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Self, Speech and Agency:

Emerson, Melville and Bartleby - Beyond Pragmatism and Performativity

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1. Introduction

The American self has always been closely related to individualism, performance, potentiality and rhetoric. There are many instances of the self – as experimenters - who are changeable, mobile, transformative (such as the confidence-man, trickster figures, Dean Moriarty, Emerson's Poet) – and yet highly valorized despite being "founded" on persuasion, protest, illusion and creation by means of mere speech-acts. In contrast, silence, deactivation, ruptures in discourse and subjectivities have stood, even in Melville's time, in the background of American myths of success, force of will and self-reliance. The potentialities of Melvillean "anti-heroes" such as Bartleby the Scrivener and the Confidence-man contest the rhetorical force, performance and unity of the isolated self represented in these myths. While Emerson's early work manifests his reliance on the powers of the "beyond" (Platonism) or "below" (mysticism, Gnosis), which, however, often cannot be clearly distinguished, the language of Emerson's late work, which has been frequently disregarded, resonates with that of the late Melville on many levels. The dynamic relationship between Emerson and Melville has been, in my view, shaping American culture and thinking since the "Melville Revival" in 1920s and continues to do so in contemporary debates regarding both the formation of subjectivity and issues of performativity and agency. Although Emerson is often portrayed as "the beautiful enemy" of Melville, I will try to show that they address the same topics, especially the issues of power, speech, will, silence, protest against paternal authority, the construction of self – while emphasizing potentiality. To set the dramatic scene, we shall employ, as experimenters, Melville's Bartleby and Emerson's poet.

Recently, there has emerged an intensified interest concerning the character of Bartleby who might, in contrast to the American ideology of self-creation and practical power, provide an instance of "showing" or "acting" by means of disappearing. The contemporary interest in "the Bartleby question" is connected with the issues of agency, potentiality, loss of ego, law and difference (as shown in C. S. Pierce, J. Derrida and G. Deleuze), as well as with a major protest against the way in which personal identity is performatively constituted by means of speech (as seen in Emerson's late work, the school of pragmatism and theories of performativity). Yet, Bartleby is not immobile and inactive in all respects. I will argue that Bartleby does something, both linguistically - within the realm of language, signs, performative constructions (where his formula "I would prefer not to" has

profound effects) - and nonlinguistically (by means of his silence, suspense, presence, death). Both Bartleby and Emerson's poet manifest, in their selfless constitutions, power as potentiality. Bartleby, as will be seen, shows the limits of rhetoric (while questioning the Platonic distinctions from the *Gorgias* between *nomos* and *physis,* between the self disappearing in *religious-mythical forces*, and the self led by the forces of *will to power*) and the American rhetorical tradition, including Austin's theory of performativity, James' pragmatist self and Emerson's eloquent voice, notions of the will, power, potentiality and agency. The methods that I will use to argue these points involve close-reading, plus performative and critical theories.

In the first part of this work, then, the genealogy of the American self as opposed to the European notion of the subject will be briefly sketched. Secondly, the self, its agency and Bartleby as the detached self will be interpreted from the perspective of Emerson's early work ("Circles," "Self-Reliance," and mainly his "Transcendentalist"- a probable source of Melville's "Bartleby"). Here, the spiritual, transcendental (Platonic and Gnostic) level of Emerson's thought will be explored. Following the Platonic distinction from the *Gorgias* regarding two kinds of forces constituting subjectivity (the religious-mythical forces and the enlightenment forces of will and power), the spiritual ascension and diving of the self shall be examined. The performative force of Emerson's words aims here to enable the transformation, unblocking and even complete abandonment of the self.

In the second part, the main topics will be the power of rhetoric, performativity, repetition and presence (interpreted with the help of J. L. Austin and Gilles Deleuze) in Melville's "Bartleby." The power and consequences of Bartleby's formula "I would prefer not to" will be examined, together with the issues of detachment from the body, originality and sacrifice. Both Melville's Bartleby and Emerson's poet, it shall be argued, speak a foreign, minoritarian language within the language of the majority, which shall reveal new possibilities and/or positions for personal identity/self.

In the third part, the self, its will, speech and power will be analyzed from the perspective of Emerson's late work, that is, from the perspective of immanence, which was, to a certain extent, later developed by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Butler and others. However, Emerson's and Melville's notion of power and will will be interpreted *neither* in the Nietzschean lineage *nor* according to the essentialist interpretations of the resistant will of Bartleby (John B. Williams in *White Fire: The Influence of Emerson on Melville*) but from a perspective which goes beyond pragmatism and speech-act theory. Apart from the issues of confidence and forgery in Melville's

"Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *The Confidence-man*, rhetoric, potentiality, silence, abyss, death and the power of the self will be examined in relation to poetic creation, gnosis, and the semiotics of expressive symbols (Charles Sanders Peirce).

Finally, the notions of the law and agency in Melville's "Bartleby" will be contrasted with their use in Kafka's "Before the Law." The exploration of Kafka's performative "Not Yet" and Melville's "I would prefer not to" together with an analysis of deferred action, order-words, paternal function, and pragmatic aspects in both works should bring us to the point where we see the necessity to revise Austin's performative theories.

Contemporary poststructuralist thinkers such as Judith Butler or Jonathan Culler are often criticized for their theories of subjectivity which focus too much on rhetoric, discourse and performative constructions, and not on the mystery, integrity and responsibility of the subject. While Jacques Derrida tries to explore the inarticulable secret of Melville's Bartleby and his responding without response[1], Emmanuel Levinas[2] stresses the infinite dimension of the "face" of the other to which we have to respond. Gilles Deleuze attempts to think non-identity and shows various aspects of repetition in speech and images. All of them are, however, still somehow preoccupied by the power of speech/discourse and its importance for self/identity, which was significantly developed, if not introduced, by the late Emerson and Nietzsche. One of our aims here will therefore be to explore Melville's characters – such as Bartleby – as "Drummond lights" which illuminate everything around them and which offer a different way of thinking about the self and language. For such characters test the limits of the notions of identity/consciousness as performatively constructed through speech, of the self as a an inoperative power, as "different," or as a detached enigma, all of which are at the center of contemporary discourse on subjectivity. If Emerson is one of the greatest vitalists in American culture, Melville shows the implications and significance of inactivity, gaps and ruptures for personal identity.

What we witness in Bartleby's case is first of all a strange kind of spiritual and bodily detachment. It seems as if his main wish were to leave/escape the symbolic order of language and social practices altogether. This strategy of detachment has its roots in the American Renaissance, especially in the work of Emerson, while criticism of institutions and ideologies are also to be found there –not surprisingly in the work of Herman Melville (Bartleby, Confidence-man, Pierre, or the Ambiguities). In what sense is Bartleby's detached, experimenting self different from that of

[1] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret,* trans. David Willis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 75.
[2] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Springer Press, 1980) 206: "The Other faces me and puts me in question and obliges me."

Emerson's character of the poet? While seemingly quite distinct, both late Melville and late Emerson, however, believe in the transformative/deformative power of speech *and* silence while suggesting (in their own ways) the necessary processes of liberation.

It is important to realize that Emerson's self does not relate only to the "beyond," to the Over-soul, Power, but also to the "below," to the abyss, to the potential, indeterminate zone, depth which transcends one both because of its place (limitless space of potentiality) and its time (before time and language, before Creation). As to his early work, it is only from the pre-linguistic "below," I believe, that Emerson could account for Bartleby. The beyond and the below refer to the respective Emersonian activities, that of ascension and diving. It is the act of diving with which Melville identifies. As to Emerson´s late work, Emerson shows his extraordinary talent to use language so as to increase the degree, the feeling of power. No longer abandoning the self, his poet acts, creates and keeps silent along the tracks of nature and immanent forces.

We shall analyze the Emerson-Melville relationship in more detail in the chapter on "The Transcendentalist" - Emerson's early essay and probable source for Bartleby. What we can mention here, however, is that their relationship bears several strange signs. Melville attended Emerson's lectures (1848-49) but never spoke to him directly. When he became interested in the thinking of Thomas Carlyle (whose essays Emerson edited and which Melville bought in February 1849), Melville demanded that his brother-in-law send him the letters from Carlyle to Emerson instead of asking Emerson himself (see the letter to Lemuel Shaw, on the 10th of September, 1849). Moreover, when Melville began editing *Moby Dick* and three years before he wrote Bartleby (in the summer of 1853), he re-read Emerson's essays (after having read a few of them in Hawthorne's bedroom one morning in October 1850). In his letters to Duyckinck, he praises Emerson as a great fellow. However, there is an obvious ambivalence in his approach to Emerson regarding the transcendent features of the self, power and rhetoric which Emerson's early work manifests – in reaction to Plato and Platonism, the Vedas and European Romanticism (Carlyle, Coleridge, Goethe). The Emerson-Melville relationship, incuding the dialectic between their works, has been, in my view, constitutive for American notions of the self – be it the rhetorical tradition or the silent, transitive, underground, unsaid one.

1.1 The Subject vs. The Self

Before we get to the construction and disappearance of the self in Emerson's work and

Melville's Bartleby, let us have a quick look at the differences between the American notion of the self and the European notion of the subject. We do not seek to make any far-reaching generalizations, yet it is evident, from the above-mentioned, that the American self carries with it several paradoxes. On the one hand, it is considered highly mobile, changeable, detached, critical of society, transformative and self-creative (cf. Emerson, Melville, Puritan origins). On the other hand, as David Loewenthal shows, it is shaped by the problematic relationship of Americans to their history and their constant recurrence to the authority of the Founding Fathers as the ideal to be followed, not deconstructed.[3] Even Emerson himself experienced this contradictory reception – while he himself dismissed memory, custom, filiation,[4] and the paternal function, he has been praised by many as a mythical thinker and as the founding father of American thinking. In contrast, other commentators have interpreted his ideas as destabilizing, questioning the norms of society, conformity and even the integrity of the self (Poirier, Cavell).

When compared with the European notion of the subject, which draws on the works of Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel we notice how Emerson turned European thinking on its head. While still following the Cartesian formula "I think, therefore I am" and believing that man is characterized by what he thinks about all day, he did not view the self as passive and receptive but rather as constantly active. Descartes also faced the problem of how to ensure the existence of man when he does not think. This issue was solved with the help of the notion of God as "watching over" the human being and providing it with existence.

Furthermore, Emerson adopts to a great extent the mind-body split where the mind/soul is the privileged, thinking part. Descartes describes it as follows: "Because we have no conception of the body as thinking in any way at all, we have reason to believe that every kind of thought present in us belongs to the soul."[5] Accordingly, Emerson focuses mainly on the soul, the individual ascent and not on inter-subjective bodily interactions.

His main turn away from the European tradition can be seen in Emerson's exploration of human consciousness and and his description of intuition as active and reason/intellect as passive, which goes against the grain of the doctrine of Immanuel Kant. According to Kant, reason can create laws that it gives to itself (such as moral laws, the categorical imperative) without being

[3] "the assertion of the independence of every successive generation on their fathers and the respect for the Founding Fathers and their inheritance. This contrast made them relegate heroism to the past, and give the present a role of a mere preservation of the values established by the founders of the Republic. David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 119.

[4] Lowenthal 110.

[5] Descartes, René. *Passions of the soul. The philosophical writings of Descartes.* Vol. I. trans. Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1985) 329.

exclusively dependent on empirical data. While intuition is passive - being a faculty through which objects are directly grasped, i.e. the form of space and time projected on phenomena - reason can create imperatives a priori (independently of empirical data). Moreover, intuition is related to sensible knowledge (as Kant never really described any intellectual intuitions) while understanding provides us with higher knowledge or wisdom. The European Kantian subject is therefore subjected to phenomena from the empirical world and to the laws and conceptions of one's own reason. One's thinking is subjective, because each person has different "patterns" that it uses to structure its world. Kant says that:

> in the world of elements, there are two main elements, the form of intuition (space and time) … and the matter or content which is presented in time and space … we can determine our conceptions a priori in intuition, inasmuch as we are ourselves the creators of the objects of the conceptions in time and space – these objects being regarded simply as quanta. In the one case, reason proceeds according to conceptions and can do nothing more than subject phenomena to these. … In the other case, reason proceeds by the construction of conceptions, and as these conceptions relate to an a priori intuition, they may be given and determined in pure intuition a priori, and without the aid of empirical data.[6]

Emerson, on the other hand, interprets intuition not as a form of time and space imposed on the phenomena but as a creative element, the instinct which keeps the self in motion, in transition. Emerson says: "What is the aboriginal self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? … The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition."[7] The intellect, or reason, rejoices in detachment and boundaries, according to Emerson, while intuition and emotion provide the power to create and experiment. The poet, the experimenter, is the Language-maker[8], who "feeds" on his/her instinct, on the *pneuma,* the divine spark; he tries to unname and rename things diving into the abyss which precedes Creation and already formed concepts. The consciousness of the experimenter in the moments of ecstasy incorporates, or "devours" the whole world and makes it a part of himself. The Emersonian (and Whitmanesque) self is therefore expansive, always moving

[6] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Forgotten Books, 1958) 408.

[7] R.W. Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Complete Writings* (New York: H. Wise and Company, 1929) 148.
[8] Emerson, "The Poet," *Complete Writings*, 203.

on, creating a new circle while drawing on Power/Life-force/Intuition. Unlike the European subject, the subjection of the American self is not explored but repressed. Limitations are not investigated profoundly in Emerson's early work, and institutions are rather avoided altogether than questioned in detail (as opposed to Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze). Another issue is inter-subjectivity which is mainly stressed by G.F. Hegel in his dialectic of the master and slave and other chapters from *The Phenomenology of Spirit.* The problem of subjectivity and subjection is developed later by many critics of German idealism such as Heidegger who show that the subject (das Selbst) is a project of possibilities which is thrown into the world and which experiences subjection of many kinds including anxiety, the call of conscience and, ultimately, death. These topics are not evaded as negative. The subject cares about its being and partly "derives" its authenticity when grappling with these phenomena. Heidegger's notion of *Selbst*, *Dasein*, is its possibilities through understanding even though these are not ever necessarily actualized; it is ahead of itself, it projects itself into its forthcoming potentiality-of-being. To understand means to act on one's anticipated possibilities.[9] The moment of actualizing one's potential is present in Emerson as well. However, the existential dimension of Heidegger's thought can only partially be found in Emerson's work. Is Emerson, then, a proto-pragamtist? And if so, in what sense?

When exploring the self in an American context after Emerson, one recognizes an increasing influence of and turn toward psychology within the field of the constitution of the self. The focus is on consciousness, on beliefs, affects, power, transformation and present time. William James is one of those who started to treat consciousness from this psychological perspective (and not surprisingly, he is also considered the founder of psychology in the US). The development of psychology goes, in James' work, hand in hand with the development of pragmatism which he to a great extent adopted from Charles Sanders Peirce. Yet, there are obvious differences between the two as we will see further on. Another significant approach to human consciousness in the US is that of analytical philosophy. Drawing on the Anglo-American analytical tradition, J.L. Austin analyzes language and articulates a theory of speech acts – performatives - which are also constitutive for the development of consciousness. Furthermore, a combination of the analytical approach, pragmatism and the theory of speech acts can be found in the work of John Searle and in the well-known contemporary pragmatist Richard Rorty.

We may perceive at least two fruitful lines or "connections of ideas" drawing on Emerson's late work. One is the deconstructive approach which was developed by Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin

[9] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) 192.

Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze and others. The other is the pragmatic one which was developed by James, Peirce, Dewey and Rorty. We shall explore Emerson's pragmatist tendencies and see whether we can get beyond the limitations of Jamesian pragmatism and Austin's theory of performativity.

1.1.1 Emerson and the Self in Pragmatism

The central theme of Emerson's work, I shall argue in this work, is power as potentiality, potentiality of a voice (and silence) which makes democracy possible. The emphasis on potentiality connects his thought with the pragmatist thought of William James and Charles Sanders Peirce. As I shall explain later, however, Emerson's notion of potentiality moves beyond the limits of James' pragmatism and his tendency towards the substitution of philosophy with psychology. Let us first have a quick look at the notion of self that Emerson and James present in their works.

Emerson claims that our human condition enables us "to be able to" do something, or not to do something. The fire of one's thought can bring to life, or actualize, the forces of nature and the "laws" (forces) of our own inner organization. Stressing the vital, affirmative potentiality of human beings, he advocates intuition and insight, as opposed to calculation, or performance done merely for effect. The source of that potentiality is, in his early work, as will be seen, the indeterminate nature, which is part of our experience when we unblock our self and let it speak. As in the case of structuralism, Emerson stresses relationships and relations of forces. Emerson's priority was not contemplation but action. Emerson writes in "The American Scholar" that: "Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth."[10] In his late work, which we shall explore in the second part of this work, Emerson turns to practical living and asks: How shall I live? With his focus on experience and relations, Emerson anticipated the thought of William James, Peirce and Dewey.

Another feature common both to Emerson and James is the language of continuity, of continuous variation rather than the language of finality or totality.[11] Emerson, as we have mentioned above focuses on the transitory nature of experience, the various potentialities and implications of events, rather than on the construction of hierarchies. What is important is to learn to read symbols coming from our constitution and to interpret the metaphors in our experience.

[10] Emerson, "The American Scholar,"150.
[11] McDermott 93.

In "The Poet", Emerson says: "Every new relation is a new word". For this, one obviously needs to make use of one's imagination. As in William James' work, words do not exist merely to connect grammatically, but they rather make and remake the very fabric of our world as experienced.[12] But is our experience in any way directed or "fated" by our constitutions or external circumstances? Charles S. Peirce would say that the action of experience takes place by a series of surprises.[13] Peirce, like Emerson, oscillates between a vision of the world which is fatalistic and chance-ridden and the power of the intellect and of method (or in Peirce's case science). As for Peirce's *tychism,* he offered in "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" (1908)[14] an argument to a hypothesis of God as the Necessary Being. Asserting the reality of chance, he claimed that "matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws".[15] Concerning the power of intellect and method, Peirce turns to logic as the fundamental capacity of the process of human knowledge. For him, logic precedes metaphysics and there is no intuition as an absolutely first cognition. All mental action has a form of inference. Moreover, all thought is in signs. This formal semiotic focuses on sign action and on inquiry as a sort of inference process. That is why Peirce's method develops abduction, deduction and induction. As for sign, Peirce distinguishes a sign, an object and an interpretant as follows:

> A sign is something, *A*, which brings something, *B*, its *interpretant* sign, determined or created by it, into the same sort of correspondence (or a lower implied sort) with something, *C*, its *object*, as that in which itself stands to *C*. This definition no more involves any reference to human thought than does the definition of a line as the place within which a particle lies during a lapse of time. It is from this definition that I deduce the principles of logic by mathematical reasoning, and by mathematical reasoning that, I aver, will support criticism of Weierstrassian severity, and that is perfectly evident. The word "formal" in the definition is also defined.[16]

The scientific method of Peirce therefore combines abduction (guessing of a new idea), induction (evaluation of the hypothesis, inference on the basis of tests; includes classification, probation, sentential induction), deduction (analysis of hypothesis and deduction of its consequences; includes explication and demonstration). The method of science can always go

[12] McDermott 95.
[13] Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5:37.
[14] Peirce (1908), "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God", CP 6.452–85, *Selected Writings* 358–79, EP 2:434–50, *Peirce on Signs* 260–78.
[15] Peirce (1891), "The Architecture of Theories", *The Monist* v. 1, pp. 161–76, via *Internet Archive*. Reprinted (CP 6.7–34) and (EP 1:285–97, see p. 293).
[16] Peirce, "Carnegie Application", *The New Elements of Mathematics* v. 4, p. 54.

wrong (fallibilism) and is therefore always open to tests and experiments. Peirce's tychism and fallibilism therefore present two major approaches of his thinking.

As for Dewey, McDermott suggests, we might draw a parallel between Emerson's break with the theological language of his time and Dewey's break with the ecstatic religious language of Emerson.[17] However, I believe that if McDermott had explored Emerson's late work, he would have seen the shift to an immanent language and a focus on the everyday, the common, the possible, physical aspects of self-creation and language itself. There he would probably not have found any religious speeches. As he notes further on, Dewey's thoughts about possibility, celebration and uncertainty did resonate with Emerson's work. Similarly, William James likes to hover in potentiality, indeterminacy, that is, between the poles of the objective meaning of nature, and its subjective meaning. In *Pragmatism* James claims:

> In our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We add, both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hands. Like the kingdom of heaven, it suffers human violence willingly. Man engenders truths upon it.[18]

On the one hand, James embraces the subjective and performative quality of human knowledge, on the other, however, he would like to stick to the scientific method which makes use of implication, deduction and other scientific means. James' doctrine is that of radical empiricism, while Emerson's thinking is, in my view, based on potentiality, on language, and if transformation is necessary, he will not prevent it. Emerson, unlike James, does not primarily seek to mediate, or ameliorate the opposition between the subjective and the objective, between the potential and the actual. What James did see and approve of, however, regarding Emerson's work was the notion of possibility, of newness, of the present hour. The main difference I see (and will explore later) between James' and Emerson's thought regarding the constitution of the self is James' refusal to take into account the powers, energies and forces of the individual. While James read almost every essay by Emerson, he, nevertheless, never examined his ideas in more depth; he never took them seriously as to their philosophical and social import. In his "Address at the Emerson Centenary in Concord" (1903), he presents Emerson as an artist, spiritual seeker, who emphasized the Universal Reason, and subjective connection with God.[19]

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[17] McDermott 95.
[18] William James, *Pragmatism* (Harvard U Press, 1975) 123.
[19] William James, "Address at the Emerson Centenary in Concord" (1903) p. 5. http://members.door.net/arisbe/menu/library/aboutcsp/James/1903EM.htm

The notion of consciousness as potentiality was, in my view, first explored in great detail in the US by Emerson. We will see in what follows not only how human consciousness is constituted by means of speech and performative acts (which shall lead us to analyze power, will and agency in Emerson's late work) but also by means of silence, leaving, performative failures and ruptures in discourse (as will be seen in Bartleby).

1.2 Early Emerson, Performative Speech and Self-Reliance:

1.2.1 Experimenter, Genius, Life-force and Plato´s *Gorgias*

Let us have a look at Emerson's "experimenter" then. What does experimentation mean for Emerson? Emerson, like Plato's Socrates, tests and "tries" the human being in the strange kind of dialogue he leads, in his essays, with himself, with American, European or other values. One can find contradictory arguments on any page in any essay by Emerson, which makes any totalizing synthesis of what he arrived at impossible. Unlike in Socrates´s argumentation, there is no consistency or common logic (*logos*) to be found. Moreover, one can find contradictory passages in the same paragraphs. What does he seek to find through this violent experimenting with language, consistency, logic and our consciousness? It seems that his aim is to twist and turn language and speech itself (including old, rigid concepts, invisible ideologies and hierarchies of values). Why does he need to twist it all out of joint? As will be made clear in the analysis of his late work – for every event, no matter how common it may seem, one needs to select or invent the appropriate rhetorical means, metaphors, concepts and verbs to be able to capture or at least hint at the meaning of the event. To experiment then means to question, to deconstruct, to free from non-functioning contexts, to revive or, if that is impossible, to create anew. Such experimenting is focused not only on values and ideologies but also on the self. The figure of the experimenter makes use of all the possible rhetorical as well as transcendental means to do this work. Is it important what effects such a practice has on the reader and Emerson himself? Such performativity is, of course, important and needs to be explored. One of the main aims/effects of his rhetoric in his early work is to unblock the self (as a channel through which Power flows), to transform it or even to abandon the self altogether.

To see how Emerson oscillated between the extremes of a complete abandonment of the self

merging with the "beyond" (or the "below") on the one hand, and his later praising of practical life based on rhetoric, will and power, on the other, it is helpful to introduce the old distinction from Plato's *Gorgias*, which examines exactly these extremes in the construction of the self. Jan Patočka describes the conflictive forces presented in the *Gorgias* (where Socrates opposes the sophist Callicles who defends life based on will to power) claiming that there are two kinds of forces which both threaten to rid the human of all independence

- mythico-religious forces – where the higher world stays alien and never really accepts the individual. Inspired man is, according to Plato, like a puppet of God; a passive being. Human wisdom, in his view, does not grow from inspiration.[20]

- enlightenment forces – that is, the forces in the natural sense refering to human nature and nature in general. The human being is/embraces a play of such forces, or the play of force as such. It is force itself that keeps the tension and joy in our lives. The natural force, according to Plato, is here in the form of instinctual desire, a self-confident will to power[21] that represents a world of forces without any wholeness, significance and purpose.[22]

What we shall test in the following work is to what extent the Emersonian self evades or transcends these extremes (by means of his Platonism, gnosis, or rhetoric of forces and power). Similarly to Plato, Emerson believes that thinking is a process through which the human being comes to itself. What is important for Plato, however, is the Law as a limit, which is essential as it prevents the self from falling into the world of the atemporal instincts.[23] Both Emerson and Melville shift the limits of the dominant language, the contours of bodies, effectuating transformations. They question the distinction between law (convention, nomos) and nature (physis), between laws of nature and laws of convention, performatively constituted. Both Emerson and Melville were influenced by Plato's works to a great extent. As Furlani writes, "by 1850 Melville had begun to acquire the six-volume Bohn edition of Plato's works, and the use he made of it is everywhere apparent in Melville's works: to no other philosopher does he allude more frequently."[24] Emerson admits his idealist Platonist point of departure in his essay "Plato, or the Philosopher."

[20] Patocka 186.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Patocka 187.
[24] Andre Furlani. "Bartleby the Socratic." *Studies in Short Fiction* (Vol. 34 Issue 3, 1997) 337.

The Emersonian experimenter, as was suggested above, tries to use language in a new way, to deconstruct rigid dichotomies, ideologies, systems while drawing force from the "beyond" (Power, Over-soul, Life) or "below" (abyss, silence, potentiality). To get beyond rhetoric by means of experimental use of language and logic is not an easy task. Melville´s Bartleby counters such a task, presenting a reaction to the Emersonian emphasis on performativity and the rhetorical nature of the self. Before we come to see what the rhetorical aspects "do" in the case of Bartleby, or any contemporary individual who decides to abandon/disappear from the symbolic order **of** language and pragmatic rationality, we will focus on Emerson, on the hidden line of Emersonian thinking which has been largely disregarded. This line, or connection of ideas, can be excavated from Emerson's early, but chiefly from his late work, and may be discovered from his *Conduct of Life* onwards. It is in his essay "Experience" that he finally steps down from his Greek Olympus and makes use of language and speech in a different way far from his early Platonic, idealistic beliefs and which was later developed further, as was mentioned above, on the one hand by Friedrich Nietzsche, Heidegger, Butler and deconstruction, and on the other by pragmatists such as Charles Sanders Pierce, William James and Richard Rorty. Although we want to avoid any simple syntheses of these two directions of thought, we will see that the ideas of Deleuze and Derrida connected with the Bartleby issue draw on both of these influences and show various new perspectives on human potentiality. In order to interpret and "test" identity and agency by means of Bartleby, we will need to analyze personal identity, potentiality, power and various notions of difference and repetition (Deleuze, Derrida) in both Melville's and Emerson's thinking.

1.2.2 Emerson and the Speaking Self

Once we get to the "potentiality to disappear" which the class of silent, stammering and de-centered subjects express (and which is described in Emerson's "Transcendentalist"), it is desirable to have a look at the myths and ideologies to which they react. Like ideology, says Bercovitch, "myth is inherently suspect, and for much the same reasons: it is (among other things) a vehicle of culturally prescribed directives for thought and behavior"[25]. American myths of self-reliance and individualism were already developing in the American Renaissance. R. W. Emerson explicitly states that one has to confide in one's own nature only, listen to what his/her "genius" tells him/her

[25] Sacvan Bercovitch, *Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America.* (Routledge, 1992) 358.

and disregard the voices of others (including systems, governments and societies). His attitude has strong anarchist overtones.

The Emersonian self is openly anti-bureaucratic and anti-governmental. Moreover, it does not even have to be consistent in its own thought. It can actualize any thought while leaving other, contradictory thoughts in the state of potentiality which may or may not be actualized at any time and which are valid alongside the actualized ones. Emerson does not concern himself too much with the truth or validity of his "system" of thinking, or his past writing. "Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds", claims Emerson while continuing with his experimentation on all levels of being – questioning language, the Church, professing self-creation and intellectual activity. He, unlike Melville, however, identifies identity with creative thinking and self-fulfillment. The creative self, for him, draws on Life-force. Unlike the Kafkaesque and Melvillean characters who often suffer from entropy - loss or degradation of power/energy, decomposition into chaos, Emerson's figure of the "Experimenter", or "Poet" relies on his "genius," i.e. on a transcendental connection with (or participation in) the "beyond" (which, when realized, takes one to a higher level of creativity). The names Emerson uses to designate this "beyond" are the Over-soul, Power, Life-force. The primary relationship with the "other" is therefore the relationship with this "beyond." Emerson wants, in his early work, to let the Power flow through his self (the self is merely a channel) and get rid of everything that blocks this flow. The speech of such an inspired man is therefore the speech from beyond which effects a change in the here and now, which makes things happen. Words, according to Emerson, are often actions. To think is to act, as Emerson says:

> A man's genius, the quality that differentiates him from every other … determines for him the character of the universe. As a man thinketh, so is he; and as a man chooseth, so is he and so is nature.[26]

The uniqueness of man, of his own thinking and speech, refers to Emerson's claim that everyone has their rightful "place" in the universe. The universe is what one sees it to be according to his/her "genius". Following Plato, Emerson claims that everyone "has" this genius and and that one can often recognize it in the works of others as one's own rejected thoughts. "Genius" makes the difference, draws the lines of one's thinking in a particular, unique, way. One's opinions are therefore completely subjective. One's journey and its "success" (to become oneself) depends

[26] R.W. Emerson,. "Self-Reliance" *Complete Writings* 146, 147.

mainly on oneself, what one *can* do. To transform one's thinking is of great importance, for it influences one's "place" and the roles one chooses to play. According to Emerson, nothing can stop the self in its ascension higher, in its expansion towards wider and wider circles of its life and knowledge. Every time the self feels too confined in its current situation, *it has the potentiality to* "draw a new circle" and transgress the boundaries of its old self, thereby creating a new horizon. The source of this change, as will be seen in the analysis of the temporality of the self, is however not one's enclosed self. Emerson's self-reliance is to a great extent a form of (divine)Power-reliance, which helps one to step beyond one's horizon into a God-like perspective of absolute possibility. He says in "Self-reliance:"

> To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, -- that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense.[27]

On the one hand, Emerson emphasizes here the transcendental grounds of his idealism – the unity of man with the universe and with himself, the oneness of man. On the other, he shows the common, ordinary nature of every human being. Once one gets to the bottom of one's heart he or she finds the same thing there which is ordinary, shared, a potential basis for democracy. It is also noteworthy that Emerson's imperative which aims to persuade us as much as himself says: "*Speak* your latent conviction." The stress is again on the individual, his genius and "his" (inspired) speech. It is a performance which "does" something in the world and it "does" something to the speaker. On what conditions does it work? What exactly does it enact? Nature, as we mentioned before, means in most cases human nature in Emerson. To give universal sense to nature then refers to the sense of human nature. It is a manifesto of subjectivist philosophy – our latent conviction, the lenses through which we see are only ours, our intuition shapes the world for us. Emerson interprets "genius" not as virtuosity but, as Stanley Cavell points out, as a stance, as the "name of the promise that the private and the social will be achieved together, hence of the perception that our lives now take place in the absence of either.[28] The Emersonian "whim", as we will see later, refers in a sense to genius as a force which leads one's life. Emerson's self can therefore be led on the one hand, but on the other it performs, enacts itself. And it is by means of speech, i.e. performative speech, that individual nature is changed and given sense. Instead of the Kantian space-time pattern, Emerson's

[27] Emerson, "Self-Reliance," 145.
[28] Stanley Cavell, *Transcendental Etudes*, 93.

world is enacted by spoken intuition which has the force to transform, making the universe plastic, fluid, moving. The aim is therefore not to enact a stable change, a stable universe of moral laws, values, or states (such as J.L. Austin's example of the marriage ceremony where the phrase "I do" creates a new legal and personal state). Emersonian performatives, as we will see, both create and then destabilize values, beliefs and social norms. His stress is primarily on language and self as processes and not on transcendental connections. The transcendental "aura" pertains to Emerson's thought only up to his essay "Experience". From "Experience" on, the main topic is speech, force, poetry and oratory as a means of liberation and heightened feeling of power.

Emerson's rhetorical self and its spiritual liberation therefore stem from the individual. He emphasizes solitude: "We must go alone....But your isolation must not be mechanical, but spiritual, that is, must be elevation."[29] Such isolation however does not equal mere self-interest. It does not hinder mutuality and community. Although Emerson believes that there seems to be no need to suffer when another person suffers, he does not advocate the ideal of a self-made man. What a suffering person needs is this kind of "elevation", this "detachment" by which he or she transcends their current condition. Tocqueville asserts that the Emersonian ideal of self-reliance is widely spread among Americans; they, nevertheless, rely rather on their reason:

> Each American appeals to the individual exercise of his own understanding… As no signs of incontestable greatness or superiority are perceived in any one of them, they are constantly brought back to their own reason as the most obvious and proximate source of truth. It is not only confidence in this or that man which is then destroyed, but the taste for trusting the ipse dixit of any man whatsoever. Every one shuts himself up in his own breast, and affects from that point to judge the world.[30]

In other words, there is no divine or human authority which could be a better judge about things than the individual himself. One need not confide in any "other" (man, opinions, systems); his power, according to Emerson, is to be found in himself alone, nothing stands in his way, nature is here to actualize his wishes. Such optimism, which would disregard external limitations and practices, however, is not typically Emersonian. As we have mentioned, it drives Emerson's thought only up to his essay "Experience" (written after the death of his son) where he finally comes to fully acknowledge the power of circumstance (fate).

[29] Ibid.
[30] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Bantam, 2004) 511-12.

1.3 Signs and Nature

This short chapter will introduce us to Emerson's work *Nature.* The reasons to include *Nature* are several. First, it concerns signs and language, that is, topics closely related to the concepts of agency and performative action. Second, it is quite probable that Melville read *Nature and Other Essays* (an edition including "The Transcendentalist") when he visited the Hawthornes before writing "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Many of Emerson's ideas from *Nature* were developed and re-formulated in a new way in his later essays ("Natural History of Intellect," "Fate").

Emerson understands Nature as NOT ME – it is both nature and art, all other men and my body. ME means, for Emerson, the spiritual being. Nature, however, is not completely separated from the individual. In special moments, as Emerson describes, Nature helps us perceive the unity of human nature and Nature, the exterior and the interior, the union, or identification of the soul with Nature/God/Power or the Over-soul.

Another notion that Emerson discusses in *Nature* is the notion of language. In his late work, he describes language in a different way – as constructing and deconstructing values, individuals, traditions. In *Nature*, however, he views language as a teleological arrangement of signs. Emerson claims that: 1) Words are signs of natural facts, 2) Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts, 3) Nature is the symbol of spirit. The signs therefore mirror nature and natural facts (as a kind of theory of correspondence). Yet, words are also symbols of spiritual facts. Language is thus seen as a set of metaphors and nature as a metaphor of the human mind. What follows from this is an important key to Emerson's work, that is, Nature refers in most cases to human nature. And human nature manifests itself mainly in action, not in words. He says:

> Words are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it. An action is the perfection and publication of thought.[31]

Emerson therefore makes a distinction between action and words (which is later effaced) while claiming that these are not parts of brute nature, but of human nature only. As for intellect, Emerson views it in *Nature* as active, while in other essays (the Over-Soul and others) it is mostly

[31] Emerson, *Nature*, chapter III. Beauty, 34.

passive and receptive while intuition is the active part. He says:

> The intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God, and without the colors of affection. The intellectual and the active powers seem to succeed each other, and the exclusive activity of the one, generates the exclusive activity of the other. There is something unfriendly in each to the other, but they are like the alternate periods of feeding and working in animals; each prepares and will be followed by the other.[32]

Emerson does not create any elaborate dichotomies here. These are mainly his primary intuitions which he develops and articulates in more detail much later. That, of course, does not mean that we should expect stable definitions from Emerson. His ideas from *Nature* – especially those of analogy and his theory of correspondence are abandoned in his later works where the poet, the experimenter creates new concepts, percepts and enacts new realities. There are no longer any essences, the world manifests an incredible plasticity. It becomes. In *Nature*, Emerson still holds on to the distinction between natural objects and human creation or crafts:

> Nature, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. Art is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture.[33]

Here, Emerson's thinking bears visible signs of Neoplatonic thought. To see the essences which shine through the universe, to lessen the creative force of poets, which cannot be overestimated or hailed more in his later essays ("The Poet," "Eloquence", "Poetry and Imagination"). In *Nature*, Emerson forces the dichotomies on the universe:

> This relation between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men. It appears to men, or it does not appear.[34]

These paragraphs are, paradoxically, closer to Heidegger and phenomenology than to any

[32] Emerson, *Nature,* chapter III. Beauty, 36.
[33] Emerson, *Nature*, 38.
[34] Emerson, *Nature*, 42.

pragmatic notions of power, language and oratory (in his late essays). All in all, Emerson's essay *Nature* carries within itself the seeds of several important thoughts developed later in various directions.

