

Transcendentalism VS Anti-Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is a philosophy that originated in the 1830's. Its chief aficionado, Ralph Waldo Emerson, began the movement by meeting regularly with other intellectuals of the time to discuss a various array of topics. The Transcendentalism movement was the mainstream flow of writers in the New England Renaissance.

The contrasting philosophy anti-Transcendentalism was a small philosophical movement predominantly consisting of a small group of writers including, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. These two were leaders of a movement that dared to go against the conventional belief. Hawthorne and Melville are considered two of the greatest fiction writers of their time and together these scholars stood up, as opposition to what they felt was impractical perspective.

The Transcendentalists had a wide variety of beliefs that were constantly changing to adapt to the time. Though always changing and never having a standard set of beliefs, Transcendentalists generally agreed on certain key points in their philosophy: man is born good, children are Gods most perfect creation, one can only find god in and through nature the belief in universal truths, and the oversoul pool concept.

Anti-Transcendentalists also have important elements that are generally agreed on: man is born with the stain of the original sin, man is the most destructive force in nature, one can only find God through good works and life experience. There are no Universal truths just individual truths, and there is no oversoul just Heaven and Hell. These keynotes in each philosophy are essential in understanding the foundation of both these beliefs

Transcendentalists will choose to create rather than to destroy. This also underhandedly shows that man will choose right, if giving the choice between right and wrong. On the other hand, anti-Transcendentalists believe man will naturally choose wrong over right if given the choice between the two. Also in spite of the transcendental argument, anti-Transcendentalists argue that man destroys while attempting to create, thus reiterating mans natural creed to destroy. The two philosophy do not end here there are many other beliefs of both that contrast with each other.

An essential key in unlocking the mystery of the Transcendental philosophy is understanding that they believed in finding God through nature. They believe he can be found by becoming one with nature. In addition, like Buddhist in respects to nature but not like them in their beliefs in god is in all living things. Anti- Transcendentalists oppose this with the belief that God can only be reached though good works and experience. They feel living a good life, doing good deeds, and experiencing life through one's work is the only way to find God. Transcendentalists on the other hand believe nature's peaceful and serene setting is the only place where one can transcend to Gods level. While the conversely the anti-Transcendentalists believe that one will not know if one has found God before one is in the after life. This, like the rest, is a highly controversial argument between the two philosophies.

Anti-transcendentalism is a philosophical movement most notably associated with a period in literature during the nineteenth century. This movement was born directly out of resistance to the period's very popular transcendentalist themes in literature. Well-known authors such as Emerson and Thoreau were among the forefront of transcendentalism whereas Melville, Hawthorne, Crane and Poe are often credited as the leaders of anti-transcendentalism. To understand anti-transcendentalism, one must first learn of transcendentalism.

Transcendentalism was based on the belief in the concept that there was inherent good in man, nature and the universe. Appreciation for, and communion with, nature were common themes. In Thoreau's "Walden," the author had isolated himself in a cabin near a simple, peaceful pond. Thoreau had abandoned the modern accommodations of his time in order to retreat to a more simpler, natural habitation. The result of this regression was his personal serenity and spiritual growth. Transcendentalists believed nature was created by God. Therefore, nature was definitively good and man need only to transcend the narrow vision of modern-day life to connect with nature and glow in its pure goodness.

Anti-transcendentalism, rose up to point out the flaws in the Utopian-like views of its counter-movement. To the anti-transcendentalist, man was capable of evil and nature was destructive and indifferent. History has displayed innumerable characters driven by self-serving goals. From the common thieves, thugs and murderers of society to the tyrannical rulers of governments, humans proved corruptible and without compassion. Nature itself was capable of causing much pain and suffering through floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, and disease.