

Henry David Thoreau: Literary Transcendentalism

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Abstract

During the mid-19th century, New England was experiencing Transcendentalism as a religious, philosophical and literary movement. Despite being inspired by German and British Romanticism, due to its nature which incorporated true notions of American individualism, Transcendentalism was a distinct American movement. Individuals like Thoreau constructed the political dimension of Transcendentalism by putting their transcendentalist beliefs into action by disobeying the government. The true transcendentalist movement was rooted in various influential factors including but not limited to slavery and the civil war, women's rights, growing industrialism and social gap. Thoreau's writings are a fit expression of a life based on high ideals and aspirations which integrates integrity and morality. He tends to spent words in pursuit of spiritual development, and it is due to the universal truth behind the particular and the personal that he conveys transcendent meaning. The present article triesto have a closer look at Thoreau's transcendental literary theory and the way it was presented in his works of art. The article started with proposing a research question regarding the basis of Thoreau's Transcendental literary thinking and how he presented it in his writings which he regarded as interconnectionamong physical, intellectual, and spiritual worlds.

Keywords: literary Transcendentalism, Thoreau, high ideas, nature, simple life

1. Introduction

Concord, the city in which Henry David Thoreau was given birth to, was also the city where Ralph Waldo Emerson first founded a club for Transcendentalist. Harvard was the university where not only Emerson but also Thoreau learnt various revolutionary ideas, namely, the new principles of Unitarianism or the European Romantic ideas. Although Thoreau first got into pedagogy, due to being forced to invade basic rights of the individual via administering corporal punishment, he resigned and joined the Transcendentalist movement under Waldo Emerson's supervision; under whose impact, he started composing in the Transcendentalist newspaper named "Dial" and later on, started to write essays of his own. Being deeply impacted by Emerson's principles as his mentor, Thoreau started living his life around his own traits, getting separated from the social structures and consequently ignoring its various aspects from materialism and commercialism to getting married which few men had followed what he chose to be, an inner self-consciousness. Ralph Waldo Emerson described him as:

"He was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State; he ate no flesh; he drank no wine; he never knew the use of tobacco; and though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun. He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature.... No truer American existed than Thoreau" (Thoreau, 2007:48).

Thoreau was a simple man who built his life around basic truths. He obeyed the inner voice of his conscience, a voice all men have but few men regard it. As he stated in Walden:

"To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically " (Thoreau, 2004:84).

The way he felt about government was mainly due to his attempt in forming his life as simple as he could which resulted in his isolation from the modern society which he thought was freedom. As a result on July fourth, 1845, he left the society behind and started to take residence in Walden Pond, a place near Concord, where he sought for solitude in order to discover his true self. Hence, he was a thorough follower of Emerson's ideology which hovers around rebuilding the relationship with Nature to find one's individuality (Wilson, 2000).

In the middle of the woods of Walden Pond, he first built a hut with as few objects as needed where he spent two years of absolute simplicity and independence. In such self-reliance, not only did he find and produce his own food by the help of growing his own vegetables, for example but also he maintained his hut by chopping wood whenever needed.

Most of his time was spent on getting to know the surrounding of his hut precisely with the smallest details through taking long walks in the area and he also studied the flora and fauna in which nature, the weather, the light, and the cycle of seasons were only a few of such instances. He spent his time in particular by the pond nearby where he would get lots and lots of inspiration by merely spending some quality time watching natural life. He, indeed, did not separate himself from social strings just to be free but instead to carry out in-depth analysis of them (Harding, 1982). The gap he intentionally inserted between his own world and the society clarified various aspects of social life to him; in particular, the impacts of materialism and religions. Additionally, he also thought about the effects of humanity and civilization on the well-being of the nature and its impacts on ecosystem. Moreover, he found out the deficiencies of merely waiting for things happen as part of a system rather than playing the role of an actor. A governmental structure like America became transparent for him as he had a much broader view of the surrounding as all these thoughts made him figure out the close proximity between what needs to be done and what should be avoided. The necessities for human beings inhabiting today's world was only part of his findings. He constantly kept his ideas in his diary, "the Journal", for almost two consecutive years till the point he eventually decided to publish his perception of the nature in 1854 entitled "Walden". Being an incredible praise of inner-development and solitude, this book revolves around reflecting American nature. Although Walden cannot be put into words, the fact is that it is a non-fiction, autobiographical auditing of his own life in wilderness comprised of not only America and its nature but also some philosophical and sociological aspects (Wilson, 2000).

