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From the Illuminating Moon to the Radiating Sun:
The Philosophical Writings of Emerson and Nichiren

by

Sharon Mitsue Blythe

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

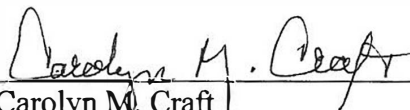
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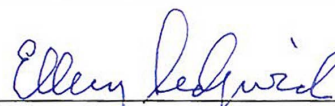
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Abstract

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Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophical writings possess deep correlations to the writings of Nichiren, a 13th century Japanese Buddhist philosopher. Both Emerson and Nichiren conceive the inherent and unlimited potential of human beings, and stress the inseparability of life from its psychological, spiritual, and physical environment. Both Emerson and Nichiren address the cyclical and universal nature of all phenomena, an understanding that derives from the oneness of all facets of existence. The greatest variation between these two writers occurs in the implementation and practice of their philosophies.

The Preface provides a synopsis of Buddhism and introduces Nichiren. It also discusses the use of textual translations and interpretations of Nichiren by the Soka Gakkai, an organization founded on his teachings. Chapter 1 correlates the universality of Emerson's idea of genius with Buddha nature. Chapter 2 delves into the concept of *ichinen sanzen*, or the existence of "three thousand realms in a single moment of life." Chapter 3 delves into Emerson's Over-Soul and the doctrine of *shikishin funi*, to emphasize the non-duality of the spiritual and the material. Chapter 4 discusses the perception of spiritual Law and the cyclical nature of life. Chapter 5 highlights the similar concepts of Emerson's "self-reliance" and Nichiren's "human revolution." Chapter 6 establishes the variation between Emerson's use of nature to experience the Over-Soul and Nichiren's use of the *Gohonzon*, the object of devotion for his followers, to attain enlightenment. Chapter 7 addresses Emerson's desire for a

“Teacher,” his incognizance of Nichiren’s teachings, and the correlation of Nichiren’s teachings with Emerson’s ideal mentor.

American Emersonian thought and Japanese Buddhist philosophy mirror one another but vary in practice. The implementation of each philosopher’s beliefs differs in Emerson’s advocacy of nature as a means of discovering the ultimate reality of life, as opposed to Nichiren’s promotion of chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* to discover the true aspect of all phenomena. Emerson announces in “The Divinity School Address” his desire for a “Teacher” who can transcend known philosophical works-- who understands the truth of life. Emerson’s call for a “Teacher” expresses a desire for a philosopher who can reveal a philosophy that rounds full circle to encompass the ultimate reality of all phenomena.

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Preface

While many scholars, including Emerson himself, recognize the relationship between Emersonian thought and Indian Buddhism, the correlations between Emerson's philosophy and Japanese Buddhism, specifically Nichiren's philosophy and writings, reveal deep similarities as well.

Buddhism is the name given to all the teachings of the Buddha. It is difficult to provide a concrete definition of Buddhism, just as it is equally difficult to define Romanticism or Transcendentalism. However, "Buddhism" refers to the religion based on all the sutras (sacred scriptures, or literally, thread) expounded in India by the historical founder of Buddhism, Shakyamuni Buddha.

Traditionally, East Asian Buddhists believe Shakyamuni's life to be circa the tenth century B.C.E., but the consensus of modern scholars place his lifetime around the fifth or sixth B.C.E. (Nichiren Shoshu, *Life* xii). Shakyamuni was born Gautama Siddhartha in the kingdom of the Shākyas. His father, King Shuddhodana, ruler of the minor kingdom of the Shākyas, provided a life of riches and nobility for his son. However, the young Siddhartha realized early in life the presence of four universal sufferings that affect all natural phenomena. Subsequently, he renounced his luxurious lifestyle and his family to discover a way to alleviate the mortal malaise of the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. A desire to eradicate human suffering initiated his various practices of asceticism popular in his time, such as fasting and other variations of minimalism (Nichiren Shoshu, *Fundamentals* 9). Before long, Siddhartha concluded that a life of self-denial was useless in his efforts to attain enlightenment and rejected such extreme tactics. Returning to a more temperate lifestyle, Gautama

Siddhartha began engaging himself in deep meditation until finally as he sat under a bodhi tree he attained enlightenment in that particular lifetime. In honor of Siddhartha's realization of the ultimate reality of life, his followers began referring to him as "Shakyamuni" as a term of respect. *Shakya* derives from his tribal hometown, and *muni* means sage or one who is awakened; thus he is the sage of the Shākyas. In the western world, the "Buddha" is a term used more commonly without the understanding that the "Buddha" referred to is Shakyamuni Buddha.

Various Buddhist sects arose as a result of Shakyamuni's method of teaching in accordance with the capacity of the people. Most of his oral teachings were recorded and contain the progressive stages of his teaching on how to ease the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Nichiren illuminates upon this subject in "The Teaching, Capacity, Time, And Country" when he states:

If one is speaking to persons who one knows have the capacity to become wise, then one should first instruct them in the Hinayana teachings, then instruct them in the provisional Mahayana teachings, and finally instruct them in the true Mahayana. But if speaking to those one knows to be ignorant persons of lesser capacity, then one should first instruct them in the true Mahayana teaching. In that way, whether they choose to believe in the teaching or to slander it, they will still receive the seeds of Buddhahood. (49)

Though Buddhism emphasizes an inherent Buddha nature, "capacity" refers to the level of potentiality an individual has of receiving, understanding, and accepting the teachings of the Buddha. Daisaku Ikeda asserts in *The Living Buddha: an Interpretive Biography*

that, after Shakyamuni achieved enlightenment, Shakyamuni “labored long and conscientiously over the precise form in which he would first present his teachings to the world” (77). Ikeda continues: “In order to explain the realm of supreme and mysterious wisdom in such a way that it would be comprehensible to others, he had to bring his explanations down to a more popular level and translate the principles of enlightenment into terms that could be generally understood and embraced” (77). Shakyamuni preached his teachings in accord with the ability of the people. He taught the aspects of reality in segments, like grade levels, using explanations that were easily understood by everyone. However, as he progressed and revealed the true reality of life, some followers did not progress and continued to practice the first phases of Shakyamuni’s teaching. Subsequently, vast numbers of Buddhist schools emerged, each basing their teachings on one sutra or another. Disputes and tensions arose between the varying sects as each attempted to assert religious superiority. Emerson reveals in “Nature” the cross-cultural dilemma of religious upheaval when he states, “religious teachers dispute and hate each other, and speculative men are esteemed unsound and frivolous. But to a sound judgment, the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence” (126). Confusion concerning the correct teaching riddled Buddhism and served as a catalyst in Nichiren’s life and led to his desire to lead others towards enlightenment through the correct teaching, one that would “be its own evidence.”

Nichiren challenged the social and religious conventions of his time by seeking the correct Buddhist teaching. He entered the earth as Zennichi-marō on February 16, 1222. His life spans a time of religious confusion and dissolution, a time when Japan

suffered from natural and humanly-instigated catastrophes. The existing military government, or *bakufu*, also known as the shogunate, consisted entirely of samurai warriors with the Emperor as figurehead. Schemes and conniving ventures for power dominated the shogunate and deprived the country of any true sense of freedom. Amid the backdrop of civil uncertainty, Zennichi-marō began his Buddhist studies. His parents sent him to study at a local temple on Mount Kiyosumi at the age of twelve.

Similar to Emerson, Nichiren's religious life began at a young age and led him to perceive true reality as a concept not yet completely defined. After years of in-depth study of all current Buddhist variations, and pondering the ultimate truth which Shakyamuni imparted in the *Lotus Sutra*, Nichiren awakened to the ultimate reality of *Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō* (to be discussed in Chapter Four). On April 28, 1253, he founded his sect of Buddhism at Seichō-ji temple, chanting *Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō* for the first time. He then renamed himself "Nichiren," which means "Sun Lotus." He began to expound his perception of the correct practice of Buddhism while correcting the faults of prevailing Buddhist sects. Subsequently, Nichiren's philosophy and writings attracted opposition from those in power, and he was persecuted in a multitude of ways ranging from an attempted execution to exile on Sado Island, a locale known for its blustery weather. Likewise, Emerson raised questions about Christianity and promoted an all-encompassing philosophy that possesses "Supreme Wisdom" ("Divinity" 66). Though Emerson did not receive death sentences and exile, he and Nichiren both broke the mold of their times, revealing a deeper, and more universal philosophy. However, the two differ in the degree to which they realized their respective philosophies.

During the nineteenth century, the writings of Nichiren were underground just as predicted in the *Lotus Sutra*, the final sutra expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha that encapsulates the reality of life and enlightenment. However, Buddhism was beginning to dawn upon the western world. Lafcadio Hearn, prior to becoming a nineteenth century professor of English at Tokyo Imperial University and a Japanese citizen, commented: “Buddhism only needs to be known to make its influence felt in America” (Bisland 265). He termed the common spirituality presented in Emerson’s works as “the higher Buddhism,” and asserted: “the higher Buddhism, ---that suggested by men like Emerson: ---*that* will yet have an apostle” (265). Although yet unknown to the common people of Japan and the rest of the world, just such an “apostle” had encompassed and given voice to what later became Emerson’s “higher Buddhism” more than 600 years ago—Nichiren Daishonin.

Alongside quotations from the *Lotus Sutra*, Nichiren quoted the works of varying Buddhist scholars, especially T’ien t’ai and Miao-lo. T’ien t’ai (538-597) was a Chinese interpreter of the *Lotus Sutra* and revered founder of the Tendai sect. T’ien t’ai, also known as Chih-I, refuted other Buddhist schools and emphasized the superiority of the *Lotus Sutra* to all other sutras. Miao-lo (711-782) restored the Tendai sect by reasserting the supremacy of the *Lotus Sutra* and aided in the clarification of Shakyamuni’s teachings. He rejuvenated religious interest in the teachings through his clarifications and commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*. Scholars in Buddhist sects research and study the work of others scholars to either assert or dismiss the validity of the explanations. Thus, Nichiren acknowledged valid clarifications and quotes them within his writings. He agreed with the teachings of T’ien t’ai and Miao-lo, but recognizes, just as stated in the

Lotus Sutra, that the capacity of the people may have been right, but the time to teach the ultimate reality was not. Nichiren elucidates the necessity of preaching Buddhist teachings at the proper time through an analogy of a farmer. In “The Teaching, Capacity, Time, and Country” he states:

If a farmer were to plant his fields in autumn and winter, then, even though the seed and the land and the farmer’s efforts were the same as ever, this planting would not result in the slightest gain but rather would end in loss. If the farmer planted one small plot in that way, he would suffer a minor loss, and if he planted acres and acres, he would suffer a major loss. But if he plows and plants in the spring and summer, then, whether the fields are of superior, medium, or inferior quality, each will bring forth its corresponding share of crops. (49)

Similar to the farmer’s understanding of time, a preacher of Buddhist philosophy must understand the significance of preaching at the moment when conditions are conducive and receptive; otherwise, neither will reap any benefit. T’ien t’ai and Miao-lo both understood this concept and did not reveal the ultimate reality within their teachings. However, they both narrowed in on developed Buddhist concepts and helped the people learn the next stage of Shakyamuni’s teachings. Nichiren addresses the truths found within T’ien t’ai and Miao-lo’s teachings and expands upon them to reveal the ultimate reality of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, a topic to be further explicated in Chapter Four.

Nichiren’s attempts to share his perceptions of ultimate reality with the world were hindered by their unavailability for the common people. Nichiren delves into Shakyamuni’s *Lotus Sutra*, T’ien t’ai’s *Great Concentration and Insight*, and Miao-lo’s

The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra” to reveal the ultimate reality of all phenomena. Through numerous letters and treatises, he expanded upon their teachings to establish a form of Buddhism that enables all people to comprehend and attain enlightenment; however, the writings were unknown to the world due to their availability only to a few temples and their priests. These temples possessed a compilation of Nichiren’s writings, but the various interpretations written by temples were not correctly understood or practiced.

Nichiren’s writings, also known as the *Gosho*, or honorable writings, were dormant for nearly seven hundred years until 1930, when Tsunesaburo Makiguchi revitalized the Buddhist philosopher’s teaching through the Soka Gakkai (SG) and the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) – an organization founded on Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and the value creation of society. The roots of the SGI begin with the founder Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his dedication to the reformation of the Japanese education system; more importantly, the organization began with his desire to create a society that conjoins the happiness of the individual with the overall success of all society. His vision for a victorious society begins with the happiness of the individual; this is the meaning of value creation of society.