1.4 Disappearance of the Self

Regarding the issue of selfhood as a detached, leaving (Bartleby-like) consciousness, it is desirable to have a look not only at the influence exerted by Platonism and gnosis on his thought but also on the importance of Puritanism on which Emerson, especially in his early work, drew. When talking about his detached, mystical experience, we will get to the issues of abandonment of the human as we know it and as we express it in discourse (especially in the Emersonian "lineage" whose influence reaches to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Deleuze and others). In another sense, we find the notion of the disappearing self in Kafka's Josef K as well as the question of law. We will get to Kafka in the last chapter of this work. The questions that Emerson and others in his lineage of thought deal with are: Can we get rid of the self? Can we become inhuman in order to show the limits of our conceptions of the human? Can we draw a new circle within language at all? Emerson explains such a mystical experience of outsideness when he talks about himself as a transparent eyeball:

> Standing on the bare ground, - my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign or accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, - master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance.[35]

The transparent eyeball metaphor is difficult to interpret in Emerson's subjectivist epistemology. What Emerson tries to express, in my view, is the moment of eternity within immanence, when natural laws experienced through the individual consciousness become fluid. This eternity of/within the moment dissolves physical limits of time and space; it is an organic metamorphosis. Such state when one is without any direction, any orientation in space, would be

[35] Emerson, *Nature*, 45.

considered a loss of identity from the modern view of the self as fixed within the spatio-temporal framework, or of an abandonment of human consciousness. For, there is no pattern, no framework of time and space, no laws, no subject position which one could experience and project on the universe. The analyzing, calculating way of thinking is abandoned altogether. What is left is a perception of wholeness, connectedness, beauty, harmony, timelessness. An 'ec-stasis', in the sense of being extricated from the old norms, terms, structures and way of thinking is what Emerson, surprisingly, finds most authentic, most "human" and most fulfilling. By abandoning, one becomes, one is being renovated, one stays within the process of transition and complete eternity at the same time. The paradox is that such an experience almost cannot be communicated in words. The audience, unlike in his late essays, is unimportant, does not need to be persuaded, is considered rather a disturbance, if it does not know what Emerson is talking about in the passage. The self as a transparent eyeball cannot be defined in the Aristotelian categories which we still use, not only those used in the description of action. The reader struggles with similar problems concerning intelligibility in Melville's works. How to describe the metamorphosis of the characters, their becoming inhuman? How can we do it with our humanist, enlightenment-based vocabulary? Emerson's self as "nothing" then might be a counterpart to Melville's Bartleby who do not have any clear direction or content; who are atemporal, potential, cyclical in their behavior and do not seek any destinations or goals. To find out anything about them we need to look at the margins of the text, at the unsaid, the repressed, at the discontinuities, or moments when language stops working, stops representing and offers new possibilities of interpretation.

While Emerson describes the self in his late work ("Eloquence", "Natural History of Intellect") as a presence and potentiality (be it the presence of mind, of character, will or powerful *dynamis*), he draws inspiration from the disappearance of self voiced in his essay "Circles". Such an approach can be found in Nietzsche's work as well. The self becomes a bundle of perspectives, of affects struggling to gain power over others. Consciousness and its feeling of power is then a mere result of this struggle, or ascension which occurs in the unconscious realm of the self. This deconstructive Nietzschean approach, however, does not offer any positive alternative, any option as to what to build from the remnants of the "statue" of the self. Ultimately, Nietzsche translates it into a de-centred will to power (in his posthumously published work *Will to Power*). Such a will refers to the disappearance of the self and its liberation from oppressive ideologies (including the state, Christianity and the masses). In Emerson, as Richard Poirier suggests, there is no need for a cultural revolution, as:

> culture is treated less as a burden or impediment than as an opportunity, as we have seen, for troping, for turning over or overturning, for twisting out of shape whatever comes to you by way of inheritance.[36]

American culture, for Emerson, has immense potential, possibilities which can be actualized, developed, or transformed. While Emerson does not support institutionalized religion, he does not seek to eradicate it either. The same goes for the old conceptions of the self. Emerson gets rid of them when they seem too confining. He erases his self in moments of ecstasy, which is more of an event than anything calculable. In "Experience", he refuses to follow the track of cause and effect and claims that:

> Power keeps quite another road than the turnpikes of choice and will, namely the subterranean and invisible tunnels and channels of life. It is ridiculous that we are diplomatists, and doctors, and considerate people: there are no dupes like these.[37]

Here, Emerson opposes the connection between power and will, or power and decision. He turns to Life instead. This is also a development of his notion of "self-reliance." If we ask what the self actually relies on, it becomes clear that Emerson talks about a reliance on Life, on Force, on the unaccountable, the potential. Power, according to him then resides in the moment of transition, not in the construction of categories or fixed forms and selves. One cannot obtain power by means of will. The whole notion of will is redefined in Emerson's later work, and it can no longer act or effect things itself. Intentionality, as in the case of Bartleby, collapses. But we will get to that later on. Poirier also stresses the decentralization of the self when suggesting that for Emerson, Nietzsche and Foucault the human being is no longer the center of the world, intellect does not reveal clear and distinct "truths". What is important is the style of the person, its potential. Self-eradication can be, according to Poirier, exhilarating and culturally beneficial.[38] Emerson says in "Circles":

> Every man is not so much a workman in the world, as he is a suggestion of what he

[36] Richard Poirier, *Renewal of Literature: Emersonian* Reflections (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 184.
[37] Ibid. 188.
[38] Ibid. 193.

> should be. Men walk as prophecies of the next age. Step by step we scale this mysterious ladder: the steps are actions; the new prospect is power. … The new statement is always hated by the old.[39]

If the human is mainly a potentiality of becoming, what then is the "nothing" from his phrase "I am nothing; I see all"? What occurs is a certain eradication of will, a loss of ego, a transgression of limits. Would we want everyone to live in this mode of being? All the time? And does this "ex-tasis" include any "action"? Or is it a moment of inaction, inoperativity, passivity and endless possibility – in a Bartlebian fashion? It seems as if Emerson was saying in both "Self-Reliance" and in "Circles" that the less self-form one has, the more power one experiences. Self-reliance is in this sense rather an abandonment of oneself to Life.

This approach is close to William James's pragmatic notion of the self. James claims that the ideas and even the self occurs to one, in a similar way as "truth happens to an idea." He says that the self is discovered by *you* only as and when it "works," and it is to be continuously rediscovered.[40] The Emersonian self, for Poirier, suffers from the same problem: the self can rely only on those workings which in turn reveal it; its identity can therefore never be fixed or solidified.[41] Both Emerson's and James's performative statements about words as action and the importance of action are pronounced mainly to make the two writers active. Emerson mainly persuades *himself* in his essays. It is one of his chief aims, his own psychotherapy. He wants to be active, that is why he repeatedly preaches the importance of activity. That is what keeps him in motion, in transition, active and believing. His melancholy would prevent him from creative work. He writes performative statements because he has to. But can abandonment also be performative? Can we speak with abandon? What does that mean? Is that a resolute speech which speaks one's belief, one's latent conviction wherever that may lead?

1.4.1 Disappearing and Consciousness: "Circles", "Self-Reliance", "Intellect"

The issue of the abandonment of the self, as we have seen, is connected with the Platonic notion of participation. One is an impersonal channel through which Power/Life flows. We need to ask then: What kind of agency is in force in this abandonment? What does such disappearing do to

[39] Emerson, "Circles," 212.
[40] Poirier 196.
[41] Ibid.

us? In "Circles" Emerson says: "The way of life is wonderful. It is by abandonment." The Emersonian *voice* (or contradictory voices) dissolve(s) everything around it, including customs, conventions, his own texts and his own self. He is always ready to leave the center and move to the periphery of experience, to the margins of consciousness to draw a new circle from there. He knows all too well that this new circle will solidify itself again and take a certain form – it will be performatively constructed through a language that still follows the rules of old logic, rhetoric and structures. To enact a new self is therefore a great challenge, especially through the writing process. To get rid of the old language, consciousness or to create a space, a possibility, a zone of potentiality within it for a new self is the greatest task, which even Emerson himself often finds impossible. Speech and writing, however, are the fundamental practical acts in Emerson's early work. In his later work, he often turns to music, art, painting, dance and other non-textual modes of expression. How can one actualize the voice within oneself when language limits us so? The voice as the "genius" communicates with Emerson directly. It causes the ongoing transition which, when written down, when passed through reflection, no longer captures the becoming of the self. That is why it is so difficult to describe in words not only how the self gets created but also what "genius" is. Genius comes when we "abandon" the self. Genius, or the influx of divinity/energy into the world, is received by us and speaks to us by means of images before intuition brought them to light as words. Language, however, distorts the message with ideas and forms inherent in the language or discourse (such as the idea of subject vs. Object, the self, the other, stable existence...). How can "genius" free us from the constrictions of our culture when it speaks through the language of this culture?

Richard Poirier in his *Renewal of Literature* tries to elucidate the problematic relationship between Emersonian genius and American culture. He quotes Emerson from "Circles": "history and the state of the world at any one time are directly dependent on the intellectual classification then existing in the minds of men." Poirier comments on it: "It is hard to see how any individual, except vaguely or intermittently, could manage even to recognize those facts which necessitate or accompany "a new order of things," a new "circle" or discursive formation."[42] The notion, or voice, of "genius" is therefore not a solution to the problem of language. Emerson realizes that when the words of "genius" are written down as a text they become a part of history and their message is confounded (for any future readers). Emerson's dislike of rigid selves, the past, solid values and hierarchies is close to Plato's fear of written text, which can, as PHARMAKON, both heal, soothe

[42] Poirier 78.

the soul, and poison. Luckily, Emerson's voice manages to dissolve, or shift, in his texts, any petrified forms or ideas (of self, culture, intellect, soul). In "Circles", Emerson emphasizes the transitoriness of both human and external nature. Reliance, for him, is a simplifying, external way of seeing. He says: "There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees."[43] For Emerson, the mind or intellect can dissolve the "facts" of the world and understand the law (which very often means for Emerson "forces", "vectors of forces", "direction"). He claims that "Every ultimate fact is only the first of a new series. Every general law only a particular fact of some more general law presently to disclose itself. There is no outside, no inclosing wall, no circumference to us."[44] Such open-mindedness then refers to pure potentiality and indeterminacy. Emerson praises the forces of life: "Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit. No love can be bound by oath or covenant to secure it against a higher love. No truth so sublime but it may be trivial to-morrow in the light of new thoughts. People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them."[45]

This ongoing, onward movement both of human nature and of external nature provokes a question whether we can really know, or ascertain that there is an outside and what it is. It also suggests that one can never really fully grasp this changing nature of the world but only try to attune to it. Emerson stresses the importance of widening of one's consciousness, of thinking, of following silently the tracks of nature. One can interpret such broadening as either an ascension (or diving), or as an extension of consciousness. Also the way one proceeds can be perceived as a continuous movement (as in a spiral) or as a discontinuous movement, a jump, from one's current circle to a wider circle (which often occurs after certain liminal situations such as the death of a parent, the loss of one's partner, shock, or revelation). But one of the main questions concerns the nature of thinking. Can one get anywhere by means of rational thinking? Is it not something that rather needs to be abandoned? How does it enact, ascertain, name us and thus make us exist?

The question of thinking and its value in Emerson's work, is a complex one. We should distinguish between what he calls intellect (which could be equivalent to some extent to the Kantian notion of reason, for it involves reflection which is, however, receptive) and thinking (intuition which is to a great extent a processual activity bringing images to light, constructing ideas as words). What is therefore most creative in Emerson's work, is intuition. Intellect often borders on perception, for it is passive, receptive and should be broadened to"receive" as much as possible.

[43] Emerson, "Circles," 216.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

That refers also to sensibility as a measure of the nature of different individuals. We will get to these questions regarding the self and consciousness again later, when we interpret Emerson's late work. In "Circles" Emerson says: "The key to every man is his thought."[46] Thinking refers here, in my view, to the way each man thinks (having an "idea" of his self), to the patterns he repeats, to the amount of "facts" he is able to perceive - himself being the channel. Is that opposed to whim, or can it coexist with rational thinking? He explains whim as follows:

> I have my own head and obey my whims, let me remind the reader that I am only an experimenter. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle any thing as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back.[47]

We can interpret Emerson's "whim" here as a force in nature, as a call of genius which opposes utilitarism and vulgar pragmatism, effects, consistency and science. But what is the whim Emerson talks about in relation to the self? If whim tells one to take a different road in life who is it that is speaking? Is it the divine inspiration that the Poet experiences or does it proceed from his constitution, temperament or character? If Emerson preaches transition, onward thinking and existence in the present time, no stability or consistency can be ensured. The self works rather as an organizing and disorganizing principle of mutable forces as vectors, of affects, of possibilities that can be actualized. This onward thinking, however, does not continue without stopping. The Cartesian "I think, I am" does not always apply, we do not think all the time. Furthermore, in timeless states, the mind does not count or calculate moments, there is no past or future, everything is unsettled, moving. When talking about time, whim, motion and change, Emerson draws on Plato and Goethe. Especially Goethe's notion of metamorphosis can help us understand Emerson's notions of whim and the growth of consciousness.

1.4.1.2 Plato, Goethe, Emerson: Time and Metamorphosis

Emerson, when talking about eternity and life above time, draws on Plato's dialogue Timaeus. As James Robert Guthrie points out, Emerson extracted the idea that time was an

[46] Ibid. 216.
[47] Ibid.

imperfect, incomplete representation of change from Timaeus where God, according to Socrates, sought to make the universe resemble eternity as much as possible.[48] Eternity was, however, unmoving and the universe was moving, which meant that the universe could not reproduce the original perfectly. Thus there is this disparity between the original and the copy.[49] When we think about time, we actually project the segments (seconds, minutes) on the changing prototype while there is no inherent past, or future in time; humans devised it themselves. Emerson is also aware of the projection, but he stresses the powers of the present moment and often disregards the past altogether. Socrates says in Timaeus:

> God determined to make a moving image of eternity, and so when he ordered the heavens he made in that which we call time an eternal moving image of eternity which remains for ever at one.

In contrast to Plato's distinction between perfect forms and their imperfect, moving, copies in the world, the chronologic monad of Emerson persisted in time and confirmed time's continuity with eternity. Emerson writes in "The Over-soul": "After its [the soul's] own law and not by arithmetic is the rate of its progress to be computed. The soul's advancements are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line; but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis – from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly." Our vanquishing of physical limitations (of time and space) comes through the activity of intellect which can convert solid matter into fluid law. Imagination plays a huge role here. For, the laws of nature can be accessed in one's inner nature, through inner experience, growth. They are therefore products of construction, of imagination, like works of art.

What Emerson seeks is the growth of individual consciousness. What is the emblem of this organic growth? As Guthrie points out, it is the "monad" (a term adopted from Pythagoras, Leibniz and Goethe).[50] Thanks to Goethe, Emerson found the connection between the spiritual and scientific dimension of metamorphosis. Goethe wrote in his "Metamorphosis of Plants" in 1790 that he wanted to limit himself only to one subset of metamorphosis, that is to the "regular," or progressive, metamorphosis that describes the growth of the plant from seed leaf to fruit as the transformation of one shape into another shape, climbing as if on a kind of spiritual ladder, to that pinnacle of nature,

[48] Guthrie 175.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Guthrie 182.

the propagation through two sexes. [51] He understood the plant growth as successive periods of expansion and contraction. Goethe's four principles (of organic holism, polarity, intensification, transformation, which he also explained on musical composition) are not related merely to botany but also to human ascending qualities that Emerson talks about in his essays.

Metamorphosis therefore served as a paradigm for both the growth of individual consciousness and as a descriptor of palpable natural processes.[52] The monad meant for both Goethe and Emerson the persistence of character in a sea of change. Guthrie claims that this notion of monad was connected with their notion of representativeness, that is, the presence of the one in many, and the many in one. [53] On a temporal level, this principle was seen in a moment as a concentrated eternity. Goethe said: "Every moment has infinite worth for it is the representative of all eternity." The moment is therefore eternity realizing itself in time.[54] Both Emerson and Goethe stress this immanence of eternity in the moment as opposed to a transcendental stance above time.

Coming back to the issue of whim, Emerson says that in moments of inspiration one needs to follow the whim whatever it is. He says: "I shun father and mother and wife and brother when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim*." Stanley Cavell interprets the passage as follows:

> I will not repeat what I have said elsewhere concerning Emerson's marking of Whim in the place of God and thus staking his writing as a whole as having the power to turn aside the angel of death. The point I emphasize here is only that the life-giving power of words, of saying "I", is your readiness to subject your desire to words (call it Whim), to become intelligible, with no assurance that you will be taken up. ("I hope it may be better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation"). Emerson's dedication is a fantasy of finding your own voice, so that others, among them mothers and fathers, may shun you.[55]

Whether "whim" is an equivalent of God, as Cavell claims, or the call of genius, which I believe, is not of essential importance. But we need to ask what is the relationship of intellect to whim. For, Emerson does say that the act of saying "I" is performative, but he also stresses silence

[51] Jocelyn Holland, *German Romanticism and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 36.
[52] Guthrie 182.
[53] Guthrie 186.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Cavell 93.

and abandonment as relevant for self-reliance. He says in "Intellect":

> The ancient sentence said, Let us be silent, for so are the gods. Silence is a solvent that destroys personality, and gives us leave to be great and universal. …. But whilst he gives himself up unreservedly to that which draws him, because that is his own, he is to refuse himself to that which draws him not, whatsoever fame and authority may attend it, because it is not his own. Entire self-reliance belongs to the intellect. One soul is a counterpoise of all souls, as a capillary column of water is a balance for the sea.[56]

Silence, for Emerson, liberates personality by means of destroying it, transforming it. The limits and forms that speech imposes upon one are melted down. In this way, one can transgress the boundaries of his constructed self and allow oneself to be led. However, Emerson is careful to distinguish who or what can lead one. The antagonism toward other souls is still present. Whatever position of authority is offered him, whatever fame, he is to reject it because it does not draw him. It would make him inauthentic and not the source of his activity. Intellect here is manifested as that source, as the force that lies behind genius. It dissolves fire, gravity, laws, method. It is difficult to separate the action of the mind from knowledge and other actions. Also, Emerson claims that intellect separates the fact considered from one's self. One is tyrannized by the considerations of time and place, of oneself and others, of profit and harm. Intellect is the means of detachment; it is capable of abstractions. Such a detached platform from which one can view and move one's present life is literature. We might ask: Is therefore what Emerson does a literary endeavor? Or is it philosophical?

As we have seen, Emerson's thinking is not an enclosed system or doctrine. However, he explicitly deals with philosophical issues such as the mind-body split, the Cartesian cogito, Kant's notion of space and time and develops these in his own way. From my point of view, his dialectic which never arrives at a final synthesis can and should be considered a part of a philosophical endeavor and questioning. The argument that Emerson draws on intuition, which for some might be seen as non-philosophical, is only partially true. Emerson does draw to a great extent on other thinkers (be it Heraclitus, Plato, Plotinus, Boehme, Goethe, Descartes, Kant, Hegel) and without this knowledge, he would be unable to express his views the way he does. Although he preaches about the necessary return to instincts and intuition, one needs a lot of knowledge to be able to get

[56] Emerson, "Intellect," 230.

rid of petrified forms of behavior. What Emerson does believe, however, and what becomes much more clear in his late work is that intellect is dependent on the unconscious. We cannot really determine what we think. The basis of intellect is not pure reason but the instincts and affects that underlie it. Thinking is a spontaneous process and even though it can transform circumstance and make it plastic, there are still events which we cannot control, which befall us and need to be accepted. We are thrown into a place in the world which we did not select. There are situations which present many external impediments, limitations, what Emerson calls the power of circumstance. Life is a combination of power and form. As we will see in *Conduct of Life* Emerson conceives of our self as constituted not by means of pure reason but in a non-rational world where instincts, spontaneity and intuition play, or should play, a major part. To abandon rationality, calculation and simplifying logic means to come back to the primordial, instinctual, natural origins of the human self and knowledge. To trust our instinct, as George J. Stack argues, is also a part of trusting the "genius" which helps enhance our existence. He says that "the cognition of 'the genius' is neither discursive nor follows in accordance with the pattern of deductive inference. Rather, it is essentially "spontaneous."[57] Our ideas therefore cannot be explained by pure reason. Rather, it is essential to stop the calculative, pragmatic rationality, to let things and events come to us. Emerson says:

> The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory and to do something without knowing how or why; in short to draw a new circle. Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment.[58]

Enthusiasm refers here, I believe, to the exact etymology of the word which has meant a state when one is "filled with God" or Life, Force. It is therefore not something one can do, or effect. As with the call of genius, such a state is a state of powerlessness, a mode of being between authenticity and inauthenticity. A moment when one's experiences are extratemporal, that is when one experiences eternity within a moment. If experience creates the time matrix, then any possible widening of experience changes the perception of time as well. The walls of time are dissolved into water. All that ever was is now. Emerson often uses the Heraclitean concept of fire as a figure for thought. For, thought as well as fire could melt matter back into its constituent forces/laws.

[57] Stack, George, J. *Emerson and Nietzsche: An Elective Affinity* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1993) 189.
[58] Emerson, "Circles," 220.

Together with the constancy of change (Emerson uses the metaphor of metamorphosis), the two concepts create the "pillars" of Emerson´s subjective idealism. The influence of Heraclitus and Ovid can be perceived mainly when Emerson talks about the symbolic nature of language and metaphors. We will get to the issue later on when discussing the Poet.

1.4.2 Emerson's "Transcendentalist" as a Potential Source for Bartleby

One of the questions that many commentators of Melville have tried to solve (i.e. Dan McCall, Hershel Parker, Christopher W. Sten) is whether "Bartleby, the Scrivener" was inspired by Emerson's early essay "The Transcendentalist."[59] The thinker Emerson describes in this essay resembles to a great extent the character of Bartleby. It is then important, I believe, to explore Emerson's early work not only because it provides the necessary context for Melville's criticism of transcendentalism but also in order to understand the shift towards immanence and philosophy concerning power, potentiality and will that took place in *both* Emerson's work (after he wrote his essay "Experience") *and* Melville's work (after his completion of *Moby Dick*).

It is noteworthy that even though I consider the Emersonian influence upon Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" to be the most important single influence, there are two more sources which Melville made use of when writing the story in the summer of 1853. As Dan McCall mentions in his book *The Silence of Bartleby*, the second source is most probably a newspaper article published in The New York Times and The New York Tribune, called "The Lawyer's story; or on the Wrongs of the Orphans. By a Member of the Bar." from February 18, 1853. It reads as follows:

> "In the summer of 1843, having an extraordinary quantity of deeds to copy, I engaged, temporarily, an extra copying clerk, who interested me considerably, in consequence of his modest, quiet, gentlemanly demeanor, and in his intense application to his duties. … The clerk answered I would prefer being near my sister. … Hope for the future is dead within me. … The lawyer said: I urge you to view the matter differently."[60]

[59] Emerson, *Nature; Addresses and Lectures (1849) (*Elibron Classic Series, 2006) 309. "The Transcendentalist" was first a lecture read at the Masonic temple in Boston in 1842, then published in 1849 as part of Emerson's *Nature; Addresses and Lectures*, which contained a reedited and republished version of *Nature*, along with a number of other essays.
[60] Dan McCall, *The Silence of Bartleby* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,1989) 6.

The situation is surprisingly similar to the setting of "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Although Melville erased all the women from the story (the wife of the lawyer and the sister of the scrivener), the dialogue between Bartleby and the lawyer deals with the same issue and involves a similar misunderstanding on the part of the lawyer.

The third most probable source for Melville's *Bartleby* refers to several verses in the Bible, which are, as McCall suggests, mainly Christ's injunction in Matthew 25:34-40. For, Melville has the lawyer say three times that he is not related in any way to Bartleby: "but, really, the man you allude to is nothing to me - ". Or, another example: "I know nothing about him." In Mark 14:71 , we read: "I know not this man of whom ye speak."[61]

The first, and most influential source, as I argue here, is, however, Emerson's writing. We know from Melville's correspondence that Melville heard Emerson lecture in the winter of 1848-49. He writes: "I have heard Emerson since I have been here. Say what they will, he's a great man."[62] And in the next letter: "Let us call him a fool; - then had I rather be a fool than a wise man. - I love all men who *dive*.[63] Further on, he describes Emerson as a man who comes back with blood-shot eyes, resembling the unaccountable and indeterminate whale. The blankness of the whale also resonates with Emerson's characteristics of the poet who helps to enact such blankness, such creative potentiality within his readers. We shall find "blankness" in Bartleby as well, yet in a different light.

From what is known of Melville's reception concerning "The Transcendentalist," Melville read the essay with considerable care. Sophia Hawthorne wrote to her sister, Elizabeth Peabody, that on one visit, Melville "shut himself into the boudoir and read Mr. Emerson's essays "all one morning.[64] He read these essays a few months before he wrote Bartleby.

Emerson talks, in "The Transcendentalist" about a class of men (into which one could easily include Bartleby himself) who are "like fairies, they do not wish to be spoken of. Love me, they say, but do not ask who is my cousin and my uncle" ("The Transcendentalist"). Bartleby, in a similar manner refuses to talk about his past. He wants the lawyer to see the answer in Bartleby's face, to divine it himself. Emerson speaks for the sensitive class of men: "if you cannot divine it, you would not understand what I say."[65] A person from such a class claims: "I do not wish to perform," and: "I

[61] Ibid. 4.
[62] 24th of February, 1849, in a letter to Duyckinck.
[63] 3rd of March, 1849, in a letter to Duyckinck.
[64] Quoted in Christopher W. Sten, "Bartleby, the Transcendentalist: Melville's Dead Letter to Emerson," Modern Language Quarterly" 35 (March 1974) 31.
[65] Ibid.

do not wish to do one thing but once. I do not love routine."[66] In a similar vein, Bartleby "prefers not to." In Sten's interpretation, this means that Bartleby refuses to work. Sten argues that it is difficult for him to view Bartleby as a transcendentalist because he is speechless and we cannot say much about his thinking. As Branka Arsic argues, on the other hand, Bartleby's speechlessness and impassivity refer to a thought that does not "have" itself and can only be lived "without giving an account of itself."[67] I agree with Arsic that Bartleby follows Emerson who supports the thought of an open mind, a mind become an influx.[68] I, however, do not agree with her notion of open thinking as impersonal suffering. I believe that, for Emerson, open thinking does relate to abandonment of personality which is, nevertheless, expressed as animating, actualizing ecstasy and not as a Bartlebian suffering. Later on, Arsic claims that such indeterminate "suffering" (which she derives from the word pathos, patient, patientia) is only a hope and no poet has fulfilled it yet. What is at stake in Emerson is, I believe, a state of blankness, transparency outside of any fixed form or self; the state of eternity immanent in the moment. I agree with Arsic when she says that Emerson, for Melville, represented, as a whale, the possibility of new thinking.[69] Emerson could be understood as a "Drummond light which lights everything around it."[70] For, Emerson says in "The Transcendentalist": "the Transcendentalist … believes in the perpetual openness of the human mind to a new influx of light."[71] Bartleby's blankness, I believe, could also be seen as a light, which being formless, reveals to us the objects in their forms. What Bartleby does is that he makes one abandon the "I" of one's thinking so that one may plunge into indeterminacy and potentiality. That is obviously what frightens the attorney the most.

When Emerson describes in "The Transcendentalist" the class of extraordinary persons who need to be respected within a society, it is not clear whether he identifies with them. He says:

> It is a sign of our times ... that many intelligent and religious persons withdraw themselves from the common labors and competitions of the market and the caucus, and betake themselves to a certain solitary and critical way of living, from which no solid fruit has yet appeared to justify their separation. *They hold themselves aloof:* they feel the disproportion between their faculties and the work offered them, and *they prefer to* ramble in the country and perish of ennui, to the degradation of such

[66] Emerson, "The Transcendentalist," 104.
[67] Branka Arsic, *Passive Constitutions or 7 ½ Times Bartleby* (Stanford University Press, 2007) 101.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid. 102.
[70] Herman Melville, *The Confidence-man* (BiblioLife, 2009) 373.
[71] Emerson, "The Transcendentalist," 105

> charities and such ambitions as the city can propose to them. *They are striking work,* and crying out for somewhat worthy to do! What they do, is done only because they are overpowered by the humanities that speak on all sides.[72]

The spirit of these people, their writing and conversation are lonely. In a Bartlebian fashion they repel influences and shun society. Such abandonment, as Emerson notices, is not well liked in society. Yet, such shunning does not proceed from any whim; it comes both from temperament and from principle. Another reason why they shun society is the desire to experience equality. They wish for a just and equal fellowship, or none at all, says Emerson. "They cannot gossip with you, and they do not wish, as they are sincere and religious, to gratify any mere curiosity which you may entertain." Again, Emerson stresses the fact that they do not "wish to." It is not that they would not "will to," for this is not a problem of will. They have no will. Unlike John B. Williams in *White Fire: The Influence of Emerson on Melville*, I argue that Bartleby cannot be interpreted as an extreme example of self-reliance which is based on will and independence. Bartleby's will is a mere organization of his becoming, of his potential. It is not a self-assertive will, which would also be power, the power to act otherwise. Bartleby's action is not direct. It occurs and it affects us on the margins of our consciousness.

Emerson also noticed that people are imperfect. Like Melville, he believed that every piece has a crack. Emerson says: "'T is strange, but this masterpiece is a result of such an extreme delicacy, that the most unobserved flaw in the boy will neutralize the most aspiring genius, and spoil the work."[73] But he claims that the good and wise people must learn to act and save "the combatants and demagogues in the dusty arena below."[74] The second instance, as we mentioned earlier, when Emerson pronounces his "I do not wish to" is when he speaks about the necessity of action. He says:

> Unless the action is necessary, unless it is adequate, I do not wish to perform it. I do not wish to do one thing but once. I do not love routine. Once possessed of the principle, it is equally easy to make four or forty thousand applications of it. A great man will be content to have indicated in any the slightest manner his perception of the

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid. 106.
[74] Ibid.

reigning Idea of his time.[75]

It is important to realize that when Emerson distinguishes the materialist from the idealist, he stresses the spiritual dimension of events and objects in idealist thought which is also adopted by the transcendentalist. What is interesting, however, is that he mentions the name of the German philosopher Jacobi (whom he classifies as a transcendental moralist) who sees the measure of right and wrong only in the determinations of private spirits. Emerson's reading of Jacobi tells us two things. First, knowing Jacobi suggests that Emerson was acquainted with the Dutch pantheist thinker Baruch Spinoza (which becomes increasingly obvious in his late work). Second, Jacobi was a thinker of immanence, an atheist. If Emerson, however, calls him a transcendental moralist, it means, in my view, that Emerson's notion of transcendence did not necessarily involve any connection to religious or spiritual faith in the "beyond." It would also suggest that Emerson was a pantheist himself who found the source of all energy, life and force within nature. Emerson advocates the waiting of the Bartlebian class of people, till they be activated. He responds to the argument:

> " But whilst you wait, you grow old and useless.'
>
> "Be it so: I can sit in a corner and "perish," (as you call it,) but I will not move until I have the highest command. If no call should come for years, for centuries, then I know that the want of the Universe is the attestation of faith by my abstinence."[76]

It does not seem, however, that Bartleby waits for the highest command, for a divine activation of his forces. His blankness, formlessness provokes his colleagues who try to activate him. Yet, Bartleby will not accept the mode in which they do that. He keeps abandoning everything fixed. In an Emersonian way, he remains a zone, a potentiality, outside of law itself. Is Emerson able to describe such abandonment?

1.4.3 Emerson and the Legacy of Puritanism

Talking about Emerson's aim "to disappear" from the spacio-temporal pattern, another influence on Emerson needs to be mentioned. Apart from Platonism and Gnosticism (which will be

[75] Ibid. 107.
[76] Ibid.

explored in the following chapter), the Puritans also played their role in the context of Emerson's construction and deconstruction of the self. The Puritans sought "to disappear," but in their case the reason for losing the self was their desire to be filled with Christ. Sacvan Bercovitch sums up the influences of Puritanism on Emerson in his book *The Puritan Origins of the American Self.* He describes their identity issues and images in the mirror as follows:

> For the writers from the humanist Renaissance (Richard Mather, Dell, Baxter) the mirror radiated the divine image. They never sought their own reflection in it, as did Montaigne, ….They sought Christ. … Manetti, Ficino, and Pico held up the Christic mirror to show man his own splendor. The Puritans felt that the less one saw of oneself in that mirror, the better; and best of all was to cast no reflection at all, to disappear. … You must be empty if ever Christ fill you," went the pulpit refrain, "You must be nothing if you would have Christ."[77]

The whole body of sin, according to Bercovitch, had to be washed, transformed, emptied, rendered pure. Such "saintly" characters who draw on (divine, natural) Power can be found in Emerson's writing as well. Emerson always reaches for the future, emphatically and performatively constituting the new poet whose aspirations and aims are as wide as the land itself. He is to be everything and nothing – a character who makes use of all his talents, a "jack-of-all-trades" with moral integrity. Bercovitch relates the "new man" in Emerson to Puritanism by saying that Emerson sees man as a "new man in a paradisiacal New World. He is a fallen creature, to be sure, but comparable nonetheless, as a latter-day American saint, with Emerson's Young American, aspiring in troublous times towards a lost organic wholeness which he only darkly understands and of which he remains largely undeserving."[78] When Emerson talks about the young American he stresses that he should obey his heart and the nobleness of the land.[79] Bercovitch takes this idea further and interprets Emerson's view of American identity as the equation of "man as America" and the land. The land was to serve as the salutary influence which "promises to disclose new virtues for ages to come."[80] Connecting the "land" with "nature", Bercovitch says:

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[77] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (Routledge, 1992) 14 – 15.
[78] Ibid. 157.
[79] Emerson,"Young American," 233.
[80] Emerson,"Young American," 235.

> Emerson interpreted the self through the medium of American nature; his model of spiritual growth reflected a teleology that eliminated the tension between process and fulfillment. It gathered meaning by its proleptic identification with the destiny of the New World, of which American nature was the symbol.[81]

On the other hand, however, we should not disregard, in my view, Emerson's stress on the "psychology" of the self as something that exists apart from the land. For Emerson, the concept of "nature" very often meant "human nature", as we mentioned above. What he was claiming when he talked about nature in connection with power, life force, instincts and signs referred mainly to the development and transformation of the singular, unique self. Emerson's "hero," as he constructs him, is not here for others to imitate; furthermore he does not primarily imitate America. Imitation is something that Emerson, in contrast to the Puritans, considers highly inauthentic. For him, each self has to find its unique way of life, its direction and ascent higher (in a Platonic fashion) as much as possible. That is a part of Emerson's Romantic heritage.

Bercovitch rightly claims that Emerson's Romantic naturalism and Puritan hermeneutics are to a certain degree interconnected.[82] When talking about identity he explains the Puritan concept of intermediate identity. Puritans adopted the notion from Augustine's passage about *experimentum medietatis*, the "trial of the center", in which the ego overcomes the soul. For Romantics, says Bercovitch, it resulted in "the victory of the soul."[83] The Romantic "model of selfhood was the inspired perceiver. In effect, they freed the individual to choose (invent) his identity, and then to impose his own patterns upon his experience, including his experience of history, nature, the Bible, Christ Himself."[84] Imitation of Christ was therefore a process of duplicating oneself and of showing faith in one's own image, which depended on narcissism and autonomy.[85] Such duplicating of self based on the (projection of oneself onto Christ) of Christ is not, I believe, present in Emerson's writings. It is true that Emerson often led a dialogue with himself, being an inspired perceiver, but he was aware that he could not impose his own freely created patterns upon his experience. There was a limiting factor, the circumstance, which hindered any fully narcissistic projection.

There are many other Romantic tenets in Emerson's thought. We can mention the influence

[81] Ibid. 161.
[82] Ibid. 162.
[83] Ibid. 164.
[84] Bercovitch 165.
[85] Ibid.

of Carlyle and Goethe. Emerson led a lifelong correspondence with Carlyle and was influenced by Goethe's notion of time and metamorphosis. However, Bercovitch goes as far as to say that Emerson was creating his own mythology. He says: "Emerson expressed himself by expressing the myth of America."[86] In my view, Emerson is much more focused on the individual phenomenology and perception than on the expression of the myth of America. According to Bercovitch, Emerson distinguished between American and un-American identity. Un-American identity was interpreted as the genius of humanity (intellects such as Plato, Napoleon) which was atemporal (as history repeated itself). The motive of history as an ascending spiral was connected with the American identity. This is, according to Bercovitch, clearly shown in Emerson's essay *Circles*. However, it is not clear from Emerson's writing that he believes in the repetition of history, in what Nietzsche later called the eternal return of the same. Rather, his focus is on the present moment, which can include eternity as a part of the present moment, in immanence. In creative, or artistic ecstasy, one perceives the eternity, the boundlessness of the moment.

Bercovitch stresses that the Puritans, like Emerson, valued subjectivism, I-in-process and personal assertion. Such assertion often led to downright militancy, where they saw America as a place of universal rebirth. Bercovitch comments on the secular aspects of Puritanism: "The 'self-made man' of business, for example, was not simply a secular version of the visible saint. He was a sort of mercantile *imitation Americae,* representing a union of personal and historical ideals, both of these grounded in the belief that America was ready for the ultimate confrontation with God."[87] Emerson, according to Bercovitch, adopted Puritan secular hermeneutics, which arrived to him through Mather and Edwards. In combination with Emerson's ideas, the implications for the concept of American identity were, according to Bercovitch, twofold: Calvinist depravity (Edwards) and Emerson's cosmic optimism.[88] However, we must not overestimate the Puritan influence on Emerson, because he was able, as we will see, to transform his Platonic, Puritan and Romantic heritage into an amalgamation of his own.

1.4.4 Emerson's Confidence in Himself

Another important aspect of his writing concerns Emerson's appeal to self-perfection. Self-perfection, another Platonic idea, however, does not mean self-completion. Emerson does not

[86] Ibid. 165.
[87] Ibid. 145.
[88] Ibid. 157.

support the idea of the self-made man, his journey is spiritual and rhetorical – it has no clear end, no completion. What Bercovitch describes as Emerson's "synthesis" is, in my view, slightly misleading, because Emerson's dialectic never truly arrives at any stable synthesis (which distinguishes him from Hegel). What we get in Emerson's writing is usually a paragraph – a thesis – followed by another paragraph which often claims the opposite, being a perfect antithesis to it. There is no synthesis that would stop the dialectical process. Emerson's discourse is a journey of transformation, directed by "whim," his "genius," or his current "mood." There are no fixed statements which hold for a longer time, no stable practical effects which would explain his concepts. Being the master of antithesis, difference and new perspectives, he is ready to break down any established notion and "truth" whenever he feels like it. And he does just that quite often. There are usually at least two standpoints in his essays which struggle for victory, or which ask for synthesis, but Emerson never lets them finish the rhetorical process, never bringing them to a synthetic conclusion. There is no completion, no complete figure (which Bercovitch stresses in regard to the Puritans) in Emerson's writing.[89] The process of exploration and experiment, as we mentioned above, goes on, sometimes quite incoherently and openly against all conformity.

I would not therefore so universally emphasize Emerson's reaffirmation of the vision of Puritanism[90] even though in his essay *Nature* he draws on the Puritanical mode of exegesis. The same goes for Emerson's "system," for there is, luckily or otherwise, no such thing to be found in his writing. I attempted to show that Emerson's essay *Nature* and its conception of words as signs of natural facts and other ideas were his early conceptions which he developed in his later writings. In his late work, from *Conduct of Life* on, his focus is on language, discourse, his approach being both creative, constitutive, as well as deconstructive. Very often he deconstructed his own (self-) confidence and had to re-enact it in a new way by means of performative speech.