Thoreau went back to living in solitude at Walden Pond even after publishing his book. He kept admiring the nature by spending all his time observing its smallest details. Such an Intellectual, physical, and spiritual regeneration was not possible without being impacted by Emerson's ideology and as a true follower of Emerson's, he never ceased regarding nature as the mere source of force.

While he was publishing the book, far from Walden, he still demonstrated the true meaning of Concord and kept thinking about the woods by exploring every possible detail with Emerson's children and young companions. He constantly regarded Walden as the world most microcosmic place which in his opinion, was as hospitable to individuality and self-realization as any developed urban, civilized, and cosmopolitan place to live (Packer, 2007).

In his journal entry for March 11, 1856, he wrote:

"If these fields and streams and woods, the phenomena of nature here, and the simple occupations of the inhabitants should cease to interest and inspire me, no culture or wealth would atone for the loss. . . . At best, Paris could only be a school in which to learn to live here, a stepping stone to Concord, a school in which to fit for this university. I wish so to live ever as to derive my satisfactions and inspirations from the commonest events . . . so that what my senses hourly perceive . . . may inspire me, and I may dream of no heaven but that which lies about me. . . ." (Thoreau, 2009:351).

He visited Minnesota in the spring and summer of 1861 not because he wanted to take some time off but as to regain health since during late-1860, he caught a simple cold, which later on turned to bronchitis and aggravated the tuberculosis that had followed him since his college time. Even though, he tried to flee from that disease, it did not stop and at the age of forty-four, he passed away on May 6, 1862. On the very same day, the United States was going through a Civil War over what and to whom freedom meant. During the last few months, he kept editing and reworking his journal. Initially, his body was buried down the New Hill Burying Ground, and was later moved to Authors' Ridge in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery (Wilson, 2000).

Sophia Thoreau, Ellery Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson edited Thoreau's unpublished manuscripts for a few years and later on, some notable pieces first were published periodically, in particular, "Walking," "Wild Apples," and "Life without Principle" were published in Atlantic Monthly. After editing some other pieces, Sophia Thoreau and Emerson published a collection entitled Excursions in 1863. Sophia Thoreau also teamed up with Ellery Channing and revealed "Cape Cod", "A Yankee in Canada" and "The Maine Woods" with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers in 1864, 1865, and 1866, respectively. Furthermore, Emerson edited letters; Thoreau's journal was edited into four volumes by Blake during 1881 to 1892; and in 1895, Frank Sanborn and Henry Stephens Salt, Thoreau biographer, edited Thoreau's poems into a collection called Poems of Nature.

After his death, Thoreau's modest reputation during his lifetime turned into being recognized as one of the most

original and profound of American authors as the time passed and a much broader portion of his work was revealed. Thoreau's writings were integrated into part of American literature's canon to a countless number of minds, affecting invaluable minds of society (Harding, 1982).

Now the research question which is to be answered through the analysis of Thoreau's works is regarding the basis of Thoreau's transcendental literary thinking and how he presented it in his writings which he regarded as interconnection among physical, intellectual, and spiritual worlds. In fact a scientific analysis of Thoreau's literary works has to answer what his literary Transcendentalist thinking has been and how they were presented in his works.

2. Discussion

As an exacting writer of the art of writing, Henry David Thoreau's work flourished as a result of understanding of the inseparability of his life and his writing. Writing of this unity is seen in his journal February 28, 1841:

"Nothing goes by luck in composition. . . . The best you can write will be the best you are. Every sentence is the result of a long probation. The author's character is read from title page to end" (Thoreau, 2009:159).

He believed that he was what he wrote; so, he spent much time revising his own work. Thoreau was able to demonstrate reality in strong language and he managed to convey the slightest details with a remarkable nuance. He adequately used a variety of techniques in his works—paradox, exaggeration, and irony, for example for creating a penetrating prose. His talents are revealed in many forms such as bringing various resources to his art, breadth of vision, closely examined personal experience, wide and deep reading, imagination, originality, and above all, a strong vocabulary (Critchley, 2009).

He interpreted whatever he had seen around him *"As you see, so at length will you say,"* (Thoreau, 2009:159) he wrote in his journal. Clearly as a result of this, his tendency to use direct, vigorous, succinct, and economical prose are significant in his work. He believed in the importance of content far more than style. He thus tried to never sell content at the expense of overemphasis on form. Romantic writer that he was, he couldn't care less for abiding by the explicit and implicit formalities of a literary genre. His work hovered around the useful of each and every word, to convey meaning, and he had no interest in decoration. *"As all things are significant,"* he wrote, *"so all words should be significant"* (Thoreau, 2009:159).