The Soka Gakkai’s publications of Nichiren’s writings in 1952 provided a *Gosho*, or honorable writings, free of errors and complete with “secretly transferred” documents (Ikeda, *Human* 598). Prior to the Soka Gakkai’s published *Gosho*, only a few collections existed. According to the Soka Gakkai, the publications of the Minobu and Tendai sects, Chigaku Tanaka’s *Classified Collection of the Founder’s Writings*, and a few others distorted Nichiren’s correct teachings due to their incompleteness and multitudinous

errors (Ikeda, *Human* 597). Therefore, the Soka Gakkai sought the expertise of Nichiko Hori, the 59th High Priest of the Nichiren Shoshu temple and life-long scholar of Nichiren Buddhism, to serve as editor. The Soka Gakkai published the letters and treatises of Nichiren with the determination to provide a *Gosho* with precision and correctness. Prior to its publication Katsu Kiyohara made her explanatory pronouncement: “Based on orthodox faith and comprehension, it will be the first and only error-free Gosho in the seven-hundred-year history of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. Its compilation will be characterized by the inclusion of the secretly transferred documents that we cannot find in any other published collection” (Ikeda, *Human* 598). The “secretly transferred documents” refers to the documents, “Hyakurokkasho,” “Honinmyosho,” and “Ubuyusojonokoto,” transferred orally from Nichiren to Nikko, which are contained within the *Gosho Zenshu*, the Japanese collection of Nichiren’s writings. Among those documents, only *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* has been published in English thus far. The 65th High Priest Nichijun and the retired High Priest Hori of the Nichiren Shoshu, the dominating temple of Nichiren Buddhism, were pleased that Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda embarked on the project to publish the correct interpretation of Nichiren Buddhism, and gave them one hundred percent support in their endeavor. Therefore, the Soka Gakkai’s *Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* possesses high esteem as the correct and primary compilation of his writings.

The perspicacity of Emerson and Nichiren on the ultimate reality of life reveals significant correlations of thought. Emerson never encountered the 13th century Japanese Buddhist’s writings due to the restricted availability of Nichiren’s work. However, both thinkers perceive the innate greatness and potential of every individual, the

interrelatedness of all life, the cyclical nature of existence, and a means to attaining an elevated state of being. Despite the difference in time periods in which they lived and the cultural variations that divide these two thinkers, the universality and boldness of their vision unites them.

-Chapter One-

The Universality of Genius and Buddha Nature

Emerson emphasizes throughout his writings the notion of “genius,” an aspect that he perceives all human beings to possess. Emerson’s use of the word “genius” does not correlate to the present day English definition. David Norton addresses Emerson’s variant use of “genius” in his work, *Japanese Buddhism and the American Renaissance*, by emphasizing the difference between the ancient Latin and modern definitions. Typically, “genius” pertains to two categories of outstanding people who are often considered superior to ordinary beings. Norton asserts supreme intelligence and great contributions to the historical and cultural growth of humankind, for example Einstein and Michelangelo, as two paths that lead to the notion of genius. Contrary to the modern understanding of the word, Emerson insists that each individual possesses an innate genius, for it is “that divine idea which each of us represents” (“Self-Reliance” 141). Norton notes how the etymological root reveals the ancient Latin “genii” as the “tutelary gods or attendant spirits allotted to all persons at birth, determining the character and governing the fortune of each individual” (qtd. in 3). Interestingly, this ancient definition reveals that genius is given to “all persons at birth.” Significantly, the modern definition eliminates the notions of “gods” or “attendant spirits” by replacing them with two classes of people: one of exceptional intelligence and the other beings those who actively labor towards human cultural and social progression. However, “all persons” become the few who possess what Norton describes as “exceptional native endowments,” suggesting that a “vast majority of human beings,” or ordinary beings, perceive “that little of real importance can be expected of them” (3). Thus Norton explains how the modern

definition suggests that not all people either possess or recognize genius in their lives. Emerson's perception of genius, by contrast, takes from the etymological roots the idea that all humans possess genius. In his essay, "The Over-Soul," he states that genius "does not descend into individual life on any other condition than entire possession" and that "genius is religious" (246-247). Emerson's perception of genius transcends the modern definition and advocates the ancient perception of all persons at birth being the possessors of a universal force.

Similar to Emerson's idea of genius, Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes how all phenomena on earth possess a Buddha nature, an enlightened state of life that pervades the entire universe. Buddha nature is the internal cause for attaining enlightenment, emphasizing each person's inherent potential to achieve an elevated life-state. The *Lotus Sutra* allegedly expounded by Shakyamuni expresses the expansiveness of the Buddha nature. David Norton acknowledges the four classes of people, not accounted for in the prior sutras, which are included within the *Lotus Sutra* are: "women, persons of incorrigible disbelief, persons who seek to attain Buddha exclusively by study of Shakyamuni's teachings, and those who seek enlightenment without a teacher" (24). Similarly, Emerson stresses how genius "comes to the lowly and simple; it comes to whomsoever will put off what is foreign and proud; it comes as insight; it comes as serenity and grandeur" ("Over-Soul" 247). Both philosophies reveal an extension of genius or Buddha nature as inherent within all people, no matter their supposed superiority or inferiority.

In Nichiren Buddhism, Buddha nature, though present at all times, is said to remain dormant until activated by the individual. Perhaps this concept exists within the

modern definition of “genius,” insofar as only exceptional people are allotted the term due to their activation of that genius. While everyone possesses a Buddha nature, it is essential that one acknowledges and makes real his or her potential to achieve Buddhahood in order to activate that nature. Because many human beings do not acknowledge the unlimited potential within, the contemporary use of the word “genius” has declined from the ancient. Emerson’s notion of genius is an invitation for individuals to reawaken to the reality that rests internally, to reawaken to the “aboriginal strength” he discusses in the “Over-Soul” (151). His longing to lead others to realize their innate genius correlates with Nichiren’s teaching about Buddha nature.

Emerson stresses the significance of faith in the “Over-Soul” when he states: “Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable” (248). Emerson’s worshipping of the God within correlates to the Buddhist notion of having faith in everyone’s potential of being the Buddha. Buddha wisdom is awakened in the lives of those who realize that everyone possesses Buddha nature including themselves; however, awakening to this reality is extremely difficult because of the ignorant nature of human beings. In this case, “ignorant” refers to humankind’s inability to believe that each individual is the Buddha, too. Within the second chapter, entitled “Expedient Means,” of the *Lotus Sutra*, Shakyamuni states, “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter” (23). Shakyamuni emphasizes that Buddha wisdom does not require intellect, as wisdom did not lead his most intelligent disciple Shariputra to enlightenment; but it takes faith:

the belief that everyone, too, is the Buddha. In both cases, all individuals are capable of becoming God or Buddha simply by realizing and having faith in this truth.

In his essay, “The Intellect,” Emerson articulates the power instinct possesses to motivate belief or faith:

You have first an instinct, then an opinion, then a knowledge, as the plant has root, bud and fruit. Trust the instinct to the end, though you can render no reason. It is vain to hurry it. By trusting it to the end, it shall ripen into truth and you shall know why you believe. (265)

The instinct Emerson stresses correlates to “genius” as both are innate within all people. Interestingly, Emerson reveals the progression developing belief requires, and advocates that even if “one can render no reason” they must embrace the natural instinct to discover the truth. In relation to Buddha nature and Buddha wisdom, Emerson expostulates the necessity for believing, or having faith, in order to realize truth. Similarly, Nichiren elaborates on faith and wisdom in one of his ten major writings entitled, “On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice.” In this writing, Nichiren emphasizes the necessity to substitute faith for reason in order to attain enlightenment, stressing how faith, or believing in one’s unlimited potential and Buddha nature, is a prerequisite for Buddha wisdom. Nichiren asserts in “Earthly Desires are Enlightenment” that Buddha wisdom “is the entity of the true aspect of all phenomena, and of the ten factors of life that lead all beings to Buddhahood. What then is that entity? It is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (317-318). Essentially, Buddha wisdom is the ultimate understanding of the true nature of all phenomena, a reality encompassed within the characters *Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo*. Both Emerson and Nichiren stress the significance of developing the faith,

or belief, that each individual, including the personal self, possesses “genius” and Buddha nature.

Emerson’s genius mirrors the concepts of Buddha nature and Buddha wisdom, for all phenomena possess the same potential state of enlightenment. The ability to conceive and activate the genius or Buddha nature differentiates one aspect of phenomena from the rest— meaning that once an individual acknowledges the genius or Buddha nature within, then the genius or Buddha wisdom is awakened, thus enabling him or her to perceive the ultimate reality of life. Emerson emphasizes this realization in “The Divinity School Address” when he finds “the fountain of all good to be in himself, and that he, equally with every man, is an inlet into the deeps of Reason” (66). The self-discovery of endowed genius or Buddha nature leads to Reason or Buddha Wisdom. Buddha nature and Buddha wisdom relate to Emerson’s “genius” and Over-Soul, because Buddha nature embodies of the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*.

-Chapter Two-

The Doctrine of *Ichinen Sanzen*

The concept of *ichinen sanzen* relates to Emerson's perception of the universe existing as parts that cumulate to a whole. Nichiren declares *ichinen sanzen* to be the jewel of the *Lotus Sutra* and the path to Buddhahood. The doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* originates in sixth century China as a philosophical system created by Chih-I, also known as T'ien-t'ai (538-597) in his work, *Great Concentration and Insight*. In response to the phrase "the true entity of all phenomena," found within the "Expedient Means" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, T'ien-t'ai established the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* (*Lotus Sutra* 2. 24). *Ichinen* literally means "one mind" or "life-moment" and refers to the unchanging aspect of life. *Sanzen* literally means "three thousand," and refers to the variety of modes each moment can assume. Literally, *ichinen sanzen* means "three thousand realms in a single moment of life" and is first presented as a concept "in only one place, hidden in the depths of the 'Life Span' chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra" (Nichiren, "Opening" 224). The three thousand realms contain the entire phenomenal world and exist within a single moment of life. *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism* elucidates: "The number three thousand here comes from the following calculation: 10 (Ten Worlds) X 10 (Ten Worlds) X 10 (ten factors) X 3 (three realms of existence)" (729). The Ten Worlds, ten factors, and three realms of existence cohere within a single moment that exists universally within all phenomena.

Originally, the Ten Worlds were perceived as "distinct physical locations, each with its own inhabitants" (Soka Gakkai 686). However, the *Lotus Sutra* teaches that each of the Ten Worlds possesses the other ten within it, thus revealing a range of potential

states a person can experience or manifest. The Ten Worlds from the lowest to highest are: Hell, Hungry Spirits, Animality, Anger (Asuras), Humanity, Heaven, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, and Buddhahood. Each of the Ten Worlds is inherent in each individual being and ranges from a state of intense suffering, Hell, to Buddhahood, a state that possesses “complete access to the boundless wisdom, compassion, courage, and other qualities inherent in life; with these one can create harmony with and among others and between human life and nature” (Soka Gakkai 688). It is not correct to assume that the Ten Worlds can be compartmentalized or separate from one another, because within each world simultaneously exist all the others. See Appendix for a detailed description of the Ten Worlds.

The “mutual possession of the ten worlds” emphasizes how all the worlds exist within each world. The definition provided by *The SGI Dictionary of Buddhism* states: “‘Mutual possession’ means that life is not fixed in one or another of the Ten Worlds, but can manifest any of the ten, from hell to the state of Buddhahood, at any given moment. While one of the ten is manifest, the other nine remain latent, in the state of non-substantiality” (Soka Gakkai 417). The significance behind the concept of the Ten Worlds is its implications of the state of Buddhahood existing within all the worlds; thus, even while in the state of Buddhahood, one exists with the potentiality of lower worlds. Like Emerson’s genius, the Ten Worlds reveal how Buddha nature is present within everyone.

The ten factors, not to be confused with the ten worlds, contained within the concept of “mutual possession” are characteristics present within all phenomena, inanimate and animate, and aid in Shakyamuni’s teaching that no distinction exists

between a Buddha and an ordinary being. The ten factors are found within the *Lotus Sutra* immediately following “the true entity of all phenomena,” and consist “of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end” (*Lotus Sutra* 2. 24).

A brief description of the ten factors reveals universal structure. The first, Appearance, refers to the visible outward physicality of things, such as shape, behavior, color, and form and represents the most basic aspects of existence. Interestingly, the first factor for T'ien t'ai is not the first perception of life for Emerson, who perceives appearance as secondary when he states: “We first share the life by which things exist and afterwards see them as appearances in nature and forget that we have shared their cause” (“Self-Reliance” 141). Here Emerson suggests that humans are each born with the inherent “genius” to “share the life by which things exist;” however, the intuitions of childhood are lost as human beings age and undergo variant influences. True “genius” is lost and perceptions of external appearances take over, resulting in the loss of innate understanding. Though in this passage Emerson acknowledges humankind’s tendency to only see the surface, he asserts the appearance factor does in fact exist as the simplest form.

The second factor is nature. “Nature” refers to the unchangeable, irreplaceable, and invisible characteristics found within things. For example, the nature of wind cannot be changed into water and vice versa. Not only does “nature” refer to natural elements, but it also refers to the nature found within human beings. Similarly, Emerson perceives human nature as unchangeable, irreplaceable, and invisible; he states in “Self-Reliance”:

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza; read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing.

(138)

Emerson perceives “nature” in the same way as described by the second factor, that it is invisible (“his will”), irreplaceable (“no man can violate his nature”), and unchangeable (“it still spells the same thing”). Emerson’s “nature” is both physical and human simultaneously. In his essay “Nature” he emphasizes that physical nature is among other things a symbolic language that teaches universal spiritual truths. More significantly, he highlights the oneness of physical nature and human nature when he states:

Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and the state of the mind can only be described by presenting the natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. (134)

These metaphors reveal the likeness between human nature and physical nature.