I agree with Bercovitch that, "Emerson's confidence is mainly an act of faith in himself" and that American Scholar is Emerson's autobiographical hero and that he projects himself onto the hero. Self-reliance is, according to Bercovitch, the consummate expression of a culture which places an immense premium on independence while denouncing all forms of eccentricity and elitism, in opposition to, say, Nietzsche. He says that: "The self-reliant American may declare his whim superior to the entire legal code, but he remains by definition the hero as guide and national benefactor."[91] We have seen this paradox in the reception of Emerson's work as well. On the one

[89] Ibid. 165.
[90] Ibid. 160.
[91] Ibid. 171.

hand, he is considered the Founding Father of American thinking, the authority which one needs to obey. On the other hand, Emerson is seen as a deconstructive philosopher following his whim, like Nietzsche, who hammers down rigid structures, contentless values, imitations and traditions. In this way, he is often quoted by feminists, post-structuralists and post-colonialists.

1.5 Power and Performativity in Emerson's Early Work

1.5.1 The Performative Power of Words

Emerson's philosophy of following one's whim, or "genius," leads us into several difficulties and various surprises. In his early work Emerson always emphasized spontaneity, a connection to the beyond and sincerity. He openly opposed all kinds of conformity (which for him was the counterpart to "whim"), overturned traditional concepts (of the self, of time, of society), and enacted new ways of thinking. In other words, we can talk about the immense power of his writing to transform everything around him, including himself. That means that his writing is performative, it does something to us, it effects a change in the world, it is series of performative acts that shape even personal identity. J. L. Austin introduced the term "performative utterance" to make clear that to say something, in some cases, is to do something. However, as J. L. Austin says further on in *How to Do Things with Words*, for a performative to work, it must take its power from the preceding "formulas" repeated within a tradition in a certain context. This refers to conformity. The performative formula needs to draw on preceding formulas in the same "ceremonious" context (such as the "I do" performative act in a wedding ceremony).[92] The question whether a performative is separable from the situation it emerged in is therefore extremely important. It is relevant especially when one addresses the status of individual intentions, sincerity or speech as a resource of power.

What Emerson does, however, is rather a revolution, overturning these "ceremonies." How do his performatives work then? Where do they draw their power from? Another prerequisite for performatives is sincerity. Sincerity, however, does not necessarily refer to seriousness. J. L. Austin excludes from the realm of performatives sentences pronounced within literature or theatre, jokes and any other non-serious use of language. Jacques Derrida and others successfully challenged this claim of Austin by saying that everything we say is already a citation, not only theatre plays but also our everyday speech. The distinction between serious and non-serious use of language

[92] J. L. Austin. *How To Do Things with Words* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1975) 130.

therefore cannot hold.

As for sincerity, that is a more difficult issue. Emerson says that when his "genius" calls him he is ready to live with the devil if necessary. He does not shy away from anything. He is only an experimenter, following his whim in a sincere way but not claiming absolute truth for his sentences, including performatives. His performatives are acts and they are to a great extent related to the courage to express one's unique potential, to break from a conformist society, to speak one's latent convictions and let them be seen as making sense for others as well. His endeavors seem sincere, yet neither himself nor anyone else can draw the distinction between truth and falsity in his work. All of us are fictional characters. It is not Emerson's aim to unmask confidence-men. Also, the simple theory of truth as correspondence does not hold in Emerson's later work which includes the processual notion of truth where one co-creates events and events co-create him. For, Emerson does not try to simply "make sense" of the world around him and appease his readers. Rather, he puts old concepts into new contexts, challenging everything one had believed up to that point. How can such an overturning activity be performative? How can something new take its force from the old? J. Hillis Miller describes such overturning, or revolution as follows:

> A revolution, however, is a performative event that definitely does not fit Austin's criteria for a felicitous performative. A genuine revolution, one that makes a decisive break in history, cannot depend on pre-existing conventions, laws, rights, justifications, and formulations, however much it characteristically attempts to claim that it does. A revolution is a performative act of a particular, "nonstandard" kind, namely the anomalous kind that creates the circumstances or conventions that validate it, while masking as a constative statement. A revolution is groundless, or rather, by a metaleptic future anterior, it creates the grounds that justify it.[93]

While Austin creates such a "revolution" in philosophy, even though he claims to be following Kant, Emerson does not preach revolution in any of his works. He introduces new terms and "a new language creates a new realm, a whole new world."[94] Yet, he does not mention its political implications nor is political change his primary aim. In Austin's case we remain in the domain of speech-act theory. In Emerson's and Melville's case, linguistic acts always imply much more than just what was said. They point to the silence, the non-selected potentialities lurking on

[93] J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* (California: Stanford U Press, 2001) 27.
[94] Ibid.

the horizon, which make concrete speech possible. In what way are these performative? In the final chapter of this essay we shall ask: Is Bartleby a performative failure? What does it say about the distribution of subject positions, the order of time and the law? Now, however, let us have a closer look at Austin's notion of performatives.

Austin was examining the category of constatives – statements that can be either true or false, when he discovered that language not only has the capacity to represent but also to make something happen. That is why he introduced the category of performative speech acts. There are two types: The illocutionary act is concerned with what an actor is doing in saying something (e.g. when someone says 'hello,' he is greeting another person).[95] The perlocutionary act involves the unintended consequences of an utterance and refers to that which an actor is doing by saying something (e.g. when someone says 'hello' and the person greeted is frightened by it).[96] However, every performative can also be a failure. Austin calls these performative failures infelicities.[97] There is a distinction, for Austin, between the individual text and the situation, the "total speech act situation," which surrounds it. In order for an illocutionary act to be successfully performed, certain conditions, as we mentioned above, must be met (e.g. the priest in the marriage ceremony must be authorized to perform the ceremony).[98] Besides the context, the performative utterance itself is unambiguous as well. The words of an illocutionary act have to be expressed sincerely; if not, Austin discards them as a parasitic use of language, as we have seen above. If we say that Emerson's work is performative because it does something to us, increasing the feeling of power within us, opening a space of potentiality for us, taking away our fear and "enabling" us to let Life take over, then we need to ask in what context can such encouraging performatives work. Are they successful in our contemporary condition? What is it about our culture or situation that allows, invites or preserves their power? And what situation, on the other hand, makes Bartleby's formula "I would prefer not to" so alluring even though it seems to lead to destruction? Or is Bartleby's speech a performative failure?

Melville realized the performative power of words and the influence of society on the individual, as can be seen in "Bartleby, the Scrivener." He criticized social systems and constructions of identity as well. Although he often opposed the early theory of Emerson and his idealist notion of power (as participation in the beyond, following of one's whim), he has also shown that flexible, non-consistent characters are quite common among men, that they can lead us

[95] Austin 108.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Austin 14.
[98] Austin 8.

into the realm of potentiality and that it need not occur by means of speech. In the *Confidence-man,* which is full of language games, Melville claims that a consistent character is a *rara avis*; to distinguish fictions, imagined performances from real life performances, is quite impossible. In this book, Melville mocks Emerson's pragmatic rhetorical role of the "experimenter." On the other hand, however, his Confidence-man is a kind of an experimenter who throws light on things that could not be seen otherwise as will be shown later on (in chapter 3.3 dealing with forgery).

1.5.2 Power in Emerson's Early Work

To elucidate the notion of power as potentiality, it is essential to explore what Emerson means when he speaks about the power of the individual, the other and the world in his early work. Power, in Emerson, is closely related to agency. For thinking, as well as speaking, is action. To enlarge the field of perception, to be more receptive increases one's power and expands one's field for action. As will be seen, Emerson abandons the idea of participation in a transcendental Over-soul, or Power, in his late work and turns to physics and an immanent conception of consciousness. What he preserves, however, is his understanding of the performative power of words. One can clearly see the practical effects of his sentences (both in Emerson's life and in the lives of his readers, such as an increased feeling of power, courage and inspiration to create) which to a great extent explain his concepts. One then draws on one's experience and not on some pure intellectual understanding which is a notion that Emerson seriously questions in his late work.

In his early work (Essays First and Second Series), to "have" power still designates abandonment, or one's participation in Force, Life, Light, a divine flow of energy. Emerson is here drawing on the idealist doctrines of Plato and on gnosis.

1.5.2.1 Emerson and Plato: the Soul vs. the Body in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*

Emerson described the force of Plato´s work as follows: "Plato seems to a reader in New England an American genius. His broad humanity transcends all sectional lines."[99] For, he, according to Emerson, keeps both unity and difference in his work. Plato claims that the soul sees unity (the same), the senses perceive the difference. Emerson also believes in the possibility to perceive unity. He explains it further: "Art expresses the one or the same by the different. Thought seeks to know

[99] Emerson, "Plato, or the Philosopher," *Collected Works,* 565.

unity in unity; poetry to show it by variety; that is, always by an object or symbol. Plato keeps the two vases, one of aether and one of pigment, at his side, and invariably uses both."[100]

The dichotomy of the soul and the senses (or the body), which Emerson embraces, is explained in Plato's *Phaedo*. The slow mortification of the body and preparation for death (as a liberating event) should be, according to Plato, the aim of every thinker. Such extreme soul-reliance, including gradual detachment from the body, is also manifested in Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener." The emphasis on the soul is present in Emerson's early work as well. He sees in Plato "a certain earnestness, which mounts, in the *Republic* and in the *Phaedo*, to piety."[101] However, too much philosophizing is not good for anyone. Emerson paraphrases Callicles´ speech in the *Gorgias*: "For philosophy is an elegant thing, if any one modestly meddles with it; but if he is conversant with it more than is becoming, it corrupts the man."[102] In the *Gorgias,* the argument serves Callicles in his aim to ridicule Socrates, who, thanks to his dialectics, his *elenchos* (method of testing and revealing inconsistencies in his opponent's speech), is impractical and could not even defend himself in court if necessary. Emerson develops the argument in a different direction. He claims, here and in other similar quotations, that the power of rhetoric can corrupt the man, making him either impractical and indecisive, or using words to manipulate the speech in his favor. In the latter case, the power of words, the force of rhetoric, can corrupt the man as much as political power. That is why Plato's doubt, piety and sense of boundary, as well as abandonment, are so important for Emerson. Abandonment is closely connected, as we have seen above, with ascension, which Emerson admires in Plato's works, especially in the *Phaedrus*.[103] It is in the *Phaedrus* that Plato also accepts rhetoric as important and useful but only if it is based on philosophical grounds and related to the ideas of the Just, the Beautiful and the Good. The power of speech lies, according to Plato, in the leading, guiding of the soul; that is why the orator needs to be knowledgeable of the types of soul (rather than body type) to be able to choose the right words for the particular soul type.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato concludes that the body cannot teach wisdom. For, what Plato's Socrates shows in the *Phaedo* is a strange kind of withdrawal, detachment from the everyday world; a process which can take place simultaneously on both the physical and mental level. Socrates, like Bartleby, is waiting for his death in silence – that which cannot be said is suddenly present in the atmosphere. Every argument, as Patočka observes, lacks something, stammers and

[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid. 570.

thus points to what cannot be contained in any argument.[104] That makes Socrates step away from Socratism, from his own method, from his indeterminacy. The silence, face to face death, forces him to give a positive account of the real, actualized, human existence. The main emphasis is therefore on the soul and its nature. For, the soul is not a power to know but the power to decide and take up various positions, levels of human life. Plato´s point of departure is the living human being, a realm of possibilities and contradictions. To attune the soul to its proper purpose, Socrates, like Emerson in his early immaterialism, suggests a slow secession, drifting away from the body. While Plato affirms the significance of corporeal life, he warns that it can make one passive. It does not help us differentiate between the true/eternal and the illusory. There is in the *Phaedo* a clear distinction between the corporeal and the eternal, which drives his dialectic. Plato believes that the universe is full; there are no ruptures, no blank spots, no abyss. However, that does not mean that there are no blank spaces in memory, in the process of recollection. What happens if the movement of forgetfulness regarding the eternal is extended? We get a Bartlebian character with no will. Patočka says that such an individual has no will, no unity, no drive for self-preservation, no desire to keep his form, or the form of his species. We get what is in fact a passive, lifeless, immobile body.[105] Yet, even Socrates´ life is decentred, oscillating, not fully a whole. The desired unity can be gained only after death. In the meantime, Plato recommends a katharsis (purification) of the soul which involves one's concentration on the eternal. Fullness, or plenitude cannot be attained but only approximated in this life. Emerson, on the other hand, brings eternal moments into his life and works from these inspiring ecstasies. Be it the prospect of the Over-soul, or the Abyss (following the gnostic tradition), he is ready to explore it, coming back, as Melville says, with bloodshot eyes.

1.5.2.2 Emerson and Gnosis: Words, Plenitude and Silence

Emerson´s work contains certain elements of mysticism (he was fascinated both with Jacob Boehme and Swedenborg) which seem to be drawing on the Gnostics (pre-Christian philosophers, Valentinus, Basileides, 2nd century A.D.) who stress the ascension of the soul through various layers (the 7 spheres in Valentinian Gnosis) to eventually reach 'fullness' (*pleróma* – the source of energy and spiritual power). Although Emerson does not relate his approach to historical Gnosticism, he addresses its key concepts including gnosis (knowledge/wisdom), the abyss, the silence, the pre-linguistic, absence, nothingness. Gnosis, when connected with Emerson's stress on words as seeds that engender new realities, alludes to Valentinus' *logos*, which refers to the transformative power of

[104] Patočka 218.
[105] Patočka 230.

the word (as a seed of LOGOS – order, word, logic). When certain words are heard they start a "fire" in the soul, a transformative burning, or light, which can be cultivated; thus one becomes an inspiring element for others and begins to disperse LOGOS among others. The fire (of mind, soul and words) which transforms things around us is an important metaphor that Emerson uses a lot throughout his entire work. Those who are able to express this fire are the best interpreters-creators of the universe. Emerson often calls them poets or orators. Still, not everybody, according to the Gnostics, is willing to cultivate wisdom and some are even unable to perceive it by virtue of fate or predestination (those who are mainly attached to matter and materiality which they do not see as spiritual). That can be seen in the school of Valentinus who believed that there were three classes of people characterized by their main ruling element – hylokoi (matter), psychikoi (soul) and pneumatikoi (pneuma). Only psychikoi and pneumatikoi could reach gnosis. Valentinus further claimed that "there is in invisible and ineffable heights a pre-existent perfect aeon (i.e. a supernatural being) whom they also call Pre-beginning, Forefather and Primal Ground (Bythos), that he is inconceivable and invisible, eternal and uncreated (or: unbegotten) and that he existed in great peace and stillness in unending spaces (aeons)."[106] Aeon is a region, unalterable, imperishable. The inner man (pneuma), for pneumatikoi, equals the seeds of light which need to be cultivated so that pneumatikoi enter aeon. Harold Bloom interprets Emerson's gnosis and his self-reliance as a reliance on a deeper, alien God within, not psyche but the pneuma, "the spark, the uncreated self, distinct from that soul that God (or Demiurge) created. *Self*-reliance, …, is the religion that celebrates and reveres what in the self is before the Creation, a whatness which from the perspective of religious orthodoxy can only be the primal Abyss."[107] Such an idea, or rather, affect, was related to what he mentioned in his journal in 1866 about the return of the primal Abyss which he called Necessity.[108] Further on, Emerson says:

> There may be two or three or four steps, according to the genius of each, but for every seeing soul there are two absorbing facts, - *I and the Abyss*.[109]

To interpret the notion of the Abyss (and later on, in the third section of this work also Emerson's poem *Terminus*), it is helpful to mention his view on gnosis (knowledge, wisdom).

What is important, in relation to our future discussions about will and potentiality, is the

[106] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: the nature and history of Gnosticism*. Continuum, 1998.
[107] Harold Bloom, *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* Bloom's Modern Critical Views (Infobase, 2006) 34.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

notion of the abyss as unaccountable depth, indeterminate potentiality from which everything arises (and which Bartleby to a certain extent epitomizes). According to Valentinus, the first principle is called Aeon or the unfathomable. It is the primeval depth, the absolute abyss, *bythos*, in which everything is sublimated before the beginning or before the Father. Aeon is the activating force. The transition or unfolding of the One is *diáthesis* (arrangement), and this stage is also called the self-conceptualizing of the inconceivable (*katálepsis toú akataléptou*), which is a concept later to be found in the Stoic philosophy as *katálepsis* (grasping, conceiving). Emerson, in his late work and poems also addresses the abyss, the nothing from which all things are articulated or not articulated. There is, however, nothing material about this abyss of consciousness. Other Gnostics, such as Markos, call the first principle the unthinkable, *anennóetos*, and non-existence, *anoúsios*. It is that which proceeds into the determinate, *monótes*. Another name they use to denote the first principle is pure stillness, *sigé* (silence). From the silence evolve Ideas and the aeons. Each aeon contains its own world within itself, in a way similar to the Leibniz´s monad. Such a depiction of potentiality reminds us both of Bartleby and of late Emerson. In his poem *The Sphinx* (often quoted by Charles S. Peirce), Emerson writes in the poem:

> Kind leaves of his covert/ Your silence he sings./ "The waves unashamed,/ In difference sweet/ Play glad with the breezes,/ Old playfellows meet;/ The journeying atoms,/ Primordial wholes,/ Firmly draw, firmly drive,/ By their animate poles. / "Sea, earth, air, sound, silence,/ Plant, quadruped, bird,/ By one music enchanted,/ One Deity stirred, - ….[110]

The journeying atoms which Emerson mentions remind us of the aeons, primordial wholes, developed from silence. Here, as above in the section about the Abyss, Emerson sees the origin in silence. Yet, many commentators such as William James, Melville and Hawthorne object that Emerson did not peer very deep into the abyss and that there was a distinct lack in Emerson, "too little understanding of the morbid side of life."[111] When we compare his use of the terms "words, speech" as opposed to "silence," there is an obvious preference for the speech. However, when James re-read Emerson later in his life, he affirmed that he felt real greatness in his works. Silence, in my view, is the unaccountable potentiality from which he writes and which he tries ultimately to turn into music. Emerson's "I am nothing. I see all," would mean, for a second-century Gnostic, that the knower finds himself in a primordial fullness, before Creation. This can occur thanks to the

[110] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Poems* (Read Books, 2006) 21.
[111] William James, *Partial Portraits,* 1888, 31.

contemplative "ascesis," a sensory deprivation which is common to mystical experiences. Joseph Kronick explains Emerson's use of the term Abyss[112] and shows how he drew on Jacob Boehme. In a journal entry, in November, 1845, Emerson says:

> There must be the Abyss, Nox and Chaos out of which all come, and they must never be far off. Cut off the connexion between any of our works and this dread origin and the work and the work is shallow and unsatisfying.[113]

The abyss is an original potentiality, emptiness preceding all creation. Emerson tries to connect the mental and cosmic Abyss, as if he wanted to witness the Creation. In this way, Emerson's poet could plunge into the potential, before Demiurge created time and before language was introduced, and thus overcome history. It is from this point that the human being shall draw its always new circles. Every man is able to evolve, according to Emerson, to draw energy and inspiration from the potential, which Emerson at this stage interprets in transcendental terms as the Divine Force, Life, and the Over-soul but which actually refers to the Abyss as well. He writes, in "Circles," that:

> The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end. The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force or truth of the individual soul.[114]

Pursuit of power refers predominantly to the activities of the mind/spirit (without mentioning the more immanent topics such as success, persuasive language, will and the practical/public sphere which can be seen in Emerson's late work). Actions correspond to ideas in "Circles"; Emerson claims that:

> Step by step we scale this mysterious ladder: the steps are actions; the new prospect is power. Every several result is threatened and judged by that which follows. Every one seems to be contradicted by the new; it is only limited by the new.[115]

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[112] Joseph Kronick, "On the Border of History: Whitman and the American Sublime," in *The American Sublime*, ed. Mary Arensberg (SUNY, 1986) 54.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Emerson, "Circles," 216.
[115] Ibid.

One's consciousness here is still strongly attached to the future which is also an essential sign of hope and of self-reliance. Emerson suggests that one shall not be afraid of the new, the different. The man projects himself into the world as a set of possibilities which need to be actualized; he casts his designs into the future, ensuring his individuality in this way. Power, in this sense, is therefore a widened prospect: when we climb up and arrive at a higher point, the new prospect opens up in front of us. Our consciousness is wider and we have a feeling of power. Power is therefore not a cause of our action, something we need to "have" before we begin to act but rather the reward we get when we expand our horizons (through participation in the beyond).

Emerson's early essays reveal quite well the points of departure of Emerson's thinking – the theory of circles, the Over-soul (from Vedas and Platonism), the dynamic aspect of knowledge "ascending" higher, the transformation of the mind, inspiration, power residing in transition and movement. Drawing on Power also means, in this sense, that one has the right to develop one's potential in a practical way which is also valid for the "other", not only for the individual self. The "beyond" on which the other can draw is also related to the relationship one has with the other. If one draws on Power, if one "has" it, one also has the right to act on it. That is the basis of Emerson's democratic thinking.

1.5.3 Power as Right

Emerson associates the notion of power with the right to express this power but also with the right to execute what one has the "power" to do, or to create. According to the early Emerson, the natural world is in sympathy with human nature which wants to fulfill one's designs. The aim of this power is therefore not mere self-preservation but also self-expression. Individual power can be understood as *conatus* – the drive for self-preservation, but also as a dynamic, creative force. Such a notion of power is much more rooted in the everyday world (as opposed to Power viewed as a Platonic form). Emerson will develop this insight later in *The Conduct of Life, Society and Solitude,* and other essays where it is associated primarily with language, health, success, wealth and practical life. In his essay "Power" from *The Conduct of Life,* as we will see later on, Emerson views power as an affirmative, immanent force. Such an interpretation follows in the steps of Spinoza (the revolutionary 17th century philosopher from the Netherlands) who distinguishes the brutal power of the masses and the dynamic power of the individual based on *conatus. Conatus* is

one's drive for self-preservation. Yet it encompasses other aspects of the self such as self-expression, the desire to overcome limits and other dynamic features.

Conatus or the resistance to self-destruction is formulated by Spinoza in terms of a human striving to continue to exist. In this way, Spinoza describes an inclination of things to increase in power; rather than just existing statically, all beings must strive towards perfection. All existing objects and subjects act when such an action preserves or augments their existence. And when following their *conatus* they have the right to express themselves. What Spinoza also claims in the *Ethics* (1677) is that the *conatus* is of "indefinite time;" it lasts as long as the object does.[116] Emerson, following Spinoza claims in his late work, that one should do what increases the feeling of power and enhances life in general. The time of such action, when one's power increases, usually cannot be measured in the ordinary spatio-temporal pattern, for one abandons the self. It is a moment of transition. Similarly, Emerson says in "Self-reliance:"

> Power is, in nature, the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdom which cannot help itself. … Power ceases in the moment of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state. … the soul *becomes*.[117]

The equivalence of power and right marked a revolutionary turn in political theory in the 17th century. What it says is basically this: Whatever we have the power to do, we also have the right to do. Spinoza adopted Hobbes' equivalence of power and right and developed an elaborate analysis of affects around that. We shall explore the power (and potentiality) to speak and the right to speak. Whether one always has the power and right to speak, whether speaking requires a will, a presence of mind, will be tested with the help of Bartleby.

2. Bartleby, Action and Discourse

If R. W. Emerson and American myths of self-reliance gave most of the power/right to the individual, Herman Melville saw the other side of this "idealism" - the power structures, relations, subtle ruses of ideology and technologies of manipulation which quite considerably limited the

[116] Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (Penguin Classics) 66-67.
[117] Emerson, "Self-Reliance," 146.

power of the individual. Melville detected these in the processes of industrialization, alienation (as did Emerson who specifically discusses alienation) and the transcendental illusions of freedom and the ascending immaterial soul which were common in his era. Bartleby as a disappearing consciousness opposed the unifying, empowering rhetorical force of the Transcendentalist movement and the early Emerson which held on to the notion of Idea that creates and fuses things together. His character mocks the rule of capital, rhetoric and pragmatism. To interpret Bartleby within the American rhetoric of self-reliance and the force of the voice is quite problematic. To see him from the vantage-point of Emerson's late work, which is already substantially Nietzschean (as Nietzsche used Emerson's late work for his essential writings such as *The Joyful Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* etc.) and pragmatist, means to abandon the idea of the self as participating in any transcendental beyond and to explore the power of will, language and sensibility. It means to focus on Bartleby as a de-centered individual who "redraws" the lines of our thinking about performativity and agency while making/becoming difference, all of which greatly resonates with Emerson's late thought, showing both its positive contributions and its limits.

2.1 Bartleby's Story

The story of "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is quite easy to sum up, yet quite difficult to interpret. Its potential for inspiring various interpretations is remarkable. Bartleby, a young, pallid man, arrives one day at a law office to get a job as a copyist. There he encounters the attorney. This "unambitious lawyer, who practices snug business among rich men's bonds, and mortgages, and title-deeds"[118], accepts him because of what he "reads" as pallid innocence and obedience. Bartleby, is provided with a desk in a corner of the lawyer's own office, behind a folding screen so that "in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined."[119] On the third day, Bartleby is asked to help the attorney proofread some documents. In response he says, "I would prefer not to." Baffled, but being in a hurry, the attorney asks someone else to help him. A few days later, the same situation repeats itself. "Why do you refuse?" inquires the attorney, to which Bartleby responds again, "I would prefer not to." Having been criticized for his behavior, he makes everyone understand "that […] his decision was irreversible."[120] The attorney, however, postpones 'the consideration of this dilemma,' to the next day when he ponders:

[118] Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener," in *Billy Budd and Other Tales* (The New American Library, 1961) 111.
[119] Melville 113.
[120] Melville 123-4.

> Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance. If the individual so resisted be of a not inhumane temper, and the resisting one perfectly harmless in his passivity, then, in the better moods of the former, he will endeavor charitably to construe to his imagination what proves impossible to be solved by his judgement. Even so, for the most part, I regarded Bartleby and his ways. Poor fellow! Thought I, he means no mischief; […] his eccentricities are involuntary. He is useful to me. I can get along with him. If I turn him away, the chances are that he will fall in with some less-indulgent employer, and then he will be rudely treated, and perhaps driven forth miserably to starve. Yes. Here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval.[121]

This situation is maintained for some time. Then Bartleby, however, reveals that he prefers not to do any writing at all. The attorney responds that in that case he must leave, to which Bartleby reacts again by saying that he "would prefer not to." The attorney finds himself in a state of "nervous resentment."[122] Yet, he calms down when he recalls the divine injunction, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another."[123] Having accepted Bartleby's decision, the attorney believes the status quo could be preserved "were it not for the unsolicited and uncharitable remarks obtruded upon me by my professional friends who visited the rooms,"[124] upon the peculiar 'unaccountable' presence of Bartleby in his offices. In the end, the lawyer, completely at a loss, decides to leave his own premises. Bartleby, however, stays there and "persists in haunting the building generally, sitting upon the banister of the stairs by day, and sleeping in the entry by night."[125] Consequently, he is removed to a prison as a vagrant. The attorney visits 'the silent man'[126] twice in prison. The second time he finds him "strangely huddled at the base of a wall." "Eh!—He's asleep, ain't he?" asks the grub-man, upon which the attorney says 'With kings and counselors.'"[127] His last exclamation is "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!"

There are several movements in the story when meanings are shifted and several ethical stances are questioned. From the point when the attorney perceives Bartleby as an individual to the point when he comes to represent, for him, any fellow man, "a man in general," the attorney does

[121] Melville 128.
[122] Melville 129.
[123] Melville 130.
[124] Melville 132.
[125] Melville 136.
[126] Melville 145.
[127] Ibid.

not manage to see the singularity of Bartleby, treating him as an impersonal, almost inhuman, "brother," as he was taught by Christian ethics. How can his 'humane' treatment can render Bartleby inhuman? Following an ideal image, or form, of a human being instead of perceiving the real, corporeal, singular man with his needs reminds us of the dangers of Kantian formalism. It is then duty rather than sympathy or shared emotions which lead one's behavior. Such an objective approach to the value of a concrete individual obviously cannot help Bartleby. What is, however, surprising is how Bartleby's formula alters his surroundings.

Melville shows the deconstructive effect of Bartleby's formula, which he repeats several times in the story. Bartleby manages to infect half of the law office with his "I would prefer not to." Subsequently, he stops eating and dies of starvation, not finding any meaningful human relationship in the alienated space of the law office. Even the attorney himself, however, begins to use the phrase. He says:

> Somehow, of late, I had got into the way of involuntarily using the word "prefer" upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions. And I trembled to think that my contact with the scrivener had already and seriously affected me in a mental way. And what further and deeper aberration might it not yet produce?"[128]

The attorney is afraid of the power of the formula, of this new logic. And so he would rather leave Bartleby's secret undeciphered than renounce his conformity. Let us now turn to the repetition and difference, as constitutive parts of performative force.

2.2 Repetition, Identity and Difference

In "Bartleby, the Scrivener," speech, as a repetition of a certain formula, can no longer create an independent, self-creative self as it did in Emerson. In contrast to Emerson, repetition in Melville's Bartleby decomposes rather than composes the surroundings and the character itself. We deal here with a different kind of performativity – one that does not work as a creative force but rather one which effects the neutralization of laws, which de-activates, decentralizes and eliminates both the preferred and the non-preferred. For, Bartleby's formula does not mean anything in particular (which is close to Emerson's embracing of vagueness, or ecstasy, even though in a

[128] Melville 123.

different form). Yet, it holds every claim in suspense. Does Bartleby merely replicate the same to do this? As can be seen in contemporary mass media the repetition of empty formulas, or exhausted pieces of information which no one is able to "resuscitate" cannot provide us with any sense or meaning, with anything new. Such repetition of the same, such replicating, often leads to destruction, loss of energy and meaning. In both "Bartleby the Scrivener" and *The Confidence-man* Melville shows that empty rhetorical linguistic games lead only to further confusion and chaos, which is not creative. Bartleby's formula, however, shows the limits of rhetoric, of such empty language games because he enacts a whole new order of affects, a whole new logic, as Deleuze suggests, the logic of preference. The significance and performative force of the formula consists then in the deconstruction of non-functional, meaningless machines, order-words and pragmatic monsters.

It is impossible to talk about Bartleby and repetition nowadays without mentioning the work of Gilles Deleuze, especially his essay "Bartleby, or the Formula"[129] and his ideas from *Difference and Repetition.* Deleuze introduces in the latter the notion of repetition as transgression as opposed to repetition as replication of the same. Repetition as transgression makes it possible to understand what constitutes Bartleby as an agent who enacts "difference" from a wholly different stance (the foreign language within language) and semiotic ground (Bartleby as a zone of indistinctness, pre-linguistic potentiality). Deleuze helps us understand difference in a new way. He seeks to explore difference which is liberated from the identical and which is without negation, and without the more profound structures of "hidden repetition in which a 'differential' is disguised and displaced."[130] For, such structures "give raison d'etre to the mechanical repetitions of the same."[131] Bartleby's self, his deconstruction of the identical (the attorney, the law) may be an example of modern thought as described by Deleuze:

> Modern thought is born of the failure of representation, of the loss of identities, and of the discovery of all the forces that act under the representation of the identical. The modern world is one of simulacra. Man did not survive God, nor did identity of the subject survive that of substance. All identities are only simulated, produced as an optical 'effect' by the more profound game of difference and repetition. We propose to think difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which

[129] Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical, 68.*
[130] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia Univerity Press, 1994) Preface.
[131] Deleuze, ibid., Preface.

reduce it to the Same..."[132]

Not to reduce difference to the same is a claim that both Emerson and Nietzsche embraced as well. Nietzsche criticized modern science for its inability to cope with the alien, the dangerous, the unaccountable which does not fit any of its categories and is therefore eliminated or changed (subsumed, translated) into that which fits the categories. Bartleby, in my view, does the complete opposite, because he translates or dissolves the identical (the typical notions of stable identity, language games, authority, work) to a potentiality, to a preconceptual, indistinct zone, the abyss, before Creation. That is why his formula carries with it a strange light, seed of a new order, which, when planted within his colleagues, splits and confuses them completely. The attorney tries to find a suitable subject position within the system, the machine, and provides Bartleby with a list of possibilities, jobs, and lifestyles so that he can choose. Yet, it is obvious that none of these would fit Bartleby's mode of being and the different logic which he enacts by means of his repeated performatives and silent presence.

One thing is clear, Bartleby's "power" consists in his extraordinary gift to disarm his audience – both his employer (the attorney) and the reader of the story. His modality of being, his silence and his formula produce the feeling of "inoperativity," de-activation, in others. He himself 'prefers' this inoperativity to the pragmatist notion of power. This completely contradicts the power that the attorney relies on. The attorney's power and authority rest on several factors, one of them being "power as consistency." He possesses faith in the power and dignity of reason, coherence and common sense, relying on logical methods and language (LOGOS) with functional commands that he blindly inherited from others. When encountering Bartleby, however, his behavior does not display any method whatsoever. Instead, he manages to invent "survival" strategies to avoid Bartleby's deconstruction of his sovereignty, self-interest and faith. As for Bartleby's being, he displays method much more than the attorney; the combination of his obstinacy and indeterminacy work together as a counter-machine, producing a difference, rupture in discourse, deferral of action. His formula, as an organic machine, takes power away from the attorney and his colleagues; it dissolves their selves as well as his own. The rupture/difference provokes new affects in others, taking them beyond language (the attorney roars, or he is silent). Yet, Bartleby's personality does not show any drive for self-preservation or desire. Instead of willing, he prefers. For him to do something, the force would have to come from the outside, as with physical violence. The attorney

[132] Deleuze Preface.

seems to perceive this. He keeps postponing any violence against Bartleby who, in the mean time, begins to re-signify, to re-draw the lines, the borders and differences in the attorney's system of thinking.

2.3 Bartleby's Formula

The whole story of Bartleby revolves around the speech act "I would prefer not to." Its effect, as we mentioned above, is highly subversive, turning the lawyer's office with its machine-men into a chaos while disrupting the automatism of the office's everyday procedures and commands. It breaks with all contexts. As Gilles Deleuze notes, it constitutes a new world, a world where preference dominates and where laws are not binding anymore.[133] Such a world appeals even to the attorney himself who, in my view, represents common sense and vulgar pragmatism based on the effects, or cash value of events. The formula gains its power thanks to its shifting potentiality (to displace orders, to postpone decisions) and perhaps also from the subconscious desire for preference in those surrounding him); it is used systematically, *constituting* new situations. In this sense, Bartleby can be understood as an organic machine (which Emerson describes as not inanimately mechanical) that produces new planes of signification while *questioning* the everyday language and regime in which we live. He represents a Difference, a rupture, as Derrida would have it, an opening towards the future. His indeterminacy allows for a projection of words into new contexts. The performative, changing force of this one sentence which makes others go crazy also shows that the relationship between reason and language is more problematic than we may think. If language constitutes consciousness and enacts laws, does it not precede reason itself? Could not language enable (and then also deconstruct) the workings of rationality? We can definitely see its effects on both Bartleby and the attorney. But let us analyze the formula itself now.

As Gilles Deleuze writes in his essay on Bartleby, the formulas that Bartleby utters seem to be the same at first sight. Bartleby "introduces" the formula 10 times over the course of the story. Yet, they always include an internal difference, which opens the road to the other and which prevents our thinking from settling on any already established fixed concept. At the same time, the formula cannot develop itself into any concrete faith, particularity or system; it is ideology proof. Being a difference, Bartleby always postpones any definite stance, decision or belief that anybody would present. Even the attorney keeps postponing his decision about expelling him from his

[133] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical,* transl. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press) 1997.

premises. The formula manages to deconstruct his world, to draw the lines of his ordinary thought in a new way; it produces new affects and perceptions in him. The effect it has on Bartleby, however, cannot be disregarded either. It deconstructs his last attempts at finding a meaningful thing to do, a center on which to start building a "house" (Emerson's metaphor of the house), a source from which he could draw, turning to something that would not be a mere reproduction, repetition – be it friendship, love, any relation to the world outside his mind. Yet, no such easy "founding" is possible, Melville suggests. The self is performatively constituted, which means that there have to be certain procedures, rituals and beliefs repeated which constantly form and re-form the personality. Bartleby's ritual is the formula "I would prefer not to (repeat, imitate, control, proof-read etc.)" and his "staring at the wall." One day, however, he will have to stop repeating the formula as well. A question lingers here now: if Bartleby was able to systematically subvert the system, why wasn't he able to find a source of energy for himself? Where do other revolutionaries take their power from? Communities? Nature? New poetics? New metaphors, or connections with the "beyond" or "below" like in the case of the early-Emersonian "experimenter"?

It seems obvious that the mechanical world of the law office cannot provide Bartleby with any source of creative power. He is stuck with his one formula, unwilling to explain it further. Instead, he puts others into his "place", into the zone of indistinctness, of "difference", where the primary ruptures take place. Deleuze views Bartleby as pure negativity, as patient passivity, saying that his formula, "annihilates 'copying,' the only reference in relation to which something might or might not be preferred. I would prefer nothing rather than something: not a will to nothingness, but the growth of the nothingness of the will."[134] Nothingness of the will is exactly that potentiality, the zone of indistinction which is not nihilistic but which creates or reflects. But how can anything proceed from such profound denial?

2.4 Bartleby's Non-Willing Self

Bartleby's character does something even though his actions are not based on will. Coming from the abyss, he splits things, people, ideas in a new way, conducting a kind of criticism from the inside, within the immanent. He obviously lacks the affirmative/expressive/self-constituting part of personality (typical of the Emersonian experimenter), which signals a different approach to critique – he does not posit any ideals, organizing principles or manifestos. He does not show the

[134] Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 71.

inconsistencies in the speech of others, which is what Socrates does in his early dialogues. Bartleby's *elenchos,* his testing, is not voluntary and it is not based on words only. Bartleby as a differentiating force can become thinkable only when tamed, which in his case means - only when dead. Before that he exhibits indeterminacy that fuels the machine he is, the process he "launches." Thus he cannot have an identity (which has been defined since Plato as the essence of the same), a stable, recognizable, representable being. Bartleby cannot be a thing-in-itself. In fact, he invades all such concepts, bringing a little bit of the Dionysian transformative energy into the Apollonian lucid, logical universe. He affects the attorney in this way, taking him to the limits of discourse, making him scream (which is already outside of language).

