renovation and improvement of the self and the elevation of the spirit are to function as the pivotal point to motivate vitality and strengthen the hope of success for all social reforms.

Conclusions

Emerson is an influential figure in American literature, intellectual history, and social reform. In his essays and lectures, Emerson has constantly spoken highly of the importance of individuals in reform. In this period of world-wide materialism and spiritual decay, Emerson's faith in individuals and morality power is a valuable tonic. His emphasis on the self and the moral sentiment should serve as a guide on government reform measures, the tendency of which is growing increasingly to settle all social problems by legislations and supervision. Emerson is a valuable counselor in the social reforms in that he well understands the nature of man, the unlimited potential of the individual and the power of morality. He does not permit the world to forget the supreme importance of the individual and the moral sentiment in solving the problems of man and the society and that is his indispensable value for both America and the other countries.

As a true representative of New England Transcendentalism, Emerson leads people out of the blind worship and the dependence on the European cultures, and encourages people to give full play to their own creativity and subjectivity. It is the individual's responsibility to be a self-renovated and self-reliant man, who will contribute to

the development of the whole society with their wisdom and creativity. Confronted with the national spiritual predicament, Emerson does not feel depressed, but behaves as a spiritual leader to guide American people to get out of the confusion with their own enthusiasm, initiative and incomparable confidence. Living in a society where comprehensive and urgent reforms are needed to maintain its development momentum, Emerson (2001) appeals to everyone that the reform should be initiated from the renovation of the individual, taking the spiritual reform as the key to success. Just like other transcendentalists Parker, Fuller, etc., who strive to put their extraordinary talents into practical use, Emerson is also an outstanding intellectual “in service to the nation, at once patriotic, critical, optimistic, and eager for radical reformer” (Field, 2001, p. 61). Thus, it is fairly to say that Emerson, as a great philosopher and true reformer, shows this world a bright and promising path to reform with his humanistic emotions. He was and will still be respected and worshipped owing to his insightful and enlightening thoughts on human beings by the scholars, the thinkers and the reformers all round the world.

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