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**THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF EMERSON'S IDEAS ON
AMERICAN MANAGEMENT LITERATURE FROM THE LENS OF
DALE CARNEGIE'S HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE
PEOPLE**

Taylor M. Dalton

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Honors Thesis

THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF EMERSON'S IDEAS ON AMERICAN
MANAGEMENT LITERATURE FROM THE LENS OF DALE CARNEGIE'S
HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

by
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ABSTRACT

THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF EMERSON'S IDEAS ON AMERICAN
MANAGEMENT LITERATURE FROM THE LENS OF DALE CARNEGIE'S
HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

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Bachelor of Arts

This thesis considers how the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson may be seen as an important precursor to Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Through a side-by-side analysis of four key topics—creativity, intention, action, and the idea of a non-hierarchical society—it becomes clear that the independent and creative mindset envisioned by Emerson in essays like “Self-Reliance” and “The American Scholar” finds a full and practical expression in the pages of Carnegie's famous book. A close reading of these texts will reveal how Carnegie's application of the philosophical ideas put forth by Emerson served as the foundation for many later management and leadership texts.

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“The reason why rivers and seas receive the homage of a hundred mountain streams is that they keep below them. Thus, they are able to reign over all the mountain streams. So, the sage, wishing to be above men, putteth himself below them; wishing to be before them, he putteth himself behind them. Thus, though his place be above men, they do not feel his weight; though his place be before them, they do not count it an injury” (Carnegie *How to Win Friends and Influence People*).

Introduction:

I’ll never forget the first time I bought a stock. To this day I can’t remember if it was a share in Nike, Marriott, or Disney. What I do remember, however, was the feeling that I had done something that was pushing my career forward. I was excited because this was something totally different from the lemonade stands or the car washes or the lawns I’d mowed. For the first time in my life, I was using that money to make money for me. I felt like my world had completely changed. That day, however, my dad told me something I’ll never forget: “Remember, son, the greatest investment you’ll ever make is in yourself.” He then handed me a copy of Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and challenged me to read as many books on business and leadership as I possibly could. Carnegie’s ideas thrilled me. There were many principles that were relevant to my stage of life—even though that stage of life was as a twelve-year-old. I felt that the ideas contained within his writing were not only helpful for me as I contemplated what I wanted to be when I grew up but were just as important for my development as a person.

It has been many years since I first opened *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. I have now gone through multiple copies of that book and read hundreds of other

books on leadership and management thinking. The ideas contained within those pages have led me to various business, learning, and leadership opportunities across three continents. I have started multiple businesses, participated in over fifteen different internships, made great investments in the stock market, lost many of those same investments, and have landed a dream job with a company following graduation. As an English major, I've had to be proactive about my business education—literature and creative writing classes are wonderful, but they will not land you an internship in consulting, operations, or investing. I've learned that in order to pursue my passion for writing and communication, while also striving to further my career in the business world, I needed to be constantly learning as much as I could about business on my own.

The best way to learn about being successful in business, I found, was to find successful people and learn from them. Over the years, I continued to seek out the people who were experiencing the type of success that I dreamed about and ask about their story. I wanted to know what had made them so successful, what drove them to excellence, and what they were reading. When I would ask them for book recommendations, the first book that almost all of them would recommend I read was Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It didn't seem to matter what field they'd chosen; there was a consistent theme across the board for each of these leaders and successful managers. To them, the ability to understand leadership and interaction in general was vital to any career.

The first recommendation was so consistent, in fact, that after a while I started to ask them what book (besides *How to Win Friends and Influence People*) had helped them to learn more in business. Over the years, I've realized that the principles and themes

Dale Carnegie taught have served as a foundation for much of the business leadership and organizational behavior written about today. Carnegie's books were pivotal in providing the foundation for this genre. Warren Buffet (arguably the greatest investor the world has ever seen) once told a documentary film crew that "in my office, you will not see the degree I have from the University of Nebraska, or the master's degree I have from Columbia University, but you'll see the certificate I got from the Dale Carnegie course" (Gallo). He, too, believed in the idea that the greatest investment a person can ever make is in themselves. This theme of self-improvement in order to become a leader of people and organizations was an integral part of Carnegie's teaching. As Carnegie himself wrote, "improving yourself is a lot more profitable than trying to improve others" (Carnegie *How to Win Friends and Influence People*).

Before there was even a genre of business management and leadership texts, there were already people thinking about these principles. Over a hundred years later, these books are everywhere. A more accurate understanding of the origins of the ideas contained within these books will allow us to develop a better understanding of what these ideas mean. In order to understand these texts, I'll be pulling one of the earliest texts of business management literature to try to better understand the origins of the present genre. I want to figure out the catalyst behind this outburst of business management and leadership books. For the purposes of this analysis, the geographical scope of the project will focus solely on writings from the US and how those writings have played a role in creating the management styles that Carnegie advocated and taught.

