faulting Oppenheim's description or implied content of his book: it is neither about Christianity nor about Royce's general philosophy of religion, and it has little relevance to world religions.

If one wishes a preview of Oppenheim's sensitive and sympathetic treatment of Royce (dealing with similar issues to those in his book) see "A Roycean Response to the Challenge of Individualism" (Beyond Individualism: Toward A Retrieval Of Moral Discourse In America, ed. by Donald L. Gelpi, 1989). He does a nice job tying Royce's insights to the American culture that is central to Robert Bellah's et. al. Habits of the Heart.

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To those who find the fashionable jargon of "texts" and "audience" illuminating, this book will seem a fresh and original interpretation of Emerson. However, if this talk of "alterity" and "testuality" strikes one as mere jargon, then this book, however perceptive at times, will seem mainly "sophistry and illusion". Professor Michael seems to know with absolute certainty just what 'Skepticism" is. "Skepticism" is the philosophical tradition of Montaigne, Hume et al. Prof. Michael also seems to envisage "Skepticism" as the vague, amorphous mass of all concrete "doubt". It is as if one could speak of "doubt" that is not a doubt about something, or of "relation" that is not a relation to something. When he speaks of "the Other", one is tempted to ask: Other-than-what? We are told that for "Skepticism" (or for Hume) the "self", or "identity", is relational. The Self is not an "Archimedean Point". The "transparent eyeball" is a mere nullity. Emerson, of course, straddles the line between Literature and Philosophy. In academic "turf wars" it is not clear where he belongs. Professor Michael teaches English. He seems to know more "Philosophy" than most literary scholars. (He has read Cavell.) I am not sure if philosophers will find this book of interest. He sets out to attack the "accepted view" of Emerson (as stated in Whichner's classic Freedom and Fate). For him, Emerson is not merely the "untroubled spokesman for American individualism" (57). Of course, Emerson's prose is not a model of simplicity and clarity. That is part of its charm. His "system" is more implicit than explicit. Yet what Prof. Michael presents as the "accepted view" seems often a mere "straw man". The "accepted view" may ignore Emerson's "doubts" and "anxieties". But for a certain philosophical position, they can be seen as mere "epiphenomena". Does the "accepted view" oversimplify Emerson? Sometimes, it is a "gift to be simple". The "complexities" Prof. Micheal finds intriguing may be "irrelevant"
(and not "ignored") from another point of view. Surely, if Prof. Michael maintains that all "texts" are ambiguous, then Whichner's interpretation must be as good as his own!

Did Emerson resolve the problem of Skepticism? The fact that he still has some "doubts" means only he was human. Still, for all that, the picture of "Olympian Sage" may be essentially correct. The sort of psychological speculation which interests Prof. Michael is hardly infallible. The first chapter focuses on the Divinity School Address. "Skepticism is double edged" (p. 11). Was the very same "skepticism" which Norton used against the orthodox theologians later used against him by Emerson? Was Norton "hoisted on his own petard"? Yet if Norton was right, then Emerson's "doubts" were unjustified. The fact that "doubts" are raised does not mean they are justified. Prof. Michael's analysis of the "dialectic" of this debate must abstract "doubt" from its validity. This seems quite unphilosophical. (This is an example of a problem that permeates this book.) Also, there is no such thing as "the Unitarian Church". Prof. Michael does not seem to be aware of the congregational polity of the Boston churches.

The Second Chapter, "Idea and Relation" is more philosophical. It turns on Hume's notion that the "self" is dependent upon the "other". It is an intriguing discussion, yet very speculative. His elaborate "conceit" of "cutting a Moebius strip" with "circumcision" and "castration" seems a bit much. "For the skeptic . . . self-identity is relation with another" (p. 57). But why can't one be "skeptical" about this rather abstruse theory of the "Self"? Is it self-evidently true? Indubitable? Yet these intriguing speculations about the "Self" are for Prof. Michael "the Truth" about Emerson. This discussion may be a valuable "corrective" to Whichner. It may even be true. Was Emerson merely that "Olympian Sage" who solved the "Riddle of the Universe"? Possibly not, but the "accepted view" may not be as false as Prof. Michael supposes.

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Brief Notice: Thoreau, Leopold and Environmental Ethics.

Arguably the most active frontier in current American philosophy is in applied philosophy, more specifically in the areas of ecology and environmental ethics. Scores of books, more than enough for the most enthusiastic interdisciplinary scholar beckon for attention. Below are brief comments on a half-dozen books of interest to SAAP Newsletter readers.