The third of the ten factors is Entity, which combines appearance and nature to reveal the essence of life. The first three of the ten factors, then, represent the reality of life, a concept that Emerson seems to recognize also, evident when he writes, “Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence” (“Nature” 135). The form and shape of the rock (appearance) thrown into

the water by a human (human nature) reveals the “beautiful type of all influence” in the rippling water (physical nature).

The fourth factor, Power, as described by Richard Causton, author of *The Buddha in Daily Life*, articulates how power “equates with energy and refers to the potential or strength inherent in individual life to achieve something or affect the environment. Power might, therefore, be called individual life force and is expressed both in one’s physical and spiritual functions” (199). The fifth factor, Influence, is the effect resulting from the activation of power in the form of action. Emerson combines power and influence in “Self- Reliance”: “Here is the fountain of action and thought. [...] We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of activity” to reveal the influence living beings possess to take action (141).

The SGI Dictionary of Buddhism defines the sixth factor, Internal Cause, as “the cause latent in life that produces an effect of the same quality as itself, i.e., good, evil, neutral” (667). Emerson’s thinking correlates with this notion in “The Divinity School Address” when he states: “He who does a good deed is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed is by the action itself contracted” (64). Relation is the seventh factor; it refers to the dynamic between indirect causes and internal causes. Indirect causes encompass internal and external conditions that aid in the production of an effect of the internal cause. Only when the internal and external conditions are appropriate can the effect of the internal cause be manifested. For example, a flower blooms when the conditions, warm weather and water, are present. The eighth factor, Latent Effect, results from an activated internal cause. Each cause is activated only through its relationship with other conditions that vary. Factor number nine, Manifest Effect, is the tangible

result of an internal cause that activates into a latent effect, and when conditions are appropriate manifests, thus manifests overt effect. The tenth and final factor, “Consistency from Beginning to End,” does not imply a beginning or an end; rather, it refers to the union of all nine factors. The tenth factor indicates how all nine factors from beginning (appearance) to end (manifest effect) exist simultaneously and harmoniously as one whole.

The ten factors of life are consistent and absolute, and, like the Ten Worlds, exist at all times. The Ten Worlds and the ten factors depict the unity of all life, but do not address the individual. As individuals, phenomena are revealed with a multitude of differences in the ten factors, such as variations in appearance, nature, and internal causes.

The final portion of *ichinen sanzen* refers to the three realms and addresses the issue of individuality. The three realms consist of the realm of the five components, the realm of living beings, and the realm of the environment. Each realm cumulatively exists within all of the Ten Worlds at any given moment.

The realm of the five components pertains to the nature of an individual and his or her reaction and responses to the environment. The five components are form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness. Form encompasses every physical aspect of the body and the senses; perception delves into the ability to sense occurrences and objects in the environment; conception depicts the ability to develop coherent ideas about those occurrences and objects; volition formulates the will to take actions based upon the conceived ideas and perceptions; and consciousness is the cognitive combination of each of the components. While consciousness is the totality of the mind,

the four prior components are mental functions necessary to differentiate one object from another, and to discern right from wrong, while allowing the individual to formulate conclusive ideas pertaining to the environment. Form is a physical aspect, while the remaining four are spiritual aspects. The realm of the five components possesses a multitude of mental and physical possibilities that differ for each individual based on his or her perception of reality. The realm of the five components relates to the Ten Worlds in that a person existing in the world of Hunger, for example, perceives, formulates conceptions, and responds to the same object or situation in a different manner from a person existing in the world of Heaven. For example, people stuck in rush hour traffic perceive any experience differently than one another, and depending on their life-states or the world in which they currently exist, reflect various attitudes. One living in the world, or life-state, of Anger will undoubtedly become irritated and negative. However, one situated in the world of Heaven will see the traffic jam as an opportunity to listen to favorite songs and sing at the top of his/her lungs. The way we handle situations is a direct reflection of the life condition, or world, in which we currently exist.

Emerson's beliefs correlate to the realm of the five components. In "Nature" he acknowledges how a life-state differentiates response: "Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight" (127). He continues:

First, the simple perception of natural forms is a delight. The influence of the forms and action in nature, is so needful to man, that, in its lowest functions, it seems to lie on the confines of commodity and beauty. To the

body and mind which have been cramped by noxious work or company,
nature is medicinal and restores their tone. (130)

Emerson duly notes the effects of nature upon an individual's mental and physical well-being; however, he emphasizes not how a life-state determines a response, but how nature can determine a life-state. Nichiren Buddhism extends this observation from a person's reaction to nature to a person's reaction to all phenomena, natural and experiential. The realm of the five components exemplifies the classic question, "Is the glass half empty or half full?" The answer depends entirely upon the life-state of the individual.

The realm of living beings and the realm of the environment extend outward from an individual to encompass society and the land. The realm of living beings consists of all sentient beings and addresses how an individual exists as a part of the whole; thus, this realm encompasses the group with which an individual associates, which is also known as society. The realm of the environment pertains to everything physical that is non-sentient. This realm encompasses the land and location where the individual exists. Though the realm of living beings pertains to the sentient and the realm of the environment pertains to the non-sentient, the two are not separate from one another. The condition of the land mirrors the state of the individual(s) who reside in it. The environment exists within one of the Ten Worlds, assuming the world that most correlates with the lives and conditions of the people dwelling within it. Thus, as Nichiren states in "On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime," "If the minds of living beings are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds" (4). Similar to the Ten

Worlds and the ten factors, the three realms of existence are not separate from one another, but they are a part of the whole that simultaneously manifests any and all of the Ten Worlds.

Likewise, Emerson perceives the realms of living beings and the environment as reflections of internal, spiritual states. In “The Divinity School Address,” he stresses how other living beings and their respective environments reflect the individual:

But speak the truth, and all nature and all spirits help you with unexpected furtherance. Speak the truth, and all things alive or brute are vouchers and the very roots of the grass underground there do seem to stir and move to bear you witness. See again the perfection of the Law as it applies itself to the affections, and becomes the law of society. As we are, so we associate. The good, by affinity, seek the good; the vile, by affinity, the vile. Thus of their own volition, souls proceed into heaven, into hell. (65)

Emerson’s ideas correlate here with Nichiren’s view that the land responds accordingly to the individual’s thoughts and actions. This is clear when he articulates the action (speak) of the individual’s thought (truth) results in a response from the land (all living things, sentient and insentient, “move to bear you witness”). Furthermore, Emerson emphasizes how society relates and acts as a mirror of the individual residing within it. When Emerson discusses the “perfection of the Law” as it influences the “affections” of an individual, he reveals how then the individual, with the law running through his or her life, effects or “becomes the law of society.”

The development of T’ien-t’ai’s doctrine of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life” derives from his response to the “true aspect of all phenomena”

articulated in the *Lotus Sutra*. The Ten Worlds depict the various states phenomena can manifest, while each world mutually possesses all ten worlds within itself in a state of non-substantiality. Therefore, the Ten Worlds multiplied by the Ten Worlds equals one hundred. One hundred is then multiplied by the ten factors that exist within all life to equal one thousand. The Ten Worlds manifest within the three realms; therefore, one thousand multiplied by three equals three thousand-- thus, three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

The doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* articulates “a single moment of life” to emphasize how life is all encompassing and indivisible as it contains mind and body, cause and effect, sentient and insentient things. Metaphysically, *ichinen sanzen* emphasizes how all aspects of reality interfuse one another, revealing the whole within in each part, and thereby revealing how the macrocosm exists within the microcosm. David Norton delves into the concept of truth and asserts *ichinen sanzen* to stress how “each truth contains the whole truth” (24). *Ichinen sanzen* illustrates how the part (individual truth) pertains to the whole (all men), and correlates with Emerson’s idea that “to believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your own private heart is true for all men—that is genius” (“Self-Reliance” 132). Put another way, when Emerson emphasizes how part and whole coexist with and inform each other, he acknowledges this universal unity.

The ten worlds presented in the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* indicate that Buddhahood exists within all the realms; thus an enlightened state exists within living beings and is not limited to living beings, but is present in all facets of life. In this way, Buddha nature as an aspect of Buddhahood correlates with Emerson’s conception of

genius. However, in order to achieve the elevated state of Buddhahood, or to conceive the concept of Emerson's Over-Soul, one must first acknowledge the basic value (genius and Buddha nature) that exists within. Similarly to Buddhahood, Emerson believes in the classical mystical conception that the "the universe is represented in every one of its particles," and "the world globes itself in a drop of dew" ("Compensation" 158).

Divinity, for Emerson, coincides with the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*, for it encompasses a collection of parts when one perceives the unique genius inherent within all individuals, and a whole when one contemplates his divine notion of the Over-Soul: "Let man then learn the revelation of all nature and all thought to his heart; this, that the Highest dwells within him; that the sources of nature are in his own mind, if the sentiment of duty is there ("Over-Soul" 249).

ICHINEN SANZEN

"Three Thousand Realms in a Single
Moment of Life"

T'ien t'al

TEN WORLDS
(From Highest to Lowest)

10

x

TEN WORLDS

10

x

TEN FACTORS

10

x

THREE REALMS

3

=

THREE THOUSAND REALMS IN A
SINGLE MOMENT OF LIFE

3000

10. Buddhahood
9. Bodhisattva
8. Realization
7. Learning
6. Heaven
5. Humanity
4. Asuras
3. Animality
2. Hunger
1. Hell

The Six Paths

The Four Noble
Worlds

The Four Evil Paths

Mutual Possession
of the Ten Worlds
Each World contains
all the worlds, or
conditions collectively

1. Nature
2. Appearance
3. Entity
4. Power
5. Influence
6. Internal Causes
7. Relation
8. Latent Effects
9. Manifest Effects
10. Consistency from
Beginning to End

1. Realm of the Five
Components
~ Individual ~
2. Realm of Living Beings
~ Society ~
3. Realm of the
Environment
~ Land ~

The True Aspect of All
Phenomena

-Chapter Three-

Emerson's Over-Soul and the Concept of *Shikishin Funi*

Emerson intuitively perceives the divine in a way that mirrors the concept of *ichinen sanzen*, due to his perception that stresses the divine consistency of both a part and a whole. Emerson's conception of genius residing inherently within everyone reveals the part, and the whole constitutes a unity that he terms the Over-Soul. The genius is an integral part of the whole, while the Over-Soul represents Emerson's conception of the ultimate reality of the universe. Ultimate reality to Emerson is revealed in "The Over-Soul" when he states:

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character and not from his tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand and become wisdom and virtue and power and beauty. (237)

Emerson's Over-Soul is a collective whole which exists and can be divided into many aspects, each aspect different and yet the same. The different aspects, ranging from individual beings, their character, their physical body parts, and their thought processes, combine into a collective whole of wisdom, virtue, power and beauty, which are "but

different faces of the same All” (“Nature” 134). This is similar to Buddhism’s emphasis upon the multitude of interrelated aspects that conjoin to encompass the enlightened state of Buddhahood, evident in the preceding chapter’s dissection of *ichinen sanzen*. For example, Emerson’s Over-Soul stresses the inseparability of the spiritual and material aspects of life, emphasizing how individual phenomena conjoin to create one reality.

In his essay, “Nature,” Emerson stresses two categories of phenomena, Nature (material) and Soul (spiritual). He defines Nature: “Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE” (126). Emerson uses the term “nature” philosophically to refer to all phenomena external to an individual, including the individual’s own external reality, or body; he also uses the term “nature” commonly to refer to the “essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf” (126). The Soul, or spirit, refers to abstract concepts: “Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the nature of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine” (135). The universal soul he describes above is intellectually referred to as “an eternal calm, and full of everlasting orbs, [and] is the type of Reason” (135). When this reason conjoins with nature, Emerson calls it Spirit. Emerson reveals the unity of nature and soul when he elucidates:

We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; that spirit is one and not compound; that spirit does not

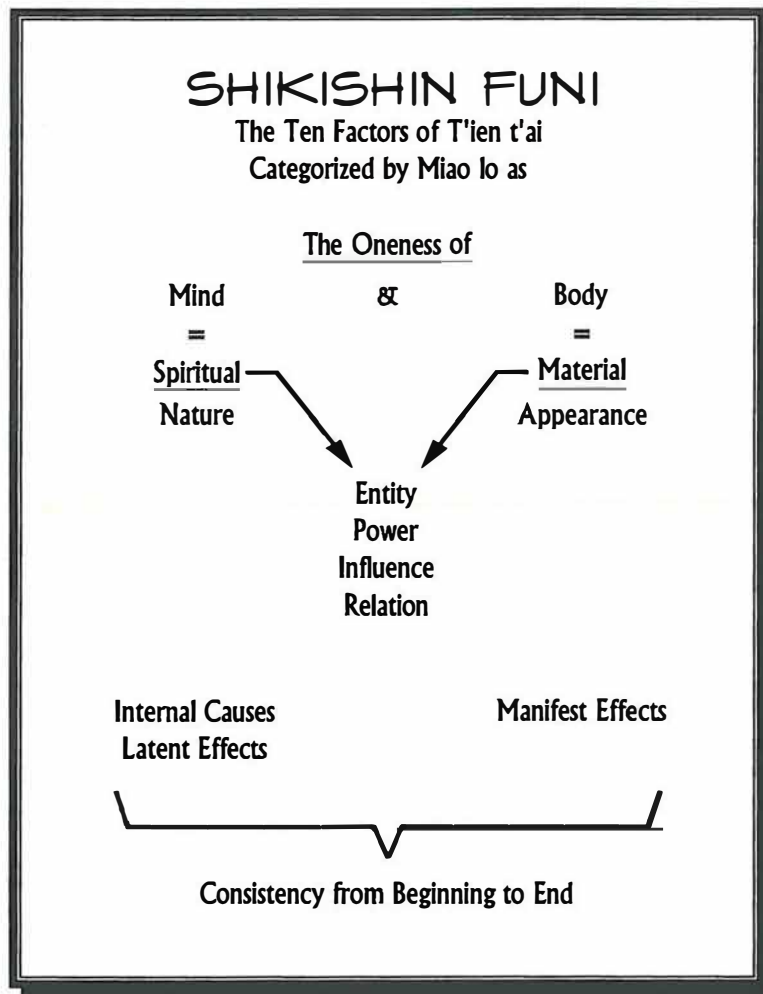
act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves. (“Nature” 151)

Emerson’s perception reveals that “spirit” exists “behind nature, throughout nature” and acts “through ourselves.” Therefore, he articulates the unity between matter and non-matter. Though nature (material) and soul (spiritual) refer to two seemingly different aspects of phenomena, Emerson, like Nichiren Buddhism, unites the two aspects as one: the result for Nichiren is the concept of *shikishin funi*— the result for Emerson is the Over-Soul.