In 1900, there were literally no business management books or leadership training courses. In 2020 alone, there were over 11,000 business management and leadership

books published just in the US (*World Economic Forum*). Anything that can sustain the publication of 11,000 books is clearly still relevant. If it is that important, then an analysis into the root of the subject will yield interesting results. Rather than trying to synthesize all these books (a nearly impossible task), I will analyze *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie as one of the earliest American business management and leadership texts.

The author I will highlight as integral to the ideas put forward by Dale Carnegie is Ralph Waldo Emerson. US essayist, philosopher, and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston on May 25, 1803. Emerson was a graduate of Harvard University and was ordained as a Unitarian Minister in 1829. His essay “The American Scholar” was first delivered as a lecture in 1837 before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge. This essay focuses on the responsibilities and values of the American scholar. “The American Scholar” is one of Emerson’s most important works and “is widely regarded as a seminal text in American Literature” (Emerson Central). “Self-Reliance” is perhaps Emerson’s most popular work. As a Transcendentalist, Emerson thought that by focusing on the purity and intrinsic goodness of the individual and the interaction of community with nature, one could create a stronger society. “Self-Reliance,” published in 1841, reflects Emerson’s ideas on self-sufficiency as an integral virtue in such a society.

These two essays played a pivotal role in shaping much of the writing surrounding American thought on learning and self-improvement, which I believe provided the basis on which management ideals and principles were created. Literary scholar Dr. David Greenham writes that with the rejection of European cultural traditions, Emerson was seeking to create a literary (and cultural) philosophy that was distinctly

independent and American. He is considered by many to be “the father of American Literature” (Greenham). This is because these principles hinge upon the idea that American identity is directly related to the freedom to think and act as one wishes, and thus move on to become who one wants. In *The American Scholar*, Emerson portrays the scholar as a person who learns from three main sources: nature, books (more specifically the record of what has been learned in the past), and action. These three things serve as the primary sources of education for the individual known as a scholar.

Emerson has rarely (if ever) been seen as a precursor to management thought. Emerson was almost antithetical to business throughout his life. In fact, Thomas D. Birch, associate professor of Economics at UNH, has written that “Emerson was fundamentally ambivalent about capitalism and the industrial revolution” (Birch). In other words, he was not focused on making money, but instead as a Romantic, was focused on living life to the fullest. In fact, most Romantics were typically seen as actively critical of capitalism and its principles. They were more focused on a larger movement toward humanistic thought. Romantic critic Michael Lowy wrote that “the essential characteristic of Romantic anti-capitalism is a thorough critique of modern industrial civilization (including the process and production of work) in the name of certain pre-capitalist social and cultural values” (Lowy). A close reading of some of Emerson’s most important works, however, shows that the ideas he wrote and spoke about were similar to, and perhaps influential on, Carnegie’s work. Carnegie understood how people operated and, thus, how they needed to be treated in order to accomplish the ideal society that Emerson envisioned.

It is apparent, upon close examination of his description of these ideas, that Emerson hoped that Americans who heard them would apply them and build on them. It has been said that “Emerson did not believe that great men were ends in themselves but served particular functions, notably for Emerson their capacity to ‘clear our eyes of egotism, and enable us to see other people in their works’. Emerson’s representative men are ‘great, but exist that there may be greater men’” (Brewton). This is where I believe the importance of Dale Carnegie’s writing and teaching lies. An idea without action lacks the staying power to create true change. Emerson’s ideas were pivotal in creating the independent and creative mindset that allowed for Carnegie’s later management courses. I will illustrate how Emerson’s thoughts served as the theoretical foundation for the practical application of the management principles described in Carnegie’s book.

Without Carnegie’s step-by-step approach to management, however, these principles would have not been as applicable. Dale Carnegie took some of these basic concepts of thought, human interaction, and community and adapted them in a way that allowed the everyday individual to understand. He took the principles espoused by Emerson and built them out into a more workable, applicable format. Thus, it is through a combination of Emerson’s scholarship and thought and Carnegie’s application and process that true change can be achieved within the workplace. In the business management profession, where discussion and understanding the problem are vital to coming to a solution, both the environment and the approach to that solution must be in line with the ideas put forth by Emerson and outlined by Carnegie.

Creativity

The first principle I would like to explore (as described by Emerson) is that of creativity. It is important to note that Emerson believed in the power of the individual to produce original ideas. The unexpected connection to Carnegie, however, is that Carnegie also advocated for fostering creativity but took that idea a step further by also adding that the true leader must also seek to help others do the same. In his eyes, it was not enough to just be creative for ourselves, we must also teach others to have that creative drive as well.

The scholar, according to Emerson, is the “delegated intellect” of society (Emerson 54). In other words, a scholar is one who holds the occupational responsibility for thought. One of the most important things that a person can do is become “a man [or a woman] thinking,” which for Emerson means someone who thinks for themselves (Emerson 54). To put it another way, society has often falsely defined people solely by their occupation. Emerson believed it necessary for people to define themselves “not [as] a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer,” but to recognize that “he is all” (Emerson 54). Otherwise, a person may become “a mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men’s thinking” (Emerson 54). It is because of original thought that real ideas occur. That creation of ideas is what makes people unique. What Emerson argues, however, is that it is far more important for people to define themselves by their own identity, and that when they think, that is a role they play...but that act of thinking isn’t necessarily their full and complete identity. An example of this is my time as a student. If I were to define my entire identity on the fact that I am a university student, then that would be an example of the failure Emerson was pointing out within society. In such a society, where we are only

identified by our function, “the priest becomes a form; the attorney, a statutebook; the mechanic, a machine; the sailor, a rope of a ship” (Emerson 54). It is important that a human who engages in the actions such as studying, define themselves first as a human.