As for the attorney, he perceives Bartleby as the wholly other. The attorney's logic, unfortunately, lacks the other side of normative language which is the acknowledgment of a rupture, of a new situation and context being constituted, the acknowledgment of a secret. He is not at all open to the otherness of Bartleby, and every time the rupture "takes place," he quickly tries to fill it with something, block it, revert it to a false Christian ethics or some other general laws. Non-understanding is thus quickly covered with simplifications, self-projections and other stratagems. Why is it threatening for him not to understand? Why does he need to assimilate the otherness to sameness or similarity to sameness? Why should Bartleby be like him? It seems that the underlying notion of humanity which is in operation here when the attorney thinks and assimilates is that of sharing the common sense rationality. His last exclamation, "Oh Bartleby, Oh humanity!", reveals his thought best. It draws on the Enlightenment view of the human being, on its rationality, identity, metaphysics and utilitarianism. Based on these notions the attorney is disconnected from his body, from emotions, attachments, affects. Bartleby wakes them in him – as if he were a lover – Eros in the Platonic sense of leading, ascending higher. But the attorney does not follow. When he subordinates Bartleby (as Difference) to resemblance, identity or analogy[135], the Difference disappears and so does Bartleby. Deleuze says that Bartleby is an Original; there is nothing either particular or general about him:

> Originals are beings of primary nature, but are inseparable from the world or from secondary nature, where they exert their effect: they reveal its emptiness, the imperfection of its laws, the mediocrity of particular features ... the world as masquerade. ... The original, says Melville, is not subject to the influence of his milieu;

[135] Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical,* 335.

> on the contrary, he throws a livid white light on his surroundings, much like the light that accompanies the beginning of things in Genesis.[136]

Do we expect the emergence of the New Man from Bartleby? Can the new logic of Bartleby which does not "will" but evades will by simply 'preferring' be a sign of a profound transformation of identity? One which Emerson prophetically professed in the 19th century and whose ideal was his "experimenter," his "poet"? We will see that Emerson in his late work offers a conception of "will," emphasizing the strong will of the individual but silent potentiality as well. We will analyze his notion of power and will which was later developed by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and deconstruction philosophy. The non-willing of Bartleby which, however, exerts great performative force, therefore opposes to a certain extent the conceptions of Nietzsche and Heidegger which makes it an extremely provocative case for the contemporary debates about will, power, subjectivity and the limits of rhetoric. For, Bartleby obviously does not seek to augment his power, his power "stands" in passive resistance. He lives a life of atemporality. Deleuze describes Bartleby as follows:

> Bartleby is the man without references, without possessions, without properties, without qualities, without particularities: he is too smooth for anyone to be able to hang any particularity on him. Without past or future, he is instantaneous. I PREFER NOT TO is Bartleby's chemical or alchemical formula, but one can read inversely I AM NOT PARTICULAR as its indispensable complement.[137]

Being no one, having no will but only preferences goes much farther beyond mere nihilism, or even Buddhism. Even though it was Spinoza who had already said in the 17th century that there was no freedom of the will, because the will as such did not exist, his appeal to activity and transformation of passive affects into active ones is far from Bartleby's passive resistance. His void of identity is surprisingly static. He, whose "force" moves others, remains unmoved, unmoving. Instead of sending himself into flight[138] physically (away from unbearable circumstance), Bartleby stays, or actually stands still. Such fixity would, from Emerson's point of view, lead very soon to insanity. The other extreme, the flexibility of the Confidence-man, would, however, end in insanity

[136] Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical,* 83.
[137] Ibid. 74.
[138] Ibid.

(of himself or others) as well. If Bartleby set the attorney fleeing instead of himself, is there a relation of identification between them? Does he slowly become minoritarian, like Bartleby?

2.5 Identification and the Paternal Function

Gilles Deleuze claims that the process of identification that takes place between Bartleby and the attorney cannot be successful for several reasons. The logic of preference which Bartleby employs instead of the traditional logic of presuppositions[139] breaks down the system of references on which both constative and performative meanings are founded. Being the creature of the abyss,[140] he creates a void within language. Being at first separated from the attorney by means of a screen and thus made non-referential, Bartleby nulls the attorney's performative acts, that is, his orders, commands, and thus also his sovereignty. That reveals the attorney's unstable because rhetorical self founded on functioning conventionality and performativity of his orders. In other words, what Bartleby does is that he "disconnects words and things, words and actions, but also speech acts and words."[141] The process of identification between Bartleby and the attorney is severed from any referentiality to 1) a stable subject (Bartleby), 2) an image, or form, of the father (the attorney) and 3) the process of identification through reproduction which would appropriate the form. All three elements of the process are somehow deformed. The self of the attorney cannot be reproduced because it does not hold together. The paternal function, the image of the father (which, symbolically, also provides logos, meaningful speech and law) is disrupted, together with Bartleby as a subject. Instead of the process of reproduction, or identification, we get a process of becoming[142] (the attorney starts to become Bartleby, which frightens him). The Bartlebian subject thus becomes a zone of indistinction, the image that is not a form but a formless trait, the process of identification is deconstructed and it ends in the function of a psychotic, fraternal becoming. But how is the subversion of the paternal function, of authority, enacted in the story?

One of the important sources of the attorney's performative power is his "place," his high function in the office. His authority is based on laws, structures, order-words. It does not come from his authenticity, the inner structure of his being. Such authority is external, virtual, for it falls when the ruling system falls, which is another reason for keeping Bartleby at a distance. Bartleby's power, on the other hand, is internal. It comes from his personality, his originality, his presence. He is what

[139] Deleuze, "Bartleby, or the Formula," *Essays Critical and Clinical,* 73.
[140] Deleuze, "Bartleby, or the Formula," *Essays Critical and Clinical,* 79.
[141] Ibid. 73-74.
[142] Ibid. 78.

Melville calls a Drummond light which enlightens everything around it and makes us see things in a new way. The attorney cannot ignore this strange power of Bartleby; he decides to befriend him. Instead of acknowledging him as a person, however, he generalizes him as a subject and takes pity on him. Later on, when the attorney finds Bartleby in his own office on a Sunday morning, he is suddenly seized by anxiety, which he calls melancholy, realizing the loneliness of Bartleby (and probably his own as well):

> For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me. Before I had never experienced aught but a not-unpleasing sadness. The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam.[143]

The resoluteness of the attorney is shaken as Bartleby's powerful performance re-draws the lines of his thought. For the first time, he perceives inter-subjectivity in the world, the otherness/sameness of human beings to one another. He even seems to love Bartleby in a strange way. At the same time, however, he is afraid of what such openness could do to his "system" and where it would take him. He desperately holds on to his "foolish consistency", his regime, his rituals of thought and language. Ironically, it is also through language that Bartleby invisibly transforms the thinking of those around him making commands fluxional, offering no ideology but a test of thought, embodying a rupture in the mechanical processes of the office. Such a rupture in language, which frightens the attorney because it "decentralizes" him, makes him "inoperative" (leaving him on a periphery where Bartleby is as well). It has a performative effect. Through the experience of anxiety, the attorney could make the first step to authenticity. Yet he cannot stand such a state of "inoperativity"/de-activation of laws. Making use of all his rhetorical abilities to return to the closed lonesome stable pragmatic universe, he quickly establishes a limit in order to accomplish a unity of the self once again, cutting himself off from the world around him.

2.6 Bartleby: Beyond Pragmatism

When Deleuze talks about pragmatism in "Bartleby, or the formula" he contrasts its novelty with the old paternal spirit of Western philosophy that "realized itself in the world as totality, and in

[143] Melville 123.

a knowing subject as proprietor."[144] He sees pragmatism as a new mode of thinking which stresses the transformation of the world and the subject. It is an attempt to think a new man as self-creative. I would argue that these features are typical of Emerson's approach. Yet, Deleuze attributes this sketching of the traits of pragmatism to Melville, while using a distinctly Emersonian language based on process and hope. He says that pragmatism is:

> first of all the affirmation of a world in *process*, an *archipelago*. Not even a puzzle, whose pieces when put together would constitute a whole, but rather of wall of loose, uncemented stones ….isolated and floating relations, islands and straits, immobile points and sinuous lines – for Truth always has "jagged edges." … the Americans invented patchwork … But to reach this point, it was necessary for the knowing subject, the sole proprietor, to give way to a community of explorers, …, who replace knowledge with belief, or rather with "confidence " - not belief in another world, but confidence in this one, and in man as much as in God.[145]

Deleuze considers pragmatism to be this principle of archipelago and hope. He believes that pragmatism, like Melville, will always struggle on two fronts: "against the particularities that pit man against man and nourish an immediate mistrust; but also against the Universal, or the Whole, the fusion of souls in the name of great love or charity."[146] The quality that prevents people from merging with the Whole is originality, an original sound which one produces when embarking upon a journey, taking to the open road, or plunging into the open sea.[147] Such an original is always ready to free himself from constrains; to abandon, in an Emersonian way, the tradition, norms, even one's own family. Deleuze contrasts this democratic morality of taking to the road and not trying to save other souls with the European morality of salvation and charity. The democratic fraternity, as Melville suggests can be attained only by original souls.[148] Bartleby reflects both mistrust and the fear of merging with another human being. Perhaps he expects a little confidence from the attorney, yet he does not get it. For Deleuze, the hero of pragmatism is Bartleby, not the attorney. Too suspicious (of confidence-men, forgers), he makes any real relationship with Bartleby impossible. And a relationship based on charity and paternal care is unacceptable not only for Bartleby but also

[144] Deleuze, "Bartleby, or the Formula," *Essays Critical and Clinical,* 86.
[145] Ibid. 86-87.
[146] Ibid. 87.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.

for both Emerson and Melville.

Certain commentators have interpreted the attorney as an incarnation of the late Emerson, a proto-pragmatist and Bartleby as a detached Socratic philosopher (Andre Furlani "Bartleby the Socratic"). However, the Socratic testing, his *elenchos,* I believe, cannot be equaled or compared with the approach of Bartleby. First, Bartleby does not prove inconsistencies in the discourse and values of others by means of argumentation, within dialogue. He makes, with his alien formula based on preference, any consistent dialogue impossible. Half of Barleby's performative effect, moreover, comes from his silence, from his inhuman presence. Although Melville offered a criticism of Emerson's philosophy in his satirical novel *The Confidence-man* later in his life, his target in "Bartleby, the Scrivener" does not seem to be vulgar pragmatism. What he criticized most in Emerson was his lack of feeling, his coldness, egotism and idealist Platonism that does not acknowledge the existence of evil and other issues. Knowing this, it is not very surprising to see Bartleby with his inoperative power standing in contrast to Emerson's idea of the Poet, the active experimenter. Yet, as for the detachment of the soul, early Emerson could very well be the target of the criticism – because of his capacity of detachment from corporeality, society, everyday reality and material forces – which he elucidates in his essay "The Transcendentalist."

2.7 Detachment from the Body

In what did Bartleby's failure in "constituting his self" consist? Was there not enough action, or agency on his part? His mode of living was based neither on any typical action nor on reaction. Bartleby preferred not to react, because the circumstances did not allow that. His "agency," or disappearing was both linguistic, non-corporeal and yet somehow coming from his presence, material-affecting, materializing a change, transforming others, their vision and himself. If we say that his formula "I would prefer not to" deconstructed his personality as well his body and the "bodies" around him, what do we mean exactly? It would be necessary to introduce several conceptions of the body in the American Renaissance (especially Emerson's immaterialism and Platonism, Melville's notion of the body as a blank screen – i.e. Bartleby, the whale in Moby Dick). Bartleby's story serves as a great example here. What takes place, in my view, is Bartleby's gradual detachment from the body and from the symbolic order, from conventional language. Through his words from a foreign language, Bartleby enacts a severe body-soul split, where the body loses all value and is subjected to starvation and death. Is this a case of some kind of Emersonian anorexia?

Or is he an example of a Platonic who, seeking the katharsis of the soul, leaves the temporal, the bodily, and preferring the timeless, the eternal? Does Melville suggest that if we disengage ourselves from the material world (and the body) and enclose ourselves in our own spiritual universe, we can no longer survive in a community and among people in general? What defines human nature?

There are many places in Emerson's essays where he identifies nature with human nature and stresses the abandonment of both the body and the mind. As to physicality, however, Emerson's early philosophy bears traces of Platonism, as was mentioned above, which is concerned mainly with the victory and katharsis of the soul, not with any development of corporeal forces. Bartleby thus stands here as an extreme type of Emersonian self-reliance. Such self-reliance is no longer God-reliance or Power-reliance but a strange and radical kind of soul-reliance. But do we know what the body can do? Melville shows where such a soul-based approach might lead us if taken to its utmost extreme. First, Melville describes Bartleby's body as blank, white, palsied – a body which slowly becomes a ghost. The body does not manifest any desire, the Spinozian conatus (drive for self-preservation) or need. Like in Plato's *Phaidon*, Bartleby, if interpreted as a Platonist, mortifies his body, through a strange kind of Socratic katharsis, purification of the soul, which tries to forget about the body completely. While his mundane, rhetorical "power" derives from his suggestive formula "I would prefer not to." Yet, as we have shown above, Bartleby does not use the method of the Socratic *elenchos,* he does not speak within the same discourse as the attorney and he does not make use of the Socratic *logos* either. As to his corporeality, Bartleby's body seems to float in a kind of stoic ATARAXIA, a state when one is reconciled to everything, desiring nothing. Melville, who is clearly a writer of inter-subjectivity and corporeal experience, presents us here with a figure with various "lacks" to show us the untenability of this extreme soul-reliance, of the notion of the self as a temple separated from the world outside. It is surprising that Melville who so often deconstructs the boundaries between the material and the spiritual, knowledge and experience, the individual and communal consciousness does the opposite in the case of Bartleby – the body-soul split is produced directly in the book by means of the formula. Melville points out other distinctions as well - the individual vs. society, pragmatism vs. friendship, et al. Bartleby becomes an "isolato" who thinks that he can be self-sufficient. He gradually stops eating and starves himself to death. Having no origin, no obvious, visible, perceivable personal relationship to others, to nature, to the universe, Bartleby relies on his own soul, refusing to become an automaton that merely reproduces images or copies copies (in the Platonic sense of *mimesis*). The alienation from

others, however, also implies a severe alienation from his own body and from experience. His whole existence is transferred to the testing and deconstruction of law, language and conformity. Melville opposes here the dualities of self and other, materiality and idealism, master and slave by showing where such splits and the radical reliance on one of the opposing terms may lead. Yet, can the soul without a will leave the symbolic order and survive? That would imply in the Aristotelian-Platonic Western logic insanity, godlike nature, or animality. Bartleby says he wants to leave his body in one place, he sees material limitations everywhere. When asked to try clerkship, he answers: "There is too much confinement about that. No, I would not like a clerkship. But I am not particular." As to his "place" in the world, his immovable bodily presence, Bartleby seems to rebel against mobility of all kinds (including Emersonian spiritual mobility). He says: "I like to be stationary. But I am not particular."[149] However, the conceptual and physical mobility he causes in others is remarkable. In this sense, his spiritual vagabondism frees the concepts (of identity, freedom, friendship) from their customary, limiting categories.

2.8 Derrida's Bartleby and the Formula

Derrida interprets Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" as "a response without response": it is not a statement, it is indeterminate, it is neither true nor false.[150] Its inconclusiveness means that one cannot say anything decisive about it. The future is in the hands of some "indecipherable providence."[151] Derrida no longer focuses on performatives in speech, but rather on the indeterminacy of every self. He says:

> I prefer not to looks like an incomplete sentence. Its indeterminacy creates a tension: it opens onto a sort of reserve of incompleteness; it announces a temporary of provisional reserve, one involving a proviso. Can we not find there the secret of a hypothetical reference to some indecipherable providence or prudence?[152]

Bartleby has obviously attempted to leave the symbolic order of the conformist use of language and common rationality. He prefers not to impose any forms (space and time) or

[149] Melville 135.
[150] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret,* trans. David Wills (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008) 75.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

imperatives on the world. Abandoning calculation and pragmatic rationality, his formula leads him into absolute passivity. He prefers to resist. With the increasing nothingness of his will, he eventually prefers not to react, not to live. Derrida shows us that we need to see Bartleby first as an absolute singularity and not from the point of view of universalist ethics, norms and tradition which would mean sacrificing him, sacrificing his singularity to the universal.

2.8.1 Bartleby and the Secret of all Secrets

Jacques Derrida sees Bartleby's formula "I would prefer not to" as an incomplete sentence. We do not know what Bartleby wants to say nor what he does not want to say.[153] He, like Abraham in the Bible, responds without a response. His formula enables and at the same time disables his relationship with others. Is it a secret formula? Can it throw light onto Bartleby's enigmatic personality? Similar to Abraham, Bartleby speaks in a strange, foreign language which embodies indeterminacy and which is not human. The indeterminacy, however, creates a tension. If Bartleby would prefer not to (cooperate, obey, eat, move), Abraham would also prefer not to sacrifice his son Isaac, yet he decides he will do it, he will make such a gift of death, and offer Isaac to God. Derrida says: "Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" is also a sacrificial passion that will lead him to death, a death given by the law, by a society that does not even know why it is acting the way it does."[154] What is that sacrificial passion in Bartleby? What does he suffer from? Is passionate passivity possible? If his responses are not really responses and his relationships are also nonrelationships, how can we say anything at all about Bartleby? Is the gift he gives his own death? Derrida understands the whole text as comical and full of irony. He even likens Bartleby's irony to that of Socrates. For, Socrates also questioned and deconstructed others while feigning ignorance.[155] Yet, the way in which he does so is difference.

Bartleby's irony also enhances the "uncanny feeling" of the story. Nobody feels "at home" in his roles, positions and beliefs anymore. The communication that Bartleby and Abraham initiate with the external world is based, most ironically, on the "unsaid". Abraham, like Bartleby in certain moments in the story, does not say anything at all, and in that he says everything. For, Abraham's secret (that he is going to sacrifice his son) is unspeakable. For, if Abraham had said what he was determined to do, nobody would have understood the message anyway. The message would not

[153] Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 75.
[154] Ibid. 76.
[155] Ibid. 77.

have reached them. Bartleby who had been working in the Dead Letter Office before he arrived at the Law office knows what such a failure of communication means, be it written or said. Both stories at a certain point lead to the unsettling realization that any letter may be a "dead letter". Jacques Derrida suggests that a letter can always not arrive at its destination, meaning that it can always go astray. We can ask, together with Bartleby, what it means for meaning to arrive - of what it in fact means for something to mean at all.

In the *Gift of Death* Derrida arrives at two revealing claims. First, that any decision is, in the end, always secret, even in the very instant of its performance.[156] This is because no decision is guided or controlled by knowledge. Derrida says: "Such, in fact, is the paradoxical condition of every decision: it cannot be deduced from a form of knowledge of which it would simply be the effect, conclusion or explication."[157] At the same time, Bartleby's and Abraham's decisions are absolutely responsible decisions. How can that be? If not based on knowledge nor reason, how is any ethical decision possible? When we compare their manner of deciding to the Kantian manner, we see that their decision could not be defended in front of any law, any tribunal. They respond to the wholly Other. And that forces them to neglect the others. That is the main idea behind Derrida's explication of absolute decisions. Even though Bartleby and Abraham would prefer not to, they decide to (do it, to kill). They sacrifice all of the others because of that one Other with whom they communicate and to whom they give the gift of death.

What stands behind this is Derrida's "secret" formula "tout autre est tout autre." In this (second) argument he tries to decipher the formula as follows: Every other (one) is every (bit) other. He uses both stories to explain what that might mean, explaining that: "God, as wholly other, is to be found everywhere there is something of the wholly other."[158] And because everyone is singular, solitary, inaccessible, transcendent and cannot be presented originally to my consciousness, Derrida makes the claim, by means of analogy with Abraham's story that, "what we can say about Abraham's relation to God can be said about my relation without relation to every other (the neighbor, husband, teacher...)."[159] Every other is an indecipherable mystery. But what is appalling here is that the *I* is always responsible for the decisions it makes (when he "responds" to the wholly other or to others). Such an absolute decision, however, sometimes leads to an absolute disregard for the human, accepted, ethics based on generality. Can such a decision be ethical? Who are we responsible to? If ethics is based on generality (such as Kantian ethics) i.e. the belief that the *I* can

[156] Ibid. 78.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

give itself a law (such as "you will not kill") that can be accepted by everyone, that is, generally, universally, then what happens to our responsibility towards others? That is the gift of death which one sometimes has to give to the others when responding to the wholly other. Derrida says that this relates to Jews, Christians, Muslims and everyone else – for every other in its relation to the wholly other.[160] Levinas' criticism of this Kierkegaardian explanation regards his belief in the generality of ethics. Levinas says: "Generality can neither contain nor express the I's secret. Now, it is not at all certain that ethics is where he sees it. Ethics as consciousness of responsibility towards others ... far from losing you in generality, singularizes you, poses you as a unique individual, as an *I*. ... In his evocation of Abraham, he describes the encounter with God at the point where subjectivity rises to the level of the religious, that is to say, above ethics. But one could think the opposite: Abraham's attentiveness to the voice that led him back to the ethical order, in forbidding him to perform a human sacrifice, is the highest point in the drama. … It is here, in ethics, that there is an appeal to the uniqueness of the subject, and a bestowal of meaning to life, despite death."[161] Now, why are we saying all this? How does it relate to Bartleby? We will focus on two things here – on Bartleby as the wholly other and on the most dramatic moment in the story.

What communication does Bartleby have with the wholly Other? Is there anything at all speaking to him? To what extent can we equate God as the wholly Other and the other (human being)? His argument is that there is no real difference between the face of my neighbor and the face of God. For, if every one is every bit (wholly) other, then we cannot distinguish between the generality of ethics and "the faith that turns towards God alone, as wholly other, turning away from human duties."[162] Levinas, on the other hand, according to Derrida, does not differ from Kierkegaard, because he wants to distinguish between the infinite alterability of God and the "same" infinite alterability of every human being.[163] That erases the border between the ethical and the religious. Derrida claims that Levinas' ethics is already a religion. The Derrida-Levinas argument has been analyzed elsewhere in more depth and falls outside the purview of our considerations so we will not analyze it here. Bartleby's relationship to any transcendent God, or voice, cannot be found within the text. Rather, Bartleby is an immanent version of Emerson's fragile class of men explored in his essay "The Transcendentalist." Let us now turn to Emerson's late work which discusses subjectivity, power, rhetoric and will.

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Emmanuel Levinas, Emmanuel. *Proper Names.* Transl. Michael B. Smith. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 76-77.
[162] Derrida, *Gift of Death*, 84.
[163] Ibid.

3. Emerson's Late Work: Towards Deconstruction and Pragmatism

Focusing on characters such as Bartleby who cannot see their secret (which only the "other" can voice for them[164]), we get a specific outlandish perspective that makes us tremble and that shows us the limiting structures we live in. Being an indeterminate "gap" of potentiality, or "cancellation of all difference", Bartleby as a decentered subject, deconstructs with his performative formula and foreignness the myth of self-reliance and willful power, showing his readers that one needs to approach such an almost "inhuman" otherness not only for recognition but also for self-knowledge. According to Melville, self-reliance (and Transcendentalism) was a suspicious ideology - an ideology which disregarded the suffering of the "other", and which was anticommunitarian, antisystematic and detached from the non-intellectual issues of his day. However, Melville did not seem to realize that what he calls Emersonian Transcendentalism is always counterbalanced with Emerson's use of language as a deconstructive means that refutes anything we might understand as a fixed belief (which places him among the thinkers of the deconstructive tradition, i.e. Nietzsche, Foucault, Butler, Deleuze). Emerson subverts the system and discourses of his time from within – by means of tropes, metaphors, performative statements that enact new possibilities for subjectivity. To criticize it as ideology is, I believe, untenable. To treat Emerson's late thinking as a part of the "metaphysics of force", where Jan Patočka places Nietzsche and his will to power, would be reductive as well and it would ignore Emerson's praxis of secession, of abandonment. Patočka views the "metaphysics of force" as an inauthentic fiction, as a mythology.[165] For, it stresses the role that we play (and with which we fully identify) and not our "ownness" which is irreplaceable. I shall argue in this chapter, however, that Emerson's notion of force and will does not correspond to any interpretation that understands Nietzsche's concept of will to power as Domination, or rule of the stronger. Instead, Emerson's power expresses itself as potentiality. Emerson in his early work (including "Self-Reliance") emphasized the transcendental, the connection one has with the Over-soul, or Life-force. While Melville focuses to a great extent on the deconstruction of external impediments which block the construction of identity, Emerson's early rhetorical force turns to the creative self and the infinite, the "genius" in the individual. In his late work, however, he explores

[164] Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 93.
[165] Jan Patočka, *Heretical essays in the Philosophy of History,* trans. Erazim Kohák (Carus Publishing, 1993) 117.

society, immanent forces, rhetoric, success, will, the organization of affects and performative strategies.

3. 1 Speech that Creates a Self: Eloquence

3.1.1. Thinking and Speaking: Descartes' "I think, I am" formula

Can one (re-)constitute one's consciousness by means of speech? By acknowledging, naming who one is? Is it possible to do so only temporarily, or can it ensure our long term existence? Is one the author of oneself? These are the major questions which are dealt with in Emerson's "Self-Reliance" where he comments on Descartes' *Meditations.* Emerson claims in his essay: "Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say 'I think, I am,' but quotes some saint or sage."[166] Stanley Cavell draws attention to the full quote in Descartes' Second Meditation where Descartes expresses his insight as follows: "*I am, I exist,* is necessarily true every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind." Emerson also emphasized the fact that one needs to say the "I" in order to exist.[167] But what happens when one does not speak or think? Does it mean that he no longer exists? The question is, what does this *saying of the "I"* mean. Cavell offers two interpretations taken from Jaakko Hintikka and Bernard Williams. Hintikka understands the formula "I think" as a basis of inference. Williams, on the other hand, sees it as an expression of some kind of performance. I agree with Williams that the cogito, in naming its existence, enacts a kind of performance. As Cavell points out, once I say "I exist", I must exist. It follows from the performative force of the first person singular. It is impossible to coherently say "I do not exist."[168] How do I, however, distinguish myself from others? For Descartes, there are no others and that is also partially why he needs God to be the perfect one, the author of my existence, thus providing me with existence. For Descartes, moreover, man always thinks. Emerson does not follow this line of reasoning up to these two conclusions. He asks whether the "I" really gets into my speaking and thinking (or whether it is genius that speaks through me). Further, he asks what happens when I do not think. And he says that those who do not stake their claim in the world by staking their existence really only haunt the world as non-existent. Cavell suggests that such an answer has two weaknesses – he does not say what the I may in the end be; the proof only works in the moment of

[166] Emerson, "Self-Reliance," 123.
[167] Cavell 85.
[168] Ibid.

its enunciation.[169] For Emerson, self-authorship is to a great extent possible and indeed recommended. He calls the uncreated life the life of conformity.[170] However, there is a paradox in Emerson's rejection of quoting others. Cavell is right to point out that Emerson himself quotes Descartes here and other authors quite often. Can we not repeat others? Can we be the original authors of our sentences? Derrida would say (and it is also a part of his argument against Austin's criticism of the nonseriousness of artistic and theatrical speech) that all saying is citation, including 'serious' everyday talk. Language is something we inherited in a certain form and with rules and words. One always subjects oneself to intelligibility. In an effort to enact his self, Emerson performs it. Cavell locates the performance of Emerson's cogito in Self-Reliance: "My life is for itself and not for spectacle. … Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony."[171] It is clear that Emerson knows that we are visible to one another, the theatricality of the self is obvious. But we may to a great extent control and transform what we show as our self, as who we are. One must not let one's consciousness be controlled and limited by the stare, by the watching of oneself by others.

Emerson knows that the boundary between the private and public is a thin one. It is impossible not to be influenced by the "external," public gaze and the normativity arising therefrom. He, however, preaches a necessary detachment from the theater, from the stage of life. That can be attained either through the workings of "genius" within oneself, or by means of self-reflection and the reflection of the surrounding society, performed by the intellect. That was exactly the problem of Bartleby – the effort to evade public space, the public gaze and disappear from the power structures and rhetorical power games. But is that possible? Emerson's answer would most probably be negative. What Melville emphasizes is the visual "speaking" of Bartleby's presence. For, Bartleby's presence is already a visual presentation of meanings. The public space provides perfect "soil" for the theatricalization of his body. Melville, in contrast to Emerson, stresses the body and physical space. He suggests that the public space is not anchored in ideas but in corporeality which reflects the individual by means of the public. From the perspective of semiotics, we could understand Bartleby as an expressive symbol, as will be explored when discussing poetry and C. S. Peirce, which reveals that which conditions its creation.

3.1.2 Eloquence

[169] Ibid. 89.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Cavell 96.

Emerson claims in his essay "Eloquence" that right words can save every occasion. All one needs is to be a good orator. His reliance on speech can be seen in almost all of his late essays. Even a mute, even Bartleby perhaps, according to Emerson, could become an orator and begin to change his surroundings and himself. He says:

> because every man is an orator, how long soever he may have been a mute, an assembly of men is so much more susceptible.[172] … There is no calamity which right words will not begin to redress. … The end of eloquence is to alter in a pair of hours perhaps in half hour's discourse, the convictions and habits of years.[173]

What Emerson emphasizes here is the idea that words are performative and can become actions under certain conditions. The power of statements, for Emerson, is connected, however, with moral sentiment and affirmative truth. It must invigorate the hearer. It has to promote activity. Such an attitude stands in stark opposition to Bartleby's formula which leads to a complete nothingness of the will and inactivity but which also shows the shortcomings of identity based on speech. For, how can Emerson ensure that the world will not soon be filled with confidence-men of all kinds, misusing speech and leading one subsequently to skepticism and nihilism? He simply cannot and does not. He experiments, he attunes and provides energy for one's own thinking. The responsibility is up to each individual himself. He claims that:

> Eloquence is attractive as an example of magic of personal ascendency. The orator changes the face of the world; he commands his passions and affections. ... [The] [o]rator attunes the audience, manipulates moods of people like a musician. Experimenters are improvisators.[174]

On the one hand, Emerson's confidence in performative speech, in eloquence, has no limits. He is well aware of the manipulation that every orator makes use of and he approves of it. It is also clear that the orator must improvise and experiment. His statements, however, need not be logical. Emerson claims in "Poetry and Imagination" that the poet makes use of a joyful science (a concept

[172] Emerson, "Eloquence," 639.
[173] Emerson, "Eloquence," 640.
[174] Emerson, "Eloquence," 664.

on which Nietzsche bases one of his works). Poetry is science, and the poet a truer logician. He builds, adds, and affirms, while the critic destroys : "the poet says nothing but what helps somebody; let others be distracted with cares, he is exempt."[175] The poet is the law-giver, according to Emerson, the exact reporter of the essential law. Self-knowledge is one of the main prerequisites of a good orator and poet. Another one is the abandonment of the world of common sense. Repetitions of a phrase, which form a rhyme, help the poet "launch on the sea of ideas and emotions: we pour contempt on the prose you so magnify; yet the sturdiest Philistine is silent."[176] Rhyme is a kind of music and it also has the privilege of speaking the truth which no confidence-man can challenge. Thus, the character of the experimenter, or poet, draws on his own intuition and emotions, enacting a new logic if necessary, constituting "difference" in the world while being a decentered self. It is obvious that while Emerson's late work still stresses the affirmative side of performatives, it leaves space for the non-identical, for the self as "differentiating," a rupture in discourse. Overcoming circumstance or limitation, can therefore be enacted not by means of ascent or descent but by means of deconstruction from within discourses themselves.

Emerson connects eloquence with power: the orator concentrates the powers of a multitude. His aim is: "taking sovereign possession of the audience. Him we call an artist who shall play on an assembly of men as a master on the keys of the piano."[177] This ability to attune the audience to a desired emotion, to enlarge their affections, is one of the main virtues of the orator and of the poet. The orator must be of radiant physical health and must have "great volumes of animal heat."[178] At the same time, the orator has to be a supreme commander over all his passions and affections. That is the first but not the most important prerequisite. He or she needs to be able to see through masks, let Force/Life stream through his/her body and mind and convince, mesmerize the audience. Mere power of speech is not sufficient. Eloquence refers to a unique presence; it is "the appropriate organ of the highest personal energy."[179] Together with personal energy, the orator needs to be able to make use of tropes, to condense his daily experience into a glowing symbol.[180] Here we are already moving into the sphere of Emerson's mysticism. To electrify the audience requires that the poet or orator contemplates a whole and is inflamed by it. The paradox is that while the orator's eloquence must be grounded on facts (he must keep his feet on something), he at the same time offers symbols of all kinds and colors to be able to free the audience, to transform its emotions, to keep its

[175] Emerson, "Poetry and Imagination," 510.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Emerson, "Eloquence," 640.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Emerson 645.
[180] Emerson 649.

attention. What connects these two realms, is, I believe, affirmative power, or as Emerson calls it moral sentiment. The success of the orator is measured by his ability to provide new energy for the hearer, to transfer his ecstasy to the audience. As to Emerson's proto-pragmatism, he stresses in "Eloquence" that one needs to develop one's character and insight and see to it that his words are actions. He also emphasizes the connection with power claiming that eloquence shows the power and possibility of man. Yet, one needs several attributes to make it work:

> No act indicates more universal health than eloquence. The special ingredients of this force are clear perceptions; memory; power of statement; logic; imagination, or the skill to clothe your thought in natural images; passion, which is the heat; and then a grand will, which, when legitimate and abiding, we call character, the height of manhood.[181]

The human being therefore needs to show rare power of expression. But we may perceive heat and energy also in the talk of tricksters. How do we distinguish genuine actions from fake actions, or performances? How can we tell who is an authentic orator and who a mean forger, or confidence-man? In his essay "Success," Emerson criticizes those American "performers" who work only for effect. He says:

> I hate this shallow Americanism which hopes to get rich by credit ….skill without study, mastery without apprenticeship, or the sale of goods through pretending that they sell. … excellence is lost sight of in the hunger for sudden performance and praise.[182]

What Emerson attacks here is the power of confidence-men to mesmerize the audience, to focus only on the consequences, on the profit of their action. That sounds similar to the notion of pragmatism as we use it today where what counts is the effect, consequences of a conception, its "cash value" as William James termed it. Emerson would, however, disagree with the ideas of William James and would not move into the realm of relativist thinking.

3.2 Pragmatism, Speech and Forgery

[181] Ibid.
[182] Emerson 730.

Charles Sanders Peirce tried to evade the ethical problems connected with forgery. His pragmaticism opposed both nominalism and pure analytical philosophy. He followed, like Emerson, Swedenborg and reached mystical oneness, love of all humankind, the acceptance of the impossibility to solve the final questions involved with ethics. On the other hand, he relied on his mathematical methods of inquiry. His greatest influence on the pragmatic tradition was formulated in his maxim:

> Pragmaticism was originally announced in the form of a maxim, as follows: Consider what effects, that might *conceivably* have practical bearings, you *conceive* the objects of your *conception* to have. Then, your *conception* of those effects is the whole of your *conception* of the object.[183]

There, he defines truth as the correspondence of a sign (in particular, a proposition) to its object, and the real as the object (be it a possibility or quality, or an actuality or brute fact, or a necessity or norm or law) to which a true sign corresponds, such that truth and the real are independent of that which you or I or any actual, definite community of inquirers think. After that needful but confined step, next in clearness's third grade (the pragmatic, practice-oriented grade) he defines truth — not as actual consensus, such that to inquire would be to poll the experts — but as that which *would* be reached, sooner or later but still inevitably, by research taken far enough, such that the real does depend on that ideal final opinion—a dependence to which he appeals in theoretical arguments elsewhere, for instance for the long-run validity of the rule of induction (Peirce held that one cannot have absolute theoretical assurance of having actually reached the truth, and later said that the confession of inaccuracy and one-sidedness is an essential ingredient of a true abstract statement). Peirce contends that even to argue against the independence and discoverability of truth and the real is to presuppose that there is, about that very question under argument, a truth with just such independence and discoverability.

The pragmatism of Peirce does not resemble "vulgar" pragmatism, which connotes a ruthless search for political advantage. Peirce's pragmatic maxim is rather the heart of his pragmatism as a method of experimentational mental reflection.[184] It is obvious then that Peirce's

[183] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Thoemmes Continuum, 1998: 5.438.
[184] Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.13 note 1.

method was, like Emerson's method, based on experimentation and not on utilitarian values. Peirce distinguished between utilitarian and intellectual interests, saying that the scientific man (as opposed to the practical man) wants nothing more than to render ideas and things reasonable. Pragmatism, according to him, is not a utility-oriented practicalism but an endeavor based on experimentation.

William James, in contrast, has been often attacked for his relativist and opportunistic ethics. Some of his rather unfortunate claims were misinterpreted into claims such as, "Do whatever is good for you." What is good for you may not be good/true for me. While his statements about truth do often lead in the relativist direction, and he was criticized for that by Ch. S. Pierce, his ethics rests on the values of trust and faith. To test whether a person's statement is authentic we need to test it from the viewpoint of a community, as James emphasizes. He explains in his work *Will to Believe* that we have to act and we cannot always wait for adequate proof when making a moral decision. And a decision whether someone is a forger is not a mere epistemological problem, but an ethical one as well. James says:

> Moral questions immediately present themselves as questions whose solution cannot wait for sensible proof. A moral question is a question not of what sensibly exists, but of what is good, or would be good if it did exist. [...] A social organism of any sort whatever, large or small, is what it is because each member proceeds to his own duty with a trust that the other members will simultaneously do theirs. Wherever a desired result is achieved by the co-operation of many independent persons, its existence as a fact is a pure consequence of the precursive faith in one another of those immediately concerned. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this condition, without which not only is nothing achieved, but nothing is even attempted.[185]

Such trust, or confidence in others is exactly what Melville plays with in his book *Confidence-man.* In it, he opposes both Jamesian pragmatism and Emerson's idealism which do not solve the problem of forgery and rely on intuition and the test of a "community of inquirers." How can we test authenticity and differentiate it from speech made for mere effect or for profit? Linguistic transactions are in many aspects analogous to monetary

[185] William James, *The Will to Believe; and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (General Books LLC, 2009) 16.

transactions which motivate the American self.