Occasionally, Emerson refers to the Over-Soul as God, but not in a Judeo-Christian sense that often promotes a dichotomy of natural and supernatural. Rather, Emerson’s Over-Soul correlates with Miao-lo’s, a Chinese Buddhist philosopher living from 711-782 B.C.E., concept of *shikishin funi* in its revelation that the mind is not separate from the body. In reference to the mind, Emerson’s idea that “the same omniscience flows into the intellect and makes what we call genius” restricts the term Over-Soul, evident in his emphasis that having a fulfilling life is not merely knowing the sacred, but actualizing and becoming it (“Over-Soul” 246). Thus, his emphasis lies in the expansive nature and interrelatedness of the soul to all matter. He addresses the Over-Soul as “the Blessed Unity which holds nature and souls in perfect solution, and compels every atom to serve a universal end” (“Fate”). Similar to the concept of *ichinen sanzen*, Emerson reveals the concept of the whole, the “Blessed Unity” of all aspects of life, both “nature and souls.” Moreover, he perceives that “We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE”

(“Over-Soul” 237). Emerson’s articulation poses a striking resemblance to the concept of *ichinen sanzen*. Emerson articulates the divisions and parts, similar to T’ien t’ai’s classification of the Ten Worlds, ten factors, and three realms, which exist within every one individual. The Over-Soul conjoins the spirit and matter to reveal the unity within all life and phenomena. Similarly, Nichiren Buddhism stresses the significance of the inseparability of spirit and matter.

Miao-lo articulated ten aspects of non-duality in his *Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.”* *Shikishin funi* is one of these united factors and emphasizes the oneness of the body and mind, a concept that correlates with Emerson’s Over-Soul and view of Nature. *Shikishin funi* emphasizes how the physicality of existence, or body, integrally fuses with the spiritual aspect of life, or mind. *Shiki* pertains to all aspects of life that are physical and possess form and appearance. *Funi* contains all aspects of life that are spiritual and devoid of physicality, such as the mind, emotions, and the soul. *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism* reveals how *funi* is an abbreviation for *nini-funi* that “indicates ‘two (in phenomena) but not two (in essence).’ This means that the material and spiritual are two separate classes of phenomena, but non-dual and indivisible in essence, because they are both aspects of the same reality” (476). Essentially, *shikishin funi* reveals the inseparability of these two divisions of life. Miao-lo categorized the ten factors of life found within the ‘Expedient Means’ chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* to reveal the oneness of the mind and body— due to the placement of each factor into material and/or spiritual existence that are broken down as follows:



Each factor represents either the spiritual or material and thus embodies Miao-lo's concept of *shikishin funi*. Nichiren quotes Miao-lo: "Appearance exists only in what is material; nature exists only in what is spiritual. Entity, power, influence, and relation in principle combine both the material and the spiritual. Internal cause and latent effect are purely spiritual; manifest effect exists only in what is material" ("Object" 356). Miao-lo characterizes appearance as "material" due to its representation of the outward, physical aspect of life; likewise, manifest effects are outwardly visible. He describes nature as "spiritual" because it refers to the inner, unseen aspect of life; thus, internal causes and

latent effects are “spiritual” due to their seeming dormancy within life. Nichiren quotes Miao-lo’s concept of *shikishin funi* within his Buddhism to reveal the interrelatedness of all phenomena, specifically the spiritual and material aspects of life.

Alongside nature and soul, Emerson, too, uses the term “body” to assert the physical aspect of life and “mind” to represent the spiritual. In “The Over-Soul” he states: “All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs” (238). The soul is not physical or material; it is the inner and spiritual aspect of life that creates the cause for manifest effects. The organs are material but would not function without animation by the spiritual. Likewise, the spiritual soul manifests itself within the material organs. Here Emerson correlates with the idea of *shikishin funi* through his emphasis on the intrinsic nature of the mind (spiritual) and body (material). The material and the spiritual are two aspects that conjoin as one, similar to how the genius and the Over-Soul are two aspects that culminate into one. In “Nature” Emerson articulates the relationship between matter and spirit: “The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass” (137). The spirit of an individual coexists with the matter and the material world. *Shikishin funi* is a part of *ichinen sanzen*. Likewise, Emerson’s genius and Over-Soul correlate with two concepts that are integral to Nichiren Buddhism.

Daisaku Ikeda, an interpreter of Nichiren Buddhism, explains, “Only by seeing mind and matter as an inseparable whole is it possible to come close to the essence of life. Contemporary biochemistry and theories of evolution offer evidence in this” (*Buddhism* 22). Ikeda’s aim is to compare Buddhist concepts to actual scientific theory. Ikeda cites biological conclusions that reveal concrete characteristics between the

animate and inanimate. The discovery of numerous natural phenomena, such as the tobacco mosaic virus, reveals the presence of both mind and body. In daily life, it is evident that the mind correlates with the body. For example, Daisaku Ikeda addresses how “emotional stress gives rise to physical symptoms such as ulcers or muscular tension, while physical factors such as vitamin deficiencies or changes in blood-sugar levels can deeply affect a person’s emotional state” (*Unlocking* 138). *Shikishin funi* is not merely a philosophical concept, but a reality that provides its own evidence.

Similar to Daisaku Ikeda’s look into science, Emerson emphasizes in “Self-Reliance” the relationship of science to an individual:

The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics. Thus, “the whole is greater than its part;” “reaction is equal to action;” “the smallest weight may be made to lift the greatest, the difference of weight being compensated by time;” and many the like propositions, which have an ethical as well as physical sense. These propositions have a much more extensive and universal sense when applied to human life, than when confined to technical use. (137)

Emerson relates the significance of the above “propositions” to human life. “The whole is greater than the part” refers to the importance of the universal law and the rejection of egoistic self-centeredness, while “reaction is equal to action” pertains to the law of cause and effect to thus aid humans to engage in positive causes. From such seemingly scientific propositions, an individual can gauge personal humanity and its accord with the universe. Both Nichiren Buddhism and Emerson stress the relationship between the

spiritual and the material, in other words, between scientific laws and the internal laws of humankind.

The Over-Soul is an active force that coincides with the Buddhist concept of life force. Emerson depicts the Over-Soul as being “not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely” (qtd. in Sealts 30). The continuity of his perception occurs in “The Over-Soul,” as he details manifestations of the Over-Soul: “when it breathes through the intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love” (238). Emerson reveals the Over-Soul as a uniting factor of the spiritual and material that exists within every facet of life. It is an active, moving force that pervades the universe as well as the individual. Similarly, Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes the concept of a life force that further elucidates the pervading essence that streams through the macrocosm.

Due to the inseparability of the mind and body, the Over-Soul, or life force, exists within the macrocosm, the microcosm, and within each person, just as do genius and Buddha nature, as well as all the concepts discussed thus far. For this reason, life force is a vital portion of Nichiren Buddhism. One must cultivate life force by tapping into the universal. Daisaku Ikeda emphasizes the importance of this action: “Vital are wisdom, tenacity and self-expression, as well as the strong life force that makes these things possible,” and he advocates that all should strive “to strengthen our life force to the greatest extent” because it will expand our lives (*Today* 207, 244). Emerson addresses life force in “Circles”:

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. (253)

The stronger the “force or truth” of an individual the more expansive his or her life will become. Emerson continues on to emphasize the power of a strong life force:

But if the soul is quick and strong it bursts over that boundary on all sides and expands another orbit on the great deep, which also runs up into a high wave, with attempt again to stop and to bind. But the heart refuses to be imprisoned; in its first and narrowest pulses it already tends outward with a vast force and to immense and innumerable expansion. (253-254)

Emerson stresses how obstacles occur in life that attempt to “stop and to bind,” but he reveals that it is a person’s life force that helps him or her barrel through any impasse.

Nichiren Buddhism perceives life force as a universal force that exists within all phenomena, just as the Over-Soul exists inseparably within all aspects of life.

Both the Over-Soul and *shikishin funi* circle back to the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* and therefore Buddha nature. Emerson’s conception of life manifesting in division correlates with the Ten Worlds and the ten factors of *ichinen sanzen*. Thus, Emerson’s Over-Soul is very similar to Buddha nature. Buddha nature is the embodiment of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, just as Emerson’s Over-Soul is an all-encompassing Unity that can be broken down into “divisions.” Though T’ien-t’ai’s doctrine goes beyond Emerson’s understanding in depth and definition, both the Over-Soul and *ichinen sanzen* reveal the “true aspect of all phenomena” as a realization that in many are one, and that in a whole exists a part.

For both Emerson and Nichiren, all living beings possess genius and the universe fuses with the Over-Soul, *shikishin funi*, and life force to reveal the inseparability of the spirit and matter. Overall, the Over-Soul and life force are concepts not easily definable; yet two aspects of each are definite. Emerson's Over-Soul and Nichiren's life force both emphasize the interrelatedness of spirit and matter, and a force "breathes" and "flows" through all phenomena to reveal the movement and power of such a force. Therefore, just as Emerson puts it, "Thus is the universe alive. All things are moral" ("Compensation" 159). Emerson perceives the Over-Soul as the ultimate reality of life, and Nichiren conceives the unity described by Emerson as reality as well; however, the two writers differ in their perception of the ultimate Law of life. Nichiren goes beyond Emerson's conception, revealing that not only does the ultimate Law exist, not only is it describable and understandable, but it is also practicable by humankind.

-Chapter Four-

Universal Law and *Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo*

Emerson counteracts traditional Western thought when perceiving the universe as alive and moral. He announces the reality of universal law: “That soul which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law. We feel its inspiration” (“Compensation” 159). However, Emerson is limited only to feeling and sensing its presence, its impression upon life. Similarly, the idea of a universal law and life force is prevalent within the writings of Nichiren. However, for Nichiren, the ultimate reality of all phenomena is a truth that one can not only feel, but also understand and translate into word. According to Nichiren, ultimate reality is *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, the universal law or principle of life. Both writers discern the presence of an existing force that works towards positive ends. Emerson perceives that the laws of the universe transcend human conception, but emphasizes that the individual is part of the Over-Soul, which permeates all. Similarly, Nichiren acknowledges the difficulty of understanding that the law exists within each individual, but continues to affirm the vast ability of humanity to correctly perceive and become united with the ultimate truth.

Emerson announces in “The Divinity School Address” that “when the mind opens and reveals the laws which traverse the universe and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once into a mere illustration and fable of this mind” (63). When one can fully absorb, comprehend, and manifest the “laws” Emerson speaks of, he or she achieves an enlightened state synonymous to Buddhahood. An enlightened state reveals boundless wisdom, which correlates with Emerson’s image of the world shrinking to a “mere illustration and fable of this mind,” and becoming an illustrated book of

universal laws. Essentially, the “open” mind can see the universe for exactly what it is, a complex, yet simple, network of interrelatedness. For Nichiren, the universe can be understood from the microcosm to the macrocosm due to the expansive wisdom and comprehension of all phenomena. Both Emerson and Nichiren perceive an “open” or “enlightened” mind to have the ability of perceiving universal laws throughout all aspects of life.

Emerson does not discover a termination to human contemplations. He announces human wonderment of all phenomena as a topic “to never be quenched” (“Divinity” 63). Emerson understands that laws are present, but expresses how those laws evade understanding:

Behold these outrunning laws, which our imperfect apprehension can see
tend this way and that, but not come full circle. Behold these infinite
relations, so like, so unlike; many, yet one. I would study, I would know,
I would admire forever. These works of thought have been the
entertainments of the human spirit in all ages. (63)

Once again, Emerson emphasizes the “many, yet one” idea that correlates with the concept of *ichinen sanzen*. Whatever exhaustion he exerts in attempts to understand the ultimate reality, he states that complete conception is not likely, that it will never come “full circle.” To exemplify the universal, he articulates how all human beings share the same desire, the same wonderment, and the same contemplation of the ultimate reality. Yet, he does not formulate the words to reveal the essence of such an enlightened state, or the realization of the presence of the Over-Soul.