If these “thinking” scholars are the ones who propel society forward through the identification of problems and the creation of solutions to those problems, then those scholars are also the people who are defining creativity or new ways of thinking. The identification of new ways of thinking comes from a deeper understanding of the problems within the world. One of the fundamental responsibilities of an entrepreneur is to identify key bottlenecks in society and provide innovative solutions for those problems. These scholars are entrepreneurs because they are creating solutions to the problems in society. They must not be afraid of work, for “labor is everywhere welcome; always we are invited to work; only be this limitation observed, that a man shall not for the sake of wider activity sacrifice any opinion to the popular judgments and modes of action” (Emerson 63). Emerson is talking about the importance of work in making space for real creativity and original thought. Those who find inspiration through the genuine understanding of others are more likely to solve the real issues in the world. Emerson writes that for such a scholar, “the world is his [if he or she] can see through its pretension” (Emerson 65). In other words, a closer examination of human needs within society provides ample understanding of the bottlenecks waiting to be solved.

Emerson’s essay does not, however, fully address the practical application of how to develop more of this creativity. *How to Win Friends and Influence People* begins by teaching the fundamental techniques for how to work with and supervise people. Working with others is an essential first step in understanding their needs. When one understands

the needs of others, that person is then better able to address those needs with a more nuanced and creative solution. Carnegie believed that we should never criticize, condemn, or complain because in almost every case, criticism creates resentment and disagreement. He wrote that when we feel like someone has made a critical mistake or done something wrong, it is easy to feel as if they need to be criticized in order to make up for their error. However, Carnegie thought that the better thing to do in such a situation was to reward the good behavior you see in those you manage or work with, instead of punishing the bad. In his opinion, “criticism is futile because it puts a person on the defensive and usually makes him strive to justify himself” (Carnegie 5). Therefore, the best way for us to comprehend people is through developing an understanding of their needs. Achieving this understanding requires creativity. More importantly, creating understanding will also perpetuate further creativity.

“Self-Reliance” deals with the importance of relying on oneself for knowledge and guidance. Doing one’s best brings relief and happiness, “but when [someone] has said or done otherwise, [that] shall give him no peace” (Emerson 260). Our best efforts can only happen when we trust ourselves. As Emerson said, “trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string” (Emerson 260). Emerson promotes self-reliance as an ideal, even a virtue, and contrasts it with various modes of dependence or conformity. To Emerson, those who wish to add to the collective consciousness must first learn to think for themselves. Otherwise, they will be caught in the trap of conformity, because “society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood [or ability to rely on oneself] of every one of its members” (Emerson 261). Rather than being obsessed with how others think of us, we are to focus on creating our own journeys through life. If we are too concerned

with our reputation and the approval of others, we will never be able to accept our individual natures, for the “virtue in most request [by society] is conformity” and “self-reliance is its aversion” (Emerson 261).

Emerson believed that it was better to live true to oneself than to have one’s great attributes or qualities praised by the public. He wrote “that which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it” (Emerson 279). If an individual were to become too focused on the praise of the world around him, he would lose his personal identity and trade it for the opinion of the masses. It is transient—where “society is a wave” and that wave “moves onward but the water of which it is composed does not” (Emerson 281). That is why Emerson goes on to discuss the importance of readdressing our old opinions and thoughts to determine the direction of our lives. If we are unwilling to address such decisions and attempt to discover whether or not they are helping us to become better people, we must let them go. Emerson says that the ideal individual, “belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of all things. Where he is, there is nature” (Emerson 267). In other words, such individuals cannot be bound by only one instance or situation that defines who they are completely. For “[our] own gift [we] can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life’s cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession” (Emerson 279). As such, it is our individual natures that determine who we will become and what we will achieve in this life. This allows us to better combat comfort and conformity.

One of the main purposes of *Self-Reliance* was to urge the individual to avoid conformity and to seek creativity. The greatest gift man could give society is the

application of his own conscience rather than a passive obedience to the ideals which society had fed him. Otherwise, that individual becomes like “most men [who] have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion” (Emerson 264). The idea of self-reliance is, in essence, the idea that an individual should rely on his or her own personal judgement. This will influence the choices they make, the activities they participate in, and even the person that they eventually become. If we merely adhere to the principles of conformity, we will develop the false perception that we are maintaining integrity by staying consistent. Such individuals who are stuck conforming to society’s standards live in a world that is “false in all particulars [where] their every truth is not quite true” (Emerson 264). To Emerson, such consistency is false, because it discounts the importance of one’s own ideas and instincts—the natural intuition with which each of us can make our own decisions. It is only through self-reliance that we are able to accomplish anything truly original, especially in a world full of consistent societal opposition.

