

## SELF-RELIANCE



We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind, and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed.



“Self-Reliance” originally appeared in Emerson’s first series of essays, published in 1841 at the height of his powers as a writer and thinker. The essay is a celebration of genius, which Emerson and the Transcendentalists valued very highly. But the word *genius* meant something different for them. For us the word connotes great intelligence or talent; for the Transcendentalists it meant something more like a current of energy or power that can be tapped. In their view, virtually any person could demonstrate genius if he allowed this current to flow through him in an unobstructed way. It could be said that the essay represents