Due to the intense difficulty of comprehending the laws that govern the universe, Emerson perceives those laws, or the Over-Soul, to be too complex to put into words, for words are finite, limited, and humanly derived. He emphasizes how “these laws refuse to be adequately stated. They will not be written out on paper, or spoken by the tongue. They elude our persevering thought”(64). Though the laws are present within every aspect of life, to formulate the words to encompass its vastness is a task, as perceived by Emerson, which cannot be accomplished. Instead, he reveals a few laws that can be written, for example, the law of cause and effect and the law of natural benevolence. While Nichiren’s writings exemplify various universal laws that coincide with Emerson’s understanding, Nichiren differs from Emerson’s conception by encompassing the ultimate Law of the universe in words. Emerson’s inability to articulate the universal Law contrasts with the ability of Nichiren, who integrates the entire macrocosm into the characters of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*.

Nichiren provides a mode of Buddhist practice that makes accessible and comprehensive to all human beings the ultimate reality of life. By chanting the characters of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, an individual taps into the universal, thus receiving the three bodies of the Buddha: truth, wisdom, and compassion. Nichiren teaches that chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* leads to the manifestation of Buddhahood within the lives of human beings. He states in a letter to Shijo Kingo entitled “Earthly Desires are Enlightenment”:

Though the teaching I am now propagating seems limited, it is extremely profound. That is because it goes deeper than the teaching expounded by T’ien t’ai, Dengyo, and others. It is the three important matters in the

“Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching. Practicing only the seven characters of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* seems limited, but since they are the master of all the Buddhas of the three existences, the teacher of all the bodhisattvas in the ten directions, and the guide that enables all living beings to attain the Buddha way, it is profound. (317)

In this letter, Nichiren asserts that his teaching surpasses prior teachings based upon the *Lotus Sutra*. He accentuates how the seven characters of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* encompass the total essence of Shakyamuni’s teaching.

Just as Emerson states in “The Divinity School Address” the physical world “shrinks” when one truly envisions the ultimate Law. Correspondingly, the universal law can also be “shrunk” or contained within words or phrases. According to Nichiren, the laws of the universe can be both written and stated within the characters of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* encompasses all phenomena, from the microcosm all the way to the macrocosm.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is also known as *daimoku*, or title of the *Lotus Sutra*. The title of the *Lotus Sutra* in Sanskrit, the literary language of ancient India where Buddhism was first expounded, is *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, which translated literally means, “The Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wonderful Law.” As Buddhist teachings spread into China, all the sutras were gradually translated into classical Chinese, a linguistic form used by the court and other upscale sectors of society. Kumārajīva, a Buddhist scholar and linguist, translated Buddhist writings into classical Chinese, and is known for his intense studies and propagation of Mahayana Buddhism. Moreover, his translation of the *Lotus Sutra* from Sanskrit to Chinese initiated wide respect of the sutra in comparison

to other translations due to his linguistic skills. The *Lotus Sutra* was introduced to Japan through Korea. The Chinese title of the *Lotus Sutra*, *Miao-fa-lien-hua-ching*, translates into classical Japanese as *Myoho-renge-kyo*. Literally, *Myoho-renge-kyo* means “Mystic Law of the Lotus Sutra.” Nichiren added *Nam*, a contraction (similar to how “I’ll” is a contraction for “I will”) for the Sanskrit word *namu* or *namas* that literally means “devotion,” to the front of the title; thus, *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. Literally translated, *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* means, “I devote my life to the Mystic Law of the Lotus Sutra;” however, the depth of this phrase is not as simple as its literal translation. In *The Buddha in Daily Life*, Richard Causton compares *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* to Einstein’s formula for the theory of relativity, $E = mc^2$. Causton highlights the five symbols of Einstein’s formula and its translation, “Energy equals mass multiplied by the square of the speed of light,” as a prime example of how the straightforward translation does not necessarily elucidate the meaning (98). While one may understand what each word means, without a strong understanding of physics, the significance cannot easily be discerned. Each symbol of Einstein’s theory of relativity represents a profound aspect of reality as it is taken to a deeper level of understanding, just as the seven characters of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* do for Nichiren Buddhism.

Nichiren delves into the meaning of each character in his letter, “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime.” He reveals the essence of *myoho*:

The mysterious nature of our life from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express [...] Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the

qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality. *Myo* is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and *ho*, to its manifestations. (4)

In relation to *myoho*, or the Mystic Law, one must understand mystic to signify, not magic or obscurity, but the presence of an aspect incapable of being put into words, yet recognizable by an individual of its presence. For example, Richard Causton uses music as an example of the Mystic Law. He relates the power of music and its effect upon listeners in various ways: “It can move them to joy or to tears; it can soothe or rouse their passions; it can call up a complex variety of emotions. Whatever the effect, there is no rational explanation for why a series of sounds arranged in a particular order should do any of these things, and yet they do” (100). Causton’s example aids in the comprehension of how “mystic” is used by Nichiren: *myo* refers to the inexplicable development of music, while *ho* refers to the subsequent range of emotions that result. This is similar to Emerson in “Compensation” when he states of universal law: “We feel its inspiration” (159). Emerson and Nichiren correlate in their acknowledgement of perceiving universal laws through feeling.

In *Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death*, Daisaku Ikeda delves into the complex meaning of *myoho*:

Nichiren interprets *myo* as the ultimate reality beyond our ability to perceive and *ho* and the world of phenomena in its ever-changing forms. The union of these two concepts, represented by the single word *myoho*, reflects the essential oneness of the ultimate reality and the world as it actually appears. (171)

Ultimate reality is not separate from everyday reality: when one recognizes the integral relationship of *myoho*, then one is awakened. If one does not perceive and understand the unity, then he or she is deluded. In “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime” Nichiren emphasizes: “When deluded, one is called an ordinary being, but when enlightened, one is called a Buddha” to stress the significance of understanding the Mystic Law of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* and the oneness of daily life and ultimate reality (4).

Nichiren elaborates in “The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra” on the character *myo* and asserts three meanings: to open, to be fully endowed, and to revive (141-154). “To open” refers to the realization of one’s Buddha nature, which results in the dismissal of delusion from one’s existence and “opens” the individual to his or her connection to the universe. This resonates with Emerson’s emphasis upon an “open” mind that reveals the laws of the universe discussed earlier in this chapter. “To be fully endowed” refers to the Mystic Law (*myoho*) and its containment of all phenomena and presence within all things. “To revive” refers to every individual’s ability to reveal Buddhahood within his or her life. Daisaku Ikeda elucidates on the “to revive” meaning of *myoho*:

In a broader sense, “to revive” is another way of saying “to create value.”

When insentient materials such as wood and stone are transformed by human effort into a building, that is one form of revival. Another example is when we reform our lives to establish Buddhahood within and contribute to others’ happiness. (*Unlocking* 173)

Ikeda further notes:

“To revive” signifies that when based upon the Mystic Law all other laws and teachings assume a correct perspective and reveal important aspects of

the ultimate truth. Similarly, when we base our faith on the Mystic Law, all our abilities, character traits and other personal qualities come to life and are expressed in a manner that contributes to our own growth and benefits others. (*Unlocking* 173)

Nichiren further elaborates on the meaning of *myoho* when he states in “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life” that “*Myo* represents death, and *ho*, life” (216). Death correlates with *myo* due to the inexplicable effect it has upon an individual’s life: when and where death will occur, and how one will feel during the state of death. Life corresponds with *ho* because it is a physical manifestation evident in the ability to trace the patterns of life. The dichotomy of life and death are both aspects of the ultimate reality: mystical and apparent simultaneously; thus, *myoho* embodies these two realities.

Renge means “lotus flower,” and reveals the simultaneous nature of cause and effect. Nichiren quotes T’ien t’ai when he writes in “The Entity of the Mystic Law” that the lotus refers to the Lotus Sutra:

Now the name *renge* is not intended as a symbol for anything. It is the teaching expounded in the Lotus Sutra. The teaching expounded in the Lotus Sutra is pure and undefiled and explains the subtleties of cause and effect. Therefore, it is called *renge*, or lotus. This name designates the true entity that the meditation based on the Lotus Sutra reveals, and is not a metaphor or figurative term. (421)

However, Nichiren explains the use of the lotus flower metaphor: “But because the essence of the *Lotus Sutra* is difficult to understand, the metaphor of the lotus plant is

introduced” (421). Nichiren addresses the significance of the lotus plant metaphor in his letter, “Wu-lung and I-lung”:

Myoho-rengo-kyo is likened to the Lotus [...] Of all the flowers, he selected the lotus blossom to symbolize the Lotus Sutra. There is a reason for this. Some plants first flower and then produce fruit, while in others fruit comes forth before flowers. Some bear only one flower but much fruit, others send forth many flowers but only one fruit, and still others produce fruit without flowering. Thus there are all manner of plants, but the lotus is the only one that bears flowers and fruit simultaneously. The benefit of all the other sutras is uncertain, because they teach that one must first make good causes and only then can one become a Buddha at some later time. With regard to the Lotus Sutra, when one’s hand takes it up, that hand immediately attains Buddhahood, and when one’s mouth chants it, that mouth is itself a Buddha, as, for example, the moon is reflected in the water the moment it appears from behind the eastern mountains, or as a sound and its echo arise simultaneously. (1099)

Thus, *rengo* represents the simultaneity of cause and effect to further reveal the lack of difference between any individual and a Buddha and the nature of all phenomena as a consistent process of creating causes that produce immediate, though at times unseen, effects.

Translated in Japanese, *kyo*, means “sutra,” but is also interpreted as “sound.” Nichiren quotes T’ien T’ai in *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*: “The voice carries out the work of the Buddha, and is called *kyo*” (4). Because Shakyamuni

preached his teachings, the voice is integral in the transmission of the Buddha's work-- that is, sharing Buddhism with others and aiding in their achievement of Buddhahood. In *Ongi Kuden*, or *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, *kyo* is said to represent the "words and voices of all living beings" (4). Thus, in "Those Initially Aspiring to the Way" Nichiren states: "When once we chant Myoho-enge-kyo, with just that single sound we summon forth and manifest the Buddha nature of all Buddhas; all existences [...] and all other living beings. This blessing is immeasurable and boundless" (887).

Daisaku Ikeda translates the Chinese interpretation of the character *kyo* as "the warp of a length of cloth. Possibly because this creates the image of continuity, *kyo* also came to mean a teaching to be preserved and handed down for posterity" (*Unlocking* 182-183). The enlightenment of Shakyamuni is expressed through his oral teachings, or the voice, and transcends time due to the absolute truth contained within a Buddha's enlightenment:

The truth to which a Buddha has been enlightened is eternal, spanning past, present and future. When we awaken to this truth we realize the eternal aspect of our individual lives, and aspect that transcends the changes of the physical world and the cycle of birth and death. (Ikeda, *Unlocking* 183)

Nichiren awakened to the ultimate reality of *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* and explained the significance of the title of the *Lotus Sutra*.

The title of any literary work possesses great significance as it embodies the essence of the work's contents; the same is true for Buddhist sutras and treatises.

Nichiren addresses the significance of titles by highlighting the meaning behind the name “Japan”:

The spirit within one’s body of five or six feet may appear in just one’s face, which is only a foot long, and the spirit within one’s face may appear in just one’s eyes, which are only an inch across. Included within the two characters representing Japan is all that is within the country’s sixty-six provinces: the people and the animals, the rice paddies and the other fields, those of high and low status, the nobles and the commoners, the seven kinds of treasures and all the other precious gems. Similarly, included within the title, or daimoku, of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the entire sutra consisting of all eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters, and 69,384 characters, without the omission of a single character. (“One Essential” 923)

Nichiren harnesses the universal law inexplicable to Emerson within the phrase of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* with the belief that as the *Lotus Sutra* provides the true aspect of all phenomena; thus, the recitation of its title encompasses the vastness and depth of the entire teaching and exponentially-- the entire universe.

Daisaku Ikeda reveals the significance of Nichiren’s expression of the Law: “The meaning of ‘Lotus Blossom of the Wonderful Law’ may be gleaned in part from reading the text. But nowhere in the sutra do we find a definitive explication of the Law referred to in the title” (*Unlocking* 168). Prior to Nichiren, no expression could encompass the magnitude of the ultimate law. What he provides is a means of actively working towards enlightenment, an action in which all human beings can participate.

Nichiren asserts in “The One Essential Phrase,” that by chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* “you will become a Buddha in your present form” (922). Furthermore, he stresses the ability to attain enlightenment through chanting the seven characters, because “the heart of the Lotus Sutra is its title, or the daimoku of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*” (923). Within the recitation of what he terms “the one essential phrase,” he emphasizes the part (the many universal laws) and the whole (the ultimate Law of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*) that conjoin in the all encompassing one.