3.3 Melvillean Performatives: Language, Money and the Body

Authenticity, sincerity, confidence – all of these are related to successful or unsuccessful performatives or speech acts. We have seen how sincerity is connected with eloquence and power in Emerson's work. In Melville's work ("Bartleby, the Scrivener," *The Confidence-Man*), the issue of sincerity versus forgery is one of the major topics. Melville offers no manuals as to "how to demask forgery" or "how to become authentic." Rather, he tests his characters and readers concerning their confidence in one another, in themselves, and in American society. His performatives are radically different from those of Emerson; they lack the drive, the hope, the rhetorical capacity to break through a wall. Their "force" often comes from no force at all, from moments when one is "de-activated" by angst, stammering, silence, ecstasy or the call of conscience, all of them moments of timelessness. We will see later on how contemporary thought (Derrida, Deleuze) deals with these moments. It will become clearer what Melville's performatives can actually do to us. For now, let us focus on the context of performatives. If they are to work, there needs to be some amount of confidence. Confidence is closely related in Melville's work to the issues of money, currency and the transmission of information. Transactions (monetary and linguistic) all require confidence in order to work. At the same time, they function as performances in all the various meanings of the word. A performance may win one's confidence or cancel it; it may reveal important strategies of forgeries, ideologies, of lying, as well as the performative aspects of charitable behavior. We have seen such transactions and performances in "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Now, we can have a look at Melville's *Confidence-man* where he also tests when a narrative is a performance. Together with it, we need to analyze performance as such. For, Melville's main criticism of Emerson's work is leveled at the rhetorical performance which can be fake.

In a text, as Marie Maclean writes, we can perceive narrative as performance. Maclean talks about physical performance and the moving body of text: "there is an interplay of the network of content and the network of expression. What Deleuze and Guatarri call *agencement,* which means that energetic actions of bodies and feelings are transformed into a combination of signs produced by *enonciation,* the act of the speaker or writer."[186] We can trace such agencement machinique in Melville's work as in Kafka's. Deleuze and Guattari say:

[186] Marie Maclean,.*Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment* (Taylor and Francis, 1988) 62.

> On the one hand [there is] the machine-boat, the machine-hotel, the machine-circus, the machine-castle, the machine tribunal: each with its parts, cogs and gears, its processes, its mixed, embedded, disjointed bodies... On the other hand the system of signs or *enonciation:* each system with its incorporeal transformations, its acts, its death sentences and its verdicts, its trials, its "law".[187]

Deleuze makes a distinction in his latter work[188] between the machinique or energetic (involving an interplay of dynamism, rhythm and process) and the mecanique or mechanical (lifeless, artificial, not part of an organic whole).[189] According to Deleuze, we get a "feel" for the notion, perceiving a vibration, an intensity. Once we begin to think about language and its processes as intensities, vectors, we begin to view the self as a multiplicity of various roles or forces. Coming back to Melville's *Confidence-man*, we realize that Melville's aim is to be able to "decode" the masks one wears, just like the character of the Cosmopolitan can, yet he knows that there is no unitary essence behind those masks. Such uprootedness is directly related to the theatricality of the American self. Maclean points out that alienation goes hand in hand with this activity: "alienation of self produces the theatricalization of self."[190] And virtuality is just another aspect that results from such alienation. The self, Maclean claims, becomes the other – a multiplied other – it splits into several virtual selves, masks. The self [of the Confidence-man] then falls apart, it loses its unity. What we are left with are only different voices in constant dialogue.[191] *The Confidence-man* is a novel made out of dialogues. It is a theatrical game where a part is substituted for a whole. There is no essence anymore, just attributes performatively constituting a rhetorical self. The formal, rhetorical self is also, like the self of the attorney, vulnerable, volatile and open to self-destruction. The question for such a linguistic approach (which we present here) is not what you can make, but what you can perform. And performance implies shared conventions between the performer and the reader and the contractual nature of language.[192]

3.3.1 Transactions: Linguistic and Monetary Confidence

[187] Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari. *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Continuum, 2004) 113.
[188] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (University of Minessota Press, 1986).
[189] Maclean 64.
[190] Maclean 66.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Maclean 67.

Let us now have a look at an important aspect of agency: speech acts. We will ask: What kind of transaction occurs when we speak? Is the linguistic transaction in any way analogical to the material, monetary one? Melville discusses the issue of confidence, speech and silence (both spiritual, linguistic and monetary) in his novel *The Confidence-man* and "Bartleby, the Scrivener." In *The Confidence-man,* he views America as a boat full of confidence-men who cannot be easily decoded. They make use of philosophical dialogue while questioning authenticity, forgery, the value of knowledge, money and sense. If trusted or paid they offer help in building up one's new personality through their performative speech. Yet, we still do not know how they do this and what kind of contract they establish between themselves and their interlocutor. What kind of contract is established between Melville's story of Bartleby and his reader? To what extent is his formula "I would prefer not to" performative effecting a change in the world of the reader? Maclean says in her book *Narrative as Performance*:

> When we say "I will tell you...", it is a performative statement which takes us into a different realm of the symbolic. This shifting presupposes a contract between the reader and the writer which implies a sort of transaction. The transaction, however, is both an 'act' and an enactment, "both doing and the representation of doing.[193]

What Maclean describes here is the contingency of every representation. It is subject to the caprice of the teller. At the same time, she says, all storytelling asks for something in return for what it supplies. The 'contract' is not a static term but rather a dynamic, transformatory and active process. The reader finds himself thrown into the contractual relationship, into the frame of the story. If there is a speech act in the story, such as "Then he said: Let's get married', and "I believed him," the act may be fictional, a second-order act.[194] Yet, it works.

The transformative effects of storytelling can occur in various forms. Even if it is merely a second-order, fictive act, it does something to us as well as something to the character in the novel. Searle and Austin doubt the effects of such fictive speech acts. Austin claims in the argument about the non-seriousness of speech acts in fiction and theater: "a performative utterance will, for example, be in *a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on stage, or introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy.[195] The void of the utterance implies that there is no communication, no

[193] Maclean 72.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 9.

contract between the performer and the audience. That is not plausible, however, because the audience clearly perceives the impact of a performative act within a play just as a reader does in a book. And the 'contract' between the speaker and the listener may include both 'counterfeit' statements as well as sincere utterances. Mary Luise Pratt says:

> The assumptions of natural discourse may … be deliberately suspended or replaced by other conventions operating for both 'speaker' and 'listener.' In such circumstances, 'counterfeit' - that is fictive – utterances will, like stage money, have a positive value, as will also the listener's *not* crediting the speaker's words or *not* taking what he 'says' as meaning what made him 'say' it.[196]

The positive value of 'counterfeit' utterances takes us back to the virtue of "decoding" a performance – of insincerity in a narrative or a play. Such insincerity, or theatrical, fictive speech, which we know may be mystifying, serves as a mirror for us to see the conditions of our own thinking and of patterns and ideologies that we unquestioningly accept (as in the case of Bartleby who reflects the attorney to a certain extent). Moreover, a theatrical speech act, even if it is not a 'serious' speech act in Austin's sense of the word, can be valid within its virtual world. It may still reveal certain truths. Anne Ubersfeld suggests that a "theatrical speech act be marked with a minus or a negative sign, precisely because a situation of self-reflexivity, such as a play within a play, will juxtapose two negatives and thereby reveal a positive, the truth of fiction. The opposite of self-reflexivity is forgery – when one persuades us that the fictitious is real."[197] According to Pratt, the major benefit of fiction is the doubling of experience. We therefore do not need to cancel the validity of theatrical speech acts and consider them non-serious and therefore useless. We can inhabit the two worlds – the world of fictional or theatrical discourse and the world of natural discourse without having to mix them. There are truths in both of them. We pay the producer of the text (with various currencies) but what we receive in the transaction can never be fully converted into either the money or the praise that we give for it. Roland Barthes considers fiction a commodity or even a piece of merchandise (and later in *The Pleasure of the Text* as a gift which has its worth) and written narrative as both a product and production. Is Melville responsible for the effects he produces by means of Bartleby? Regarding the relationship of fictional discourse to

[196] Mary Luise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1977) 101.
[197] Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre* (1977) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 186.

natural discourse, Barthes says:

> fictional discourse has no responsibility vis-a-vis the real: in the most realistic novel, the referent has no 'reality': suffice it to imagine the disorder the most orderly narrative would create were its descriptions taken at face value, converted into operative programs and simply *executed*. In short... what we call 'real' (in the theory of the realistic text) is never more than a code of execution: *the novelistic real is not operable.*[198]

It is important to realize that in fiction, the referent cannot have any reality, it cannot be put into practice. When these two systems/discourses merge, we can only become confused about what is real and what is counterfeit, as can be seen in Melville's *Confidence-man.* For, the confidence-man juggles with the discourse of language and the discourse of money – as with two symbolic forms of communication. There are counterfeit and real money present as well as words and promises. Both discourses are created by humans. As Maclean points out: "thus natural discourse, like currency is in itself a fabrication, only 'true' if we agree on its use. Fictive discourse is also a fabrication but of a different sort, a simulacrum of the natural […] It is distinguished from natural discourse by socially acceptable criteria of validity, just as the distinction between forged money and genuine money is made by the ruling social institutions."[199] Fictive discourse, like forged money, can therefore become a means of questioning the conventions of audience creation, social institutions and help to establish their respective boundaries. Such testing of conventions is one of the tasks of both Melville's confidence-man and Bartleby. Mary Douglas describes the means of such testing and the similar nature of ritual and the discourse of money. Maclean subsequently substitutes the term ritual for the term language throughout the whole quotation. The homology between money and ritual/language is described by Mary Douglas (and modified by Maclean) as follows:

> The metaphor of money admirably sums up what we want to assert of language. Money provides a fixed, external, recognizable sign for what would be confused, contradictory operations; language makes audible external signs of internal states. Money mediates transactions; language mediates experience, including social

[198] Maclean 78: quotation from Roland Barthes, *S/Z* , transl. R. Miller (New York, Hill and Wang, 1974) 80.
[199] Maclean 88.

> experience. Money provides a standard for measuring worth; language standardizes situations and so helps evaluate them. Money makes a link between the present and the future, so does language. The more we reflect on the richness of the metaphor, the more it becomes clear that this is no metaphor. Money is only an extreme and specialised form of language."[200]

It is the mediation of experience, which both ritual and language provide, that interests us most when considering language, transactions and confidence in "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Can Bartleby's experience be communicated in the language of the attorney? It seems that it cannot. He himself is not intelligible within the discourse of the law. Be it a past trauma or different experiencing of the present situation, the sensibility and logic of Bartleby is different from that of the attorney. That is why Bartleby creates a foreign language within the conventional language. Is confidence based on shared convention? The word confidence in *The Confidence-man* connects in itself both meanings – the language of trust (to confide in someone) and the language of money (the confidence man asks: Will you have confidence in me?, which often also means: Will you contribute money to our common enterprise?). Money (as a representative/sign of performed work) thus may be a form of language, a form of transaction, but only within an agreed code. Maclean admits: "when we change the context, we change the currency, thereby invalidating our initial means of exchange."[201] The context of the transaction is therefore essential. If the confidence-man presents us with a fiction which we believe, he must not break the rules of belief. It is interesting to notice that the attorney wants to make Bartleby his man of confidence. However, he soon ceases to confide in him. What are the reasons? Are they mainly linguistic – based on Bartleby's formula which enacts a logic of preference – or does he break their contract in a different way? It is clear that the attorney is the first one to break the pact when he asks Bartleby to leave the "space" he designated for him and do some extra work. He was trying to make him leave his separate realm, a world elsewhere, which could, like fiction in general, mirror his everyday world and the natural discourse. Maclean believes that if we decode a 'fiction' which a character presents to his interlocutor in a work of fiction or drama, we get to a certain truth, or revelation, which is valid within that discourse. If a fiction, such as Melville's, uses such self-reflective means, it has the effect of inspiring self-reflection on our real human situation.

[200] Maclean 79.
[201] Maclean 79.

3.3.1.1 The Forger

The figure of the forger (Confidence-man) will help us understand the breakdown in the notions of 'truth' and 'reality' which opens the way to an irreducible multiplicity. Deleuze says in his work on time, cinema and fiction:

> The power of forgery only exists in the form of a series of powers, which always refer back from the one to the other and pass from one into the other. To such an extent that investigators, witnesses, innocent or guilty heroes, will participate in the same power of forgery whose levels they will incarnate at each stage of the narration. Even 'the truthful man ends up understanding that he has never ceased lying,' said Nietzsche. So the forger will be inseparable from a chain of forgers into whom he metamorphoses. There is no single forger, and if the forger reveals something, it is the existence behind him of another forger, who may even be the State... The truthful man will form part of the chain, at one end, as will the artist, power of forgery to the nth degree, at the other. And narration will have no other content than the display of these figures, their shifting from one to the other, their metamorphoses one into the other.[202]

Forgery is closely connected with art, which is, as Maclean points out, a part of a transformational chain with multiple future possibilities. The gift of a forgery is then analogous to the gift of fiction, its value and its implications.[203] If we cannot get to the stable, unalterable truth, why is *The Confidence-man* or "Bartleby, the Scrivener" 'worth' reading? What kind of contract is established between the reader and narrator and various incarnations of forgers? One of the answers would be, as was mentioned above, self-reflection. The characters offer self-reflection, they reflect one another, America, the narrator. The narrator in *The Confidence-man* acts as a speculator, as a literary critic who seeks what is "worthy" in the America of his time. What Melville shows, however, is that value and values can be enacted in a performance, that they are only performed and can be devalorized at any time. There are several cases of such devalorization in the novel – the character wants to increase his own value, he desires a charitable reputation and also a good deal. But the exact opposite occurs, he decreases his value instead. The confidence-man unmasks his charitable endeavors and shows the emptiness behind it, its empty referent. Similarly, Bartleby

[202] Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time-Image (University of Minessota Press, 1989) 175.
[203] Maclean 85.

unmasks the inauthentic charity of the attorney and the emptiness behind human relationships in the law-office.

3.3.1.2 Dream within a Dream, Frame within a Frame

There is a strategy which Melville uses a lot in his *Confidence-man,* which is called *mise-en-abyme*. It is a great way to "force" one into self-reflection. In literary theory the notion refers to the inter-textual nature of language. Representing a frame-within-a-frame concept, *mise-en-abyme* constantly defers our judgment, our action. We can therefore never reach the basis, the foundation of reality through language, because it refers, in the frame-within-a-frame manner, to another language, that leads to another and so on *ad infinitum*. One discourse mirrors another and that one mirrors another in *The Confidence-man*, so it is not surprising that we see no end to the strange process of progression. In "Bartleby," two discourses, languages meet but nothing substantial is said or revealed. It seems that in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," unlike in *The Confidence-man,* the way/process in which they interact is not dialectical. While in *The Confidence-man* we may ask: Does their communication establish anything new? A new America?, in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," any change is potential and more probable in the world of his readers than in the world of the attorney. Melville creates a dreamy atmosphere of indistinctness, where the old European rationality arrives at its limits. Ubersfeld talks about the generative power which dreams have: "the dream within another dream speaks the truth. Through a twofold denial, the dream of a dream produces truth. Likewise, theatre-within-the-theatre does not convey reality but rather what is true, transforming the sign of illusion and identifying as illusion all that is mounted on stage."[204] Thus, such self-reflection can make one recognize his/her illusion (such as when the attorney, on the basis of his experience with Bartleby, realizes that personal identity is not a simple essence based on the narration of one´s past, or when the reader realizes the possibility of the logic of preference). If, as Maclean says, self-reflection of fictive acts produces the recognition of fiction, which in the end has a positive perlocutionary effect on the reader, then we cannot talk about the non-seriousness, the emptiness of speech acts in fiction and drama. Their effects are obvious and visible. The strategies which produce these effects are various, not limited to mise-en-abyme. Revelation/recognition of illusion or lies may proceed from other paradoxes which Melville brilliantly presents. He questions not only the stability and reality of the referent, but also the nature of the sign as such. Umberto Eco

[204] Ubersfeld 28.

says about signs and lying: "A sign is ... something … which stands in place of something which is absent, which could not even exist, or at least not be present anywhere at the time at which I use the sign. This means that the fundamental characteristic of the sign is that I can use it to lie. So that everything is a sign that can be used to *LIE* (since everything that serves to tell a lie can also be used, in the right circumstances, to tell the truth)."[205] Now the question is whether we accept the lie that pretends to be truth, or whether it self-reflectively reveals certain mechanisms in ideologies, whether we accept the counterfeit as genuine, or whether we accept it as counterfeit and continue "in confidence" ourselves.

3.3.1.3 Confidence and the Counterfeit

Lucien Dallenbach offers a definition of mise-en-abyme which perfectly suits our endeavors in interpreting American confidence. It deals with the symbolic code of language and the symbolic code of money as payment/confidence. She says that there are three sorts of mise-an-abyme, the first reflects the code which the narrator and audience must share, the second reflects the *enonciation,* the textual strategies of the speaking subject and organizing subject, the third reflects the *enoncé*, all or part of the spoken message of the text.[206] If we introduce a counterfeit coin into the flow of transactions (by giving it to a beggar, or business partner), it is a mise-en-abyme (self-reflection) of code. Yet, if we give someone a counterfeit coin or message, what kind of gift is it? That depends on the receiver. The receiver can accept the forged message as:[207]

1) genuine, passed on as true, undetected ---naive and lucky receiver
2) forged, passed on as forged at a profit ---the manipulator, cynic
3) genuine, passed on as genuine, detected –leads to tragedy, but perhaps to wisdom
4) forged, passed on as genuine, undetected –a few days' riches for the poor little speculator [208]

Employing a Greimasian semiotic square[209], one would have to explore and "decode" in *The Confidence-man* and "Bartleby, the Scrivener" the effects of: fiction given as reality, fiction given as non-reality, reality given as fiction, reality given as non-fiction. What does this tell us

[205] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (London:Macmillan, 1976) 12.
[206] Quoted in and translated by Maclean 84, from: Lucien Dallenbach, *Le Recit Speculaire: Essay sur la Mise en Abyme* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).
[207] Maclean 84.
[208] Ibid.
[209] A. J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 222.

about the construction of confidence, self-confidence, confidential discourse and confidence-games? Which messages are truly embodied in their speakers and their experience and which are merely floating systems of signs? Is Bartleby´s unsaid message embodied within him? Does Emerson´s poet embody his message?

Emerson focuses on the truly embodied messages when he talks about the poet. The poet cannot be a mere conglomerate of signs. That would not transform anyone, and he would not transfer any power onto his audience.

3.4 Performativity and Poetics in Late Emerson

3.4.1 Poetic Creativity and Potentiality

The moments when the rhetorical force of Emerson's words transgresses the boundaries and inspires creation have been contrasted above with the moments of exhaustion of language, when the characters moan, stutter, wrestle wordlessly or simply remain silent. While Emerson seeks to awaken the lion inside him, the genius, which reveals new horizons and expand his consciousness, Melville prefers the zones of potentiality, limitation of will to nothing, the switching off of all violent forces. That, however, does not mean that Emerson's ideal orator would have to be over-assertive. It is the helplessness of Bartleby, the fact that he could not hurt a fly, that is the worst of his qualities, if he has any. Emerson's poet, on the other hand, teaches people to dance above the abyss, to affirm and experiment with the forces of nature, to let Life take over. He thus examines nature from a different perspective than Melville. Yet, as will be seen, there are points where they meet, zones of contact, of potentiality, that the authors both inhabit and that question language, intelligibility and law itself. When Emerson claims that we need to affirm Life itself, he talks about being without negation. It reminds one of the old phrase by Parmenides which says: "being is, nonbeing is not." Emerson identifies Being with Life and creative forces:

> Being is the vast affirmative, excluding negation, self-balanced, and swallowing up all relations, parts and times within itself. Nature, truth, virtue, are the influx from thence. Vice is the absence or departure of the same. Nothing, Falsehood, may indeed stand as the great Night or shade on which as a background the living universe paints

itself forth, but no fact is begotten by it; it cannot work, for it is not.[210]

Emerson sees negativity as a potential background of our actions. Yet, he sees it as a privation. It is this naive notion of negativity or nothingness as the privation of the good or of being which Melville criticized in Emerson's early thinking. Even if nothing has no existence, however, it still does not exclude potentiality as an indeterminate zone for future creation. Let us now inquire what that poetic potentiality is.

3.4.2 Words as Expressive Symbols

Emerson claims in his essay "The Poet" that the science of the poet consists in naming, language-making, getting close to things and thus naming them either after their appearance or after their essence, which rejoices the intellect, "which delights in detachment or boundary."[211] For Emerson, language is a vast reserve of words created by poets. At the same time it is the tomb of muses in the sense that in its further use the words lost the "stroke of genius and obtained currency," which at the original moment "symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer."[212] That is why Emerson believes that "language is fossil poetry."[213]

Richard Poirier, a well-known commentator on Emerson, said that Emerson's sensitive and insightful mind made him aware that there is no adequate narrative for the inhabitants of 19th century America. What they did was to "scramble to orient themselves in a cosmos of alarming new proportions."[214] Similarly to Emerson, Poirier emphasized the value of the poet, saying that "the experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poets."[215] Emerson through the performative statement not only constituted the absence but at the same time took on himself the task of filling that void. His poet does not represent the things and processes of the world; he creates the world anew. The new thought, the new method of the poet comes from the formless potentiality on which the poet draws. He affirms the potentiality to apply the ideal law (the order of forces that one experiences) to this moment and the present knot of affairs. Further, in "the Poet," Emerson describes the character of the poet in a way similar to

[210] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays* (Read Books, 2008) 89.
[211] Emerson, "The Poet," 690.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Poirier, *Renewal of Literature,* 155.
[215] Poirier 185.

Romanticism – the poet is capable of taking us to the "bottom" of being – of our self and of universe: he approaches being (and not becoming) as follows:

> The poet by an ulterior intellectual perception […] puts eyes, and tongue, into every dumb and inanimate object […] so the poet turns the world to glass, and shows us all things in their right series and procession.[216]

The way we see the world is very often deformed. It is up to the poet to create/correct the new ratios in which we perceive things around us and ourselves. The new transparency of the world that the poet provides for his readers should also instill a new faith in poetry within them. He leads the reader into potentiality (before forms and conventions are enacted) where there are no superstitions, no institution, no stable essences, no secure ground and yet, one can confide in the potentiality of nature completely. Emerson claims that one cannot really be cheated. He says: "But it is as impossible for a man to be cheated by any one but himself, as for a thing to be and not to be at the same time. There is a third silent party to all our bargains. The nature and soul of things takes on itself the guaranty of the fulfillment of every contract, so that honest service cannot come to loss."[217] That is his idea of compensation in nature, the physics, law of attraction, which was, again, too optimistic for Melville. However, there is one more source of power, one more potentiality on which one may draw. That is the public power.

The human being is capable of a new energy, according to Emerson, that of an intellect doubled on itself, when one abandons oneself to the nature of things, (i.e., as structured by one's own nature). One needs to unlock, at all risks, one's doors of perception and let Life circulate through him. With this force, "his speech is thunder, his thought is law, and his words are universally intelligible as the plants and animals. The poet knows that he speaks adequately, then, only when he speaks somewhat wildly, or, "with the flower of the mind;" not with the intellect, used as an organ, but with the intellect released from all service."[218] The power of Emerson's rhetoric draws on potentiality while switching off the intellect's calculation, the poet risks everything – both his life, sanity and inner constitution.

3.4.3 Poetry and Imagination

[216] Emerson, "The Poet," 692.
[217] Emerson, "Compensation," 703.
[218] Emerson, "The Poet," 694.

Emerson's urge for transcendence, or mere transgression of the laws of time and space is connected with his desire to lose his body, to move higher, to be a mystical shape-shifter who experiences different forms of life – in a blessed continuity of experience. The poet often becomes another; he attunes himself to the voices of others, be it to their demons or angelic message and brings it to the reader. In ways similar to Bartleby, he is a messenger. But what exactly does such a poetic experience bring with it? How does Emerson's poet "leave" his limitations, the situation he was thrown into? He does not. Emerson mentions enthusiasm (being filled with the Life-force) and experimenting. One cannot function without the other in Emerson. Intellect becomes intuition, instincts approach the sublime. Paradoxes and oppositions generate the extreme power and tension of Emerson's speech. Like Melville, he evades sexuality and the ways of transgressing in ordinary experience through bodily ecstasy (be it sex, drugs, physical exhaustion). Emerson is no tantra thinker. Unlike Whitman, who makes use of Emerson's dialectic but runs it through his transformative perception which includes corporeality and sexuality. In Emerson, it is rather an Apollonian speech which materializes the relevant affects within the reader with Dionysian force. It is this immateriality made material (or having material, transformative consequences) which resonates in Melville's Bartleby. Like Emerson's poetic speech, Bartleby's creates confusion. Transgressing not only the laws of logic and grammar but also the "laws" of human nature: Emerson's poet and Melville's Bartleby inhabit a zone of potentiality and indeterminacy which is extremely provocative and meaning-productive.

Emerson speaks about the independent action of the mind, "its strange suggestions and laws; a certain tyranny which springs up in their own thoughts, which have an order, method and beliefs of their own, very different from the order which this common sense uses."[219] That is the wildness of the speech of the poet who allows himself to be directed by his Life-forces. Emerson believes in the boldness of the poet who talks about real logic. He says: "poetry is science, poet a truer logician. He is the law-giver, as being an exact reporter of the essential law."[220] We may ask whether such a new logic could be Bartleby's logic of preference. But Emerson evaluates the state of the poet by the joy it produces and by passion, which Bartleby does not express. Emerson says: "Passion adds eyes; it is a magnifying glass," and "The poet knows the missing link by the joy it gives."[221] When talking about expressive symbols, Emerson again uses joy as his measure (cf: "Poetry is the gay science. Poet builds, adds and affirms." It therefore refers to science as joyful). He claims that a

[219] Emerson, "Poetry and Imagination," 728.
[220] Ibid. 739.
[221] Ibid. 729.

happy symbol is a sort of evidence "that your thought is just. I had rather have a good symbol of my thought, or a good analogy, than the suffrage of Kant or Plato. ...Thus a good symbol is the best argument, and is a missionary to persuade thousands."[222] Symbol as an argument, as a means of persuasion, as potentiality resonates with Peirce's thought, as will be seen later on. A symbol, for Emerson, always stimulates the intellect; therefore poetry is always the best reading. The poet, according to Emerson, is a potential man.[223] Poetry as a power is the perception of the "symbolic character of things, and the treating of them as representative. As a talent it is a magnetic tenaciousness of an image."[224] Such power is, for Emerson, as palpable as anything else. To be a good poet one must be able to launch oneself on the sea of ideas and emotions, to take poetry as its own end. For, the poet is a "symbolizer, emancipator who sympathizes with the power of possible forms."[225] The force of poetry is explosive. One needs to get to the spirit of the thing and express it while passing "the brute body and search the life and reason which causes it to exist."[226] The poet introduces words into the world. The world is a virgin soil for him. All is practical and the style of the poet betrays him, it reveals his character and to what extent he is able "to fuse the circumstance of today."[227] What is stressed here, again, is the individual, nominalistic character of American thought and rhetoric in the age of Transcendentalism. The poets are transporters, messengers. What signs do they transport?

3.4.4 Emerson and Charles Sanders Peirce

If we ask whether Emerson was a proto-pragmatist, we need to ask whether there is any connection between Emerson and Peirce. We know that there is one between Emerson and William James. But is there any acknowledged reception of Emerson on Peirce's part? Peirce knew Emerson's work and even though he criticized some of his Platonic ideas, he could not refute him, for they shared several beliefs. One of them was the vision of potentiality. Peirce says about his biography:

> I may mention, for the benefit of those who are curious in studying mental biographies, that I was born and reared in the neighborhood of Concord – I mean in Cambridge – at the time when Emerson, Hedge, and their friends were disseminating

[222] Ibid. 730.
[223] Ibid. 734.
[224] Ibid. 735.
[225] Ibid. 749.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid. 739.

> the ideas that they had caught from Schelling, and Schelling from Plotinus, from Boehm, or from God knows what minds stricken with the monstrous mysticism of the East. But the atmosphere of Cambridge held many an antiseptic against Concord transcendentalism; and I am not conscious of having contracted any of that virus. Nevertheless, it is probable that some cultured bacilli, some benignant form of the disease was implanted in my soul, unawares, and that now, after long incubation, it comes to the surface, modified by mathematical conceptions and by training in physical investigation.[228]

Apart from the transcendental virus, Peirce also liked to quote Emerson's poem of the Sphinx "Of thine eye, I am eyebeam."[229] When talking about the nature of signs, he comes very close to Emerson's interpretation.

3.4.5 What Is a Sign? What Is the Summum Bonum?

Peirce asks: "What are signs, anyhow? They are to communicate ideas, are they not? Even the imaginary signs called thoughts convey ideas from the mind of yesterday to the mind of tomorrow into which yesterday's have grown."[230] He claims that these "ideas" are not themselves "thoughts," or imaginary signs, saying that:

> . . . they are some *potentiality*, some form which may be embodied in external or internal signs. But why should this idea-potentiality be so poured from one vessel into another unceasingly? … Ideas do, no doubt, grow in this process. It is a part, …, of the process of the Creation of the world. If it has no ulterior aim at all, it may be likened to the *performance of a symphony* (emphasis mine).[231]

Ideas as potentiality and their growth is likened to a symphony which reminds us of Emerson's claim that poetry ends in music – in multiple melodies. Peirce has another condition,

[228] McDermott, *Drama of Possibility* (Fordham University Press, New York, 2007**)** 90, quoted from Peirce, Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1934) 6.86-87, par. 102.
[229] Peirce, *Collected Papers,* par. 310, 404.
[230] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Essential Peirce, vol. II: Selected Philosophical Writings, 1893-1913* (Indiana University Press, 1998) 388.
[231] Peirce, *Essential Peirce,* 388.

however, which needs to be fulfilled. He says that the principles of logic show there never could be the least growth in idea-potentiality without embodiment in something other than symbols. The other condition of the summum bonum is the continual increase of the embodiment of idea-potentiality.[232] Emerson and Peirce share their interest in symbols and signs and they question the possibilities of interpretation itself. This is relevant especially for the interpretation of Bartleby as an expressive symbol, as a philosophical question regarding both agency and existence. For, agency involves several aspects, such as potentiality and actuality, decisions, projects thrown into the future and other interpretations depending on whether we take the path of phenomenology, semiotics, vitalism or analytical thought. Our aim here is to get beyond Jamesian pragmatism, which both Peirce and Emerson do in their own way. Peirce regards symbols as follows: "Symbol alone is indeterminate. Therefore, Nothing, the indeterminate of the absolute beginning, is a symbol."[233] We come back here to the Gnostic interpretation of "Nothing", Bythos, the absolute indeterminacy. For Pierce, the symbol determines its interpretant. Determination implies a subject to be determined. We may ask: What is that? Peirce says that we must suppose that "there is something like a sheet of paper, blank, or with a black space upon it upon which an interpretant sign may be written. What is the nature of this blank? In affording room for the writing of a symbol, it is *ipso facto* itself a symbol, although a wholly vague one."[234]

This sounds very much like the nature of Bartleby. He is not particular, being blank, being a symbol, being a blank sheet onto which somebody else can try to write something new. Being the messenger of potentiality, Bartleby invites one to open the doors of perception – be it in the direction of the Abyss, the Nothing, inoperativity, or in the ascending direction, abandonment of the body, following one's calling. Bartleby connects both choices without making a choice himself. Living simultaneously both in the potentiality-to and potentiality-not-to, Bartleby creates, by means of the repetition of his formula a shadow zone which has surprising performative power. Peirce talks about the self-reproduction of a symbol:

> A symbol is something which has the power of reproducing itself, and that essentially, since it is constituted a symbol only by the interpretation. This interpretation involves a power of the symbol to cause a real fact.[235]

[232] Ibid. 322.
[233] Peirce, *Essential Peirce,* 322.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.

Peirce advocates here the power of representations to cause real facts, idea becoming action, in other words, the performativity of Bartleby as an expressive symbol. Being the blank table on which one may paint his vision of the world and therefore see it as well, Bartleby's blankness at the same time is being interpreted by his "reader," who constitutes his "identity" which can never capture his being as potentiality. In this way, Bartleby questions any endeavor to decipher anyone's identity, for there is none. What we get instead is a multiplicity, which may be one of many things: centralized, decentered, imitative, harmonious or integral.

3.4.6 Poetry's End in Music

Emerson said in "Poetry and Imagination" that poetry helps us discover new energy, new laws with which we may create. That is exactly what epitomizes pragmatism. He says that:

> Rhyme, being a kind of music, shares this advantage with music, that it has a privilege of speaking truth which all Philistia is unable to challenge. Music is the poor man's Parnassus. With the first note of the flute or horn, or the first strain of a song, we quit the world of common-sense, and launch on the sea of ideas and emotions: we pour contempt on the prose you so magnify; yet the sturdiest Philistine is silent. The like allowance is the prescriptive right of poetry. You shall not speak ideal truth in prose uncontradicted: you may in verse. The best thoughts run into the best words; imaginative and affectionate thoughts into music and metre. ... when we rise into the world of thought, and think of these things only for what they signify, speech refines into order and harmony.[236]

Emerson's thinking is that of emotion and affects, as well as that of intellect. Like Bartleby, he does not try to appease the contradictory, he connects both within himself. What is important is the sensibility of the poet and the interpretant. The poet, as well as the singer, betrays himself in every line, with every sound of the voice. Thus, for Emerson poetry should turn into music:

> Let Poetry then pass, if it will, into music and rhyme. That is the form which itself puts on. We do not enclose watches in wooden, but in crystal cases, and rhyme is the transparent frame that allows almost the pure architecture of thought to become

[236] Emerson, "Poetry and Imagination," 748.

visible to the mental eye. Substance is much, but so are mode and form much. The poet, like a delighted boy, brings you heaps of rainbow bubbles, opaline, air-borne, spherical as the world, instead of a few drops of soap and water.[237]

Poetry, on the one hand, ends in music, on the other, it ends in silence as can be seen in Emerson's poem Terminus.

3.4.7 Poetry's End in Silence: Emerson's Terminus

TERMINUS

IT is time to be old,
To take in sail: --
The god of bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,
Came to me in his fatal rounds,
And said: 'No more!
No farther shoot
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.
Fancy departs: no more invent;
Contract thy firmament
To compass of a tent.
There's not enough for this and that,
Make thy option which of two;
Economize the failing river,
Not the less revere the Giver,
Leave the many and hold the few.
Timely wise accept the terms,
Soften the fall with wary foot;
A little while
Still plan and smile,

[237] Ibid. 749.

And,--fault of novel germs,--
Mature the unfallen fruit.
Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,
Bad husbands of their fires,
Who, when they gave thee breath,
Failed to bequeath
The needful sinew stark as once,
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins,--
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,
Amid the gladiators, halt and numb.'
As the bird trims her to the gale,
I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:
'Lowly faithful, banish fear,
Right onward drive unharmed;
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charmed.'

Terminus, the god of boundaries, is used in the poem to set limits to one's aging self. Emerson's aim is no longer to dive in the limitless sea, to plunge into the Chaos which precedes Creation, the abyss from which Emerson wrote. The phrase 'the port is near' may signify death, without negative connotations, as a necessary boundary to life. The sea of eternity and potentiality no longer allures and seduces Emerson. He openly recognizes and accepts his physical and intellectual limitations, likening himself to a tree that shall not shoot its ambitious branches but stay silent and accept the imperatives of temporality and fate. Although the tone of the poem is not optimistic and Emerson realizes that he was unfit for either poetry or politics, it is not a poem about giving-up. It is clear that his typical force-voice drawing on Power, or Abyss is failing. Nature, as in other *May-day* poems, is suddenly inscrutable and mute, every wave is charmed; its secret must be

decoded carefully, without passion and fancy. For, the power of intellect and fancy are slowly decreasing as well. The Emersonian poet, however, knows that there is no final destination, aim or terminus for poetry. He says in Merops:

MEROPS

WHAT care I, so they stand the same,--
Things of the heavenly mind,--
How long the power to give them name
Tarries yet behind?

Thus far to-day your favors reach,
O fair, appeasing presences!
Ye taught my lips a single speech,
And a thousand silences.

Space grants beyond his fated road
No inch to the god of day;
And copious language still bestowed
One word, no more, to say.

As Emerson says here, it is poetry as a journey what counts in the end. Not the constant naming and unnaming of nature. Presences taught him to use speech but it is silence, or one word that he can use to describe his circumstance. To be able to interpret the situation when speech arrives at its limits, one can return to Emerson's fascination with gnosis, the Abyss, silence, light, fullness (*pleroma*) and the spark (*pneuma*). When describing the acts of the poet in one of his late poems called The Poet he says:

Not yet, not yet,
Impatient friend,--
A little while attend;
Not yet I sing: but I must wait,
My hand upon the silent string,
Fully until the end.

I see the coming light,
I see the scattered gleams,
Aloft, beneath, on left and right
The stars' own ether beams;
These are but seeds of days,
Not yet a steadfast morn,
An intermittent blaze,
An embryo god unborn.

Emerson mentions the seeds of days, the embryo god unborn, silent string, coming light, scattered beams, which might all refer to their gnostic counterparts (logos spermaticos, silence, bythos, aeons). Yet, as was mentioned above, his philosophy of the the self and gnosis does not have much in common with historical Gnosticism. For Valentinus, both the body and the soul are a product of Creation, effected by Demiurg (the creator who brings forms and language), and not Nous. That makes the body and soul inferior in comparison with the fullness, *pleroma*. However, there is the breath, *pneuma*, "the scattered gleams" in Emerson's poem, which may come from the highest logos, or *nous* and which can light up the human soul when breathed in. The *pneuma*, the spark gleams in silence this time. We have seen that in his early work the spark grew into fire through Emerson's force-voice which made everything around him plastic, transformable. Why was it dependent on his voice and not writing? Emerson has a tendency to cancel, or turn over any written affirmation that he proposed in the past, be it the past paragraph or the past sentence. For, he believes, as was mentioned above, neither in the past, nor in consistency. It is his voice, as a force, inflamed by the spark, *pneuma* (breath coming from the abyss, from absence, from nothing), that can resist "master" all destruction. Unlike in Valentinus, gnosis can be attained, for early Emerson, mainly through (poetic) language, by means of the transitive force, the movement of the voice. That is why speech and eloquence need to be developed as much as possible. Yet, late Emerson does know that silence is the opposite of speech without which no knowledge, no gnosis could ever be attained. Silence dissolves one's personality, it beams its message, dissolving rigid forms that could petrify the movement of the voice. For silence draws on the abyss which is present in every dialogue, referring thus to the unsaid. The force is no longer rhetorical but it is the force as the Abyss. Power becomes the potentiality of the unsaid.