By building on the foundation of Emerson’s ideas surrounding creativity, Carnegie moves from the mere idea of cultivating and governing ourselves to the more general application of cultivating and fostering creativity within others. Like Emerson, Carnegie acknowledges that there will be times when you will be faced with opposition as you try to foster creativity. However, Carnegie also describes originality as crucial to leadership and management. In situations of opposition, he writes that it is best to understand everything you can about the points your opponent is making. To him, “if there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of

view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own" (Carnegie 33). Such an approach will allow managers and leaders to promote a creative space for others.

Carnegie takes Emerson's ideas around the importance of creativity a step further by stressing that we should not only cultivate our own creativity, but also find ways to foster creativity in others. Carnegie believed that when you respect your opponent as someone who has just as much importance as you do, you will be more likely to reach an agreement. When you encourage others around you to continue to reach for new ideas and be creative, they are less likely to feel threatened by your ideas. This leads to a state where people are freer to discuss their own ideas and foster creation, something which Emerson spoke very highly of. Emerson urged that we must "first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause" because in Emerson's eyes we "lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity" (Emerson 269). In other words, by relying on the things which make us unique and inspire us to act, we are able to come up with more creative ideas.

Carnegie believed that such a state was best achieved when we think about the perspective of others, hold them to high expectations and high moral standards, and eventually help others get what they desire. True leadership comes when managers listen to the teams they manage and treat their employees as individuals with just as much value as themselves. In conclusion, Carnegie writes that "it is naïve to believe that you will always get a favorable reaction from other persons when you use these approaches, but the experience of most people shows that you are more likely to change attitudes this way than by not using these principles—and if you increase your successes by even a mere 10

percent, you have become 10 percent more effective as a leader than you were before—and that is your benefit” (Carnegie 218). This idea is a clear indication that one of the main reasons Carnegie wrote *How to Win Friends and Influence People* was for the development of better leaders and managers.

Creative management promotes independent thinking, respects autonomy, and minimizes criticism to help teams solve problems. I have seen this principle of managers fostering creativity play out in different ways over the course of my professional experience. When I have been on teams that focused on a strict acceptance of the mere fulfillment of the duties given to us, those teams rarely produced new ideas. There was rarely any progress. In fact, during one particular internship, my manager was so focused on micro-managing each aspect of every team member’s job, that they were unable to achieve any autonomy. Because my manager was focused on only allowing us to do exactly what he wanted us to do, our team was never able to create real value for our client. He was defying the advice of both Emerson and Carnegie with this behavior. Our client was an impact-driven firm providing solutions for problems in Madagascar. While none of the rest of the team had personal experience living in Madagascar (besides the manager), we all had participated in thorough research to understand all we could about the problem we were trying to solve. Because we hadn’t actually visited Madagascar, however, the manager would discount the ideas we would come up with as unfeasible, irrational, and illogical. Any original ideas that a member of the team had were instantly quashed by the manager in charge. Emerson labeled situations like this as “a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them” (Emerson 265). Eventually,

this caused us all to have no motivation to find new ways to solve the problems we ran into or automate any processes. We were shackled by a complete reliance on the manager to tell us what to do. This was not, of course, what any of us wanted to do, but was a direct result of poor management.

A contrasting positive example is illustrated through an experience that occurred when I worked at a non-profit in Haiti. We were building schools, creating clean drinking water solutions, and working to provide a better living situation for the villagers we worked with. Once each member of the team was trained and understood our individual tasks, we were encouraged by the team-lead to find better ways to do the tasks we were assigned. If we saw something in the systems and processes that could be accomplished more efficiently, we were encouraged to share those ideas. In fact, the person in charge incentivized us to come up with improvements to the current system. This led each of us to fulfill our own tasks and also actively seek out ways to automate those tasks in order to free up more time, resources, and energy. Emerson wrote that in such circumstances, we should “speak what we think now in hard words, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today” (Emerson 265). In other words, do not ever be afraid to challenge something that seems inefficient or wasteful simply because that is how it was done before. The resulting culture made the work more enjoyable, which increased our motivation and led us to come up with even more improvements. These two experiences could not have been more different, and the majority of that difference was because of the self-reliance we were encouraged to exhibit within our own individual workstreams. Thus, creativity can create both cohesion and innovation within the workplace.

Intention

The second principle I want to highlight is how intention can and should govern the lives of those who wish to truly progress. Emerson sought to encourage the scholar to live an intentional life. He outlined why such an approach to learning and living was vital. Carnegie took this a step further by arguing that intention was also important for leading others, prescribing specific methods for how to lead with intention.

Emerson believed that "what I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think . . . the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude" (Emerson 263). In Emerson's view, the individual who cares too much about what other people think is unable to come up with their own ideas. "Nothing is at last sacred," he wrote, "but the integrity of your own mind" and if you "absolve you to yourself...you shall have the suffrage of the world" (Emerson 261). Those individuals who rely on the opinions of others are never able to come up with ideas or themes that can help society. Otherwise, as Emerson writes, "Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For everything that is given, something is taken" (Emerson 281). In other words, there can be no true progress without a conscious and intentional tendency toward relying on yourself. Carnegie adds to this idea by emphasizing the value of teaching others to rely on themselves. He takes Emerson's thoughts on the importance of self-reliance and then emphasizes how managers should teach their team members how to cultivate those same ideals within themselves.