Like Emerson’s Over-Soul, Nichiren’s daimoku is not limited strictly to the human or natural world. Rather, both concepts include all phenomena existing within the universe. This is a difficult concept to understand, just as Nichiren acknowledges, but it is the two modes life are vital to understanding Nichiren’s daimoku. Life can be actual or virtual, or in other words active or dormant. Similar to a seed in winter that waits underground until the conditions are right to manifest its existence, so is life dormant and virtual. The proper conditions, appropriate temperatures and adequate sunlight, manifest the seed into action and it grows through the earth to become actual. Daisaku Ikeda states in *Buddhism: the Living Philosophy*: “Nichiren Buddhism teaches that essential life pervades everything in the universe [...] The modern theory of spontaneous emergence explains that life will occur spontaneously if a particular combination of conditions is provided” (23). He continues: “The countless different forms of life flourishing on this planet today make it patent that life emerged on the earth as a consequence of the evolution and development of something in or on the earth. In other words, life was implicit in the matter of the earth before its manifestation” (27). Advancements in science provide more concrete evidence for the philosophy of Nichiren

Buddhism. Moreover, through the recognition of the actual and virtual modes of life, it becomes implicit that life is eternal, a concept that Emerson advocates within his writings.

Nichiren and Ralph Waldo Emerson both perceive life as eternal; thus a circular pattern of life becomes apparent. The cyclical nature of life emerges with the idea that death is not an extinction of life, but a progression into a latent state that then proceeds in continuous cycles of remanifestation. Emerson reveals in "Nominalist and Realist" how "it is the secret of the world that all things subsist and do not die but only retire a little from sight and afterwards return again" (398-399). Emerson's perception of death is very similar to the Buddhist perception through his emphasis of the dormant (out of sight) and actual (when the visual returns again). He continues in "Nominalist and Realist" to announce:

Nothing is dead: men feign themselves dead, and endure mock funerals and mournful obituaries, and there they stand looking out of the window, sound and well, in some new and strange disguise. Jesus is not dead; he is very well alive: nor John, nor Paul, nor Mahomet, nor Aristotle; at times we believe we have seen them all, and could easily tell the names under which they go. (399)

Through his personal genius, Emerson acknowledges the true cyclical nature of life, perceiving how the circle does not end but rides upon a never ceasing continuum. This is why he states, "nothing is dead," and announces that when one existence is "dead" another actually exists "in some new and strange disguise." In "Circles," Emerson further explicates the cyclical nature of life:

Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens. (252)

Significantly, Emerson addresses the eternal where “every end is a beginning,” just as the moon gives way to the sun and vice versa. He emphasizes how all aspects of life compile into circles of truth that can be extended outward perpetually. Similarly for Nichiren Buddhists, life is eternal and cyclical. Daisaku Ikeda refers to the cycle of life as “Nonbeing, death, disappearance, and extinction represent return to the noumenal; being, birth, appearance, and existence represent manifestation in the phenomenal” (*Buddhism* 32). The cycle Ikeda refers to reveals how a being progresses throughout the eternal realm of life. Emerson and Nichiren correlate on their perceptions of the cyclical nature of existence.

Genius finds manifestation within all human beings; the Over-Soul is manifest in all existence, just as are Buddha nature and life force. From these ideas, both Emerson and Nichiren reveal the interrelatedness of the individual to the environment, and thus to the universe, to emphasize a force that exists within all things. Due to the presence of a universal force that is, as Emerson notes, moral, along with the perception that life is eternal consisting of the actual and virtual, it becomes essential, to Emerson and Nichiren Buddhists, that human beings look inward and desire revolution within their own life. Chapter Five delves into Emerson’s stress upon the concept of “self-reliance” and the Soka Gakkai’s stress upon Nichiren’s call for “human revolution.”

-Chapter Five-

Universal Humanity and Personal Development

A comprehensive analysis of humanity, in both historical and current affairs, aids in an individual's understanding of humanity, whereupon a desire to create greatness within the world initiates the promotion and development of the self. Due to the inseparability of all phenomena, a change in a single being alters the state of the entire macrocosm. This is the basis of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Nichiren Buddhism's "Human Revolution."

Emerson reveals in "The Transcendentalist" how a man's thought, "is the Universe" (83). The perceptions of one individual, in other words, metaphorically encompass the entire macrocosm due to experience. Emerson presents experience as an aspect that is "flowing perpetually outward from an invisible, unsounded centre in himself, centre alike of him and of them"; thus, he emphasizes the subjective nature of human existence (83). Within the subjectivity of an individual's perception lies a reality depicting the unoriginality of subjective perception, meaning that while people's perceptions are self-originating, their thoughts are not entirely unique because of the universal nature of all aspects of life. Emerson begins "The Transcendentalist" with a call for people to awaken to this universal unoriginality. He announces how the thoughts people are addressing as new, "are not new, but the very oldest of thoughts cast into the mould of these new times" (81). In this essay, Emerson notes that the "transcendental" thoughts of himself and his colleagues are not new, but an old philosophy (found in Buddhism among others) in a new form. He suggests the recurring nature of thought patterns and stresses the notion that thoughts are universal for all humankind. Therefore,

Emerson's statement does not strictly apply to the "transcendental" thoughts he wrote of in this specific essay, but all thoughts as it is a part of the whole universal law. Due to the cyclical effect of human thought, Emerson then delves into history as evidence of universalism.

Emerson's essay "History" emphasizes the historical progression of humanity as a means of discovering the universal nature of man. He states:

There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent.

(113)

The recognition of the universal nature of all phenomena is a criterion for achieving true liberation. Emerson's perception of genius being inherent within all human beings presents itself as he announces that any man can think, feel, and experience the same realms as another. Moreover, an individual can experience all things experienced in history, not just in the past with Jesus or Plato, but also in the present time. With this understanding, history becomes a means of explaining the existence of countries, societies, and communities, as well as each individual human being: "If the whole of history is in one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience" (113). He continues: "Of the universal mind each individual man is one more incarnation. All its properties consist in him" (114). Due to the inseparability of living beings and their

actions, “The student is to read history actively and not passively; to esteem his own life the text, and the books the commentary” (115). By delving into history, an individual can reach a deep understanding of the human spirit; thereby, the desire to create a more positive existence for future generations becomes fuel for personal and social reformation. Thus, Emerson emphasizes how “the crises of his life refer to national crises” to express the inseparability of human beings from one another, as well as to relate history to individual lives (114). The final paragraphs of “History” admonish the “shallow village tale” of “our so-called History” and advise a reformation of humanity (131). He concludes:

Broader and deeper we must write our annals-- from an ethical reformation, from an influx of the ever new, ever sanative conscience—if we would trulier express our central and wide-related nature, instead of this old chronology of selfishness and pride to which we have too long lent our eyes. (131)

The “central and wide-related nature” depicts the mind that is free of delusion and narrow vision. An in-depth study of history acts as a means to gain the wisdom to elevate one’s life and therefore to elevate humanity. This wisdom is central within the individual and universal simultaneously to establish a more elevated existence. Emerson’s call to observe history and contemporary affairs is synonymous to the seventh of the Ten Worlds, the world of Learning (see Appendix I). Emerson correlates to the seventh world in his notion of learning as a prerequisite of desiring and achieving a higher state of existence. Similarly, Nichiren stresses knowledge of history and worldly affairs as a prerequisite for achieving Buddha wisdom.

Nichiren advocates societal and historic knowledge as an aid in the attainment of Buddha wisdom. He begins “The Kalpa of Decrease” with a stab at human delusion, asserting, “The kalpa of decrease has its origin in the human heart” (1120). A kalpa in Indian cosmology is an extremely long period of time. In Buddhist cosmology, the word “kalpa” describes the creation and disintegration of the world. Nichiren expresses the disintegration of the world as a result of human delusion. A clear depiction of human existence is essential to create change. The depiction begins with each individual and grows larger in a concentric manner. Similar to Emerson, Nichiren calls on people to view themselves and history. In this letter, he refers to various Chinese historical events as evidence to the sufferings and triumphs of human life. More significantly, he advises that a person of wisdom is not one who exists “apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed” (1121). The inclination of humankind to study history is imperative due to the ability to relate past humanitarian experiences to the individual and vice versa. Both Emerson and Nichiren desire the study of history. Daisaku Ikeda states in a dialogue with Russian politician Mikhail Gorbachev that the wisdom of the *Lotus Sutra* and the compassion of Nichiren stress the “limitless universal *I* within each individual” (*Moral Lessons* 106). Gorbachev concurs, and coinciding with Emerson, adds: “True universality cannot come to light without the support of individual originality. A person who knows his own history can find undeniable universality and elements common to all humanity within it” (106). Both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nichiren perceive the knowledge of history as a means to understand the universal nature prevalent throughout existence. Moreover, history

stimulates transformation originating within the individual and subsequently reverberating outward.

Both Emerson and Nichiren emphasize that all phenomena are universal, a recognition that leads to true happiness. In “The Divinity School Address,” Emerson expostulates the unity present within “the sublime creed that the world is not the product of manifold power, but of one will, of one mind; and that one mind is everywhere active, in each ray of the star, in each wavelet of the pool; and whatever opposes that will is everywhere balked and baffled, because things are made so, and not otherwise” (65). He addresses the world as a product of one will and one mind, as an omnipresent force that rejects any force going against its will. Similarly, Nichiren advocates this unity in a letter entitled, “Many in Body, One in Mind” when he elucidates the need for unity: “If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable” (618). A group with divided minds can accomplish nothing because it opposes the will Emerson describes. This ideology does not only pertain to groups, but to the individual as well. This is not stating that Emerson would approve of conforming to any type group; rather, it emphasizes that every single spirit, every single person, awakens as a collective whole to the “one mind,” or the realization of the Over-Soul. Significantly, Nichiren is not advocating the conformity Emerson adamantly rejects. Similarly, Nichiren stresses the unity in individuals to perceive and harness the ultimate reality of life. He advocates self-knowledge and motivation to direct the individual towards desiring attainment of an elevated existence not only for his or her own behalf, but also for all humanity. Emerson’s synonymous perception is evident in “Nature”

when he states: “The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself” (155-156). Thus, both philosophers stress the significance of harmony within the self to project harmony within the universe.

Emerson’s “one will, one mind” and Nichiren’s “many in body, one in mind” both emphasize the need for each individual to accept the universal unity in order to prevent negative ends. Emerson contends that “if a man dissemble, deceive, he deceives himself, and goes out of acquaintance with his own being” (“Divinity” 64). Deceiving and lying to oneself only disconnects one from the universe and results in evil ends. Correspondingly, Nichiren’s statement, “Even an individual at cross purposes with himself is certain to end in failure,” reveals how disunity in the individual results in failure, and the denial of one’s potential (“Many in Body” 618). Thus, if one possesses no connection with his or her own life, then he or she denies the Buddha nature inherent within. By denying the Buddha nature, or Emerson’s genius, the individual exists in delusion, without fathoming the universal Law. The universe dictates that living beings aid others to conceptualize personal aptitude and greatness. Thus, both Emerson and Nichiren express within their works the great potential of all people.

Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” stresses the importance of “*Ne te quaesiveris extra*,” which literally advises one not to seek for things outside of him or herself. Lawrence Buell sees Emersonian self-reliance as “founded on a self-contradiction: we are entitled to trust our deepest convictions of what is true and right insofar as every person’s inmost identity is a transpersonal universal” (59). He continues on to state that self-reliance “sets the highest value on egocentricity, yet also strives mightily to guard itself against the egotism it seems to license” (59). Interestingly, Buell does address a distanced

perception but does not fully comprehend the essence of self-reliance. From a distance, self-reliance seems selfish and egocentric; yet upon personal investigation, one discovers a humbling effect that occurs during the revolution of individual self-conceptions. From a distance, the notion of personal convictions being “transpersonal universal” seems dangerous inasmuch that everyone will establish truths that vary from others. Of course, this is true; yet when Emerson states, “Thus the universe is alive. All things are moral,” he asserts the universality of not only existence, but of human sufferings and desires. Morality is inherent within all life; therefore, in individuals, and through self-knowledge and growth, one will begin to desire that which is best for not only oneself, but also for humanity.

All life is sovereign, and upon that understanding comes the question: what is the best life for a human being, and how can it be attained? Questions like these are at the heart of American Romanticism and Nichiren Buddhism, and fuel a desire for a fulfilling life. If one searches for these answers externally, then one forfeits the ability to realize his or her own greatness, his or her own heart, and the pulse that drives humanity. Therefore, human revolution is an essential portion of achieving morality and goodness.

Emerson emphasizes in “Self-Reliance” how “The virtue in most request is conformity,” a request that he vehemently opposes (134). He opposes conformity because it derives from external situations and leads to a shallow existence. Similarly, lay disciples of Nichiren within the Soka Gakkai call for a “human revolution,” a transformation in peoples’ lives from external directives to ones that delve internally. David Norton elucidates the premise for this evocation as the “innate presence within all persons of potentialities for value which require to be actualized,” which stresses how

one cannot actualize the greatness of the self without knowing and acknowledging that greatness (12). Emerson's exhortation to "Trust Thyself" correlates with human revolution ("Self-Reliance" 133). Due to the typical societal impressions upon people from a young age, both Emerson and Nichiren advocate introspection as a liberating means to discovering the ultimate reality of life. Social restrictions, mores, and norms consume the development of humanity as society imposes its pre-packaged ideologies upon youth and limits their potential. Thus, both Emerson and Nichiren emphasize the significance of self-knowledge and human revolution. From these realizations-- that all humankind possesses genius (Buddha nature), that the Over-Soul (*shikishin funi*) flows through all things, and that the self proves to be the greatest teacher-- then does the individual begin to realize the non-egocentric greatness of the self.

