

meditate so that they can realize their inherent oneness with the cosmos and be brought into harmony with the natural order of the universe. This, in turn, transforms one's life and leads to the full realization of "human potential." A person who is attuned to nature will be confident and content, able to handle the pace of modern life without succumbing to stress. Such a person is in harmony with the cosmic order. Maharishi attributes his success and his movement's growth to "the natural expression of the force of evolution, silently reshaping the destiny of the world through the thought and action of one moving in perfect attunement with the infinite intelligence of nature" (Maharishi 1986: 1). If his followers meditate, they too will be successful at life because they are in accord with the natural order.

TM's description of nature concerns the cosmic whole, not specific phenomena such as the sun or mountains. The same is true of the movement's approach to the earthly environment. One of TM's stated goals is "To maximize the intelligent use of the environment" (Forem 1974: 10). However, TM writings do not have specific aims such as stopping global warming or requiring that all members be vegetarian. Rather, there is a general belief that those who practice TM will find themselves naturally living a more harmonious life. This will include better human relationships, reduced stress, greater clarity of thought, and better choices about how to live. Among these will be environmental awareness, because polluting the world is selfish and places short-sighted gratification before long-term well-being.

Although TM does not champion specific causes, Maharishi describes two ways in which it can have an effect on the world beyond its membership. First, he suggests that the "custodians of this knowledge" should serve in governments where they will create "problem-free" nations and raise life to the level of a "Heaven on Earth." Second is the "Maharishi Effect," the theory that the mental states of a few people can influence the behavior of others at a distance. According to TM, if the square root of one percent of a population meditates regularly, the higher consciousness of the meditators will affect the whole area and social problems will be alleviated. Thus, their efforts will bring the society into harmony with nature.

Cybelle Shattuck

Further Reading

- Forem, Jack. *Transcendental Meditation*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. *The Science of Being and Art of Living: Transcendental Meditation*. New York: New America Library, 1988 (1963).
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. *Thirty Years Around the World – Dawn of the Age of Enlightenment*, vol. 1, 1957–1964. Vlodrop, The Netherlands: MVU Press, 1986.

Rothstein, Mikael. *Belief Transformations*. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1996.
See also: Hundredth Monkey; Natural Law Party; New Age.

Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism refers to the intellectual and social movement that emerged primarily in Boston and surrounding areas during the mid-nineteenth century and included such familiar figures as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller, as well as Fredric Henry Hedge, George Ripley, James Clark, Orestes Brownson, Bronson Alcott, Elizabeth Peabody, and Theodore Parker, among others. Already known to each other through intellectual and social circles, the Transcendentalists formalized their relationship (to the extent that they ever did so) through a regular symposium – sometimes dubbed "the Transcendental Club" – that gathered at participants' homes from 1836 to 1840. The group analyzed such topics as "the essence of religion as distinct from morality," "American Genius," "Pantheism" and "the nature of Poetry." As these titles indicate, the preoccupations of this group were flexible and wide-ranging (as was its informal membership).

Participants in the club were interested in expanding the latest trends in German philosophy, developing original – recognizably American – literary contributions and experimenting with new forms of religious life and thought. Often, they were referred to as the "New School" by their critics and even the term "Transcendentalist" was more often a term of criticism leveled by opponents than a term used by its participants. While regular meetings of the club waned after 1840, the Transcendentalists continued to communicate and exert their influence through their publication, *The Dial* (1840–1844), which was edited first by Fuller and then by Emerson.

The Transcendentalists were highly individualistic in both character and philosophical outlook, resisting any common doctrinal or intellectual stance. They shared, however, a highly optimistic vision of humanity and a confidence in the future of American intellectual life and thought, freed from the bonds of intellectual precedent or religious superstition. These young writers also shared an intellectual affection for various forms of idealism, from neo-Platonic thought to the increasingly influential work of Immanuel Kant, whose use of the term "transcendental" – mediated through the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge – these thinkers both borrowed and transformed for their own purposes. What was "transcendental" for the Transcendentalists was a preference for spiritual (or "intuitive") over material (sense-based) forms of knowledge. Similarly, they expressed a commitment to shaping life according to individually discerned aesthetic and spiritual priorities, rather than those of social convention or the

marketplace. Their intellectual stance was the starting place from which they developed their ideas of nature, as well as their moral and religious views.