3.4.7.1 The Abyss and the Unsaid

The abyss for Emerson has several sources, Jacob Boehme's Urgrund, the abyss which is God, from which God emerges. Spirit emanates from this Abyss as a force or energy. From this energy emanates Nature. Emerson often repeated a process of three stages – contemplation, thought, creation (writing). He claimed that one needed to arrive at a point between the finite and the infinite, where God and man meet. Emerson says that "the abyss of our being cannot be revealed but by the appreciable phenomena of life." He opposes the traditional Western dictionary of morals which derives its terms from animal, corporeal life. Instead, Emerson implies that it is the abyss where morality comes from. He says: "[but]..for those emblems furnished by nature herself the moral and metaphysical world would have remained entirely buried in the eternal abyss. "[238]

The place of the aboriginal self is, according to late Emerson, the abyss, before language, before thought, before Creation. The difference between Nature and human nature is dissolved there. Intuition is resistance, that which resists language, starting at the limits of language. Language emerges as intuition. As Joseph Kronick argues, "language must be the producer of intuition as well as its product. The origin would be already divided, or what today we have learned to call writing,- *differance.*"[239] Emerson supports this view when he writes in his journal:

> "thus all philosophy begins from Nox and Chaos, the Ground or Abyss which Schelling so celebrates. And in every man we require a bit of night, of chaos, of *Abgrund*, as the spring of a watch turns best on a diamond. In every individual we require a *piece de resistance,* a certain abyss of reliance and fortitude on which to fall back when worst comes to worst.[240]

The ground equals the abyss and it is accessible through language which is transitive, not stationary. Emerson believes that the I is the Abyss. Yet, the abyss is language in its potentiality. We can therefore say along with C. S. Peirce that "*man is language.* … the abyss inhabits the man as that which can never be assimilated with the Self, which in turn is unthinkable without the abyss." To confront the abyss, language is recovered from the past. Man is always already a sign, an expressive one. Emerson calls for an original reappropriation of language, as the main aim of any

[238] Emerson, *Journals of R. W. Emerson*, Journal B, ed. W.H. Gilman, A.R.Ferguson (Harvard U. Press, 1965) 67.
[239] Mary Arensberg, ed. *The American Sublime* (SUNY Press 1986) 56.
[240] Emerson, *Journals*, IX, 223-223.

writer.[241] The poet must creatively reappropriate the past and return to the ground of language. Bartleby returns to this ground, but on a different level, inventing a foreign language and logos. Also, it is not through writing but through speech and silence coming from potentiality. To transcend the division between the I and the abyss, one needs to plunge into the chaos, into a complete forgetting, from which a new form can arise.

Is Emerson a new Orpheus, following Plato's spiritual purification, *katharsis*, or diving in the way the gnostics do? Is that what makes his voice so powerful? As will be seen in the next chapter, there is a dialectic of strength and weakness in Emerson which cancels any real possibility of a proposition of new metaphysics, that of will to power. He claims in his essay "History" that "Man is the broken giant, and in all his weakness both his body and his mind are invigorated by the habits of conversation with nature.[242] He stresses the power of music and the power of poetry, coming from this conversation.

3.5 Power and Potentiality in late Emerson and Melville's Bartleby

3.5.1 Power and Force in *The Conduct of Life*

Emerson's notion of power and force in *The Conduct of Life* focuses much more on the plane of immanence and rhetoric. His turn away from transcendentalism to the "physics" of human nature and analogically to the natural world influenced Friedrich Nietzsche immensely – especially his notion of "will to power." However, Emerson does not provide, as was mentioned above, any metaphysical doctrine of the will to power which would rule the world. He even abandons his all-too-optimistic notion of Nature as something which is here for us to fulfill our dreams. From "Experience" on he also sees the negative, limiting side of Nature. He calls it circumstance. There is a lot one may do or change but there are also things one may not do. All of a sudden, Emerson sees life and freedom as beautiful necessity. Accepting limitations in life, he then analyzes power from different perspectives as if dancing around it and showing its various manifestations and influences. He deals with philosophical issues such as the analogy between human nature and the natural world. We have shown in our discussion of *Nature* that Emerson "humanizes" external nature

[241] Ibid. 58.
[242] Emerson 455.

interpreting it in an anthropomorphic way. That means that he views and judges it according to the categories which he derives from the human mind, its mental and physical states. Nature, for him, reflects or repeats the states of human nature and that is why Emerson can elaborate so many analogies between the human being and the natural world.

Another important aspect is the "spiritual basis" of material objects, including human subjects. For Emerson, nature (always accessed through individual human natures) is not silent, soundless or colorless dead matter. It is vital, always tending towards the creation of new forms of life, preserving the "animal heat, or energy." Its instinct is growth, development, the accumulation of memories and power; it always strives for more. As we will see in his "Natural History of Intellect" and "Fate," what Emerson praises most in his late work is the "will" operating within the natural world and the will to actualization of one's potentiality. The world is therefore driven not by materialist, empty, physical forces but with vectors of force which are intentional, in the phenomenological sense, which means that every force has an object to which it turns.

3.5.1.1 Plato's *Gorgias*, Power and the Limits of Rhetoric

The main antagonist of Socrates in the dialogue is not really Gorgias who teaches rhetoric but Callicles, his disciple. Gorgias, unlike Socrates and Emerson, does not see inner transformation as the founding element of education (*paidea*). What he offers to his followers is the means, the technique (techne) of rhetoric, and not the knowledge of the ultimate goal of human life. He believes that rhetoric can be used in a good way.[243] Callicles, on the other hand, is a politician and entrepreneur who uses rhetoric only as a useful weapon.

Socrates and his disciple Chairefont seek to prove that the basis of the sophist's techne is nihilism – a belief that there is no independent moral law or order and that the moral law and the law of power (i.e. the law of creation) are the same. The only thing which is real and worth pursuing is power. This may remind us of Nietzsche´s will to power, or the notion of power from Emerson´s late work. It will be shown, however, that Emerson does not go as far as to embrace the sophistic position, even though he does leaves the Platonic, transcendental stance.

Plato's objection to Charles S. Peirce and his expressive symbols and metaphors of symphony would most probably be that poets make the human being passive. They represent

[243] Jan Patočka, *Platon: Přednášky z Antické Filosofie* (SPN, 1991) 154.

religion for Plato, which means that only god can reach what is essential and decisive in life.[244] Socrates is confident, on the other hand, that there is human wisdom, beyond the reach of human *techne*. As we have shown above, however, neither Emerson´s poet, nor Bartleby are those who make people passive. They make them move, including the movement of conceptual nomadism, rather than throwing them into boundless emotions.

If we explore the relationship between rhetoric as *techné* (art, craft) and rhetoric as *dynamis* (power), we get two different perspectives in Plato´s writings. Rhetoric, according to the *Gorgias*, can function as manipulation, as power (dynamis) to assert one's opinion. Rhetoric is the instrument of one´s own rule. That is what makes it the main political means. Rhetoric is the art/craft of persuasion, the art of make-believe, based on mere faith, not knowledge.[245] In that sense, rhetoric is the art of victory. From a different perspective (that of Plato´s Phaedrus), rhetoric as a *techné* can be used by philosophers as well, as long as it is attached to the forms of the Just, the Beautiful, the Good. Such philosophical rhetoric is beneficial and should be learned.

As for rhetoric as the art of victory, one needs to ask: Can man dominate the power of rhetoric? Many formulas are performative and the power of discourse can take one to a position where he never planned to be. Can then the power of rhetoric make one a slave, who always wants to win, over everybody, at any price?

Rhetoric, according to Socrates in *the Gorgias*, is not a force or power but mere flattery. The good equals the pleasant. The strongest advocate of sophistry and will to power, as opposed to the Socratic logos, is Callicles. He is a radical man without scruples and sentiments who inspired Nietzsche in his distrust of Socrates' poison deconstructing the forces of the tragic tension and Dyonisiac Hellada. Callicles openly defends extreme individualism and the natural right of powerful individuals to rule others. He introduces the distinction between nomos (law, conventions) and physis (nature), saying that the weak created laws and norms to tame the strong individuals who were created by nature to dominate. The strong individual (which reminds us also of Nietzsche's overman) has at his disposal a boundless desire, or will to power which can never be fulfilled. While attacking Socrates for his impracticality and inability to defend himself, he praises the strong one for his ability to acquire power, and therefore also the best in life. As Carlo Ginzburg notices, for Callicles, nature itself reveals that it is a just thing "for the better man and the more capable man to have a greater share than the inferior man and the less capable man."[246] The

[244] Patočka 155.
[245] Patočka 156.
[246] Carlo Ginsburg, *History and Rhetoric* (UPNE, 1999) 6.

dominion of the strong over the weak is a law, a law of nature.[247]

Yet, Socrates claims that there is no distinction between *nomos* and *physis*.[248] For him, all *nomos* is a kind of *physis*, which means that the law of equality of citizens is based on nature to the same extent as the law of the stronger which was being defended by Callicles. The main problem seems to be that Callicles is unable to explain what the force or power of the will of the individual really means. All he manages to say is that the strong individual has a natural disposition to rule, he is a natural-born leader whose freedom consists in the gradation of his desire, will to power drawing on instincts.

What is interesting is that both Socrates and Callicles oppose conventions and conformity to the majority.[249] While Socrates seeks to tame one's physis, to provide a limit, or measure (*metron*) to one's boundless desires and find a purpose of one's life which then holds the self together, Callicles promotes the increase of desires which cannot and should not be tamed. Such a Calliclean hedonist would live in constant hunger for more. That seems to be the complete opposite of Bartleby, who negates all will and all desire. Yet, he opposes Socrates's often-enforced dialogue and the violence of his *elenchos* as well. The power of Bartleby's formula does not provide him with any power he could use; it opposes rhetoric as such. What does such disappearing from the order of language mean? In what other order can he be perceived, understood? We will show that it is the order of Deleuzian potentiality. Yet, even Deleuze's interpretation of Bartleby stays on the ground of rhetoric and cannot transgress its limits. At the end of his essay on Bartleby, Deleuze concludes that Bartleby is the brother of us all, revolting against paternal function, logos, law. Bartleby's foreign language is still a language even though it encompasses the logic of preference. Yet, Bartleby does not prefer anything that would please him. Pleasure, according to Callicles, is a pure performance of power which stresses only intensity; pleasure and the good are the same for the Sophists. Not for Bartleby. Socrates sees hapiness in discipline and self-control. Instead of expanding, however, Bartleby uses rhetoric to disappear.

Socrates posits *nomos*, as *sophrosyne* and *dikaiosyne*, geometrical equation, a limit, against the formless and boundless indeterminacy of the instinctual life. The limit and law are a being; limitlessness is non-being. Socrates' aim is to make people better through his speech, Callicles' aim is to make them more powerful. The question of rhetoric as *dynamis,* and rhetoric as *techné* has occupied us before. What is at stake now is the issue of willpower. Let us repeat the distinction

[247] Plato, *Gorgias, 483e.*
[248] Ibid.
[249] Patocka 177.

from the *Gorgias* and focus on its second aspect. As was mentioned above, there are two kinds of forces, according to Plato, which both threaten to rid the human of all independence:

- mythico-religious forces
- enlightenment forces

We shall ask now: To what extent does Emerson evade these two extremes in his late work? What is the relationship between the self, will and power? How do Emerson and Melville (in his "Bartleby, the Scrivener") evade the dangers of the metaphysics of force, of will to power?

3.5.2 Force/Life/Energy

What Emerson does is a profound dematerialization of the world, which includes a direct opposition to simple materialism, and mechanistic conceptions of the universe. "Atom," for Emerson, is a unit of "power" or "spirit." As George J. Stack points out, Emerson (and also Nietzsche, drawing on Emerson's work) anticipate some of the conceptions of relativity dynamics and subatomic physics.[250] Nietzsche named these units, or "centers of force," as the physicist Roger Boscovitch named them, "power-units," or "will-points."[251] Emerson also stressed the immanent vital force which can be experienced within the world and which acts through all things, including the human being. When the human perceives this force, his field of activity expands, as Emerson suggests, and he has a distinct "feeling of power." Self-reliance therefore acquires a new meaning. It no longer refers to a divine Power-reliance but to the possibility of having the feeling of power, confidence and independence and well-developed inner life. We can see a clear link here between existentialism and late Emerson who also asks the questions: "How shall I live?", "How can I feel more power?", "How can I embrace the affirmative within nature and myself?". We have dealt with circumstance and the human condition of having been thrown into a space which s/he did not choose. Even though he sees all the limitations of man, Emerson still believes in the freedom of the mind to transform things around it; he still believes that it is important to care about one's existence and to make it as much one's own as possible. A constant movement from the center to the periphery, from a centered self to moments when the self is decentralized is characteristic of Emerson's late work.

As to the issue of power as vital energy, as life-force, it is often tested in life and can be increased by means of "resistance" when one needs to overcome uncanny circumstances and issues

[250] George J. Stack, *Emerson and Nietzsche: Elective Affinity,* 168.
[251] Ibid.

which are both physically and spiritually demanding. In such testing and "training" of one's power in liminal situations the human being gets to know oneself to a greater degree which obviously increases the degree of power and of sensibility which one diffuses in the universe. Emerson in such moments resembles existentialist writers who ask "how" one is to live and not why or what one is to live. He also draws on the Hegelian concept of consciousness which becomes self-aware in the human being. Self-knowledge and the degree of power are therefore co-dependent. Before we get to the notion of "power" as potentiality, which I consider dominant in his late work, let us have a look at the notions of circumstance and limit in Emerson.

3.5.3 Circumstance, Liminal Situations and Death

As we have mentioned above, Emerson's perception of power (in nature) changed with Emerson´s acknowledgment of fate or circumstance. Circumstance, as Emerson admits in *Conduct of Life*, cannot be manipulated by us and it in fact affects and manipulates us. Can we liberate ourselves once and for all from unpleasant circumstances? No. It may be the first (and possibly last) NO in Emerson's philosophy. Emersonian contemplative ethics needs to be transformed when limitations finally come into play with all their force. These are the same limitations which Melville, Foucault, Deleuze and we ourselves in our present situation have to face. What are these? How do we face them? Emerson talks about positive and negative power. The negative one, the power of circumstance needs to be overcome. In Bartleby's case, such overcoming is made impossible by his very nature. While Emerson's aim was, like Melville's, to suggest possible ways of constituting the self, Emerson looks for solution in a direction diametrically opposite to Melville, as if the aim were to avoid limitations, to avoid looking at unpleasant circumstances. Emerson represses death and anxiety – to be able to function, to speak, to move on. His late work exhibits such dancing above the abyss of nihilism, enacting his reality by means of performative speech acts, persuading himself that life is worth living and that affirmative power needs to predominate.

> "We have to consider two things." Emerson (1929) says: "...positive power and negative power, or circumstance...the circumstance, and the life...Nature is the tyrannous circumstance.... Nature is, what you may do. There is much you may not.... It is wholesome to man to look not at Fate, but the other way: the practical

view is the other."[252]

This is a clear manifestation of pragmatism in Emerson. The practical view, that is, the one that gets things done, is the other. Although Emerson was constantly haunted by the negative and by death in his life, he rarely mentioned it openly. Yet, in one of his late poems ('Terminus"), Emerson explored the Abyss, the Bythos of the Gnostics. Creativity and expressivity within langauge are no longer the chief purposes in life.

3.5.4 Power, Natural Law and Right

Emerson admires the drive and courage of those who seek the sources of power, or intensity, everywhere within the everyday world. He loses sight of his earlier idealist and transcendental views and focuses on the "natural," "technical," "creative" features of man. He also believes in "compensation," which means that while our efforts will sometimes have their desired effects, they will also, as often as not, produce unanticipated, unintended, and surprising primary or collateral effects. We may ask what the relationship between the force of human desire and the force of natural law is. Emerson claims that we need to exert power. We need to express ourselves, discharge the energy that was given to us. Even when we discover that there is Fate and that we are thwarted, we will see that it also is a disclosure of power.

If one has the feeling of power, or *dynamis,* together with the ability, talent and the sensibility to do something, one also has the right to do it. Every new action in the world has a law-giving aspect in it (as we have seen in Bartleby). It enacts new modes of subjectivity, a new hierarchy of values which may or may not be adopted by others. Emerson, however, suggests that the forces of such powerful personalities work as magnets and make others follow. Emerson, of course, deplores the mentality of the mass, of the herd, which merely follows a leader. What right do these personalities have to enact new orders of thinking? The idea of power as right was developed in various forms in Emerson's work. The earliest mention of this creed is to be found in "Self-Reliance" as was noted earlier. Emerson draws here on Hobbes and Spinoza who first dealt with the topic and related it to the problem of masses, of society as dictating conformity and punishing the nonconformists and to the individual and his natural rights. In his late work, Emerson talks about eloquence and the right to express oneself, to speak. It is connected with will, at this

[252] Emerson, "Fate," 524, 527.

stage. He says: "Will is the advance to that which rightly belongs to us, to which the inward magnet ever points, and which we dare to make ours. The revelation of thought takes us out of servitude into freedom. So does the sense of right."[253] Emerson emphasizes in "Politics" that this right applies as much to the individual as to all others; and the right of others should never be overriden by the individual´s equally valid right.

3.5.5 Power as Presence and Resoluteness

Emerson, on the one hand emphasizes power as the presence of a person, on the other, he focuses on the power to be in the present time, to perceive it, to epitomize it, to express it. In "Power," he claims that "Power is an affair of presence of mind, of attitude, of aplomb. It is a question of stomach and constitution."[254] Such power ceases in the moment of repose and in the moment of conformity. It is important to decide from one's own sensibility based on one's receptivity. Imitation of others is suicide. The trick is then not only to augment one's power but not to lose power. Signs of power, according to Emerson, are visible mainly in the decisions of man. Emerson is, in this way, a predecessor of Heidegger's notion of resoluteness. Emerson claims that:

> Many men are knowing, many are apprehensive and tenacious, but they do not rush to a decision. But in our flowing affairs a decision must be made, -- the best, if you can; but any is better than none. … A man who has that presence of mind which can bring to him on the instant all he knows, is worth for action a dozen men who know as much, but can only bring it to light slowly.[255]

The notion of resoluteness has its strong and weak points, especially when related to difference, otherness and the unsaid. The practical process of quick and well-founded decision making, however, includes a synthesis of as many perspectives as possible in a given moment. Such an actualization of our "total" knowledge found resonance in Nietzsche's *Joyful Science* where he describes the most powerful/wise man as the one who is able to hold as many perspectives/affects as possible in the present moment and use them when making a decision or when re-evaluating accepted values. Resoluteness, the ability to decide, to actualize one's knowledge in the moment

[253] Emerson, "Natural History of Intellect," 1265. (Emerson also uses the phraseology "The revelation of thought takes us out of servitude into freedom" in "Fate.")
[254] Emerson, "Power," 538.
[255] Ibid.

requires a high degree of concentration. However, Emerson realizes that the other side of resoluteness is waiting and patience. It is our intuition which brings ideas and images from the subconsious into the light of consciousness, mind, reflection. Yet, such a process cannot be planned. Getting a new idea, or emotion is something that happens to us and it has no relation to whether one ´s self is centralized or dissipated. The oscillation between abandonment, selfless constitution, waiting, and the resolute action is present in Emerson´s late work a lot. Yet, his stance is still that of affirmative, joyful thinking even though he realizes the power of the negative. One must not dissipate affirmative power in a difficult situation but, instead, stay connected to it. Emerson claims that:

> Success goes thus invariably with a certain *plus* or positive power: an ounce of power must balance an ounce of weight. ... The one prudence in life is concentration; the one evil is dissipation. … Temperament is important. Or drill. Success is constitutional; depends on a *plus* condition of mind and body.[256]

Emerson differentiates various modes of the "search for power." One of them is the pursuit of worldly success, others are desire for domination, for conquest, for preeminence – be it political or individual. As Emerson has claimed before, social and political powers are like natural powers; they can be constructive or destructive. On the individual level, one's constitution is the most decisive factor regarding one's degree of power, for physical and spiritual aspects of the body can no longer be distinguished. However, one is not allowed by circumstance to actualize every whim, or every desire of his constitution. In a way similar to Heidegger's concept of the self which he calls *Dasein* (being-there), one is thrown into the world, according to Emerson, and nature acts through one. Courage and concentration are therefore not enough to actualize all our possibilities, for there is Fate, or circumstance, that limits us. Emerson expresses the change in his thinking as follows: "We have two things – the circumstance and the life. Once we thought positive power was all. Now we learn that negative power, or circumstance is half. Nature is the tyrannous circumstance..."[257] All of a sudden Emerson sees that certain kinds of circumstance (circles that limit us) cannot be easily overcome. That however does not mean that we may stop trying. Freedom is not a choice but an imperative, a necessity, even though Emerson sees it now as the Beautiful Necessity. We can therefore do a lot; and we actually must act as if we were free even though our desires are often

[256] Emerson, "Power," 541-2.
[257] Emerson, "Fate," 524.

thwarted.

That is why the question of *The Conduct of Life* – i.e. How shall I Live? - is so important. To be able to recognize what your constitution "tells" you, to concentrate and to harmonize yourself with the "laws" and forces of (individual, human) nature, means not only to gain power but to be able to transform yourself, react to events, act, have knowledge of events. To be able to live in the present time, to receive hints from nature is the aim of most of the late Emerson's endeavors. Emerson says in "Power":

> All power is of one kind, a sharing of the nature of the world. The mind that is parallel with the laws of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength. One man is made of the same stuff of which events are made; is in sympathy with the course of things; can predict it. Whatever befalls, befalls him first; so that he is equal to whatever shall happen. A man who knows men, can talk well on politics, trade, law, war, religion. For, everywhere, men are led in the same manners.[258]

What Emerson calls for here when he talks about the sympathy with the course of things is the ability to "synchronize" oneself with events, to change one's thinking and focus it exclusively on the present time. That requires an augmented sensibility, a receptiveness as regards the natural world. It is the expanded consciousness, the feeling of power, augmented action, detachment from the masses and the invention of one's own means while being synchronized with nature that create a "powerful personality." Emerson believes that we are lawgivers, we *speak* for Nature, we prophesy and divine.

There is a tie between persons and events. Persons, according to Emerson, make events and events persons; and some persons are able to epitomize the times.[259] The soul contains the event that shall befall it. The event is the print of your form.[260] He says in the "Natural History of Intellect" that: "The mark of the spirit is to know its way, to invent means. … Power is the authentic mark of spirit."[261] To invent one's means refers to the invention of new *words*, percepts, affects. The way in which certain people express the times is through performative acts. The invention of the steam engine is a performative, political act, the work of Plato, Kant and Goethe changes our sensibility to

[258] Emerson, "Power," 543.
[259] Emerson, "Fate," 532.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Emerson, "Natural History of Intellect," 1269.

temporal and moral events.

3.5.6 Potentiality and Expressivity

Power as potentiality is, in my view, essential for Emerson's thinking but what is also important are the hierarchies of values, the order of rank, of scales of power. A powerful personality manages to express itself fully and with great force. That depends on its inner dynamics, on its inner organization of affects and beliefs. If the combination preserves its healthy inner dynamics then its force is visible in the external world as well. One then feels the energy of the person which attunes others to its particular melody and rhythm, in a nonviolent, non-intrusive way. One is drawn to the energy circle of such a personality by the law of attraction, both physical and intellectual (because these two cannot be separated). That is why Emerson also stresses the physical, savage, instinctual energy of a person. It is a complete misunderstanding (by the commentators of both Emerson and his "heir" Nietzsche) when they interpret their praise for the strong, vital human being with a raw, overflowing energy as a hint that the weak shall be destroyed. Emerson clearly claims that the presence of will in the world is not directed by material forces but by spiritual development – by the amplification of consciousness, the increase of agency and the movement toward higher modalities of form, i.e. toward greater degrees of power.

Power is a potential reward; it is the actualized energy of the will of nature. The subjective feeling of energy is the goal of one's actions, not the overcoming of others but mainly the constant overcoming of oneself, the ability to juggle perspectives, to re-evaluate one's hierarchies, to speak from the potential, from the abyss, and the readiness to abandon the last circle. For this one needs a firm constitution, the plus factor, the surplus energy to experiment. A powerful character vivifies the world and is like a magnet, it naturally attracts others, for they want to experience in themselves the feeling of overflowing energy and enthusiasm. This power is positive, affirmative and can never come from negative feelings, illnesses or nihilism. At the same time, the affirmative power is no longer equated with the divine power but mere vital, immanent force. Emerson struggles with over-refinement himself. As in other cases, he seeks to persuade mainly himself and increase his energy level and creativity. When one is oversensitive, he cannot resist the more brutal natural forces and cannot draw on certain, uncorrupted forms of natural force. A will which naturally seeks power within the individual, the instincts, animal spirits, impulses is often repressed and one thus, paradoxically loses creativity and cultivation in such refinement and falls into decadence – both

spiritual and physical. That is also why Emerson calls for a higher degree of masculinity, the "yang" principle of activity which affirms itself and promotes its own expression in the world, in both men and women. Again, this is nothing that gender studies should wage war against. Emerson's pieces of advice are always addressed to the individual and could not be applied to society at large. He speaks performatively to himself, and also to another individual who is working on solving the same issues and who is ready to take the risk and experiment.

3.5.7 The Self, the Will and Power

The question of will is a complex one as it is closely connected to the issues of power, inter-subjectivity, creativity, recognition and speech. Emerson was one of the first (if not really *the* first) who stressed the positive, creative aspects of will within the natural world. It is quite clear that his writing about will and power inspired a whole new tradition (starting with Nietzsche). Emerson, however, is not interpreted here as a Nietzschean. The reason why I decided to test his proto-pragmatism and performativity in this work is because I am interested in the practical experience one has with literature and performative speech. The primary questions were: "What does Emerson's speech do to us? What effects does it have in our everyday life?" The lack of any final synthesis in Emerson, is, for me, similar to the early Socratic approach, which ensures that it cannot be forced into a dogmatic doctrine or metaphysics. It is always open to interpretation and explores interpretation itself. That is why I claim that Emerson did not create any metaphysics of force, or will to power. His thinking, and emphasis on abandonment, prevented him from settling on any fixed belief. Yet the effects of what he does induce creativity and provoke emotional states which may be quite permanent. Even though he clearly inspired Nietzsche's "metaphysics" of will, he himself, I believe, evaded its negative aspects which the Nietzschean interpretation and other (manipulative) interpretations of the overman (where he abhors weakness, shuns religion, seeks to evade masses) may provoke.

Thus, when Emerson deals with the issue of will he relates it to inner organization, resistance, and power. He explores it mainly in his essays "Fate," "Power," and "The Natural History of Intellect." When talking about individual will, Emerson says that a strong will "usually results from a certain unity of organization, as if the whole energy of body and mind flowed in one

direction."[262] All of a sudden, he emphasizes the need for direction. At the beginning of this work, we were exploring the disappearance of the self, the importance of abandonment of our old circles, beliefs and selves in a directionless, timeless moments of ecstasy, or other modes of disappearance. Later Emerson adds to the abandonment of the self the idea of the unity of a character, of its (Aristotelian) organization. With a strong will, one can survive in a society and not become merely a particle of the mass, or herd. In "Fate," Emerson claims that:

> the one serious and formidable thing in nature is a will. Society is servile from want of will, and therefore the world wants saviors and religions. There is no manufacturing of a strong will … Where power is shown in will, it must rest on universal force. . . . one must believe that one rests on truth. There is a will of all mind. It is poured into the souls of all men. Insight is not will, nor is affection will.[263]

One's aim should therefore be to find the will within oneself, to cultivate it – through the overcoming of resistance – and keep one's self in connection with the natural, immanent, universal force. If we compare this notion of will to Melville's character of Bartleby, it is obvious that Bartleby lacks the power of will which augments one's space for action. Rather, it seems that Bartleby was given no space for action. He was trying to get some space by means of his performative formula "I would prefer not to" which is to a great extent a formula for disappearing, a "farewell" address. Yet, God is not with Bartleby and neither is any natural, immanent force, life or will to power. Bartleby is disconnected from anything that could "recharge" his batteries. George J. Stack comments on the connection with natural forces as follows:

> … the study of, and understanding of, the universe shows us that an "exercise of Will" or "a lesson of power" is taught in every physical event. Nature may be construed anthropomorphically as "the double" of man insofar as it is a "realized will.[264]

Emerson talks about man shaping/constructing nature. Bartleby shapes by means of disappearing. His disappearing is, however, performative. This holds at least for Melville's readers,

[262] Emerson, "Fate," 529.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Stack 143.

if not for the attorney in the long run. Deleuze talks about Bartleby's nothingness of will instead of a will to nothingness.[265] Bartleby, for him, therefore does not embody the nihilism Nietzsche talks about in his *Joyful Science.* Or does he? Would he be a nihilist, lacking affirmative power, in the Emersonian interpretation? Even when his words have such a profound effect on the world? And does Bartleby really believe in his formula? Is he sincere in his use of it?

Let us first see what the Emersonian interpretation of Bartleby and his will would be. For Emerson, in "The Natural History of Intellect," will is connected with physical as well as mental force. It is interesting how some of Emerson's early intuitions from "Intellect" are developed into an immanent participation in the world Life-force. Emerson no longer refers to the transcendent "genius" but to "will" instead. He says that genius is a delicate *sensibility* to the laws. It adds the power to express these laws again in some new form. The laws are, however, forces. They are always perceived within and through one´s individual nature. The individual does not represent in his actions any will of the world. Rather, Emerson´s view is constructive – both language and laws are constructed and subject to transformation. A similar shift in meaning can be perceived when we juxtapose his "Circles" and "Natural History of Intellect." As to the power of will, Emerson says:

> Will is the measure of power. To a great genius there must be a great will. … He alone is strong and happy who has a will. The rest are herds. He uses; they are used.[266]

Such will resembles the Nietzschean will to power but it is not without inter-subjectivity. It is a potentiality whose expression may or may not be supported and helped by others who surround us. The distinction between the authentic individual and herds was used later by Nietzsche as one of his major ideas. However, I believe that these ideas of Emerson's are based on his inquiries into power issues, potentiality, power games and the disappearance of power. He does not promote aristocracy or elitism. Emerson again only explores himself and his relationship to others when he comes up with an insight that:

> In unfit company the finest powers are paralyzed. No ambition, no opposition, no friendly attention and fostering kindness, no wine, music or exhilarating aids, neither warm fireside nor fresh air, walking or riding, avail at all to resist the palsy of mis-

[265] Deleuze, "Bartleby, or the Formula," *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 133.
[266] Emerson, "Natural History of Intellect," 1275.

association. Genius is mute, is dull ; there is no genius.[267]

One's sensibility is numbed in wrongly chosen company. This is true about Bartleby as well. He finds himself in unfit company but does not decide to leave. Even though his formula sounds very resolute, he does not have the required amount of insight and resoluteness to leave the place which "steals" his energy. Emerson would probably say that he does not see himself as a new method which necessarily distributes things anew. He is in a "legal" sphere where such distribution is rendered almost impossible. Only the formula manages to introduce "ruptures," "gaps" into the monolithic discourse of the office. Another aspect which potentially takes away his energy is the fact that he works for another and not for himself. He is not allowed to express himself, let alone be creative. Thus he invents the "destructive formula" of disappearance. Emerson says about work for another:

> There is always a loss of truth and power when a man leaves working for himself to work for another. Absolutely speaking I can only work for myself. All my good is magnetic, and I educate not by lessons but by going about my business.[268]

Emerson's advice "to go about one´s business" is directed to experimenters, to flexible individuals, to entrepreneurs who draw on their instincts who are ready to take a risk. Instinct, however, is no longer interpreted as intuition, i.e. as something active, creative but as a negative delimitation. The stress is rather on the receptivity of perception and will (as a result of the right organization of our affects and sensibility). Instinct cannot be articulated for it has no clear boundaries; it is a "shapeless giant in the cave, massive, without hands or fingers or articulating lips or teeth or tongue."[269] Emerson further describes instinct as follows:

> The action of the Instinct is for the most part negative, regulative, rather than initiative or impulsive. But it has a range as wide as human nature, running over all the ground of morals, of intellect, and of sense. In its lower function, when it deals with the apparent world, it is common-sense.[270]

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[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Emerson, "Natural History of Intellect," 1285. ("The Natural History of Intellect" is not primarily a work by Emerson's hand directly; it was largely put together by his literary executor(s) from bits and pieces which he had, admittedly, composed himself; but it does not represent, in the main, a product of Emerson's own construction.)
[270] Ibid.

From an Emersonian perspective Bartleby would be beyond common sense, for that represents for Emerson the "natural" drive for self-preservation, the desire to eat and to communicate amongst other necessities. What we see in Bartleby, as was mentioned above, is rather a strange kind of detachment. It is not exactly an intellectual detachment. There are no signs of Bartleby as an intellectual (apart, perhaps, from his physical constitution). His dematerialized universe is unlivable, however. For the spirit, or the atoms, according to Emerson, accumulate themselves in a personality, for a certain reason. One's potential needs to be fulfilled and the energy discharged in the right direction, otherwise one's power may quickly decline. What if one cannot find the right circumstances for the actualization of one's potential? Shall one enclose oneself in one's mind and detach oneself from the world for a while? The problem is that such detachment is performative, when repeated it gains force that cannot be stopped in its later stages. Emerson says about detachment:

> This is the first property of the Intellect I am to point out; the mind detaches. A man is intellectual in proportion as he can make an object of every sensation, perception and intuition.[271]

As we previously discussed, intellect plays a major part in Emerson's late work even though its content is somewhat changed. In his early work there would still be a chance for Bartleby to reconnect to divine-Power, to Life by unblocking himself to the flow of Power, becoming thus its mere channel. It was also recommended to abandon oneself in timeless moments, or dive into the primordial abyss, where intellect, however, was not in force at all. In Emerson's late work, on the other hand, intellect and will are essential. Intellect includes sensibility, affects, perceptions. Will includes a degree of practicality. Although intellect can still detach us from our surroundings and from ourselves, Emerson realizes that thinking is always to a great extent emotional. To see something as foreign, to see it as an object is difficult. For, our moods color the world for us. Perhaps it is even impossible for thinking to occur outside of our own attunement. What is obvious, for Emerson, is that there is no pure reason in force, which could dictate us categorical imperatives which could then be rationally obeyed. Although he retains the notion of duty everything depends on the organization of our affects in the present time. Pure reason exists only in a world of illusion. Human scales of power and orders of rank often change, react to circumstances, new horizons, insights, images in nature. Yet, it is often difficult to express them. Emerson praises the receptive

[271] Emerson, "Natural History of Intellect," 1295.

power of perception when he claims:

> We find ourselves expressed in nature, but we cannot translate it into words. But Perception is the armed eye. A civilization has tamed and ripened this savage wit, and he is a Greek. His Aye and No have become nouns and verbs and adverbs. Perception differs from Instinct by adding the Will. Simple percipiency is the virtue of space, not of man.[272]

Bartleby expresses himself by means of one single formula. He does not will to perceive the external world anymore. He prefers not to. Perhaps all of his messages which could be delivered are already dead. Perhaps he does not wish to be intelligible. The logic which is incorporated in language is insufficient for Bartleby. Emerson would agree with the inadequacy of language. Yet, he would never advocate Bartleby's approach, his silent re-signification of the world. Emerson always believed in words, in the power of rhetoric and the orator. Words, for him, could redeem everything thanks to their performative character. That, however, does not mean that he did not see the shortcomings of language:

> . . . language or words are inadequate to describe the immensity and complexity of "what is." At best, words "break, chop and impoverish" the richness of actuality". Despite this limitation language use, and action as well, signify the emergence of the "human form," the highest degree of "organization" in the natural world.[273]

The human being, according to Emerson, is incessantly projecting its emotions and affects into its understanding of natural phenomena. Man is thus a reflection of the dynamics of nature, though on a smaller scale. Does Bartleby therefore project his mental states on the world around him? Does his negativity infect others? Emerson is a master of analogies and metaphors which signify mental states. Words, for him, symbolize moral or intellectual states. Yet, he often derives them from the physical world around him – i.e. the wind and breath signifies spirit (in Greek Pneuma, referring to the spirit of Gnostics). Emerson's semiotics stresses the metaphorical character of language, language as a system of arbitrary signs, the importance of relationships between signs. We use symbols derived from nature to describe our internal struggles and the other way round. What internal struggles does Melville describe in his figure of Bartleby? We have tried to answer

[272] Ibid, 1298.
[273] Emerson, *Nature*, 44.

this question above even though there may be other answers, such as the force of the publisher on Melville to "copy" his previous works about adventures so that they sell well, or his feeling of alienation from his wife and from the world.

But let us come back to the interpretation of Emerson's late work and to the question of power as *dynamis*. From "Experience" onwards Emerson begins to speak about a necessary equilibrium between power and form in character. He emphasizes the positive, affirmative aspect of a will, in contrast to Nietzsche, who drew on his conception of will but who also incorporated into his thinking the notion of will expressed by Schopenhauer where the will refers to resignation, nihilism and the suppression of desire as such. As G. J. Stack points out "the priority of willing, as well as its association with power and the "accumulation of power,"[274] is one of Emerson's most forceful philosophical views. The other one, which I intend to emphasize here, is the notion of power as possibility which may or may not be actualized. What is important in this interpretation of power is the dialectics of DYNAMIS and ENERGEIA (which is an old Aristotelian distinction later taken up by Heidegger). *Dynamis* might be rendered, in its broad usage, variously as "ability," "potential," "potency," "power"; whereas *energeia* corresponds (roughly) to "activity" and (in Aristotle, especially) to "actuality," in the sense of "actively existing." Plato's notion of *dynamis* refers to physics, as an underlying, invisible process, which is later developed by Leibniz into the science of dynamics. Aristotle, on the other hand, stresses the priority of *energeia*. He says in his *Metaphysics* that:

> For from the potentially existing, the actually existing is always produced by an actually existing thing, e.g., man from man, musician by musician; there is always a first mover, and the mover already exists actually. We have said in our account of substance that everything that is produced is something produced from something and by something … Obviously, then, actuality (*energeia*) is prior both to potency (*dynamis*) and to every principle of change.[275]

Emerson, according to G. J. Stack, also stresses man's essential power (in the sense of potentiality or what Aristotle called *dynamis*) to organize, to control, to shape, to form, to master, and to act upon others and on his environment. In his motto for "Compensation," he poetically expresses his belief that there is "power to him who power exerts," thereby joining the idea of

[274] Stack, 145.
[275] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (NuVision Publications, 2005) 136.

power as potency to that of "power as something attained."[276] One always seeks to increase his degree of power, as Emerson sees it. And as he says further: "Power educates the potentate."[277] In this sense, Emerson again stresses the reciprocal quality, or flow of power. Let us now look at Jan Patočka´s account of metaphysics of power.