Emerson's belief that "Your genuine action will explain itself and will explain your other genuine actions" rings true for both philosophies ("Self-Reliance" 139). Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes cause and effect— that the causes one creates determine the effects: "What one has done for another yesterday will be done for oneself today" ("Letter to Jakunichi-bo" 994). Moreover, Nichiren assures the positive effects of good causes: "Just as flowers open up and bear fruit, just as the moon appears and invariably grows full, just as a lamp becomes brighter when oil is added, and just as plants and trees flourish with rain, so will human beings never fail to prosper when they make good causes" ("Third" 1013). With this understanding, Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes the necessity of taking action towards positive endeavors. Likewise, Emerson comprehends the significance of action. Action becomes a force that determines one's future, for "greatness appeals to the future. If I can be firm enough today to do right and scorn eyes,

I must have done so much right before as to defend me now” (“Self-Reliance” 139). The importance of truly believing in one's genius, or Buddha nature, becomes inherent, as one's actions create future manifestations. Doubt, therefore, is not admirable: one should approach life with the whole-hearted conviction that wisdom found within is worthy of greatness.

Emerson dismisses doubt and advocates action: “God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace” (“Self-Reliance” 132). This reveals the necessity of individuals not doubting themselves and instead taking action to achieve happiness. Likewise, Nichiren acknowledges the human tendency to possess doubt: “Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate. But since you possess the other nine worlds, you should believe that you have Buddhahood as well. Do not permit yourself to have doubts. Expounding on the human world, the Lotus Sutra says, ‘The Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings’” (“Object” 358). The concept of cause and effect articulates that if one possesses doubt within the self, then others too will doubt that self. The philosophies of Emerson and Nichiren conjoin to reveal the significance of the individual— not the egocentricity, but the need to realize personal greatness, or enlightenment, and therefore to actualize it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nichiren both articulate the necessity of self-determination but their “individualism” is not self-manifestation as much as it is their use of genius or Buddha nature. By acknowledging that everyone possesses Emerson's genius, or Nichiren Buddhism's Buddha nature, a sincere compassion for life naturally follows. By understanding the Over-Soul and the inseparability of the spirit from matter,

the universality of life shines through. And through the understanding that the self is sovereign and significant in achieving morality, the emphasis upon human revolution and self-progression comes to the forefront of one's existence. Both writers emphasize the greatness of the self and the need to rely on and trust our own genius, our own Buddha nature to lead fulfilling lives.

-Chapter Six-

Emerson's Nature and Nichiren's Gohonzon

Emerson perceives nature as a means of discovering and becoming the Over-Soul. In his essay, "Nature," he delves into the physical world as a means of discovering abstract truths. Emerson reveals how one man can discover the whole truth by conceiving nature in both its "common and in its philosophical import" (126). Similar to the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*, he relays the presence of a "certain order of things," which stimulates and answers questions pertaining to life:

Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. (125)

Emerson affirms how deriving from the answers of such questions, a true theory emerges that shall "be its own evidence" in regards to asserting its validity (126). Interestingly, Emerson acknowledges the necessity of practicing and testing the theory in one's life before deeming it as a truth. The testing of such a theory means testing it in everyday experience. Emerson's view of truth correlates with Nichiren's methods of asserting validity.

Nichiren, too, stresses that a truth provides evidence of its validity when he discusses three standards for judging the truth of any teaching. The three proofs are: theoretical, documentary, and actual proof. Theoretical proof emphasizes the logic and

reason behind a teaching, whether or not it simply makes sense. Documentary proof stresses the teaching of any Buddhist schools to be in accordance with the sutras. Actual proof accentuates an actual result that occurs when the doctrine is put into practice. Nichiren states in a letter written to the lay priest Nishiyama: “In judging the relative merit of Buddhist doctrines, I, Nichiren, believe that the best standards are those of reason and documentary proof. And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact” (“Three Tripitaka” 599). Actual proof provides for a teaching what Emerson calls, “its own evidence.” Similarly, Emerson would reject “documentary” proof as a reason to believe; rather he states that “A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages” (“Self-Reliance” 132). Just like Emerson, Nichiren stresses that one must not merely rely on logic and scripture as proof, but that one must practice and test the practice in daily life to seek actual proof prior to proclaiming the theory as truth. Both Emerson and Nichiren perceive a true teaching to be one that cultivates evidence and validates itself.

Emerson postulates that the test of such a theory resides in its ability to “explain all phenomena” (“Nature” 126). In his essay, “Nature,” Emerson poses the question, “to what end is nature?” (126). Robert D. Richardson, Jr. writes in “Emerson and Nature” of Emerson’s perception of the natural world: “Nature for Emerson was a theory of the nature of things – how things are; it was a guide to life, a foundation for philosophy, art, language, education, and everyday living” (104). Emerson reasons that all questions of humankind can be answered through the understanding of nature—that it will lead people towards the explainable realizations of his Over-Soul, or universal truth.

Alternately, Nichiren emphasizes that by chanting *daimoku*, or *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* to the Gohonzon, a graphic central object of worship, one will feel his or her life interfuse with the life of the universe. From a surface perspective, it may seem that Nichiren's mode of connecting with the universe is based on scripture and Emerson's on the experience of the natural world. However, all the concepts and doctrines like *ichinen sanzen* and *shikishin funi* reveal that Buddhist "scripture" is based on interpretations of the natural world. Therefore, similar to Emerson's view of Nature, the Gohonzon embraces life philosophy and aids as a guide, or a way to see, an elevated existence practicable in daily life.

In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," Nichiren articulates the essence of the Gohonzon. He acknowledges that: "This mandala is in no way my invention" due to its creation within the *Lotus Sutra* (831). He further acknowledges how no one prior to himself had given expression to Shakyamuni's teaching:

T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo perceived it in their hearts, but for some reason never put it into words, just as Yen Yuan realized the true meaning of Confucius's teaching, but never gave it expression. Yet the sutra itself and the commentaries of T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo explicitly state that the Gohonzon will appear after two thousand years have elapsed following the Buddha's passing. (831)

Nichiren stresses, like Emerson who believes in the non-existence of new ideas, that the Gohonzon was always present, just devoid of graphic form. Nichiren also emphasizes the workings of the Gohonzon to be internal:

Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. The body is a palace of the ninth consciousness, the unchanging reality that reigns over all of life's functions. To be endowed with the Ten Worlds means that all ten, without a single exception, exist in one world. Because of this it is called a mandala. Mandala is a Sanskrit word that is translated as "perfectly endowed" or "a cluster of blessings." This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith. This is what the sutra means when it states that one can "gain entrance through faith alone." ("Real Aspect" 833)

His advice to never seek the Gohonzon externally correlates to Emerson's opening in "Self Reliance," where he advises people not to seek for things outside of themselves. Both philosophers advocate the individual as a possessor of all phenomena. Nichiren stresses how the Gohonzon as the embodiment of all universal aspects is not external from a person, while Emerson proclaims Nature is not external. Emerson and Nichiren both stress the significance of internalizing the universal law and rejecting an externalized perception.

In his essay "Nature," Emerson promotes the potential of the natural world, in its rustic and divine beauty, to be the peaceful center of humankind, a place where individuals can wander in "perfect exhilaration" (127). Edward Wagenknecht asserts in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Portrait of a Balanced Soul*: "If intuition was the source of the Emersonian man's spiritual perceptions, and consequently of his self-reliance, this was a natural gift, and nature, by any definition, or his relationship to nature, was a powerful

factor in it” (49). Nature is vital to Emerson for it is in nature that one can “return to reason and faith” and pull forth the strength of the natural world: “There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, --no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair” (“Nature” 127). Nature serves as a way of elevating an individual to the realization of the universality of life:

Standing on the bare ground, --my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes. I become the transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. (127-128)

Within this elevated state, Emerson articulates his ability to truly comprehend the workings of and his relation to the universal. He is the “transparent eye-ball” that perceives the interconnected network of all phenomena. He uses the words “currents” and “circulate” to describe how the universal flows through all aspects of life and further promotes the cyclical nature of existence. Emerson’s promotion of setting out into the woods to gain insight into the workings of the world differs from Nichiren’s means of attaining such wisdom.

Nichiren’s philosophy encompasses Nature; however, his teaching harnesses the universal law in a variant way. The natural world does indeed prove the universal nature of life; yet, one does not need to be immersed in the rustic natural world to pull forth its strength, or to be in unison with the universe. Nichiren Buddhism stresses chanting *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo* to the Gohonzon as a way of tapping into the universe and drawing from it courage, strength, wisdom, and faith.

In the Gosho passage, “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime,” Nichiren reveals, in a manner similar to Emerson, that all life’s questions are answerable:

If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and to attain without fail unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime, you must perceive the mystic truth that is originally inherent within all living beings. This truth is Myoho-renge-kyo. Chanting Myoho-renge-kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth innate in all life. (3)

With this opening paragraph, Nichiren addresses a fundamental question of humanity. Where Emerson seeks to answer, “To what end is nature?” - Nichiren questions, “How can one ease suffering?” Nichiren recognizes the cycle of pain associated with the human condition-- that is the cycle of birth, aging, sickness, and death. The inevitable cycle of life is endured “since time without beginning” to emphasize eternity: no beginning and no end, life is eternal. Attaining “without fail unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime” asserts that an individual can, within his or her present life and life circumstances, strengthen the world of Buddhahood within— all persons have the potential to become Buddhas in this lifetime. In *For Today and Tomorrow*, Daisaku Ikeda reflects on attaining enlightenment:

What does attaining Buddhahood mean for us? It does not mean that one day we suddenly *turn into* a Buddha or become magically enlightened. In a sense, attaining Buddhahood means that we have securely entered the path, or orbit, of Buddhahood inherent in the cosmos. Rather than a final static destination at which we arrive and remain, achieving enlightenment

means firmly establishing the faith needed to keep advancing along the path of absolute happiness limitlessly, without end. (205)

The “mystic truth” Nichiren refers to in “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime” emphasizes the Law of *Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo*. Nichiren stresses the universality of the Law, like Emerson’s genius, and reiterates his conviction that by chanting *Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo* one can “grasp the mystic truth innate in all life” (3). The Gohonzon, as a graphic expression of the Law, along with chanting *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo*, can be likened to Emerson’s use of the natural world as a means of truly comprehending the universal.

Emerson promotes the woods in his essay “Nature” as a location where one “casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child” (127). Childhood is significant to Emerson as he attributes to youth a fresh and spontaneous existence free of conventions. Childhood marks a time in a human’s life where they innately understand “Our spontaneous action is always best” (“Intellect” 264). Nature has the potential for making one feel youthful, revitalized, and rejuvenated: “In the woods, is perpetual youth” (“Nature” 127). Though Emerson emphasizes the natural world as a means to witness the universal, he does assert that the internal aspects of an individual are the most potent aspect: “Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both” (“Nature” 128). Nichiren’s promotion of perpetual youth is not entirely similar to Emerson’s, but they share commonalities.

A Nichiren Buddhist perceives youth to be, aside from physical age, the spirit to push onward. Daisaku Ikeda emphasizes how “acquiring youth in the deepest sense is a

very long and challenging process” (*Today* 71). Youth is available to people of all ages and is characterized by the spiritual fortitude to refuse stagnation, embrace change, and maintain openness to possibilities. Ikeda articulates youth as “the power of the spirit that refuses to succumb to complacency and strives forward” (71). Nichiren Buddhists perceive youth as a result of chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* and strengthening the inner realms of one’s life. Emerson accredits nature as a wonderful gateway, aside from experiencing the Over-Soul, to youth. However, in “Circles” Emerson correlates with Nichiren Buddhist’s philosophy that one can retain youth: “Whilst we converse with what is above us, we do not grow old, but grow young” (261). He continues to articulate youth by discussing “a man and woman of seventy” who, if they “assume to know all” will grow old because they “have outlived their hope, they renounce aspiration, accept the actual for the necessary and talk down to the young” (261). However, Emerson points out that if the man and woman “become organs of the Holy Ghost,” “become lovers,” and “behold truth,” then they will again harness “hope and power” (261). With hope and with aspiration, Emerson assures that one with retain his or her youth. Similar to Nichiren Buddhist philosophy Emerson denounces complacency and presents hope as fuel for youthfulness: “People who wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them” (261). Both Emerson and Nichiren believe youth to be determined by the individual, by his or her ability to retain hope.

Emerson emphasizes how the “whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind” and that “Nature is the symbol of the spirit” (“Nature” 137, 134). Richardson asserts the fundamental idea of Emerson’s outlook of nature:

The central point, the pivot of Emerson's understanding of nature, is his conception of the all-encompassing relationship that exists at all times between the mind – understood as a more or less constant, classifying power – and the infinite variety of external nature. (102)

Emerson's view of the natural world, in its impression upon the human mind, correlates with the Buddhist concept of *shiki shin funi* in that there is no separation between the spiritual aspects of life and the material world. Both the mind and the spirit are two phenomena, but not two in essence.