His belief in elevation of the written word through genuine expression is seen numerously: *"A fact truly and absolutely stated is taken out of the region of common sense and acquires a mythologic or universal significance"* (Thoreau, 2009:159). Despite his attempts not to use explicit artifice, his intensely crafted writing is anything but artless. However full of mythological references and of illustrative passages from earlier authors, Thoreau's writing are filled with such allusions that even for those reading his work for the first time, it is hard not to experience flashes of inspired understanding of his message. His writing carefully is designed for an intelligent and thoughtful reader. If not more, his work attracts the reader as much as it did in the nineteenth century. The long lasting impact of his work is mainly rooted in the breadth and timelessness of the major themes throughout his writings (Critchley, 2009).

Millions of words were written over the course of his lifetime. The many intellectual contradictions throughout his writings suggest a man with complexity that constantly thinks and weighs ideas. Even though his attitude may not have stayed constant over all his writings, such a change abides by a coherency in his repeated exploration of certain basic themes in all his words.

The main theme of Thoreau's is the belief in a higher truth beyond nature and human existence which runs the universe. To him, reality and nature symbolize this higher truth, and, hence, universal laws are somehow perceived in his work (Wilson, 2007).

Expressing a clear vision of the unity of man, nature, and heaven, he regarded moth cocoons resembling leaves suspended over the edge of the field and the river, he wrote in his journal:

" . . . it is startling to think that the inference has in this case been drawn by some mind that, as most other plants retain some leaves, the walker will suspect these also to. Each and all such disguises . . . remind us that not some poor worm's instinct merely, as we call it, but the mind of the universe rather, which we share, has been intended upon each particular object. All the wit in the world was brought to bear on each case to secure its end. It was long ago, in a full senate of all intellects, determined how cocoons had best be suspended,—kindred mind with mine that admires and approves decided it s." (Thoreau, 2009:327).

Thoreau's works substantially move from the particular to the universal, from the worldly to the divine. However with painstaking detail and broader generalization, the meaning and value of nature is observed all over

Thoreau's writings. Thoreau, just like his mentor Emerson, related the understanding of higher truth to familiarity with the reality of nature. Between 1845 and 1847, Thoreau's transcendental quest towards the universe took him to the nature at Walden Pond. Living at Walden Pond made him perceive a closer realization of the natural world and "look through and beyond" nature. His appreciation of nature bypassed the emotions till the point that he embraced its harshness as well. As written in "Walking," Nature was "a personality so vast and universal that we had never seen one of her features" (Thoreau, 1970:37). There could be no "great awakening light" of understanding without knowledge of the manifestations of the universal in the observable world.

On the other hand, Thoreau distinguished inspiration through genuine knowledge of nature and too much preoccupation with too many scientific details vividly. He regarded this as a danger of becoming "dissipated by so many observations" (Thoreau, 2009:386), and recognized his own aim which was nothing but to reach the ultimate goal of higher understanding. Thoreau wrote in his journal:

"I fear that the character of my knowledge is from year to year becoming more distinct and scientific; that, in exchange for views as wide as heaven's cope, I am being narrowed down to the field of the microscope. I see details rather than wholes nor the shadow of the whole" (Thoreau, 2009:386).

According to him, there was a major difference between a natural philosopher and a more limited man of science. Thoreau thought nature as a means of transcending everyday life routines and approaching what was important to be thought about. His excursions in Concord and beyond were full of purpose and wonder. He regarded nature as a tonic to the human spirit, in particular in the age of politics and spread of dehumanizing industrialization and urbanization, unfulfilling social interactions, and the perpetuation of human institutions. His essay "Walking" is a consistent illustration of the power of nature, of "wildness," in which he found the "preservation of the world", to expand one's sight. He wrote:

"If the heavens of America appear infinitely higher, and the stars brighter, I trust that these facts are symbolical of the height to which the philosophy and poetry and religion of her inhabitants may one day soar. At length, perchance, the immaterial heaven will appear as much higher to the American mind, and the intimations that star it as much brighter. For I believe that climate does thus react on man,—as there is something in the mountain-air that feeds the spirit and inspires. Will not man grow to greater perfection intellectually as well as physically under these influences? (Thoreau, 1970:41)

