

## TRANSCENDENTALIST CONCEPTS

### EMERSON'S "NATURE" CONCEPTS:

**-natural self:** a self that removes all barriers between man and nature and allows the individual mind: reason, intuition, and emotions to become analogous to observations of nature. A self that is without discontent.

**-"inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other"** (Emerson "Nature")

- "its nature is satisfied and it satisfies nature in all moments alike"

(Emerson "Self-Reliance" 151)

- "you will soon love what is dictated by your nature" (Emerson "Self-Reliance" 155)

- "discontent is the want of self-reliance; it is infirmity of will." (Emerson "Self-Reliance" 158)

- "Perception is fatal for from our involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due"

(Emerson "Self-Reliance" 150)

**-Societal Self:** a self that has no connection to the natural world and all perceptions and thoughts stem from perceiving societal institutions, expectations, and man's creations.

**-Deified Transcendence:** a moment of heightened perception in which the observer feels the presence of God in him and in nature and imaginatively perceives nature through the omniscience and omnipresence of God.

### COMMODITY:

**Anthropocentric:** a perspective that concludes that all things in nature serve man's needs; that man is the center and purpose of the existence of nature

**Ecocentric:** a perspective that concludes that all things in nature have intrinsic worth, are interrelated, and serve the health and sustainability of an intact ecosystem and perceives the ecosystem as the proper focal point from which to see the value of any object in nature.

## **BEAUTY:**

**-Nature as Therapeutic:** the perception of nature can soothe the mind and make one more grateful for the gratuitously beautiful and spiritual qualities of nature.

**-Apperception:** a metacognitive perspective that is self-aware of the workings of the mind, the formation of thought, the cultivation of ideas.

**-“Plastic power of the human eye”:** the eye and the I (the self) can enhance the unity and, therefore, beauty of nature through the imagination

**-Eternity in Present:** the idea that any one object in nature has been forming since the natural world came into existence.

**-Interconnectivity in nature:** any one object in nature is ecologically interconnected to all other objects in nature.

## **LANGUAGE:**

**Words / concepts come from nature:** man's most valuable ideas, concepts and language stem from direct observations of nature for we “fasten words to visible things” (Emerson 215).

## **SPIRIT:**

**-Pantheism:** a faith that contends that the divine is present in both nature and man

## EMERSON “SELF RELIANCE” CONCEPTS:

**FAITH IN SELF:** because all humans have a moral conscience (given by God), one should follow what one reasonably and intuitively knows to be right.

— “No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition, as if every thing were titular and ephemeral but he.”

**NATURAL SELF:** a self who follows reasoned and intuitive knowledge and involuntary perceptions in the natural world; a self integrated with nature and free from discontent.

— “ What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? . . .The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin...But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in course of time, all mankind. . .Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind, and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due.

**TWO BARRIERS TO SELF-RELIANCE:** conformity to the opinions of others; foolish consistency to one’s foolish thoughts

— “It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.”

— “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and

to-morrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said today. . . The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; 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.”

**FAITH IN THE WORLD:** accept your place in the world, history, events, nature, and contemporaries; all is in service of your good character.

— **“Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny.”**

**NON CONFORMITY:** the rejection of laws, mores, opinions that do not follow what you know to be true allows for self-reliance. Self-assess.

— **“These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most requests is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion.”**

## HENRY THOREAU CONCEPTS

### *WALDEN* (1854)

#### CONCEPTS FOR “WHERE I LIVED, WHAT I LIVED FOR”:

**1 PARADOX OF POSSESSION:** one cannot own the land by deed, but one can be possessed by the landscape and know its true value

**2 NATURAL TIME:** a perspective of time as perceived through natural processes; all object in nature have been forming since the beginning of the world

**5 HUMAN TIME:** a perspective of time as perceived through a human lens and human endeavors; it is an arbitrary and false measure of the world

**6 OPPORTUNITY COST:** this is an economic term applied to human choices; the true cost of any choice is the amount of living for the betterment of the self that one forgoes by deciding to commit to a choice.