The worst thing that we can do in life, according to Emerson, is to go throughout our lives without conscious thought. Such a person “does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past” and “cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time” (Emerson 270). If we ignore the original thoughts that come to our minds and continue to live within the biases and opinions that we have been fed by society, we are less able to change society for the better because we accept the status quo. The unthinking individual is only half awake because he is led by the crowd. Thus, “it is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men” (Emerson 275). Emerson encouraged his audience to wake up, to think for themselves, and to embrace the separate traits that allow them to be unique. This is something which Emerson discussed in both “The American Scholar” and “Self-Reliance.” There is power in embracing the constant changes that are bound to happen within the world. This principle of adaptability is yet another important management trait. No company (or leader) can ever hope to survive in an everchanging economy without first accepting the fact that they must constantly change and adapt. Emerson argued that such a “foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines” and “with consistency a great soul simply has nothing to do” (Emerson 265). The acceptance of ourselves as men and women with unique traits and abilities to contribute, in Emerson’s opinion, leads us to create new ideas and examine the old tenets upon which society had been created. The overarching element that links these ideas together is intention, because intention provides direction and purpose to creativity, innovation, and individual identity.

Once managers and their teams accept themselves as unique and valuable members of society, Carnegie agrees, it is imperative to appeal to a person's nobler motives and nature. The best way to help people want to help you is to encourage them to act on their higher values. Such an appeal to act on good intentions not only drives that person to consider their own innate sense of goodness and nature, but it also leads them to believe that others have similar higher motives. This harks back to the idea Emerson advocated, which was that "character is higher than intellect" (Emerson 62). In other words, that appeal to a person's nobler virtues is more important than the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge for the sake of increased intellect. I have found in my own life that when I see people not as they are at the present but as they can become, they tend to succeed much quicker. For example, last year I was co-president of one of the largest business clubs on campus, the Management Consulting Association or MCA. As a part of my responsibilities as co-president, I was in charge of selecting and managing a team of leaders who each had a team below them. Each manager was independent of the other and often had very different ideas as to how the club should operate. At the beginning, I struggled to help each manager understand the importance of working together with the other managers to form a more cohesive unit. It was not until I brought them all together for a leadership training where I showed them how each team was complementary to the other teams, that we were able to finally achieve the unity required to be successful. By appealing to the higher values I believed each leader possessed, I was able to create an environment where all felt included, valued, and supported. Unity does not mean conformity, for at its core, unity should intentionally motivate each team member to pursue their own ideas with the over-arching goal of creating something better. That unity

comes from a common vision, which is provided by the appeal to higher virtues and values. This intention was integral to our success as a student-run volunteer organization.

That leads us to the crux of *Self-Reliance*, namely, that though society can sometimes remain stagnant, the individual who focuses on self-improvement continues to grow and progress. Too many individuals in society are directed simply by reaction. Emerson believed, as have many management thinkers after him, that progression was only possible through proactivity. Emerson urged, “whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness but must explore it if it be goodness” (Emerson 261). Here, Emerson is not suggesting that we should not ever listen to the ideas of others, but rather that we should not blindly follow those ideas. The proactive nature is the highest nature because it leads the individual to think for themselves and create value in society. To Emerson, it was vital for the individual to seek truth over politeness, integrity instead of comfort, and honesty without hypocrisy. In the end, self-reliance leads us to a better understanding of principles. That deeper understanding of principles pushes us to change and to create new ideas that will move society forward. Self-reliance, at its heart, is the triumph of principle-based individualism, rather than a blind conformist attitude. As Emerson concluded, “nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles” (Emerson 282).

One important way to foster this “triumph of principles” that Emerson discusses is through the understanding of other people. This paradox of seeking to understand others while also striving to not conform is given clarity through the continuation of these ideas by Dale Carnegie. Carnegie believed that one of the best ways to be welcome anywhere

is to invite others to talk about themselves. He writes, “I have discovered from personal experience that one can win the attention and time and cooperation of even the most sought-after people by becoming genuinely interested in them” (Carnegie 52). It is important to note that these two ideas of nonconformity and paying attention to the thoughts of others are not at odds with each other. Creativity happens when your ideas also work with the ideas of others. Intentional thought occurs when you bring your ideas to the table with the understanding that better solutions are created when they are built in tandem with the ideas of others. This is how Carnegie applies Emerson’s ideas, specifically in the context of becoming a good leader. By asking others about their accomplishments, one is far more likely to be liked by them. Carnegie writes that people are usually most interested in talking about themselves. He goes on to say that smiling, remembering people’s names, talking about things they are interested in, treating others the way we wish to be treated, and asking ourselves the question “what is there about him [or her] that I can honestly admire?” will all lead others to like you (Carnegie 87). This can only happen when we are being intentional about our actions and words. Intention must guide our actions, or else our actions will not lead to progress. This harks back to Emerson’s idea that “the true scholar grudges every opportunity of action passed by, as a loss of power” (Emerson 60). In other words, while intentionally using each moment can be difficult and mentally exhausting, a consistent conscious effort to be a better leader will result in long-lasting rewards; the opposite, will result in missed opportunities. Emerson wrote about the principle of intention, but Carnegie took it a step further by outlining actual methods for utilizing intention in management.