Emerson elucidates in "Nature" the significance of language: "Words are signs of natural facts" (134). His perception reveals the actions and objects of nature as a symbolic language that reflects universal truths. Subsequently, our language by which we articulate such universal truths derives from the natural world. Similarly, Nichiren's inscription of the Gohonzon is a representation of natural facts. For Nichiren, the Gohonzon is an object that contains all phenomena within its characters. Emerson postulates in "Nature" of "all objects": "And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man" (135). Emerson's "objects" pertain to the natural world and the subsequent language humans created to express that world. In the same respect, Nichiren's object, or Gohonzon, would be nothing without the people, and vice versa. The Sanskrit and Japanese characters written in sumi ink are symbolic representations of the "all-encompassing" and interrelated nature of life— a graphic expression that serves, similar to Emerson's Nature, as a way for humankind to perceive the fundamental truth of life – that all phenomena on the surface are separate aspects, but in truth are interconnected in universal harmony.

Emerson's Nature and Nichiren's *Gohonzon* are two modes that approach the same goal: happiness. Emerson stresses the youthful vitality that springs up within humankind when immersed in nature; this enthusiasm derives from the understanding of the harmonic and intrinsic relationship between every aspect of life. Nichiren emphasizes not merely the relative, but also the absolute happiness achieved by chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* to the *Gohonzon* – this immense joy arises from the comprehension of the interrelatedness of all phenomena, and the inherent potential within to achieve an enlightened state that banishes the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. However, the philosophies of the two differ in that Emerson's Nature is not accessible to all people, whereas Nichiren's chanting to the *Gohonzon* is available to all humankind.

-Chapter Seven-

Emerson's Call for a "Teacher"

Lawrence Buell assesses Emerson's reputation as "remarkable for the frequency with which he has been disowned by his successors" (288). He quotes an Emersonian disciple: "After shaking free—so he fancied—from his early discipleship, Walt Whitman proclaimed that 'the best part of Emersonian is, it breeds the giant that destroys itself'" (288). Buell comments on this "dismissal tradition" emphasizing how, more so than other writers, Emerson encourages his readers to dismiss any of his writings or thoughts they deem useless (292). For this reason, Buell titles Emerson "the sage as anti-mentor" (292). However, the most interesting aspect of Buell's criticism is his recognition "of the challenges of bringing one's practice into line with such a theory" (292). Emerson possessed knowledge of a higher degree, one that emphasizes the universal; yet he did not possess a concrete or clear way of practicing such a theory himself. His ideas remain that, simply ideas. Emerson could provide no means to continuously and completely experience the Over-Soul through Nature. He must have known that people for all time would not have the ability to submerge themselves into nature on an everyday basis. The mode he suggests for discovering the ultimate reality is not applicable to everyone. Thus, it is natural that he advises readers to take from his works only what they perceive as useful. At the end of "The Divinity School Address," Emerson calls out in search for a mentor. His inability to assume mentorship resides in his knowledge that he was a disciple of some teaching he had yet to discover.

The conclusion of Emerson's address to the senior class of the Harvard Divinity School reveals his personal thirst for a mentor. He addresses the need for someone to reveal the universal truth that conjoins the entire universe in truth. He states:

I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, that have been bread of life to millions. But they have no epical integrity; are fragmentary; are not shown in their order to the intellect. ("Divinity" 78)

Emerson acknowledges prior religious scriptures as immortal and fruitful. However, he comments on their lack of fullness, of completeness, of universality. He concludes his address with an invocation for something higher:

I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace; shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul; shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart; and shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy. (78)

Emerson desires a teaching that will round "full circle" just as the moon waxes, wanes, and welcomes the sun, and the sun in return, welcomes the moon. Emerson reveals a search for a teaching that possesses similarities to Nichiren's philosophy. Perhaps if Nichiren's teachings were known to the western world, Emerson would have found this "Teacher" that he sought.

Emerson desires a mentor who “shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul,” or someone who will see all phenomena as a reflection of inner, spiritual truth (78). Interestingly, Nichiren refers to mirrors throughout his writings to emphasize Buddhism’s ability to reveal the tangible and intangible aspects of life. In a speech referred to as the “Clear Mirror,” Daisaku Ikeda quotes from the “Shinkoku- o” letter found within the *Gosho Zenshu*, the Japanese collection of Nichiren’s writings:

A bronze mirror may reflect the body but not the mind. The mirror of the Lotus Sutra reflects not only our physical form but our inner being as well. Furthermore, the sutra mirrors, with complete clarity, one’s past karma and its future effect. (*Clear Mirror* 8)

Mirrors reflect external, concrete form; contrarily, the mirror of Nichiren Buddhism accentuates the reflection of the internal and abstract aspect of one’s life. Common mirrors exemplify the scientific laws of light and reflection and are a result of human intellect and creation. According to Nichiren, the Buddhist mirror, or the Gohonzon, is based on the universal Law and therefore life itself. When Nichiren compares the *Lotus Sutra* to a mirror, he simultaneously compares the Gohonzon and all phenomena to the mirror, as the title of the *Lotus Sutra* is what is inscribed on the Gohonzon and encompasses all. Ikeda articulates the analogy between the Gohonzon and a mirror:

The Gohonzon [...] is the culmination of the Buddha’s wisdom and makes it possible for us to attain Buddhahood by providing us with a means of perceiving the true aspect of our life. Just as a mirror is indispensable for putting your face and hair in order, you need a mirror that reveals the

depths of your life if you are to lead a happier and more beautiful existence. (9)

The Gohonzon serves as a mirror insofar that it aids one to perceive the true reality of his or her life and its relation to the Ten Worlds, the ten factors, and the universal.

The bronze mirror Nichiren refers to is quite different from the glass mirrors in use today. In ancient times mirrors were constructed of polished metals such as nickel, bronze, and steel. These mirrors do not provide clear reflections; rather they blur reflections and create distorted images. Ancient bronze mirrors not only inadequately reflect, but they also tarnish easily and become unusable if not polished consistently. Thus, in “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime” Nichiren emphasizes the need for polishing one’s “mirror”:

This is similar to a tarnished mirror that will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality. (4)

To polish one’s mirror, or life, Nichiren emphasizes chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. Emerson emphasizes opening oneself to the universal through a personal experience with nature. He perceives the soul to be a reflection of the world and vice versa. In the same manner, Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes the Gohonzon, the graphic expression of the true aspect of all life, to mirror the universal found within each soul, or inner depths of human beings. Thus, Emerson’s concept of self-reliance and Nichiren Buddhism’s human revolution are integral aspects of the world. Each individual must “polish” his or her

mirror, or soul, by delving into the internal, facing his or her personal fundamental darkness and desiring to elevate his or her life condition within to then radiate outward the moral and good nature upon all of humanity and the universe.

In *The Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren emphasizes the necessity of such a mirror, due to its ability to remind individuals of the universal potentiality of Buddhahood: “It is like the situation when one faces a mirror and makes a bow of obeisance: the image in the mirror likewise makes a bow of obeisance to oneself” (165). The “bow of obeisance” within the mirror symbolizes the truth that “self” and “others” are, like *shikishin funi*, “two, but not two,” emphasizing how our actions and feelings towards others mirror our actions and feelings towards ourselves. Thus, as Emerson acknowledges in “The Divinity School Address,” the world is a reflection of the soul. The phenomena and occurrences occurring throughout the world mirror the contents of individual souls. Therefore, both Emerson and Nichiren articulate the greatness of the individual and the need for each person to revolutionize his or her thinking, his or her lives, and subsequently his or her world.

Emerson, while aware of Buddhism in general, was unaware of Nichiren Buddhism. Perhaps if Nichiren’s philosophy had been available to more than a select few during the time, Emerson might have found the mentor he desired and a philosophy that came full circle. Emerson and Nichiren perceive the interconnectedness of all phenomena and the democratic greatness of each individual; however, Nichiren provides a means of elevating oneself applicable to all humankind. Emerson’s look towards the East for a philosophy that reflects the reality connecting universal phenomena to the individual is actuated by Nichiren’s philosophy. The two thinkers share common

philosophies and mirror one another in their stress upon the value and potential within every single aspect of life. Emerson's genius mirrors Buddha nature, his Over-Soul mirrors the concept of *ichinen sanzen*, and his emphasis upon nature as an avenue to recognizing universality mirrors *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. Yet, Emerson longed for a teacher who could completely explicate and make accessible such a philosophy— a philosophy Nichiren provided centuries before.

-Appendix-

The Ten Worlds of *Ichinen Sanzen*

The first world, Hell, is a state dominated by misery and suffering. Due to the constraints of such a negative existence, a person's intense anger serves as fuel for more self-destruction. The second world is Hungry Spirits. The world of Hungry Spirits is also known as the world of Hunger and represents a condition fueled by insatiable desires. The third world is Animality. Nichiren states, "Foolishness is the world of animals" to characterize a condition fueled only by instinct and devoid of moral reasoning and the wisdom necessary to possess self-control ("Object" 358). Moreover, this state consists of those who are fearful of the strong yet prey upon weaker beings. The fourth world is Anger, or *Asuras*. In Indian mythology, *asuras* are "arrogant and belligerent demons" (Soka Gakkai 686). This world is also known as the world of anger due to its characterization of subtle yet incessant aggressiveness resulting from a shackled ego. In the fourth world, hubris hinders people from realizing and manifesting their true selves; thus their delusion prevents them from recognizing others in their true form. A façade masks this condition, as one may speak or act in any means necessary to be superior to others. These four worlds—hell, hungry spirits, animality, and anger—conjoin and are known as the four evil paths.

The fifth world is Humanity. The fifth world presents a condition where one aspires to an elevated life by attempting to act with reason, to control desires and impulses, and to attain harmony with their other people and surroundings. The sixth world is Heaven. The condition of heaven consists of a rapturous and contented feeling resulting from the attainment or satisfaction of a desire. However, the joy referred to is short lived due to its dependence on an external and temporary circumstance. These six worlds, beginning with

Hell and ending with Heaven, make up the six paths, and “are all present in the physical appearance of the person’s face” (“Object” 358). The face depicts the six paths because of the instability characterized by the lower worlds.

When one exists within the six paths he or she is at the mercy of external circumstances that are apt to change from one moment to the next, meaning that an individual is not in control of personal emotions which change dependent upon things occurring external to the individual. For example, a sunny day makes people happy, or not having financial stability can cause depression. The instability of existence within the six paths manifests itself in the facial expressions of living beings, for we are able to decipher the emotional condition of another person by looking for knitted brows, or a smile, hazy eyes, or pierced lips. Ralph Waldo Emerson acknowledges these lower six worlds as part of the “certain divine laws” that we read “hourly in each other’s faces, in each other’s actions, in our own remorse” (“Divinity” 64). The difference for Nichiren is that it is not witnessed “hourly,” but in every single moment.

The final four worlds surpass the six paths and are known as the four noble worlds. The seventh world, Voice-Hearers, is also known as the world of learning due to a person’s comprehension of the impermanent nature of all phenomena. Moreover, those in the world of learning recognize the instability of the six paths and desire an elevated condition. Attainment of a higher state is characterized by the development and revolution of the individual. This human revolution is achieved by gaining knowledge through observation of both history and contemporary affairs. The eighth world is Cause-Awakened Ones. Also known as Realization, this world depicts a state that extends from the seventh in that now a desire to liberate oneself from the sufferings of the six paths is manifested by his/her seeking

truth within his/her own observations. Additionally, those in the world of realization are apt to face death as a reality and strive for the eternal. However, these two worlds are devoid of an altruistic approach and strive instead for self-centered, individual perfection.

Bodhisattvas, the ninth world, represent a condition where one values and strives for the happiness and enlightenment of others before his/her own. Nichiren reveals how this state exists to some degree within everyone when he states, “Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children. He too has a portion of the bodhisattva world within him” (“Object” 358).

Bodhi (enlightenment) and *sattva* (beings) is the manifestation of a compassionate state that refers to a person who seeks enlightenment while working and leading others to achieve the same.

Buddhahood, the tenth and the highest of the worlds, is a state where one realizes “the true entity of all phenomena” and is therefore a Buddha (*Lotus Sutra* 2. 24). Of the ten worlds, Nichiren asserts, “Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate” (“Object” 358). By realizing the true nature of life, those in Buddhahood exist in a state of absolute freedom from the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Absolute freedom does not constitute a state devoid of obstacles and the four kinds of suffering; rather those who achieve Buddhahood ceaselessly take action to oppose negative functions. The concept of absolute freedom arises from the ability to transcend any and all difficulties by using them as catalysts for continuing development. *The SGI Dictionary of Buddhism* details this state as one of “complete access to the boundless wisdom, compassion, courage, and other qualities inherent in life; with these one can create harmony with and among others and between human life and nature” (688). It is not correct to assume that the Ten Worlds can be

compartmentalized or separate from one another, because within each world simultaneously exists all the others.

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