**9 GOD CULMINATES IN THE PRESENT MOMENT:** observing nature reminds us that God is present in the formation of all natural processes

**10 ETERNITY CULMINATES IN EACH MOMENT:** observing nature reminds us all things in nature have been forming and evolving since the inception of the world

#### CONCEPTS FOR “SOUNDS”

**Machine in the Garden (Leo Marx):** the idea that man’s constructions create the false perception that man is dominant over nature and the false conclusion that nature serves man’s needs alone.

**ECOCENTRISM:** perceiving nature from an ecosystem’s perspective allows one to behold the intrinsic value of all things in nature and how they are interrelated to all other things in nature and necessary to the sustainability of an ecosystem

## CONCEPTS ON “SOLITUDE”:

### THREE REASONS HENRY THOREAU ACHIEVED WAS NOT LONELY WHILE ALONE AT WALDEN POND:

- 1) Organic Transcendence
- 2) Deified Transcendence
- 3) Apperception

**1 ORGANIC TRANSCENDENCE:** a moment of heightened perception in which the observer feels apart of the natural world, dissolves the barrier between man and nature, and concludes that man is a member of the ecosystem

**2 Deified Transcendence:** a moment of heightened perception in which the observer feels the presence of God in him and in nature and imaginatively perceives nature through the omniscience and omnipresence of God.

**3 Apperception:** a metacognitive perspective that is self aware of the processes of one's thinking.

## **HENRY THOREAU'S "SPRING" and "CONCLUSION" CONCEPTS:**

**Inviolable Order in Nature:** despite man's alterations of an ecosystem, nature is always working toward its original state of interconnected equilibrium

**God as Landscape Artist:** the belief that any changes in the natural world are manifestations of the divine mind.

**Microcosm-macrocosm:** the idea that any object in nature or any portion of an ecosystem contains all of the relationships that are present in the entire earth's ecosystem

**-“one hillside illustrated the principle of all of nature”**

**Human animal:** “Live like a plant or animal without living an animal life”: live as you are a member of the ecosystem, but retain the human ability to imagine, reason, and intuit.

**Great Chain of Being:** a hierarchy of order in the world that classifies and ranks the different elements of existence according to levels of will, cognition, and spirituality.

**BEING: WILL, COGNITION, SPIRIT**

**GOD:** omnipresent, omniscient, all spirit

**ANGELS:** can manifest in different forms, conversant with God, spirit in the phenomenal world

**MAN:** free will, reason, capable of intuiting spirit

**ANIMALS:** heteronomous: move by instinctual control, instinct, incapable of discerning spirit

**PLANTS:** growth by photosynthesis, sentient to external forces, incapable of discerning spirit

**FIRE:** moves by consumption, no sentience, incapable of discerning spirit

**ROCKS:** moves by outside forces, no sentience, incapable of discerning spirit

**Wilderness Preservation:** to set aside tracts of nature free from human development so that the intact flora and fauna can flourish in an intact ecosystem

—must have “unexplored forests and meadows” surrounding our “villages” for “in wildness is the preservation of the world”

**Limits of Human Understanding:** the idea that nature reminds humans that they did not create nature and cannot completely understand its interconnections,

**UNIVERSAL INNOCENCE OF NATURE:** what in nature (excessive predation / loss of life) seems amoral or immoral to humans is innocent and in service of an equilibrium beyond our understanding, beyond our measure.

### **“CONCLUSION”**

**Limits of Human Understanding::** “The universe is wider than our views of it”: all of creation and its interconnectedness cannot be perceived by man

**Simplify Life:** removing luxuries allows for true perception of “solitude, poverty, and weakness”: when life is reduced to meet one’s basic needs, solitude is not lonely, poverty is full of riches, and awareness of our weakness becomes a strength

**Self Reliance:** do not rely on others to develop your thinking that informs your actions; absolve yourself to yourself

—”step to the music you hear, no matter how measured and far away”

**Metamorphic Motifs:** nature is in a constant state of transition to a higher state of being; man should follow nature’s lead

-table larva-butterfly

-societal self to natural self

-impure to pure

-human animal to spiritual

-railroad bank to nature

-seed to flower



-cold to warmth

-winter to spring

-anthropocentric to ecocentric