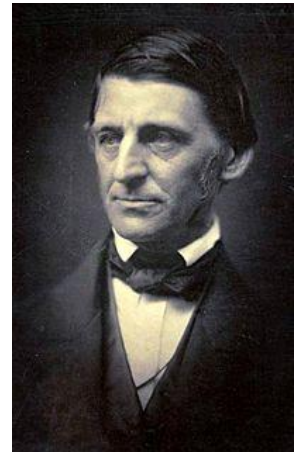


World is Mind Precipitated

From Walden Pond came two years of living "deliberately" in Nature. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) closely observed and recorded the intricate movements of squirrel and red maple, of clear air and ice, of soil and sunlight, all in their changing seasons. But in going out into Nature, the journey into his own soul had begun. Thoreau, like his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), was an American Transcendentalist. The natural world of physical objects was a reflection of and given form by the universal spiritual truths of the transcendent reality. The overt beauty of the flower reflects its spiritual essence. "Nature is the symbol of the spirit . . . the world is emblematic," wrote Emerson. It was then, through the soul and with the application of imagination, which humanity could escape its material forms and know of the spiritual truths. To go into Nature is to go into one's own soul, exploring its depths as the richness and animation of the tree and squirrel are explored.

"Nature is the incarnation of a thought, and turns to a thought again, as ice becomes water and gas. The world is mind precipitated, and the volatile essence is forever escaping again into the state of free thought." So wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson.



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"Crazy Horse dreamed and went into the world where there is nothing but the spirits of all things. That is the real world that is behind this one, and everything we see here is something like a shadow from that world."

So spoke Black Elk (1862-1950), a Lakota holy man.

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"We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely, who and what, and that we are. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined."

So wrote the Kiowa poet N. Scott Momaday (1934-present) in "Man Made of Words."

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For Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the English poet and author of "The Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan," imagination is essential for humanity. Imagination is the act of knowing and of feeling the life within all of the world, and of participating in that life.

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"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee, "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said, "Nobody can guess that."

"Why, about you!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.

"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out--bang!--just like a candle!"

"I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly. "Besides, if I'm only a sort of thing in his dream, what are you, I should like to know?"

"Ditto." said Tweedledum.

"Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn't help saying, "Hush! You'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise."

And so Lewis Carroll wrote in *Through the Looking Glass* (1871).

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When can a single event generate opposite impressions by the same observer at the same time? This was the question originally posed by the British philosopher, George Berkeley (1685-1753) in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713). Take three basins of water: one hot, one cold, and the third lukewarm. Now place one hand in the hot water, while the other is placed in the cold, and leave them in the water for several minutes. Then plunge both hands into the lukewarm water. Does not the cold hand sense warm water, while the hot hand sense in the very same basin cold water? The world is never as it seems, as something absolute and given. For what appears to us as the world is always influenced by our interactions with it, by what we bring into the experience.

For Berkeley, the world cannot be directly known by what is experienced through our senses. But rather, what is knowable in the world is what is first conceived of in the mind. The world is, in fact, what is conceived – *esse est percipi*, "to be is to be perceived." A phenomenon has being and existence to the extent that its properties are a conceived idea, be it a "tree" or a "wilderness."

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"Knowledge comes about in so far as the object known is within the knower." So wrote Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in *Summa Theologica*.

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"Every person is a special kind of artist." Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), a German Dominican theologian, was convinced of it; and Ananda Coomaraswamy, the eminent scholar of Buddhist and Hindu philosophy, echoed the same sentiment in his book, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934).