As a typical theme in Romantic literature, the impact of natural world in Thoreau's work is illustrated as an admiration for the primitive human. Amazed by the American Indian, whom he described as "another species of mortal men, but little less wild to me than the musquash they hunted" (Thoreau, 2009:407) because of the Native's closer relationship to nature compared to of a civilized man, he kept encountering Indian historical objects wherever he walked, which to him were evidence of the "eternity behind me as well as the eternity before." Despite observing of the remaining local Indians in his time, Thoreau managed to imagine the connection between an earlier Native and nature which had been lost in the development of civilization. He wrote in The Maine Woods:

"Thus a man shall lead his life away here on the edge of the wilderness, on Indian Millinocket stream, in a new world, far in the dark of a continent, . . . amid the howling of wolves; shall live, as it were, in the primitive age of the world, a primitive man. . . . Why read history then if the ages and the generations are now? He lives three thousand years deep in time, an age not yet described by poets. Can you well go further back in history than this?" (Thoreau, 2010:97)

One of the highly notable of themes of Thoreau's work is the importance of simple life. By the help of making his needs and desires as few as possible, realization of spiritual objectives instead of devoting energies to the material take form in individuals. Thoreau's perception of economy and self-reliance in a place far away from luxuries and comforts down to the bare necessities are demonstrated in one of his renowned pieces, the first chapter of Walden entitled "Economy," "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind." (Thoreau, 2004: 58). According to Thoreau, manual labor as a result of the need for laying railroad tracks, operating mills, and accomplishing the manufacture of unnecessary items led to "waste of life". The time spent on daily mind-numbing routine work, man lacks any life left for pursuing higher understanding. The individual maintains time to deliberately cultivate himself, to explore nature and divinity and to free himself to live. (Cheever, 2006).

Understanding the fact that living simply in nature allows a man to live to the fullest extent, Thoreau also recognized that civilization was nothing but prevention from both simplicity and the inner life. "Life without Principle" hovers around rejecting these concepts, namely, against politics, the conventionalism of business, law, government, church, state even of generally accepted science and philosophy, which questioned individual

freedom and the ability to thinking vividly. *"Read not the Times. Read the Eternities. Conventionalities are at length as bad as impurities. . . . Knowledge . . . [comes] to us . . . in flashes of light from heaven."* (Thoreau, 2008:29) he said.

In *"Walking,"* the corruption of villagers who lived in the worldly commotion of town life was stated:

"They are way worn by the travel that goes by and over them, without traveling themselves. Confined by social demands and strictures, they never seek the eternal" (Thoreau, 1970:44).

Hence, it was clear that Thoreau himself avoided abiding by the social conventions, which according to him, took "the edge off a man's thought." Both literal and metaphorical levels of travel play an important role in Thoreau's writings and are an integral part of his work which alongside the author's powerful sense of place made sense. Seeking strange locations in pilgrimage in order to reach higher understanding seemed useless to Thoreau. Repeatedly, he kept emphasizing on the uselessness of the outward nature of the journey and directed the focus to the inward instead. In his journal, for instance, *"Let us migrate interiorly without intermission, and pitch our tent each day nearer the western horizon"* (Thoreau, 2009:467) he said. Consequently, his travelling "a good deal in Concord," in Walden meant not just that he had explored every inch of the town but also has a strong emphasis on the inward journey toward higher reality there. The physical trip provided him with nothing but a change of circumstance, but it was the journey of the mind toward the universal which can take place anywhere and in fact more easily in a more familiar surrounding as in a distant place that could be obtained only through expense and effort (Cheever, 2006).

Thoreau's love of his native town was not hidden to anyone as he expressed his strong sense of attachment to passionately in his journal:

"I think I could write a poem to be called "Concord." For argument I should have the River, the Woods, the Ponds, the Hills, the Fields, the Swamps and Meadows, the Streets and Buildings, and the Villagers. Then Morning, Noon, and Evening, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, Night, Indian Summer, and the Mountains in the Horizon"(Thoreau,2009:502).

To him, Concord was the perfect place for visualizing and communicating the universals since it was the place he knew best. Thoreau wrote of the tendency of travel away from the familiar as a way to distract and dissipate the traveler. Concord was both representative and concrete to him, and his sense of place in relation to Concord was both generic and specific. Elsewhere in his journal, he stated that:

"I, too, love Concord best, but I am glad when I discover, in oceans and wildernesses far away, the materials out of which a million Concord can be made,—indeed, unless I discover them, I am lost myself,—that there too I am at home"(Thoreau, 2009:502).