In order to apply this principle of intentional living espoused by Emerson, Carnegie provides a roadmap for leaders who want to help others to change without causing offense or arousing resentment. This can be difficult for leaders and managers, especially in the business world where deadlines are frequent and egos can sometimes run rampant. This is one of the dangers of only being focused on individuality for the sake of individuality. Carnegie writes that if, as a leader, you must find fault, the best way to go about that is through first discussing attributes or areas where you appreciate something about that person (Carnegie 156). Starting a tough discussion with something like this will lead that person to feel more comfortable and will make tough feedback easier to take. In such cases, the manager must also be comfortable with pushback. No leader is immune to criticism, just like no employee is immune to criticism, and the best way for the two to create a mutually beneficial relationship is to not discount the good things a person has done by qualifying the praise with criticism. Emerson called for the same approach from his scholars, saying that “the main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the upbuilding of man” that the human mind “is [the] one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men” (Emerson 67). A knowledge and understanding of others comes through intention. Criticism is best taken when approached from the perspective that the issue is something that can be handled jointly.

Another approach that can aid in the feedback process is when the manager or leader admits fault first. A productive discussion on how to remedy mistakes might ensue, leading the employee to feel more comfortable admitting their own shortcomings. It shows that you, as the leader, are unafraid to discuss your own mistakes and allows you

both to find solutions together. This should never be done in a bossy or domineering way, because as Carnegie writes, “resentment caused by a brash order may last a long time—even if the order was given to correct an obviously bad situation” (Carnegie 194). It is, therefore, critical to give feedback privately to an individual, ensuring that others are not around. This will allow that individual to protect their ego, while still receiving the essential feedback. In this way, an effective manager is able to “let a man [or woman] then know [their] worth and keep things under his feet” (Emerson 267). In other words, Emerson believed that helping people understand their worth is an essential part of being a scholar. As a writer on leadership, Carnegie agreed and prescribed this direct approach of admitting fault first as the manager to help foster that growth within the employee. Following such an incident, it is vital for the manager to continue to mention the good things they have noticed from that employee. Being lavish with praise goes a long way, especially when that praise is specific to the individual. Again, Carnegie takes Emerson’s philosophies and builds on them, creating a more complete picture as to how we can apply intention in our efforts to become better managers and leaders.

Action

The third principle we will highlight here is how action and experience are pivotal in shaping and creating dynamic ideas. Emerson thought that action provided the individual with a basis upon which to create and think. He highlights this by discussing the importance of action in shaping our individual identity (Emerson 58). Carnegie also believed in the importance of action, but actually provided specific examples of actions we can take to become better leaders and managers.

Action is the natural duty of the thinking person because thought that has no action behind it does not lead anywhere. As Emerson himself says, “a great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think” (Emerson 62). This focus and intentional action leads to increased learning, which pushes the individual to progress. As that individual progresses through various levels of learning, so too does their ability to think for themselves. This learning based on action is far more important than a mere display (or diploma) of higher learning. To Emerson, without action, “thought can never ripen into truth” for the “preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action” (Emerson 60). In other words, we learn from nature as it occurs around us, from the thoughts of those who have come before, and we also learn from action. As Emerson himself notes, “the one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul” (Emerson 60).

Emerson concludes that action and experience are “the raw material[s] out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products” (Emerson 60). Successful action builds on the principles of creativity and intention. This idea of experience providing vital wisdom in order for true creation to occur is an idea that will carry a lot of weight in later management thought. In other words, when a scholar is able to discover ideas that are central to the human heart and mind, that scholar is able to communicate with people of all classes and ages becoming, “the world's eye. He is the world's heart” (Emerson 63). This understanding of others leads the true American scholar to seek solutions to the world’s collective issues. On a grand scale, this could look like an original thinker finding the existing bottlenecks, such as a traffic jam or a moral dilemma, within their societies and then creating solutions to those bottlenecks. To Emerson, the noblest ambition of the

true scholar was to improve human society by becoming the greatest original thinkers possible (Emerson 65). On a more personal level, when a person better understands the needs of others around them, they are better suited for creating good relationships. This understanding of others leads to a more unified society, which, in turn, creates a more thriving environment that fosters original ideas.

Carnegie also advocated for action colored by experience as a method for creating a better society. He was interested in making the world a better place and thought that doing so would bring more success and financial rewards than just pushing forward without thought or consideration of others. Carnegie believed that the best way to win people over to your way of thinking was to avoid arguments at all costs. This is where action and experience come heavily into play. If the aim of your conversation is to prove the other person wrong, such an approach will rarely lead to a productive discussion. Instead, Carnegie believed that we should never say that a person is wrong but should instead begin each discussion in a friendly way that establishes common ground. Such action can engender loyalty and encourage collaboration in a way that flat-out criticism never could.