The intellectual agenda of the Transcendentalists was broad, eclectic and not always consistent, consistency itself not being an ideal toward which the Transcendentalists strove. In the most general sense, however, the Transcendentalists embraced a new theory of knowledge. This theory refuted the, then prevailing, Lockean view of the process of human knowing. At the same time, the Transcendentalists put forward new theories of morality that countered more conservative religious approaches, while also opposing the skepticism of David Hume and other Enlightenment figures. In a general sense, the Transcendentalists can be said to have welcomed the Enlightenment critique of religion, while resisting recourse to forms of rationalism that overlooked human emotions and disenchanting the natural world.

In terms of epistemology, the Transcendentalists resisted Locke's empiricist approach, which proposed that knowledge comes from sense experiences which are impressed on the waiting mind just as words are written on a blank slate. While Locke's own view was more complex than that of his followers, Lockean psychology was generally accepted by the intellectuals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly the New England Unitarians. Taking cues from the writings of Kant and Coleridge, the Transcendentalists responded against Locke by articulating a distinction between "understanding" (rational reflection on sense experience) and Reason (the use of intuition and one's innate, divinely created capacities to discern the good, the true and the beautiful). While accepting Locke's confidence in the rational capacities of humanity, the Transcendentalists argued that Reason was also an innate human gift which each individual should cultivate.

The Transcendentalist's view of the moral life followed from this epistemological premise. While rejecting orthodox religion and even the comparatively liberal Christian Unitarianism that was culturally dominant in nineteenth-century Boston, the Transcendentalists also rejected Hume's skepticism with respect to religion and morality. Most Transcendentalists affirmed their belief in a divine Creator, while rejecting the notion of divine revelation of miracles. Many also became increasingly interested in the religions of China and India as these became available to them through newly available European translations of Eastern texts. Moreover, Transcendentalists' vision of human nature was indefatigably optimistic, resting on the assumption that all individuals carry the divine within them and must dedicate their lives to nurturing this divine potential, particularly through education and artistic expression.

The Transcendentalists' view of nature rests on the important epistemological and moral assumptions

described above. As with particular philosophical, literary and political preferences, the Transcendentalists' reading of nature also varied among individuals. In general, however, the Transcendentalists borrowed from the European Romantics the notion that a regular contact with nature (by which was generally meant: living in or visiting rural and pastoral settings) was essential for regaining human innocence and originality that was corrupted by civilization. Intimacy with nature could return the individual (especially the writer) to a state of childlike openness and wonder. Such a state was crucial to developing what Emerson famously termed an "original response to the universe."

The quest for originality and authenticity both in spiritual experience and in literary expression was a central preoccupation of the Transcendentalists. While the foundations of their ideas were, belatedly, shaped in response to European Romanticism, the Transcendentalists worked to create literature, educational theory and, more broadly, "culture" that was distinctly American. Because such work was dependent on the experience of and response to a particular natural landscape (primarily, pastoral New England), it is no surprise that much Transcendentalist literature concerns itself with "nature" both as an abstract concept and as a particular physical context for spiritual experience.

When considering the Transcendentalists' views of nature, it is important to recognize the complexity of what the term "nature" could signify. In its broadest sense, it represented what was not the self. "Nature" then was equivalent to the Kantian "not-Me." More particularly, nature might refer to a particular biophysical context for the experiences of insight and intuition that were sought after by the Transcendentalists: the "bare common" upon which Emerson experienced himself as a "Transparent Eyeball," Thoreau's Walden or the communal Brook Farm in West Roxbury. Even in these instances, however, the reading of nature offered by the Transcendentalists was not one of appreciating nature for what today we might call its "intrinsic value." While theologically departing firmly from their Puritan heritage, the Transcendentalists continued, while altering, the Puritan view of nature as a "book" to be read for spiritual lessons. They also carried forward Unitarian interests in natural theology, particularly the study of nature to comprehend the character of the divine. The Transcendentalists reworked and reimagined these Puritan and Unitarian legacies, ultimately asserting the presence of the divine *in* nature (as well as in humanity), while also not limiting their understanding of the divine to the Christian tradition. They incorporated spiritualism, Emmanuel Swedenborg's theory of correspondences and Eastern concepts of sacred geography into their cultural repertoire.