The place is not what it looks like but the most notable fact is how one interprets the surrounding and the reality around him, no matter where he is. Besides, Thoreau's integration of what he observed into his work made him what he was. Partly he sought "to give our intellects an airing," during his journeys and partly his objective was to look for locations with greater wildness than existed in Concord. One of his characteristics was his interest in analysis of the mutual correlation between the surrounding and the man in it, in other words, the relationship between man and place. Descriptions of those who were organically shaped by surrounding and nature are also notable in his travel narratives (Borst, 1992).

Unitarian beliefs and Transcendentalism focused on the individual and the goodness and perfectibility of man respectively; expression of which are observed throughout the writings of its proponents. At the very heart of Thoreau's work, the reader observes the relation between individual to God, nature, and social institutions.

Agreeing with the subjectivity of perception based on man's central position, Thoreau's acceptance of individual's vantage point defining the universe is also observed throughout his work. But in case of enjoying centrality in the cosmic view of things by individuals, Thoreau believed that such an individual is less likely to establish proper relationship to human institutions. In *"Walden,"* Thoreau wrote of *"an important distinction between the civilized man and the savage . . . in making the life of a civilized people an institution, in which the life of the individual is to a great extent absorbed"*(Thoreau, 2004:163).

Every threat to individuality was distrusted by Thoreau as his perception of the fact that community invaded the individual and, more importantly, that high purpose and properly guided individual threatened community. To him, individual's first and main duty was to himself, i.e. to cultivate himself and to seek knowledge of how he fit into the universal picture (Wilson, 2000:15). On the other hand, community needed individual who saw otherwise. Thoreau's life was spent on the way he understood his own responsibilities. Community's judgment mattered so little to him that despite being aware that some of his townsmen had no idea of the reason he moved

to Walden Pond in 1845, he simply ignored all their opinions. (Wilson, 2007).

With such a reforming writing, Thoreau's focus was diverted to the social mandating unwritten rules. To him, society meant being bound to following a higher standard of morality while abiding by the temporal law, all of which diminish individual integrity or that of others. According to him, social institutions tended to preserve the status quo, as a result of which individual rather than the system were to be blamed for the shortcomings of human government and law. In 1849, another work of his entitled "Civil Disobedience" was first published. This work revolved around his imprisonment in 1846 for escaping the poll tax. He wouldn't dare supporting a government that tolerated slavery, allowing individuals to be treated as physical properties while neglecting their humanity and spirituality. Despite rejecting politics from its very fundamentals, ignoring the immorality of slavery and of allowing slavery to exist were not his characteristics. In terms of individual's authority, at the end of Civil Disobedience, he stated:

"There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power; from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect. . . ." (Thoreau, 2011:25).

Individuality was by far the most important thing to Thoreau based on his writings. In his "A Plea for Captain John Brown," individual responsibility to higher law was illustrated by, asking "Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong?" (Thoreau, 2004:37). Thoreau used to harshly talk about reformism and reformers. Despite his implicit support of the fundamental concepts behind movements of reformism, he believed in ultimate individual moral responsibility. As he believed that reform movements, similar to any other political party, constraints individuality into membership of a group and takes one's freedom to make independent judgments, Thoreau supported reform of society only through the individual. In his journal, he wrote: "I can do two thirds the reform of the world myself. . . . When an individual takes a sincere step, then all the gods attend. . . ." (Thoreau, 2009:562). Radically supporting the elevation of the individual, Thoreau was a true transcendentalist.

Under the published name "Civil Disobedience", Henry David Thoreau revealed his views on government, and the individual's relationship to the state in 1849. Not only does this essay analyze the duties of the individual towards governments, but also carries out an analysis on the reason for men's obedience of governmental law even when they believe in its unjustness. According to him, the only time he had never been attacked was by government and that "wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions..." He deducted that if a law "requires you to be the agent of injustice to another..." (Thoreau, 2011:26) it is of absolute morality to break a law. In other words, if the path towards unjustness and oppressiveness is taken by a government, everybody's obliged to resist it with whatever they have, starting with peaceful disagreement and turning to force and violence if needed. Thoreau not only became a tax rebel but fought slavery and sought imprisonment for not abiding by the law for no one (Critchley, 2009).

According to him, everyone is deserved to have a free life and that life is only found in nature where you can walk with love with absolute poverty of materialism under the sanctuary of Nature with abundance of freedom and wildness and a classroom for learning honesty and sincerity. He believed that such a life needs intentional desire to be a deliberate seeker.