3.5.8 Bartleby and Responsibility: Patočka

Patočka criticized the metaphysics of force as a misleading and dangerous doctrine. I have tried to show that Emerson cannot be blamed for proposing such a doctrine because his dialectic never let him settle on, let alone create, any metaphysics. When Derrida talks about Patočka in relation to Bartleby, he suggests that his problem with the attorney's approach might be that the call of conscience he experienced did not imply any relation to the supreme being (as the origin of the voice). There is no mysterious voice that would call the responsible conscience[278], no shining "face" that would make us tremble, no infinity of the human being, which we find in Levinas' philosophy for instance. When Patočka talks about a supreme being, he says that God is the one who "holds me from within, in his hands and within his gaze, defines everything regarding me, and so rouses me to responsibility."[279] Heidegger, on the other hand, talks about the call of conscience as the experience of care and the original phenomenon of *Dasein* (the human being), which excludes any relation to the supreme being. As Derrida emphasizes, the silent voice that calls the *Dasein* cannot be identified and remains indeterminate; it is not the voice of anyone in particular.[280] While Heidegger talks about the experience of the call, of conscience as about an event which befalls me, or actually falls upon me while also coming from me,[281] Patočka says that the true responsibility always comes from someone – a supreme being – who takes possession of me. The question is, for Derrida, whether the mysterium tremendum that I experience when being called is related to the gift by God, which allows me to respond. Coming back to Bartleby we may ask: is he ready to die for the other? Are we dealing here with the issue of sacrifice?

3.5.9 Bartleby and Death as a Limit: Deleuze

[276] Stack, 157.
[277] Emerson, "Power," 545.
[278] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 274.
[279] Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 33.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Heidegger 274.

If we interpret Bartleby as a rupture/difference in discourses of pragmatism and common sense, which is manifested not by means of his formula but rather by his disappearing from the space of rhetoric, we need to ask what his death means. Is death a limitation, a final protest against speech? Is Bartleby's story a story about a "gift of death", a sacrifice? Does it cancel all difference? Deleuze says that one face of death is its inevitable but still accidental character: "Death is inscribed in the I and the self, like the cancellation of difference in a system of explication, or the degradation which compensates for the processes of differentiation."[282] It always comes from without. On the other hand, he talks about the other face of death which he calls 'death instinct' - "an internal power which frees the individuating elements from the form of the I or the matter of the self in which they are imprisoned."[283] The death instinct is therefore not just a tendency towards increasing entropy and the desire to become an inanimate object. According to Deleuze, then, every death is double – it represents the liberation and swarming of little differences in intensity; and also the cancellation of large differences in extension. Death always comes from without, even when it seems a personal decision.[284] For Deleuze, every death is accidental and violent. The internal will-to-die (the death instinct) never finally corresponds with death as an empirical event. Deleuze´s notion of death is, unlike Emerson´s and Melville´s where death comes primarily from within, connected with this doubleness, with the event and the instinct, with internal instincts, desires for liberation and external vectors of force. It is simultaneously a process of de-differentiation and individuation (based on protest).[285]

The cancellation of differences also means the cancellation of the differentiating power of speech. Difference, however, as Deleuze suggested, does not need to be connected with negativity. In Bartleby, his subversive action and logic of preference did not make so much difference in his actual surroundings, yet it makes much difference today. The power of the "image" of Bartleby disappearing, rather than just his speech, resonate with contemporary readers who question political and social involvement and agency in a world full of rhetorical manipulation and empty signs.

3.5.9.1 Performativity and Sensibility

Following Deleuze´s interpretation of sensibility, Bartleby brings us new feelings, new ways

[282] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 322.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.

to be affected. Affectivity, or sensibility are essential for both Emerson and Melville. The feeling of power, according to Emerson, comes from the capacity to be affected, from receptiveness. While for Nietzsche, as Deleuze suggests, the will to power manifests itself as the sensibility of force (both reactive and active), Emerson strongly advocated the active, affirmative force.

Deleuze interprets the reactive force as follows:[286]

1) utilitarian force of adaptation and partial limitations; 2) force which separates active force from what it can do, which denies active force (triumph of the weak or the slaves); 3) force separated from what it can do, which denies, or turns against itself (reign of the weak or slaves).

Active force is, according to Deleuze:

1) plastic, dominant and subjugating force; 2) force which goes to the limit of what it can do; 3) force which affirms its difference, which makes its difference an object of enjoyment and affirmation.[287] Emerson also mentions the plastic character of force, i.e. the force of thinking can make things fluid and plastic. In this way, the poet can re-shape old rigid concepts and laws. As for the affirmation of difference, Emerson calls for that already in his early essays ("The American Scholar" and others). The fragile boundary of active and reactive behavior is discussed in his later essays as well (*The Conduct of Life*). How is it related to sensibility?

All sensibility is, according to Deleuze, only a becoming of forces. What is dangerous, however, is that an active force can become reactive, and reactive one can become active. That might be the reason why both Emerson and Melville feared the masses as reactive forces which can become active. With their reactive force, they can spread their stupidity, as Nietzsche claims, or their unhealthy ideas, their nihilism of science, and other anti-ideals. This reminds us of Socrates and his debate with Callicles about nature and law. For Callicles, the triumph of the weak over the strong occurs thanks to the law which separates the power of the strong ones from what it can do. According to Socrates, in contrast, nature and law cannot be distinguished. The problem is, according to Deleuze, in the notion of desire. Socrates does not understand Callicles´s notion of desire which is not based on the association of a pleasure and a pain.[288] Pleasure is an attribute of reactive force which cannot provide any group of slaves with stronger force. And reactive forces can almost never triumph. It is only by "going to the limit of their consequences, that is, by forming an active force,"[289] that they enact the transformation from the reactive mode to the active. Completing Callicles, Nietzsche talks about the active desire, the active force, will to power as both

[286] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* 61.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid. 59.
[289] Ibid. 66.

affectivity and activity, that which has the capacity to be affected and which simultaneously affects others.

Yet, Nietzsche does not promote active forces only. Reactive forces are not inherently a bad thing. Lack of action, of power, can be fascinating and open new perspectives. While being ill, one can reveal a healthier mode of living, creating, has time to descend to the potentiality of becoming. Bartleby enacts exactly this kind of split within one, cutting him off from what he can do, from his direction, and offering new power through deactivation of the old one. It is Bartleby who prefers not to react and not to act, hanging thus suspended in his potentiality of being.

The interpretation of active and reactive forces, and will to power which Deleuze elaborates is a very Spinozist one. Could what he says about these concepts in Nietzsche be applied to Emerson? I would argue that not completely. Emerson´s notion of force is, as we could see above, mostly affirmative. The negative side, the abyss, is not connected with force, such as the force of diving but rather with the premordial potentiality, emptiness, silence of nature. In his late poems such as "Brahma," or "Terminus," Emerson composes enigmatic riddles by means of which he tries to make nature speak, to speak his thoughts. Instead of an influx of energy, inspiration or watery flow, he can only silently follow nature, listening to the breath (pneuma), to the wind which is elusive, limitless and changeable as Brahma, or Potentiality itself. Yet, Emerson cannot always participate in this breath, he feels that his self is detached from the Whole. That enables self-reflection as well. Perceiving the contours of things and bodies, the forces (laws), Emerson realizes that there is a gap (which makes the contours, limits visible) which keeps him from merging with the Whole, "the Over-Soul". Emerson leads a dialogue with nature (by exploring his own individual nature) while he takes into account the limits and limitations in the form of both active and reactive forces. It is in his later writings (including the poems "Terminus," "Merops" and the essay "Poetry and Imagination"), where the self-reflecting mode of speech prevails the most.

4. The Self, Law and Agency in Emerson, Kafka and Melville

What I seek to do in the last chapter is to show the connection of performative acts, the self and the law from the perspective of power not as Domination, but as potentiality. We have seen the semiotic viewpoint developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, his theory of expressive symbols and ideas as potentialities. We have also presented Austin´s theory of performativity. In the final part, I seek to explore the *limits* of rhetorical constitution of self and law and the laws of various restricting roles while moving beyond rhetorical performatives and intelligible effects of action.

On the background of Plato's fundamental attack on rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, we will revisit the distinction of *nomos* (law, convention) and *physis* (nature) in two performative statements by Melville and Kafka. Laws of nature and laws of convention will be tested. This perspective will be developed by means of contemporary thinking on subjectivity, order-words, expression and possibility expressed by Gilles Deleuze and revising J. L. Austin. However, as I shall argue, neither Deleuze nor Austin can fully account for Bartleby. For, Bartleby as a test reaches beyong the Socratic *elenchos* (i.e. the method that tests ideas within discourse) and beyond rhetoric as such.

Both Austin and Deleuze deal with the performative force of language and draw to a certain extent (Deleuze through the deconstructive lineage and F. Nietzsche, leading to Emerson; Austin through the pragmatist-performative lineage, through J. Searle and W. James) in the American (Emersonian) rhetorical tradition. However, both of them, as was just mentioned, fail to account for him. While Charles S. Peirce, as we could see, offers a radical step beyond pragmatism with his use of indeterminate symbols, John Searle connects in his thought the realms of pragmatism and speech-act theory in the US, turning away from transcendence (which is still present in Peirce's thought who wrote "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" (1908)). Emerson presents a radical revision of transcendence and subjectivity in his late work as well. He abandons his former emphasis on Platonic transcendence and detachment as the main constitutive factors for identity. Instead, he turns to the immanent forces and potentiality of speech and silence while questioning both will and power. There are claims about speech (for instance in "Eloquence," "Poetry and Imagination") which, as we could see, emphasize and glorify the power of speech and rhetoric on grand scale. What can also be seen, however, is that Emerson's character of the Poet is as ambivalent as Melville’s Bartleby, and can be interpreted symbolically (Peirce), performatively (Austin) and literally (Deleuze). The selfless constitutions, performative force and consciousness of both characters are different. What Deleuze's interpretation shows, when testing the limits of performativity, is that the consiousness of the (post-)modern individual became so narrowed, so enclosed in social roles, schemes and clichés that there seems to be no pure possibility which would

create, but merely a possibility as a replica of the already known, or preformed. How can one find a way out of these limiting roles, schemes and clichés? How can one resuscitate the pure, creative possibility and joyful thinking? Coming back to performatives, how can Bartleby de-activate the order-words functioning under any statement? We shall explore here several Beckettian situations (of Melville´s Bartleby, Kafka´s Josef K, Emerson´s Poet) where words and presence do something, action is deferred and a new field of possibilities is opened. The issue is, of course, also related to the difference between the laws of convention and laws of nature.

4.1 Deferral of Action: Performatives in Melville and Kafka

There are two principal performative formulas in Kafka´s novel *The Trial* and Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" that cause a postponement or cancellation of action. The first one - "Not yet" - is repeated by a doorkeeper in a fable told to Josef K in the chapter called "Before the Law." It prevents the man waiting in front of the doorkeeper to enter the doors which are meant only for him and which lead to the Law. The second one - "I would prefer not to" - is pronounced several times by Bartleby. It makes his colleagues in the law office fall silent, preventing Bartleby´s expulsion from the space of the law. The formulas, however, have both deconstructive and revealing effects. As for the deconstructive effects, both Josef K and Bartleby manifest a different order of affects, indeterminacy, a lack of any essential stable identity, or subject position, and disregard for their bodies. They risk everything, either willingly or subconsiously. In both cases, they deconstruct the Law. In Kafka´s case, the Law as a percept bears signs of something huge which cannot be overcome or evaded. The gaze of the Law seems omnipresent. In Bartleby´s case, on the other hand, law functions only as the background of the story. The law office can be seen as a metaphorical depiction of law as such, description of the way it distributes subject posititions, roles, the way in which work structures time and space. Bartleby prefers not to have any position in the hierarchy of power (as Domination), yet his attitude is not rebellious. He is surprisingly calm when offering a new possibility, new logic. He would not hurt a fly. That is the powerful and unknown potentiality and nonviolence which drives the attorney crazy and sets him fleeing. He even departs from his own premises. Such a line of escape, however, needs to occur not only on the material level but also within the mindset of the lawyer. Do Bartleby´s performatives have this effect? Or do they transform/deform only himself and his readers?

4.2 Bartleby as the Projector: Passive, Selfless Performativity

As for performative constructions, Bartleby fails in constituting a successful identity as a copyist. That is not surprising when we realize that he is a projector, a screen that needs to be activated. Bartleby obviously does not function from his own energetic resources, for he has none. These need to be provided or activated by others who see his originality and *invite him* to collaboration. Only those who understand/divine where he comes from, can work with him (Bartleby explains his conduct saying: "Can´t you see the reason for yourself?"). Then, his mere presence should lead others to invite him to communication. Provided they are ready to accept him as an equal subject. His selfless passivity and mode of constituting is, however, misunderstood from the very start, as we have seen above. The collaboration that the attorney offers to Bartleby is based on order-words, commands, which Bartleby is supposed to obey, in a machine-like fashion. That is obviously no invitation to action which could be creative, beneficial and respected. Bartleby, as a projector, blank screen, manifests an openness which would be even more creative (if unblocked). The attorney, to a certain extent, senses the power of Bartlleby´s opening of the space (of discourse) by means of his presence, even though his commonsense rationality seeks to prevent that. A silent, subliminal communication, takes place between them. And it is by means of his silent presence and the formula that Bartleby begins to deactivate the laws which make others unaware of their situation, of their ignorance, their enslavement. In the place of assumptions, he introduces tendencies, preferences, another mode of living, another order of affects. Deconstructing the performatives of the attorney (order-words, commands) which shape the symbolic space of the law office, he does something, even though in a passive, nonagressive way, to his surroundings, to himself, to the authority of the attorney and to the reader. He actually becomes the leader of the situation. For, Bartleby is aware of what is going on around him (as when he says: "I know where I am"). He makes himself visible by moving into invisibility, by leaving.

Bartleby´s performative effect opposes the typical instances of Austin´s speech acts. For, Bartleby introduces a logic that could have been desired by many, for a long time, subliminally, but which nobody voiced, expressed aloud. That is the power from which the formula could gain its force. For, neither the Austinian ceremonial circumstances, authority of the person, nor repetition of a pre-existing formula are present there.

Bartleby therefore not only subverts the laws of the law office, the "logos" of representation, the disciplining of the body concerning work performance, and in the end actuality as such, but he

also questions the functioning of law regarding personal identity and human rights. In his failure to reproduce, to imitate, to effect "identity" between the original and the copy, he becomes unduplicable, nonrepresentable, without category and without identity himself. The space of representation, that is, the space of the office provides him with attention, with a gaze to be under, but not with full recognition. His colleagues, even though they cannot see any content, any drive, or intention within him, nonetheless respect him. It is his body and his alien conduct, however, which subsequently constitute him as an inhuman creature in the eyes of others. All he gets is a violently humanized identity by the attorney's Christian ethics of "love your neighbor as yourself." In the end, he is seen as the embodiment (which is ironic, since he does not perceive his body or corporeality very much) of humanity itself. The transformation of Bartleby from the inhuman self to the incarnation of humanity itself, however, occurs only in the mind of the attorney and it has no positive performative effect on Bartleby's physical constitution.

It is the prologue and the epilogue which show the performative effect of Bartleby on the attorney. Bartleby clearly deconstructed his notion of a fixed, stable identity – based on the past which explains who one is. His formula subverted the possibility of any performative success of the attorney's representation of Bartleby. In the prologue, the ethereal, gentle, inhuman sensibility of Bartleby is emphasized for the first time. His aspect disarms the attorney. Soon after, however, Bartleby becomes the beautiful enemy of the attorney and they start playing their strange game in which Bartleby produces his formula. The aim is not to gain more power, to beat the attorney. Rather, it critiques the strategies of naming, of interpellation, of production of identity, authority and the workings of order-words. Apart from Bartleby's performative formula, the attorney produces several performatives as well. These are the order-words, or commands, such as: "I want you to help me compare this sheet here – take it."[290] or "You must quit this place."[291] Is it merely a linguistic game then? Is it about the power of language to (re-)constitute selves within discourse? In the case of Bartleby, we need to ask: "Can a selfless passive person resignify or constitute anything at all?" What Bartleby discloses is that the law is nothing but a performative; it is constituted by means of speech, convention, repetition. As Bartleby finds it difficult to live in the space of such narrowed representation of the law, he puts forward his destructive formula which moves the ground on which the commands of the law are founded. The attorney, as we have seen, cannot leave this delimited space of the law without losing his self, his place, his authority. He can engage forcefully in a dialectical dispute with Bartleby, but he is absolutely unable to live next to the

[290] Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Tales*, 112.
[291] Ibid. 127.

unaccountable scrivener in complete disagreement and conflict. That is why he flees as if haunted by Bartleby's nonrepresentable presence with its threatening potential of minoritarian language and position on the periphery. In the epilogue, the narrator tells us how he inquired into the history of Bartleby and found out about his dead-letter office job (a "history" which is by no means confirmed, or confirmable, but which the attorney chooses to accept as a means of (re-)constructing Bartleby). He sees this as one of the causes of his non-functioning, inactive self. His notion of simple, intelligible self/identity is, however, forever shattered.

Coming back to Austin, we see that Bartleby´s formula is, without fulfilling the Austinian prerequisites for a successful performative, felicitous both in the case of the lawyer (to a certain extent), Bartleby himself (in an ironic manner leading to death) and contemporary readers (revealing the senso-motorical schemes, the structuring of time they live in, power as domination, law as rhetorically constructed). Deferral of action in this case provides space *and* time for the reflection on action which is not based on will or violence but on the shadow zone of possibility from which new orders of affects can be not only understood but created.

4.3 Bartleby and the Law

We have seen that Gilles Deleuze, like Socrates in the *Gorgias,* does not distinguish between laws of nature and laws of convention (*nomos* and fysei). Emerson and Melville, however, do see a difference there. Emerson talks about the laws, tracks of nature to which the poet has to attune himself. The poet's aim is to synchronize his soul with these laws and transfer them into words, being thus a new law-giver (deconstructing conventional laws). Melville also talks about two natures, two orders in the world. He differentiates between *beings of Primary nature* (such as Bartleby, Ahab) and *beings of Secondary nature* (such as the attorney, or Ishmael). Beings of Secondary nature represent the Law, they are the prophets who see the originality of those of Primary nature. Still they betray them in the end, coming back to the Law. Beings of Primary nature are Originals who bring light to the situation at hand, making things, selves and social issues visible. Although they are from a different order, they change, deconstruct, re-draw the lines of convention (Law), and conventional use of language. In Melville's universe, the two realms are therefore connected. Now we need to ask: What laws does Bartleby de-activate? What conventions does he transgress?

Bartleby's formula "I would prefer not to" bears a strange relation to crime. It seems to

constitute both the crime of Bartleby (which is classified as vagrancy but which could also be interpreted as a leaving of the logic of assumptions and as conceptual vagabondism) and the unaccountable crime of the attorney who feels guilty. As in Melville´s *Billy Budd* where the situation is much more tense (the choices for Billy being either to "speak"(defend himself) or "kill" Claggard who insults him), the attorney loses his "Christian" patience, trying to settle Bartleby without any necessary use of violence. Yet, he asks, of what use is Bartleby for anyone? It is absurd to try to find him a job when he prefers not to work. And more absurdities follow. What law is there to help the attorney get rid of Bartleby? The only law he could use against Bartleby (who is ironically a "fixture") is the law against vagrancy. That law covers the zone of indistinctness, the shadow zone, because it can function against such unintelligible characters as Bartleby. The problem here is not one transgressive act, but an absolutely "alien" and performative conduct. Does such conduct violate the law? Does it transgress intelligible communication based on intelligible objects, desires and selves? Bartleby´s conduct bears signs of the Emersonian anti-social, anarchist behavior but in the passive mode. Yet, his is a passivity that creates. No system seems to be able to decode the mystery of Bartleby. Perhaps it cannot be said, put into words. His is a foreign language within language, a minoritarian language which seduces the majoritarian, logical one into becoming minoritarian as well. The attorney is, however, not willing to adopt this other language, which shifts the contours of bodies, social practices and common sense rationality. Unable to stay in the conflict with Bartleby, he goes as far as to invent and realize his "crime," to give form to the appalling situation he finds himself in.

4.4 Crime

First, the attorney thinks about the literal and figurative incarceration of Bartleby, and possibility of his subsequent literal/figurative death. He thinks about whether to enclose Bartleby between the walls and let him die. That would mean that he would live up to the crime he feels hanging "on his back." He seeks to commit some crime so that his feeling of guilt can be made concrete, delimited, classified and thus anchored. For, the biggest suffering is that which has no clear object. That is why he plans to commit the crime (of killing, or expulsion) in order to pin the situation down, to identify it, to identify Bartleby and himself. Is Bartleby a responsibility that the narrator feels it is too late to assume? And yet which he cannot not assume? Or which he has already assumed from the very start? We are used to judging someone for what he has done, and

based on that for which he is absolutely responsible. For, as many existentialists say, acts and actions create a self. However, such assumptions cease to work in the case of Bartleby. Bartleby does not seem to trespass any law, for he both assumes and does not assume the space of the law office (and, perhaps, symbolically the law) as a locus in which he may or may not act. He functions as a blank screen, reflecting the identities of others, having none himself. He obviously does not throw himself into the future as a project of possibilities. Bartleby makes the action of others impossible, he immobilizes the attorney with his pallid face. He blocks actions and the workings of logic, LOGOS and performance of law with his formula "I would prefer not to" to which he clings with all his might. He shows how rhetoric constitutes law and the everyday language denaturalizing thus the constructions and categories which are presented to us as natural. Can he do this within language only? As we mentioned above, his power is also in his calm presence, strange corporeality. He opposes and yet prefers not to, which, in the traditional logic of presupposition, means a rational impossibility. His logic of preference seems to offer a different ethical program. What might that be? The ethics of selfless, non-violent constitutions? Can any ethical stance be based on such Bartlebian selfless, sliding constituting, on such abandonment and lack of willpower? My answer would be positive, and it would not be far from what Emerson suggested regarding the leaving of norms, tradition, paternal functions, rigid languages and selves. Is Bartleby responsible for what he does? Does he respond to any need, lack within his society?

We need to find out first whether we can be sure that Bartleby does not feel obliged to anyone. He resists all ideologies, all beliefs. That is perhaps what makes him inhuman. The feeling of obligation of the attorney, on the other hand, does not proceed from any subjective, "prefered" position but draws on the laws of Christianity and generalizable imperatives of duty. He clearly applies these to everyone, and quite blindly. His ethical stance falls flat very soon, however, and the doctrine of utility and of "what the others would say to this" overrules his humane intentions. The body of Bartleby still shines its appeal on the attorney, but he decides to follow the "they" self, the common sense rationality.

4.5 Kafka's "Not Yet"

The case of Kafka´s man who is stopped by the formula "not yet" which is pronounced by the doorkeeper also revolves around performativity and selfhood. The priest tells Josef K that the fable

about the doorkeeper concerns self-deception.[292] What kind of delusion does he suggest? The story concerns a man from the country who asks for entry to the Law. Yet, the doorkeeper tells him that it is not possible now. Perhaps later. So the man waits in front of the door for years and keeps asking the doorkeeper how to get in, bribing him and bothering him, until he dies. During the process, he learns that the door is meant only for him, and that the doorkeeper is only one of many, i.e. that there are other doorkeepers further on who are even more powerful than he. Thus, the doorkeeper, through repetition of his "not yet", holds the man in check, letting him wait in suspense for the rest of his life. The performative "not yet" obviously defers action and makes the man hang in suspense. The priest argues about the meaning of the story with Josef K who thinks that the doorkeeper cheated on the man. His suggestion, on the other hand, is that the doorkeeper is a subordinate of the free man who *decides* to wait in front of the door. Does one freely decide or does the repetition of a formula make him obey?

It is noteworthy that the attorney from "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is also torn between the obligation, duty, he feels towards the concrete fellow man, and between the debt he has to Bartleby (as to common humanity). The second option, debt to humanity, soon falls flat. Yet, the first option, the feeling of duty, the law one gives to oneself (in a Kantian way), is still in force; it just seems to be something beyond possibility. Bartleby is a responsibility which the attorney cannot take upon himself nor evade. In this sense, Josef K is similar to the attorney because he also evades his issue of guilt. Like the attorney, Josef K is a reasonable, businesslike individual who instead of choosing defers any particular action and goes for a walk (or to the church) instead. Unlike Bartleby, however, Josef K obeys the performatives of the law, without questioning them or himself.

4.6 Kafka´s Performatives and the "Law"

To evaluate the performative´s success, we need to explore the "law" that the doorkeeper refers to first. The doorkeeper cites the "law," the forbidding formula, yet it is the words he pronounces that are really performative – they create the "content" of the law which is otherwise only an empty form. It is the performative statement of the doorkeeper that keeps the man in his place, that stops him from fleeing, from passing through the door. The question of the law, of moral law, is central to Kafka´s work. While trying to jump on his father's shoulders, laugh and thus evade all thinking of duty and guilt, Kafka at the same time shows the dangers of the objective approach to

[292] Kafka, *Trial,* 129.

the law which disregards singularity. The target of his critique may be the value systems of Kant and other "formalists" who understand the "law" as something transcendent, as a pure form, as an imperative that one gives to oneself. The main idea, which we can glimpse in the "backstage" of the process, is the idea that language "makes" certain things happen and that language, when used performatively "defers" action. As we can see, it defers both action and any final meaning for we simply move from one signifier to another, never getting to any transcendental signified. This constant deferring leads to immense frustration. We can then ask: Why did not the man in the fable risk it? Why did not he go through the door? We realize that words are the main obstacle together with the threat of more powerful words which would come next time. Words which are able to present themselves, to act as a "law" which cannot be trespassed. The more often the formula is repeated the stronger it gets, leaving finally no space for any free action of the man. Kafka suggests that there can be no "law" as an essence which could be subsequently filled with content and which would function universally. For, "the law" is being enacted only in the words (of the doorkeeper) that are spoken. Is it therefore completely subjective, expressing the desire of the majority? Is it completely immanent in convention, in the action of speaking?

The objective approach is related to objective values, the ability to give oneself a law (moral imperatives in Kant´s ethics), to rely on pure practical reason that exerts our decisions. We have a will that is able to "want" a maxim that could be embraced by anybody. Kant´s ethics is thus founded on transcendental grounds, on the normative, law-giving powers of reason which can create universal laws (laws transcending individual desires). Such is the Kantian transcendental stance. Let us now turn to the immanent ethical stance.

4.7 Deleuze: The Politics of Involuntarism

When talking about desire and action, Deleuze explores the notions of expression, absence of will, and possibility. Concerning the nature of possibility, he refers to two discourses of possibility, that of 1) the exhaustion of possibility (where the same schemes are repeated) and that of 2) possibility which creates: the opening of the possible, enabling dynamic emergence of the new. What is at stake in the second case is to create/open the realm of possibilities of life, and not to actualize the forms and schemes that were already there (even though in the mode of potentiality). The possibility of life is not a set of acts which is to be realized, or a choice of vocation. Low, limited possibilities refer to the modes of existence. We have seen many cases when Life and Knowledge were opposed to one another in an individual. However, if one wants to express new

forces which give thought a new sense, one has to realize that Life and Thought should not be opposed. Thought needs to affirm Life, not counter it. Deleuze claims: "Thinking would then mean discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life."[293] The possibility of life therefore expresses the mode of existence, according to Deleuze, that is, the expression or agency of life. For, expression is never in the mode of signification, or in a set of significations. It consists in evaluation, that is, not in the evaluation of the possibilities of life but the possibility of life as an evaluation, the singular mode of evaluation of the good and bad, of distribution of affects. Deleuze claims that to live is to evaluate. He says: "there is no truth of the world as it is thought, no reality of the sensible world, all is evaluation, even and above all the sensible and the real."[294] Following Emerson and Nietzsche, he stresses that what we get are appearances from which there is no way out. Yet, one can test the limits of life, the limits of the systems of signification and of law as Bartleby does.

What Deleuze does then, in his analyses of characters who exemplify the growth of nothingness of the will, the power of sign and encounter - such as Melville´s "Bartleby, the Scrivener," or Dostoyevski´s *Idiot*[295] - is that he criticizes the senso-motorical schemes, the clichés, which can be actualized and yet nothing new emerges in the world. What occurs is that the old forms of conformity are repeated and they only gain more force. That is the case of the possible (which realises, actualizes a series of discretive alternatives) which Deleuze does not praise, because no new field, or opening of the possible, is created. The potentialities he calls for are pure forces, pure dynamisms emerging independently of all spacio-temporal coordinators.[296]

Bartleby is not, according to Deleuze, a symbol of militancy, or revolutionary resistance but his action announces a process, a potentiality and *reveals* the pure force of encounter. That is also the moment when Deleuze´s thought resonates with Emerson´s metamorphosis. Where Emerson talks about transformation (which the poet embodies), Deleuze talks about social deformation (which Bartleby, as a blank screen, reflects and embodies). Bartleby, in Deleuze´s interpretation[297] rejects the mode of alternatives, of possibilities which exclude one another, a regime which ensures the solution and closure of a situation, or a conflict. All of these activities are, in my view, still within the Socratic process of testing, which has no clear, final conclusion. According to Deleuze, Melville's story is not symbolic but exemplary. Unlike in the case of Peirce´s semiotic approach,

[293] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* 94.
[294] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* 174.
[295] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 166.
[296] Francois Zourabichvili, "Deleuze et le possible," 337.
[297] Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical,* 73.

Deleuze suggests a literal reading of Bartleby by means of which he develops a whole array of political categories. For, political categories in Deleuze's interpretation of Bartleby include the notions of authority, democracy, equality and power. Analyzing Bartleby from the perspective of will to power, including nothingness of the will, Deleuze distinguishes between dominating monomaniacs (Ahab), saintly hypochondriacs (Bartleby) and other characters whose action has political consequences (at least for their readers) and whose interiority is not revealed. While acknowledging the interiority of Bartleby as mysterious, he claims, however, that the interiority may be empty, stupid, or merely a sign whose affects and effects are of a different order. Incompatible codes thus correspond to incompatible affects, which are, nevertheless quite contagious. By preferring the growth of nothingness of will within himself, Bartleby re-establishes his relationship with the potential and with situation as the force of encounter. What an event as such does is that it makes one think, according to Deleuze. The sign affects us as well; it falls on us with all its weight. Encounter is not an action which makes one see or gain a new perspective on things; it is the correlate of action. It is performative. Similarly to Dostoyevski´s *Idiot*, Bartleby no longer responds to the requirements of a situation, because it makes reaction insupportable and out of place. Both characters have seen something which transcends the facts of the situation.

Bartleby´s repetition of his formula goes against the law of the law office and common sense rationality in general. Deleuze says that "if repetition exists it expresses at once a singularity opposed to the general, a universality opposed to the particular … In every respect, repetition is a transgression.[298] It puts law into question. What does Bartleby communicate outside of his speech? Is there any outside, or does pragmatics (and the context of power as domination, or power as potentiality) belong to linguistics?

4.8 Deleuze, Pragmatics and Performatives

Deleuze stresses the importance of pragmatics and the necessity to expand its realm within linguistics. He criticizes linguistics for its exaggerated emphasis on universals, invariants. Instead of invariants, Deleuze introduces a continuous, immanent process of variation which is inherent (neither extrinsic, nor mixed) to any system.[299] What is also relevant for our analysis of language

[298] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 3.
[299] Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi* (Minneapolis: University of Minessotta Press, 1987) 103.

and law is that he distinguishes between minor and major languages. Both Melville and Kafka could be termed minor authors. They both conquer the major language in order to delineate within it unknown languages. They send the major language fleeing, racing.[300] What majority implies is a constant serving as a standard measure, manifesting for instance the standard of an "adult-white-heterosexual-European-male." It is clear, according to Deleuze, that "man" holds the majoritarian power because the term appears twice in the hierarchy of power – as a constant and as a variable. As a universal signifier- a constant, and as a concrete male signifier – a variable. All that which is different from that of the constant is therefore minoritarian.[301] That is the case of Bartleby as well. While "Kafka submits German to creative treatment as a minor language, constructing a continuum of variation …. he makes it stutter, wail, cry, shout,"[302] Melville introduces the minoritarian perspective with the help of Bartleby. His variation is more than surprising to everyone around.

Deleuze claims that "minor languages are characterized by sobriety and variation. ...that are like a minor treatment of major language, a becoming minor of the major language."[303] Such becoming can be again felicitous or infelicitous. 1) We can witness Bartleby's success regarding his surroundings. Several of his colleagues caught the preference virus and started to repeat it, with variations, becoming thus independent subjects, 2) Bartleby's performative deconstructs the performative (orders) of the attorney who loses his sovereignty, his self, which was to a great extent based on the order-words. His identity is thus revealed as unstable, performatively constituted, rhetorical identity. It is in the end the attorney (and not Bartleby) who is a performative failure. Without conventional use of language and its laws, he is nobody. That corresponds to what Deleuze says about majority. Majority is never anybody, "it is always Nobody-Ulysses - whereas the minority is the becoming of everybody, one's potential becoming to the extent that one deviates from the model."[304] Minoritarian, in our case Bartlebian, thus refers to potential, creative and created, becoming. Bartleby managed to seduce the majority to become minority for a while. That, I believe, is what art should do to its surroundings. To make others aware of presence, of what is happening around them. In this sense, Bartleby is the artist of presence, of awareness who, as a "seed, crystal of becoming, triggers uncontrollable movements … of majority."[305]

What is essential in this becoming-minoritarian is that one addresses the powers of becoming,

[300] Ibid. 105.
[301] Ibid.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid. 104.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid. 106.

which are from a different realm than Power or Domination.[306] That is the Bartlebian autonomy which frightens everyone. For he triggers new movements, making the Law space move, slide under the commands of the attorney. The world is made of sliding surfaces, as Emerson claims, and Bartleby can send into process, transition even the most rigid ones, those of the law. For, the order-words of the law are those variables of enunciation which make language possible and which define the usage of its elements.[307] By opposing them, Bartleby shows that every order-word is a death sentence for one's original personality which receives the order.[308] The line of escape that Bartleby selected, however, leads to death. The question then is: "How to evade the death sentence?"

4.8.1 Bartleby the Non-linguistic

The issue whether and how "the Bartleby effect" transcends linguistics is a complex one. That is why we will only hint at several possible ways of approaching the problem. Deleuze claims in *A Thousand Plateaus* that linguistic and nonlinguistic elements are inseparable in enunciation from the very start. Pragmatics, which deals with the nonlinguistic, should be, according to Deleuze, considered a part of linguistics, and the most constitutive one. Deleuze opposes Chomsky's abstract machine which retains the tree-like model and linear ordering of "linguistic elements in sentences and sentence combinations"[309] and which excludes the nonlinguistic. Instead, he introduces superlinearity, thinking about language without any fixed linear order. A true abstract machine of language, according to him, needs to be imagined with even more abstraction than Chomsky's linear model because it needs to involve nonlinguistic factors, variables, and not only the traditional linguistic set of "constants." The abstract machine, in Deleuze's view, belongs not to a deep syntactical structure (as Chomsky would have it) but to *assemblage* which is not language based but diagrammatic and superlinear. It is quite difficult to imagine, let alone diagram this tree-less model drawing on the indiscernible, on the *assemblage*, potentiality, rhizome or however else we may call this indescribable element. What Deleuze seeks to ensure is that external pragmatics of nonlinguistic factors be taken into consideration because "linguistics is inseparable from an internal pragmatics involving its own factors."[310] Instead of fixed, unchangeable constants in language, Deleuze talks about variables of expression and of content that cannot be separated. Content is not a

[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid. 107.
[309] Ibid, 91.
[310] Ibid.

signified nor expression a signifier; rather both are variables of the *assemblage*.[311] Thus, Deleuze's notion of language emphasizes variables, assemblages and makes space for shifts of various kinds.

As to Bartleby, I will try to show now how Deleuze's conception of content, expression and the indiscernible can illuminate Bartleby's subversive function. Deleuze distinguishes between expression and content, between linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects, to show how they are connected by means of their corresponding contour-shifting function. As to content, Bartleby's body is a screen, it lacks content, yet he shifts the bodily contours (at least of his body, and the fleeing body of the attorney) and turns them into fluid limitless forces. As to expression, Bartleby's linguistic signs also, like those of Emerson, make language plastic, fluid, boundless. The boundary that Deleuze sees as imposed between people, between classes and words is death. Death as the expressed of the statement constitutes the first aspect of the order word, of the performative (i.e. "He is dead."). It is a pure act; a pure incorporeal transformation that "enunciation fuses with the statement, the sentence." The performative, the order-word "That man is dead" shows death as the ideal boundary which is everywhere separating bodies.[312] These clear contours are preserved by the Master, in our case the attorney, who does not want transformations. He limits them, prohibits them. Yet, Bartleby enacts several metamorphoses anyway. The second aspect of the order-word, according to Deleuze, is flight. What we experience with Bartleby is a passage to the limit "in order to reduce death, to make it a variation. Flight pushes language to its limits."[313] Flight from contours and rigid schemes in favor of fluid forces is exactly what Emerson's Poet and Emerson himself does. His body or his words do not end on a precise point. The question is, however, how exactly one develops the power to escape. We have seen that neither ascension to the ideal, imaginary fullness, nor diving into the abyss could account for the experimenter. It was rather the creation of transitory words and movements within language that were able to shift the commands coming from European tradition, Puritanism, or the Church. It is, in my view, through the mastery of elements of *minoritarian* language that both Emerson and Melville create their landscapes, offering new subject positions, new orders of affects.