Nevertheless, nature remained in what we might call a "spiritually utilitarian" position. Nature was most often

understood to be something which was “read” by the individual artist (the Poet, as Emerson conceived him), whose job it was to decipher and interpret the moral lessons hidden in nature. Nature was valued, then, for what it could teach the attentive student and its function was that of moral formation. The ultimate emphasis remained on the ideal Transcendentalist (which each Transcendentalist saw latent within) whose practice of self-cultivation would enable him or her to “read” nature correctly and to share that reading with a wider audience. Nature, in the Transcendentalists’ view, was primarily *symbolic*, representing moral truths and aesthetic insights that lay “behind” or “inside” external, natural phenomena. The pursuit of nature was most often a pursuit of the self, or of knowledge of the divine, without and within.

At the same time, pastoral and wilderness environments remained vital as the ideal *contexts* for Transcendentalist self-cultivation, as was the case in Thoreau’s experiment at Walden. Thus, paying close attention to the natural world as a symbolic “book” for spiritual insight also led many Transcendentalists to acquire a large body of scientific knowledge of their surroundings. Many kept detailed records of flora, fauna, weather patterns and natural events in the places where they lived or traveled. Emerson, for instance, was an amateur orchardist and early conservationist of threatened woodlands, while Thoreau’s work in natural history and studies of plant succession were consulted by professional scientists of his day.

Rebecca Kneale Gould

Further Reading

- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973.
- Howe, Daniel Walker. *Making the American Self*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Miller, Perry, ed. *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950.
- Myerson, Joel, ed. *Transcendentalism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Myerson, Joel, ed. *The Transcendentalists: A Review of Research and Criticism*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1984.
- See *also*: Adams, Ansel; Emerson, Ralph Waldo; Muir, John; Pantheism; Romanticism in European Literature; Romanticism – American; Swedenborg, Emmanuel; Thoreau, Henry David; Unitarianism.

Transpersonal Psychology

Transpersonal psychology is the branch of psychology which integrates psychological concepts, theories, and methods with the subject matter and practices of the spiritual disciplines. Its interests include spiritual and mystical experiences, meditative practices, ritual, shamanism, and the connections between spiritual experiences with disturbed states such as psychosis, mania, and depression. Transpersonal psychologists apply their work in clinical and counseling psychology, spiritual guidance and pastoral counseling, organizational and community development, healthcare and healing, the transpersonal dimensions of interpersonal relationships, cultural diversity, gender studies, business, ecopsychology, and other areas.

The root of the term transpersonal, or literally “beyond the mask,” refers to self-transcendence, the development of the self from a sense of identity which is exclusively individual to one that is deeper, broader, more inclusive, and more unified with the whole. The core concept in transpersonal psychology is nonduality, the recognition that each part or person is fundamentally and ultimately a part of a larger, more comprehensive whole. From this insight come two other central insights: the intrinsic health and basic goodness of the whole and each of its parts, and the validity of self-transcendence.

Transpersonal psychology is phenomenological, inclusive, and optimistic. It values and integrates the personal with the transpersonal, the psychological with the spiritual, exceptional mental health with psychological disturbance, and analytical intellect with contemplative ways of knowing. It finds wisdom in Western psychology and philosophy, Eastern spirituality, postmodern insights, and worldviews of indigenous traditions. Such overlaps between psychology and spirituality have been present in both psychology (e.g., the work of William James, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow) and in the spiritual traditions (which have their own rich views of development, cognition, social interactions, emotional and behavioral suffering, and methods of healing). The work of Ken Wilber (Integral Psychology) and Stanislav Grof are at the forefront of transpersonal psychology today. Among its important projects are describing the stages and processes of transpersonal development, researching the psychological effects of meditation, exploring spiritual emergencies (those mystical or spiritual experiences which also create acute debilitating psychological suffering), and identifying the transpersonal dimensions of nature experiences.

Transpersonal psychology is a field of inquiry which includes theory, research, and practice, offering insights and applications based on research and experience and methods for evaluating and confirming or disconfirming its findings. It is scientific in the broad sense of the