"Walden or Life in the Woods" published in 1854 has become one of Thoreau's most famous pieces. This work illustrates an implicit social rebellion through rejection of materialism and spiritual regeneration and human restoration through nature's power only construct part of the many themes of Walden while being associated with several literary genres. By living a true simple life, he had time for observing the nature precisely and time for reading which made him as renowned as one of the best of his time in terms of writing. That is why, someone studying Walden develops a moral awareness of his self fulfillment which results in acceptance of what he truly is and what kind of a world he truly seeks living in. Through a life in nature, Thoreau learned to live freely both with himself and his society. Furthermore, Walden offers new values through giving a new perspective to its audience which thereby, changes life's meaning and purpose and leads to self fulfillment. (Critchley, 2009).

Henry David Thoreau published a book entitled "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" with several primary themes. Much of the work is devoted to the absolute role of man in nature in addition to three other important themes; namely, the cyclical nature of time and history; the elements of true friendship; and the understanding of death, that are known to be as a nostalgic, mournful tribute to his beloved brother (Packer, 2009).

In another work of his named "Walking", he constantly emphasized on the exploration and preservation of nature.

Walking through fields and forests made him feel the mobility of the body as well as a sense of freedom of the soul and mind. It is through his work that people can perceive the beauty and wonder of the natural world. In *Walking*, walking is described as a holy crusade which brings along health benefits as a result of exposure to fresh air and exercise. He stated that “Wildness is the preservation of the World” and thus it needs to be preserved. Hence, his rejection with development of civilization was explicitly mentioned throughout his work and he regarded such a development as a sinister and evil act and enclosure of nature and its wild landscapes. Thoreau sought persuading people to preserve the nature and explore its beauty via strong diction in his arguments. However, Thoreau illustrated a passionate case, with many of his own personal experiences and journeys through glade and glen, in support of the wildness and freedom of Nature.

3. Conclusion

The author tried to answer the research question posed in the introduction through having a look at the main theme in Thoreau's works is the belief in a higher truth beyond nature and human existence which runs the universe. To him, reality and nature symbolize this higher truth, and, hence, universal laws are somehow perceived in his work. This idealism is consistent with the transcendental concept of the ultimate connectedness of God, man, and nature in the great oneness of the Oversoul, and with the optimistic transcendental sense that the absolutes and the workings of the universe can be perceived by the readers' mind. Such a cosmic comprehension revolves around an intuitive understanding rather than reason.

Expressing a clear vision of the unity of man, nature, and heaven, he regarded moth cocoons resembling leaves suspended over the edge of the meadow and the river. Concentrating on the close mutual correlation that has always existed between men and nature, American transcendentalism illustrates an ideal life of self-reliance which consequently, leads to pure spiritual abundance. Henry David Thoreau as a transcendentalist, not only had great transcendental thoughts but also devoted his empirical spirit and personal practice of his ideals. He directly implemented his ideals into action and unlike many of the transcendentalists, who had far more discussions than actions, not only did Thoreau carried his ideology out but also kept a precise journal of what this practice meant to him.

Optimistic idealism and geocentric enjoyment were also among the important themes in Thoreau's works, similar to the way he emphasized on ultimate meaning, while enjoying the pleasing details of nature and life as he lived it. Even though Thoreau's words rejected this, he has sometimes been viewed as an ascetic who closed the pleasures of life to himself. All in all, the point was Thoreau's choice of earthly pleasures wasn't bound to what others wanted. His writings clarified a healthy joy of the moment which has always been one of the reasons for the endurance and increasing popularity of his work over time by the help of which Thoreau's work unified reality and idealism.

Agreeing with the subjectivity of perception based on man's central position, Thoreau's acceptance of individual's vantage point defining the universe is also observed throughout his work. But in case of enjoying centrality in the cosmic view of things by individuals, Thoreau believed that such an individual is less likely to establish proper relationship to human institutions. Every threat to individuality was distrusted by Thoreau as his perception of the fact that community invaded the individual and, more importantly, that high purpose and properly guided individual threatened community. To him, individual's first and main duty was to himself, i.e. to cultivate himself and to seek knowledge of how he fit into the universal picture. On the other hand, community needed individual who saw otherwise. Thoreau's life was spent on the way he understood his own responsibilities. Community's judgment mattered so little to him that despite being aware that some of his townsmen had no idea of the reason he moved to Walden Pond in 1845, he simply ignored all their opinions. Thoreau's works substantially move from the particular to the universal, from the worldly to the divine. However with painstaking detail and broader generalization, the meaning and value of nature is observed all over Thoreau's writings. Thoreau, just like his mentor Emerson, related the understanding of higher truth to familiarity with the reality of nature.

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