5. Conclusion

Our aim has been to redefine the Emersonian self which was traditionally seen as all-

[311] Ibid. 91.
[312] Ibid. 107.
[313] Ibid.

composed, willful, appropriative, and self-reliant. Instead, thinking of subjectivity stressing transition, power as potentiality, flux and metamorphosis was explored in both Emerson and Melville. Similarly to the selfless Bartlebian constitutions, Emerson's poet is ready to abandon any category, norm, relationship, position or political ideology. Such a radical move-away, disappearing from the pre-defined tracks every time the self feels too much confinement is a sign of originality. It resonates with poststructuralism (Culler, Butler, Deleuze) and its never-ending process of difference, deferral, but it still relates to the forces of nature, bringing them into language and law-giving. The process of bringing ideas, affects to light, to reflection reguires a pre-reflective perceptiveness/receptivity/affectivity of the mind and body. Something is written on the "walls of intellect" but it takes some time before intuition actualizes the image as a word that just occured to us. In this way, words or new thoughts occur to us, happen to us as events. That reminds us of William James' claim that truth happens to an idea. Likewise, Emerson realized that one often sees the truth as sudden revelation even though the images, impressions could have been stored in him or her for a long time. It is the light of intuition which enables the transfer from the subliminal to the conscious and personal realm of the self. Such drawing of images out of the darkness of the abyss corresponds to what we have mentioned before about Emerson's activity of diving. As I argued, such bringing of ideas into light is not based on will. Bartleby is the Drummond light, functioning as a carriage, as Intuition. Emerson's poet, like Bartleby with his conceptual nomadism, never knows what will occur when a performative formula is pronounced. It often transcends the realm of traditional linguistics. While Emerson's poetry ends in music, Bartleby's "expression" ends in silence. What they both share is the emphasis on potentiality, on waiting in silence. For, the main capability is first of all to make space for the non-articulated sense, for the body (and forces of nature). In other words, one needs to stop talking, asking, trying to contact the other. After a long silence one can simply start to speak. We are used to the constant projecting of ourselves when we are thrown into situations, that is, we supplant our already actualized interpretations with new interpretations of the world, with ideas, concepts, maps of how things should occur and what they should mean. It is therefore necessary to de-focus our vision sometimes, to deactivate our desire, the laws and analytical thinking and simply be/experiment/play. For, the (Bartlebian) body-world can act only when it has some space for its action. It comes into being only in the moment when the space for its emergence is created; it comes into being together with its place. Only then can one *create,* in an Emersonian or Melvillean way, instead of mere translating, or moving along the sphere of symbols. It is possible to live from these elemental forces, be it in the affirmative, joyful mode,

or the de-activated/deactivating one.

As to Austinian performativity, it was shown that the force of Bartleby's performative does not depend on any ceremonious circumstances, position of authority, sincerity, or iteration of a longtime-existing powerful formula. What affects the attorney and others is first of all Bartleby's strangely inhuman silent presence which suggests a possible leaving, a destitution. That is an important context of Bartleby's formula which constitutes the logic of preference. One of the reasons why it is so contagious could be the subconsious desire of his colleagues for independence, freedom from the law and the binding schemes of language and logic of assumptions. This unsaid, underground preference for a possible preference could add to the force of the formula and its infectious nature. Yet, Bartleby does not represent anyone; he may not be aware of the effect of the formula at all. For, if he were, that would suggest that there was a *decision* coming from his self as opposed to others. As we have shown, however, Bartleby's constitutions are selfless and indeterminate. Any definitions of the self as a separate subject – as an autonomous resolute individual – or any delimitations of the subject through the relationships with another not-Me in the social network are determinations based on mistrust toward oneself. The opposite of this mistrust, however, is not to confide in one's self and to find oneself but to confide in the world whose part I am, as someone who cannot be delimited individually.

Power as potentiality, as I have tried to show, expresses itself in experimenting, in play, in selfless constitutions. Emerson's experimenting ends in music. Music and poetry, for Emerson, connect us to the pre-linguistic forces; they are expressions of playfulness for adults. Such joyful, selfless thinking abandoning all fixity stands in contrast to power as an attempt at fulfillment of a lack, of deficit, often through domination of others. The negative side of this philosophy idealizing the unified, well-formed self is frustration, anger, despair. Lack of form, lack of willfulness and selfhood is a problem for this approach to the world. We have seen that Bartleby tested (deferred) both of these approaches. He himself was the process of pure difference, embodying the deferral of both action and meaning. Such deferral is typical of poststructuralism (Derrida). We pass from one signifier to another ad infinitum. There is no transcendental signifier or signified, no stable identity or meaning one could hold on to. That sounds like another philosophy leading to frustration. As I have argued above, however, power as potentiality can be effectuated in the affirmative way as well. Selfless constitutions are possible and do not have to lead to frustration. It does not matter if we do not arrive at definitive answers or transcendental signifiers. The rhetorical nature of our becoming, the obsession with language, can be transcended, transgressed. In experimenting, in

playing, in music, one attunes oneself to the elemental forces. In that way, laws of nature and laws of convention can come into contact. In creative experimenting, one lets the body attune itself to the non-linguistic forces, bridging the soul-body split, getting new ideas and affects while changing the contours of the majoritarian approach to the world.

An extreme interpretation, which I did not support, would presuppose that Bartleby knows that the repetition of the performative will prevent him from writing, working, eating and lead to death eventually. He knows that it shatters the possibility of communication, of sharing, of humaneness (which is based on sharing). Such decision, based on the will to nothingness, would manifest a resolute self. His disappearing, in this interpretation, would then be effectuated as a series of conscious steps outside of the symbolic order, away from identity, language and from life.

What I have tried to argue instead was that both Emerson's poet and Melville's Bartleby embodied power as potentiality, potentiality of transformation or deformation of the majoritarian discourse. In this interpretation, the force of Bartleby's performative shows the difference of idioms, where one cannot be translated to the other. Bartleby's experience (be it a past experience, for instance a trauma, or current experiencing of the world) cannot be articulated within the idiom of the attorney. His life or death is not something that could be argued about, agreed upon or solved within the discourse of the attorney. Yet, the effects of Bartleby's formula do reach the conventional language and provoke movements from the center to the periphery, from majority to minority. As Deleuze suggests, the lines of escape can be creative or evasive (moving into the imaginary, "beyond" or "below"). As we have shown, however, Deleuze still works within language, using dialectical oppositions, even though he, like Emerson, tries to make language fluid and transform its order-words into pass-words. Although he extends the domain of pragmatics, he cannot account for Bartleby whose performative presence and silence transcend the realm of rhetoric, showing us that there is much we can do and understand thanks to language, and much that we cannot.

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Abstrakt Dizertace

Dizertace se soustředí na Melvillovy postavy jako je Písař Bartleby, které jsou výzvou pro americký Emersonovský vitalismus, rétoričnost a performativitu. Melvilovo ticho, deaktivace, narušení diskurzu stálo už v Melvillově době v opozici k americkým mýtům úspěchu, síly vůle a soběstačnosti. Možnosti Melvillových "antihrdinů" útočí na rétorickou sílu, performanci a jednotu izolovaného já, které je v těchto mýtech reprezentováno. Zatímco Emersonovo rané dílo se týká především spolehnutí se na síly "zhůry" (platonismus) a "zdola" (gnoze), které ale často nelze odlišit, jazyk Emersonova pozdního díla na mnoha úrovních rezonuje s dílem pozdního Melvilla. Dynamický vztah mezi Melvillem a Emersonem podle mého názoru utváří už od Mellvilova revivalu ve dvacátých letech dvacátého století americkou kulturu a debaty o ustavování subjektivity, problémy jednání a performativity. Ačkoli je Emerson často představován jako "krásný nepřítel" Melvilla, snažím se zde ukázat, že se oba zabývají stejnými tématy – zvláště otázkami moci, řeči, vůle, ticha, protestu proti otcovským autoritám – a oba zdůrazňují potencialitu.

V poslední době se o postavu Bartlebyho rozhořel nový, intenzivní zájem. Můžeme ho podle mého názoru nahlížet - oproti americké ideologii aktivního sebetvoření a praktické síly - jako případ performativního "jednání" nebo "ukazování" pomocí mizení. Soudobý zájem o "otázku Bartleby" je spojen s problémy jednání, potenciality, zákona a difference (jak ukazují C. S. Peirce, J. Derrida a G. Deleuze) a s protestem proti způsobu, jakým se osobní identita performativně ustavuje pomocí řeči (což lze vidět v Emersonově pozdním díle, teorii pragmatismu a performativity). Bartleby ale není ve všech ohledech nečinný a nehybný. Tvrdím, že Bartleby něco dělá, a to jak lingvisticky – v rámci jazyka, znaků, performativních konstrukcí, kde má jeho formule "já bych raději ne" velkou účinnost, tak nelingvisticky – prostřednictvím ticha, odcházení, přítomnosti, smrti). Jak Bartleby tak Emersonův básník svými ustavováními mimo jáství ukazují jistou prázdnotu, jedinečnost, sílu jako potencialitu. Bartleby ukazuje limity řečových médií a rétoriky jako takové. Zpochybňuje platónskou distinkci mezi *nomos* a *physis*, dále distinkci mezi já, které mizí v *náboženssko-mýtických silách,* a já, které je vedeno silami *vůle k moci*) a navíc celou americkou rétorickou tradicí zahrnující Austinovu teorii performativity, Jamesovo pragmatické já a Emersonův

výmluvný hlas, koncepty vůle, moci, potenciality a jednání. *Metody,* které pro argumentaci těchto bodů využívám, zahrnují close-reading a performativní a kritické teorie.

V první části této práce krátce načrtávám genealogii amerického já v protikladu k evropskému pojetí subjektu. Interpretuji Bartlebyho jakožto vzdálené já, identitu a jednání z perspektivy Emersonova raného díla ("Circles," "Self-Reliance," a hlavně "Transcendentalist"- pravděpodobný zdroj Melvillova "Bartlebyho"). Zkoumáme zde duchovní (platónskou a gnostickou) úroveň Emersonova myšlení. V návaznosti na Platónovu distinkci z *Gorgia* mezi dvěma silami ustavujícími subjektivitu (nábožensko-mýtickými silami a osvícenskými silami vůle a moci) prozkoumáváme jáství včetbě jeho duchovní cesty vzhůru, a jeho sestup, noření se do hloubek. Performativní síla Emersonových slov zde umožňuje transformaci, odblokování nebo dokonce úplné opuštění já.

Ve druhé části jsou hlavními tématy Melvillův "Bartleby" a síla rétoriky, performativita, opakování a přítomnost (interpretované s pomocí J. L. Austina a G. Deleuze). Diskutují se zde moc a následky Bartlebyho formulky "Já bych raději ne," spolu s otázkami vzdálení se od těla, originality a oběti. Jak Melvillův Bartleby, tak Emersonův básník mluví cizím, *minoritním* jazykem v rámci jazyka většiny, což může odhalit nové možnosti a subjektové pozice.

Ve třetí části se vůle, řeč a jáství rozebírá z perspektivy Emersonova pozdního díla, tzn. z perspektivy imanence, která byla do jisté míry později rozvinuta Nietzschem, Heideggerem, Foucaultem, Deleuzem, Butlerovou a dalšími. My nicméně Emersonovy a Melvillovy koncepty moci a vůle nebudeme interpretovat ani z Nietzschovské linie ani z linie esencialistických interpretací Bartlebyho rezistující vůle (jak to dělá např. John B. Williams v knize *White Fire: The Influence of Emerson on Melville*). Půjde nám o perspektivu, která přesahuje pragmatismus i teorii řečových aktů. Analyzujeme proto jak v Melvillově "Bartlebym" tak v *Confidence-manovi* důvěru a klam*,* rétoriku, potencialitu, ticho, propast, smrt a sílu já ve vztahu k poetické tvorbě, gnozi, a sémiotice expresívních symbolů (Charles Sanders Peirce).

Nakonec srovnáváme pojetí zákona a jednání v Melvillově "Bartlebym" a v Kafkově kapitole z *Procesu* s názvem "Před zákonem." Zkoumání Kafkova performativu "Ještě ne" a Melvillova "Já bych raději ne," spolu s analýzou odkládaného

jednání, slovy rozkazu, otcovskou funkcí, a pragmatickými aspekty v obou dílech by nás mělo dovést do bodu, kdy je třeba přehodnotit Austinovy performativní teorie.

V poslední části dizertace se rozebírá nelingvistický aspekt Bartlebyho "performance." Jazyk se prezentuje jako pohyblivý, nadlineární. Čerpám zde především z Gilla Deleuze, který v *Tisíci Plošinách* tvrdí, že lingvistické a nelingvistické prvky se v promluvě nedají oddělit už od samého počátku. Pragmatika, která pojednává o nelingvistickém, by měla být podle Deleuze považována nejen za součást lingvistiky, ale přímo za její nejvíce konstitutivní část. Deleuze tak stojí v opozici k lingvistickému abstraktnímu stroji Noama Chomského, který si udržuje stromovitou metodu a lineární řazení lingvistických prvků ve větách a větných spojeních a který vše nelingvistické vylučuje. Deleuze zavádí místo takovéhoto modelu nadlinearitu, myšlení o jazyce bez pevného lineárního řádu; místo "konstant" mluví o proměnných obsahu a proměnných výrazu. Abstraktní lingvistický stroj nenáleží podle Deleuze k hlubinné syntaktické struktuře (kterou zastává Chomsky) ale k uspořádání (*assemblage*), které není založeno na jazyku, ale je diagramatické a nadlineární. Přemýšlet o Bartlebym v Deleuzových pojmech vede člověka k jinému náhledu na tělo a jazyk jako takový. Co se týče obsahu, Bartlebyho tělo je plátno; chybí mu obsah. I přesto ale Bartleby přesouvá kontury těla (a to minimálně svého vlastního a těla svého nadřízeného, právníka) a obrací je do tekutých sil bez hranic. Co se týče výrazu, Bartlebyho jazykové znaky, stejně jako Emersonovy, činí jazyk plastickým, tekutým, bezmezným.

Současní poststrukturalištičtí myslitelé jako Judith Butlerová nebo výše zmíněný Gilles Deleuze (kteří jdou ve stopách Emersona, Nietzscheho a Spinozy) jsou často kritizováni za své teorie subjektivity, které se zaměřují příliš mnoho na identitu jako proces, jako účinek různých sil a nikoli na člověka jako zodpovědného konatele. Gilles Deleuze se snaží myslet ne-identitu a ukazuje různé aspekty opakování v řeči a obrazech. Jak Deleuze tak Butlerová se ale nicméně stejně zabývají mocí řeči/diskurzu a její důležitosti pro já/identitu. Téma moci diskurzu významně rozvinul i pozdní Emerson a Nietzsche. Proto zde zkoumáme Melvillovy postavy jako "Drummondovy světla," která osvětlují vše kolem sebe a nabízejí tak jiný způsob myšlení o identitě a jazyku. Takové postavy totiž testují hranice pojmu identity/vědomí jakožto performativně konstruované prostřednictvím řeči, pojmu já jako neoperativní moci, jako diference, nebo jako vzdáleného enigmatu, což jsou témata, která jsou v centru

současného diskurzu o subjektivitě. Je-li Emerson jeden z největších vitalistů v americké kultuře, pak Melville ukazuje, jaký význam a implikace má pro osobní identitu ne-aktivita a mezery či trhliny v diskurzech.

V případě Bartlebyho jsme svědky zvláštního druhu duševního i fyzického vzdálení se. Vypadá to, jako by bylo jeho hlavním přáním odejít, uniknout ze symbolického řádu jazyka a společenských praktik. Bartleby nicméně jazyk velmi ovlivňuje, a to i přesto, že jeho performativní moc není na jazyce výhradně založena. Co se týče Emersona a jeho možné odpověďi na Bartlebyovskou výzvu, je důležité si uvědomit, že Emersonovo já se nevztahuje pouze k transcendentnímu "nad," k Nad-duši, k Síle, ale také k "pod," k propasti, potencialitě, neurčité zóně/hloubce, která člověka přesahuje jak díky svému místu (bezmezný prostor potenciality), tak díky času (před časem, jazykem a Stvořením). Emerson by se v rámci svého raného díla mohl s Bartlebym vyrovnat podle mého názoru právě z onoho předlingvistického "podzemí." Oba pojmy "nad" i "pod" odkazují k Emersonovým činnostem stoupání a potápění se. Právě s aktem potápění se Melville ztotožňuje.

Dalším cílem této dizertace je, kromě analýzy Bartlebyho výzvy vůči performativitě, vitalismu a pragmatismu, znovu definovat Emersonovské já, které bylo tradičně vnímáno (i když Emerson sám je tak nevnímal) jako ucelené, plné síly vůle, přivlastňující si a soběstačné. My jsme oproti tomu nabídli pohled na subjektivitu, který zdůrazňuje přechod, sílu jako potencialitu, tok a proměnu, a to jak u Emersona tak u Melvilla. Emersonův básník je, podobně jako v případě Bartlebyovských konstitucí vně jáství, připraven kdykoli opustit jakoukoli kategorii, normu, vztah, pozici, nebo politickou ideologii. Tak radikální odklon, mizení jáství z předem definovaných kolejí, kdykoli pociťuje přílišné věznění, je znakem originality. Tím rezonuje s poststrukturalismem (Culler, Butler, Deleuze) a jeho neustálým procesem diference, odkladu; přesto má ale stále vztah k čerpání sil z potenciálních sil vlastní přirozenosti, které přivádí do jazyka a zákonodárství. Proces přivádění idejí a afektů ke světlu, k reflexi, vyžaduje předreflexivní vnímavost/receptivitu/afektivitu mysli a těla. Je to právě světlo intuice, které člověku umožňuje přejít od podvědomé k vědomé a osobní rovině já. Takovéto vytahování obrazů ze tmy propasti odpovídá tomu, co jsme už zmínili ohledně Emersonovy aktivity potápění.

Tvrdím tedy, že přivádění idejí na světlo není založeno na vůli. Bartleby je

Drummondovo světlo, které má funkci nositele, či intuice. Emersonův básník, podobně jako Bartleby, nikdy neví, co se stane, když někdo performativní formuli prosloví; často se tím jazyková rovina tradiční lingvistiky úplně překročí. Zatímco Emersonova poezie končí v hudbě, Bartlebyho "výraz" končí v tichu. Co oba sdílejí je smysl hodnoty neurčitosti, nepředpověditelnosti a potenciality, toho, co může z jakékoli činnosti nebo nečinnosti povstat. To v určitém smyslu ospravedlňuje a tvoří *prostor* pro svobodu, možnost kontrafaktuality, naději. Pro oba je nejdůležitější schopností především vytvoření prostoru pro neartikulovaný smysl, pro tělo. Jinými slovy, člověk musí přestat mluvit, ptát se, snažit se kontaktovat druhého. Po dlouhém tichu prostě může začít mluvit. Jsme zvyklí se neustále projektovat do ostatních, když jsme vrháni do každodenních situací. To znamená, že nahrazujeme naše už uskutečněné interpretace novými interpretacemi světa, idejemi, koncepty a mapami, jak by se věci měly dít a co by měly znamenat. Proto je důležité někdy rozostřit vidění, deaktivovat touhu, zákony i analytické myšlení a jednoduše být, experimentovat, hrát. (Bartlebyovské) tělo-svět totiž dokáže jednat, jen pokud má pro své činy místo. A to povstává ve chvíli, kdy je vytvořen prostor pro jeho vyvstávání; vzniká spolu se svým místem. Teprve poté může člověk, po Emersonově a Melvillově způsobu, *tvořit* namísto toho, aby pouze překládal a pohyboval se ve sféře symbolů. Z elementárních sil je tedy možné žít, ať už v modu afirmativním, radostném, nebo v de-aktivovaném/de-aktivujícím.

Co se týče Austinovské performativity, ukazuje se, že síla Bartlebyho performativu nezávisí na žádných ceremoniálních okolnostech, pozici autority, upřímnosti, nebo opakování nějaké dlouho existující formule. To, co na právníka a ostatní doléhá, je především Bartlebyho zvláštně nelidská přítomnost, která naznačuje možný odchod, neboli destituci. Jde o důležitý kontext Bartlebyho formule, která ustavuje logiku preference. Jedním z možných důvodů, proč je formule tak nakažlivá, je i podvědomá touha Bartlebyho kolegů i čtenářů po nezávislosti, svobodě od zákona a od svazujících schémat jazyka a logiky předpokladů. Toto nevyřčené, podzemní preferování možné preference může přidat sílu Bartlebyho formuli a dodat jí na infekčnosti. Bartleby ale přesto nikoho nereprezentuje; možná si účinek své formule ani neuvědomuje. Pokud by si ho totiž byl vědom, šlo by o *rozhodnutí* pocházející z jeho já v opozici k ostatním. Jak jsme ale ukázali, Bartlebyho ustavování je neurčité a na já nezaložené. Jakékoli definice já jako odděleného subjektu – jakožto autonomního

rozhodného jedince – nebo jakékoli určování subjektu skrze vztahy k ostatním ne-Já jsou určení založená na nedůvěře vůči sobě.

Moc jako potencialita, jak se snažím v dizertaci ukázat, se vyjadřuje v experimentování, ve hře, v ustavování bez já. Emersonovo experimentování končí v hudbě. Hudba a poezie nás totiž, podle Emersona, spojují s předlingvistickými silami; jsou výrazy hravosti pro dospělé. Takové radostné, na já nezaložené myšlení, které opouští vše fixní, stojí v přímém kontrastu proti moci jako pokusu o vyplnění nedostatku, realizované často skrze ovládání ostatních. Negativní stránka této filozofie idealizující ucelené, dobře zformované já spočívá ve frustraci, vzteku, zoufalství. Nedostatek formy, síly vůle a jáství je pro tento světonázor problémem. Viděli jsme, že Bartleby otestoval (odložil) oba tyto přístupy. Sám byl procesem čistého diferování, čímž ztělesňoval odklad jak jednání tak významu. Takové odkládání je typické pro poststrukturalismus (Derrida). Přecházíme totiž od jednoho označujícího k druhému ad infinitum. Není zde žádný transcendentální označující nebo označovaný, žádná stabilní identita nebo význam, kterého by se mohl člověk chytit. Zní to jako další filozofie vedoucí k frustraci.

Je nicméně možné nalézt moc jako potencialitu i v afirmativním modu. Ustavování nezaložené na já je možné a nemusí vést k frustraci. Nevadí, že nedojdeme k definitivním odpovědím nebo transcendentálním označujícím. Rétorická povaha našeho nastávání, stejně jako obsese s jazykem, může být překročena. V experimentování, v hraní, v hudbě, se člověk naladí na elementární síly a tím se tyto mohou spojit se zákony konvence. V tvořivém experimentování nechá člověk své tělo naladit se na nelingvistické síly, překračujíc tak rozdělení duše a těla; získá nové ideje a přitom promění kontury většinového přístupu ke světu.

Jedna z extrémních interpretací Bartlebyho konání, kterou jsem ale v dizertaci nepodporovala, by předpokládala, že Bartleby ví, že opakování performativu ho donutí přestat psát, pracovat, jíst a povede nakonec ke smrti. Ví, že jeho formule otřásá možnostmi komunikace, sdílení a lidskosti (která je na sdílení založena). Takové rozhodnutí, ukotvené ve vůli k nicotě, by poukazovalo na rezolutní, rozhodné já. Bartlebyho mizení by pak podle této interpretace bylo realizováno postupnými kroky mimo symbolický řád, pryč od identity, jazyka a života.

Náhled, který zde naproti tomu předkládám, tvrdí, že jak Emersonův básník

tak Melvillův Bartleby ztělesňují moc jako potencialitu, potencialitu transformace nebo deformace většinového diskurzu. Podle této interpretace síla Bartlebyho performativu ukazuje rozdíl řečí, kdy jedna nemůže být přeložena do druhé. Bartlebyho prožitek (ať už jde o minulý zážitek, například o trauma, nebo o současné prožívání světa) nemůže být artikulován v právníkově řeči. Jeho život i smrt nejsou něčím, o čem by se dalo argumentovat, shodnout se, nebo co by se dalo vyřešit v rámci právníkova diskurzu. Přesto se účinky Bartlebyho formule konvenčního jazyka dotýkají a vyvolávají pohyby z centra do periferie, z většiny do menšiny. Linie úniku, jak tvrdí Deleuze, mohou být tvořivé nebo vyhýbavé (pohybujíce se do imaginárního "nad" nebo "pod"). Jak jsme již ale ukázali, Deleuze stále pracuje v rámci jazyka. Užívá dialektické protiklady, a to i přesto, že se snaží, stejně jako Emerson, jazyk zkapalnit a transformovat jeho rozkazy do hesel pro vstup, pro průchod. Ačkoli rozšiřuje doménu pragmatiky, nemůže plně vystihnout Bartlebyho, jehož performativní přítomnost a ticho překračují oblast rétoriky a ukazují tak, že je hodně věcí, které můžeme díky jazyku pochopit, a hodně těch, které nemůžeme.

Abstract of the Dissertation

The dissertation focuses on Melville's characters - such as Bartleby the Scrivener - who challenge American Emersonian vitalism, rhetoricism and performativity. Melville's silence, deactivation, ruptures in discourse, and subjectivities have stood, even in his time, in contrast to American myths of success, force of will, and self-reliance. The potentialities of Melvillean "anti-heroes" contest the rhetorical force, performance, and unity of the isolated self represented in these myths. While Emerson's early work manifests his reliance on the powers of the "beyond" (Platonism) and the "below" (Gnosis), which, however, often cannot be clearly distinguished, the language of Emerson's late work, which has been frequently disregarded, resonates with that of the late Melville on many levels. The dynamic relationship between Emerson and Melville has been, in my view, shaping American culture since the “Melville Revival” in 1920s and continues to do so in contemporary debates regarding both the formation of subjectivity and issues of performativity and agency. Although Emerson is often portrayed as "the beautiful enemy" of Melville, it can be shown that they address the same topics - especially the issues of power, speech, will, silence, protest against paternal authority - while emphasizing potentiality.

Recently, there has emerged an intensified interest concerning the character of Bartleby who might, in contrast to the American ideology of self-creation and practical power, provide an instance of a performative "showing" or "acting" by means of disappearing. The contemporary interest in "the Bartleby question" is connected with the issues of agency, potentiality, law, and difference (as shown in C. S. Pierce, J. Derrida and G. Deleuze), as well as with a major protest against the way in which personal identity is performatively constituted by means of speech (as seen in Emerson's late work, the school of pragmatism, and theories of performativity). Yet, Bartleby is not immobile and inactive in all respects. I argue that Bartleby does something, both linguistically - within the realm of language, signs, performative constructions (where his formula "I would prefer not to" has profound effects) - and nonlinguistically (by means of his silence, leaving, presence, death). Both Bartleby and Emerson's poet manifest, in their selfless constitutions certain vacancy, blankness, singularity, and

power as potentiality. Bartleby shows the limits of rhetoric (while questioning the Platonic distinctions from the *Gorgias* between *nomos* and *physis,* between the self disappearing in *religious-mythical forces*, and the self led by the forces of *will to power*) and the American rhetorical tradition, including Austin's theory of performativity, James' pragmatist self, and Emerson's eloquent voice, notions of the will, power, potentiality, and agency. The *methods* that I use to argue these points involve close-reading, plus performative and critical theories.

In the first part of this work, then, the genealogy of the American self as opposed to the European notion of the subject is briefly sketched. Secondly, the self, its agency, and Bartleby as the detached self are interpreted from the perspective of Emerson's early work ("Circles," "Self-Reliance," and mainly his "Transcendentalist"- a probable source of Melville's "Bartleby"). Here, the spiritual (Platonic and Gnostic) level of Emerson's thought is explored. Following the Platonic distinction from the *Gorgias* regarding two kinds of forces constituting subjectivity (the religious-mythical forces and the enlightenment forces of will and power), the spiritual ascension and diving of the self are examined. The performative force of Emerson's words aims here to enable the transformation, unblocking and even complete abandonment of the self.

In the second part, the main topics are the power of rhetoric, performativity, repetition and presence (interpreted with the help of J. L. Austin and Gilles Deleuze) in Melville's "Bartleby." The power and consequences of Bartleby's formula "I would prefer not to" are discussed, together with the issues of detachment from the body, originality, and sacrifice. Both Melville's Bartleby and Emerson's poet speak a foreign, *minoritarian* language within the language of the majority, which may reveal new possibilities and/or positions for personal identity/self.

In the third part, the self, its will, speech, and power are analyzed from the perspective of Emerson's late work, that is, from the perspective of immanence, which was, to a certain extent, later developed by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Deleuze, Butler, and others. However, Emerson's and Melville's notions of power and will are interpreted *neither* in the Nietzschean lineage *nor* according to the essentialist interpretations of the resistant will of Bartleby (John B. Williams in *White Fire: The Influence of Emerson on Melville*) but from a perspective which goes beyond pragmatism and speech-act theory. Apart from the issues of confidence and forgery in

Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *The Confidence-man*, rhetoric, potentiality, silence, abyss, death, and the power of the self are examined in relation to poetic creation, gnosis, and the semiotics of expressive symbols (Charles Sanders Peirce).

Finally, the notions of the law and agency in Melville's "Bartleby" are contrasted with their use in Kafka's "Before the Law." The exploration of Kafka's performative "Not Yet" and Melville's "I would prefer not to," together with an analysis of deferred action, order-words, paternal function, and pragmatic aspects in both works, should bring us to the point where we see the necessity to revise Austin's performative theories.

What is then analyzed in the last part of the dissertation is the nonlinguistic aspect of Bartleby´s "performance." Language is presented as fluid, superlinear. I draw on Gilles Deleuze who claims in *A Thousand Plateaus* that linguistic and nonlinguistic elements are inseparable in enunciation from the very start. Pragmatics, which deals with the nonlinguistic, should be, according to Deleuze, considered a part of linguistics, and the most constitutive one. Deleuze thus opposes Noam Chomsky's language machine, which retains the tree-like model and linear ordering of linguistic elements in sentences and sentence combinations and which excludes the nonlinguistic. Instead, Deleuze introduces superlinearity, thinking about language without any fixed linear order; he talks about variables of content and expression instead of "constants." The abstract machine of language, in Deleuze's view, belongs not to a deep syntactical structure (as Chomsky would have it) but to *assemblage* which is not language-based but diagrammatic and superlinear. To think about Bartleby in Deleuzian terms provokes one to adopt a different view of the body and language as such. As to content, Bartleby's body is a screen, it lacks content. Yet, Bartleby shifts the bodily contours (at least of his body, and the fleeing body of the attorney) and turns them into fluid limitless forces. As to expression, Bartleby's linguistic signs also, like those of Emerson, make language plastic, fluid, boundless.

Contemporary poststructuralist thinkers such as Judith Butler or Gilles Deleuze (following Emerson, Nietzsche, Spinoza) are often criticized for their theories of subjectivity which focus too much on identity as a process, as an effect of various forces, and not on stable responsible agents. Gilles Deleuze actually attempts to think non-identity and shows various aspects of repetition in speech and images. Both Deleuze and Butler are, however, still somehow preoccupied by the power of

speech/discourse and its importance for self/identity, which was significantly developed, if not introduced, by the late Emerson and Nietzsche. That is why Melville's characters – such as Bartleby – are explored and seen as "Drummond lights" which illuminate everything around them, offering a different way of thinking about the self and language. For such characters test the limits of the notions of identity/consciousness as performatively constructed through speech, of the self as an inoperative power, as "different," or as a detached enigma, all of which are at the center of contemporary discourse on subjectivity. If Emerson is one of the greatest vitalists in American culture, Melville shows the implications and significance of inactivity, gaps and ruptures for personal identity.

What we witness in Bartleby's case is a strange kind of spiritual and bodily detachment. It seems as if his main wish were to leave/escape the symbolic order of language and social practices altogether. Yet, Bartleby does influence language a lot even though his performative power is not based on language exclusively. As for Emerson and his possible response to the Bartlebian challenge, it is important to realize that Emerson's self does not relate only to the "beyond," to the Over-soul, Power, but also to the "below," to the abyss, to the potential, indeterminate zone/depth which transcends one both because of its place (limitless space of potentiality) and its time (before time and language, before Creation). As to his early work, it is only from the pre-linguistic "below," I believe, that Emerson could account for Bartleby. The beyond and the below refer to the respective Emersonian activities, that of ascension and diving. It is the act of diving with which Melville identifies.

Another aim of the dissertation, apart from analysis of the Bartlebian challenge to performativity, vitalism, and pragmatism, is to redefine the Emersonian self which was traditionally (but not by Emerson himself) seen as all-composed, willful, appropriative, and self-reliant. Instead, the view of subjectivity which stresses transition, power as potentiality, flux and metamorphosis is explored in both Emerson and Melville. Similarly to the selfless Bartlebian constitution, Emerson's poet is ready to abandon any category, norm, relationship, position, or political ideology. Such a radical move-away, disappearing from the pre-defined tracks every time the self feels too much confinement, is a sign of originality. It resonates with poststructuralism (Culler, Butler, Deleuze) and its never-ending process of difference, deferral; but it still relates to the

drawing on the potential forces of one's nature, bringing them into language and law-giving. The process of bringing ideas and affects to light, to reflection, requires a pre-reflective perceptiveness/receptivity/affectivity of the mind and body. It is the light of intuition which enables the transfer from the subliminal to the conscious and personal realm of the self. Such drawing of images out of the darkness of the abyss corresponds to what we have mentioned before about Emerson's activity of diving.

As I argue, the bringing of ideas into light is not based on will. Bartleby is the Drummond light, functioning as a carriage, as Intuition. Emerson's poet, like Bartleby, never knows what will occur when a performative formula is pronounced. It often transcends the realm of traditional linguistics. While Emerson's poetry ends in music, Bartleby's "expression" ends in silence. What they both share is the sense of the value of the indeterminacy, the unpredictability, of potentiality, of what might result from any action, or from any inaction. This, in a sense, vindicates and creates the *space* for freedom, for the possibility of contrafactuality, for hope. For both, the most important capability is first of all to make space for the non-articulated sense, for the body. In other words, one needs to stop talking, asking, trying to contact the other. After a long silence one can simply start to speak. We are used to the constant projecting of ourselves when we are thrown into situations, that is, we supplant our already actualized interpretations with new interpretations of the world, with ideas, concepts, maps of how things should occur and what they should mean. It is therefore necessary to de-focus our vision sometimes, to deactivate our desire, the laws and analytical thinking and simply be/experiment/play. For, the (Bartlebian) body-world can act only when it has some space for its action. It comes into being only in the moment when the space for its emergence is created; it comes into being together with its place. Only then can one *create,* in an Emersonian or Melvillean way, instead of mere translating, or moving along the sphere of symbols. It is possible to live from these elemental forces, be it in the affirmative, joyful mode, or the de-activated/deactivating one.

As to Austinian performativity, it is shown that the force of Bartleby's performative does not depend on any ceremonious circumstances, position of authority, sincerity, or iteration of a longtime-existing powerful formula. What affects the attorney and others is first of all Bartleby's strangely inhuman silent presence which suggests a possible leaving, a destitution. That is an important context of Bartleby's formula which

constitutes the logic of preference. One of the reasons why it is so contagious could be the subconsious desire of his colleagues for independence, freedom from the law and the binding schemes of language and logic of assumptions. This unsaid, underground preference for a possible preference could add to the force of the formula and its infectious nature. Yet, Bartleby does not represent anyone; he may not be aware of the effect of the formula at all. For, if he were, that would suggest that there was a *decision* coming from his self as opposed to others. As we have shown, however, Bartleby's constitutions are selfless and indeterminate. Any definitions of the self as a separate subject – as an autonomous resolute individual – or any delimitations of the subject through the relationships with another not-Me in the social network are determinations based on mistrust toward oneself.

Power as potentiality, as I try to show, expresses itself in experimenting, in play, in selfless constitutions. Emerson's experimenting ends in music. Music and poetry, for Emerson, connect us to the pre-linguistic forces; they are expressions of playfulness for adults. Such joyful, selfless thinking abandoning all fixity stands in contrast to power as an attempt at fulfillment of a lack, of deficit, often through domination of others. The negative side of this philosophy idealizing the unified, well-formed self is frustration, anger, despair. Lack of form, lack of willfulness and selfhood is a problem for this approach to the world. We have seen that Bartleby tested (deferred) both of these approaches. He himself was the process of pure difference, embodying the deferral of both action and meaning. Such deferral is typical of poststructuralism (Derrida). We pass from one signifier to another ad infinitum. There is no transcendental signifier or signified, no stable identity or meaning one could hold on to. That sounds like another philosophy leading to frustration.

As I argue in the thesis, power as potentiality can be effectuated in the affirmative way as well. Selfless constitutions are possible and do not have to lead to frustration. It does not matter if we do not arrive at definitive answers or transcendental signifiers. The rhetorical nature of our becoming, the obsession with language, can be transcended, transgressed. In experimenting, in playing, in music, one attunes oneself to the elemental forces. In that way, "elemental forces" and laws of convention can come into contact. In creative experimenting, one lets the body attune itself to the non-linguistic forces, bridging the soul-body split, getting new ideas and affects while changing the

contours of the majoritarian approach to the world.

An extreme interpretation, which I do not support in the dissertation, would presuppose that Bartleby knows that the repetition of the performative will prevent him from writing, working, eating and lead to death eventually. He knows that it shatters the possibility of communication, of sharing, of humaneness (which is based on sharing). Such a decision, based on the will to nothingness, would manifest a resolute self. His disappearing, in this interpretation, would then be effectuated as a series of conscious steps outside of the symbolic order, away from identity, language, and from life.

What I try to argue instead is that both Emerson's poet and Melville's Bartleby embody power as potentiality, potentiality of transformation or deformation of the majoritarian discourse. In this interpretation, the force of Bartleby's performative shows the difference of idioms, where one cannot be translated to the other. Bartleby's experience (be it a past experience, for instance a trauma, or current experiencing of the world) cannot be articulated within the idiom of the attorney. His life or death is not something that could be argued about, agreed upon, or solved within the discourse of the attorney. Yet, the effects of Bartleby's formula do reach the conventional language and provoke movements from the center to the periphery, from majority to minority. As Deleuze suggests, the lines of escape can be creative or evasive (moving into the imaginary, "beyond" or "below"). As we have shown, however, Deleuze still works within language, using dialectical oppositions, even though he, like Emerson, tries to make language fluid and transform its order-words into pass-words. Although he extends the domain of pragmatics, he cannot fully account for Bartleby whose performative presence and silence transcend the realm of rhetoric, showing us that there is much we can do and understand thanks to language, and much that we cannot.