When we find at any time that we might be wrong, we should quickly admit our fault and move on. That will ensure that the people we are talking with will feel that we have created a safe place in which it is fine to be wrong. When we are right, Carnegie believed that we should “try to win people gently and tactfully to our way of thinking” (Carnegie 125). Helping people to affirm what we are saying will also lead them to agree with the overarching themes of our own views. This is best accomplished, from Carnegie’s perspective, by letting the other person do the majority of the talking. Such an

approach will lead them to feel that many of the ideas are their own and that you have honestly tried to see their perspective (rather than imposing your view onto theirs). This will also show that you are sympathetic to their point of view, further establishing commonality. Experience will provide wisdom and that wisdom will help govern our actions and opinions moving forward.

A Non-Hierarchal Society

The final principle I wish to discuss is the refusal to see people in terms of class or position. To Emerson this insight came through the study of those in classes who would typically have been considered by others to be beneath the scope of classical scholars. Emerson, in short, appreciated those who drew inspiration from the lives of lower-class working individuals. As a Romantic, he believed that true scholars needed to endure “poverty, hardship, solitude,” and other privations while following the path of knowledge to ultimately become repositories of wisdom to which society could turn (Emerson 63). This is, in essence, the idea of the modern-day entrepreneur--a true entrepreneur must first understand the needs of the individuals before they can ever hope to run a successful product or service business. Carnegie also believed that it was essential to understand where other people were coming from, writing that “if you want others to like you, if you want to develop real friendships, if you want to help others [you must] become genuinely interested in other people” (Carnegie 57).

Carnegie believed that understanding comes through trying to “figure out why [people] do what they do [which] is a lot more profitable and intriguing than criticism” (Carnegie 15). Being genuinely curious about others leads them to open up, to listen to what we have to say, and to change. Flattery is too often transparent and can be perceived

as fake, but real curiosity in others leads them to feel important and listened to because “honest appreciation [will get] results when criticism and ridicule [have] failed” (Carnegie 26). Real curiosity is a hallmark of true empathy. Finally, Carnegie writes that one more way to work with and handle people is to appeal to what someone else believes or wants. Carnegie used the example of putting yourself in the shoes of others to better understand how they want to be appealed to (Carnegie 42). In cases where you are the manager and need to communicate your own original ideas, Carnegie thought that if you could first master the art of empathy and understand where someone is coming from, then convincing them to agree with your idea would be much easier. It is less important to simply tell someone what your idea is. It is much more important to explain how that idea might benefit them. This requires more work and forethought, but, as Emerson wrote, “the scholar is that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be a university of knowledges” (Emerson 70). Emerson is stating that in order to truly be a scholar, one must become well-versed in the work of others. In other words, both Carnegie and Emerson agreed that developing an understanding of others is vital to the success of the true leader or scholar.

In one of the first chapters of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Carnegie quotes Emerson explicitly, writing that “Emerson said: ‘Every man I meet is my superior in some way. In that, I learn of him.’ If that was true of Emerson, isn’t it likely to be a thousand times more true of you and me? Let’s cease thinking of our accomplishments, our wants” (Carnegie 27). In other words, Emerson believed that in order to learn and progress, we must assume that everyone we meet has something they can teach us. This

type of humble attitude will lead both scholars and managers to become great individuals. Carnegie held Emerson in high regard and thought it necessary to emphasize that for individuals other than Emerson, it was vital that we, too, seek to learn from others. This creates a non-hierarchical society, where individuals are more focused on what they can learn from others than how they can appear better or superior to them.

In my own life, I have found that when I directly interact with people who struggle with something, it is much easier to understand their problem because it makes their problem less abstract and more concrete. For example, several years ago, I spent a month in India working with those afflicted with leprosy. Previous to that humanitarian trip, I was under the impression that leprosy was a disease that could only be caught through skin-to-skin contact and that it was a skin disease. When I arrived in India, however, I learned that leprosy was completely different from what I had originally assumed. It was treatable and avoidable. Learning more about leprosy allowed me to come up with better solutions to the problems I faced while working in India. That action-based learning also allowed me to connect with the people I worked with on a far more personal level. This experience ties directly back into the idea Emerson supported, which is that true learning is only possible through intentionally immersing yourself deep within the fabric of the problems that you are trying to solve, specifically, the needs of the lower class. This helps you develop character, which to Emerson was “higher than intellect” (Emerson 62). That knowledge led me to return to the US and continue to seek solutions to the lack of education surrounding leprosy and the caste system that I had seen while traveling through India. When we see others as people with inherent worth

regardless of their class or status, we are able to collaborate and learn with them in ways that would otherwise be impossible.

Conclusion

These are the ideas upon which business leadership and management thought became predicated. It was necessary that someone should be the first mover within the space. Of course, to say that Emerson was only thinking of management and leadership in his essays would be fallacious; however, upon further examination of the ideas which Emerson propagated, there is reasonable crossover between his ideas and those described by Dale Carnegie. That crossover is a reminder that the ideas and values (such as pushing the frontier of creative thought and focusing on internal change to create external results) that we hold dear in current American management thinking are based upon the foundation of ideas and principles that were created by Emerson and synthesized by Dale Carnegie. Even before there was a genre of business management and leadership texts, thinkers like Emerson and Carnegie were seeking to better understand why we as humans act the way we do. The step they both took beyond that was an approach that attempted to utilize the understanding of why humans act in such ways. That understanding of the individual led them both to delve deeper into how society functions as a byproduct of the individual experience. A closer examination of that byproduct led them not only to challenge conventional ideas about society and the way it operated but also to introduce new theories as to how an individual could manage others within that same society.

We need only look as far as the description of the Dale Carnegie Management Seminar at the conclusion of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* to understand just how important the application of these ideals are:

“This [Management] program sets forth the Dale Carnegie principles of human relations and applies them to business. The importance of balancing results attained with the development of people—potential to assure long-term growth and profit is highlighted. Participants construct their own position descriptions and learn how to stimulate creativity in their people, motivate, delegate and communicate, as well as solve problems and make decisions in a systematic manner. Application of these principles to each person’s job is emphasized” (Carnegie 231-232). This description outlines explicitly the exact principles we have described over the course of this analysis. The most important synergistic principles are those we have highlighted already: creativity, intention, and action. A deeper empathy for others allows us to more fully appreciate these three principles, especially when we see them in others. Upon further analysis, it is clear that the principles articulated by Emerson find more practical application to daily life through the prescriptive writing of Dale Carnegie.

Personal Application

These principles have played a pivotal role in shaping who I want to become. Not only have these ideas heavily influenced my work and personal relationships, they have also been instrumental in guiding me towards management consulting as my post-undergraduate career of choice. As a consultant, I will spend most of my time interacting either with clients to help them solve their most important problems or with teammates who are trying to solve those problems with me. An approach similar to that outlined by Carnegie will lead to more cohesion, more interaction, and a far better answer than one I could come up with on my own. It is this type of environment that was first introduced by Emerson—an environment that encourages each individual to express his or her own

original thoughts. In such an atmosphere, we can all become a “Man [or woman] Thinking,” rather than a mere parrot of the thoughts of others (Emerson 54).

To me, this highlights the value of Humanities thinking in the context of management. A deep understanding of the humanities provides us with a greater sense of human identity. This perspective espouses more empathy and understanding. It also forces us to challenge pre-conceived notions and instead rely on what we learn from others as a source of knowledge. If we can develop these skills, we will be better prepared to appeal to a wider audience and lead with a more powerful approach. It is for this reason that I chose to major in English. I have always known that I wanted to go into business management, professionally, but was unsure as to what route to take. As I have leaned into the humanities throughout my undergraduate experience, I have come to understand the true power of a broader education. It has also given me an appreciation for what scholars like Emerson add to the ideas that drive society.

Emerson is considered the first American philosopher who got world-wide attention. In fact, to this day, “Emerson remains the major American philosopher of the nineteenth century and in some respects the central figure of American thought since the colonial period” (Brewton). Thus, there is something distinctly American in both the ideas espoused by Emerson and the subsequent management ideals that followed through Carnegie. Emerson was one of the first to articulate these ideas of self-reliance and creative thought. These philosophical ideas were put into practical use by Carnegie. With Carnegie as the conduit, applications of these ideas have spread throughout the nation. The idea of being able to create something great, to treat others well, and to work intentionally in the pursuit of one’s dreams is something that has become central to

American management thought. In essence, Carnegie believed that in order to truly be successful in leadership and management, we must first focus on the treatment of individuals before we can find true success within an organization. In fact, Carnegie's one challenge at the beginning of the book is that his readers develop "a deep, driving desire to learn [and] a vigorous determination to increase [their] ability to deal with people" (Carnegie xix).

It is in this way that I believe the texts written by these authors acted as a catalyst for the outburst of business management and leadership books that we have seen in the 20th and 21st centuries. Their ideas on individual identity have given rise to much of what we see surrounding the business self-help and coaching seminars so prevalent in our world today. Their thoughts on selflessness and human kindness created a whole genre of books surrounding best practices for managing teams. Their appeals for human creativity in ways that could create synergies acted as the catalyst for so much of what we call entrepreneurship. It is for this cause that Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is still so prevalent to this day.

As we look towards the future of management thought and literature, it is clear that the application of ideas spearheaded by Carnegie will continue to flourish. A clear example of this can be seen through the fact that *Leadership and Self-Deception*, a book written in 2006, which carries forward similar applications of these principles has sold over a million copies. In other words, there are over a million people today who are finding real value in the application of these ideas. Carnegie may have been an early adopter, but it is clear that some of the most influential management books to have come out in the last twenty years are in that same mode. *Leadership and Self-Deception* is an

excellent example of how Carnegie's practical application of Emerson's theoretical principles provides the essential foundation for present management thought.

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