

論文

The Implication of Aesthetic Appreciations of Nature: Comparison of Emerson and Thoreau

Maki Sato

要 旨

アメリカにおける環境思想の系譜を辿ると、ヨーロッパのロマン主義に影響を受け、19世紀アメリカにおいて超絶主義哲学を打ち出したラルフ・ワルド・エマソンによる美的印象を継起にした自然解釈と、一時期エマソンと活動を共にし、ウォルデンの森における実践的生活を描写したヘンリー・デービッド・ソローをもってアメリカ自然思想の源流と紹介しているものが多い。エマソン、ソローは、共に自然の美的な側面を基軸に、自然を生命の源として捉え、自然と人間が同質的なものであるとの解釈から、自然を通して合理主義や物質主義への懐疑を示し、超絶主義哲学の樹立を試みたものとしてロマン主義との比較から解釈が進められている。最近では、アメリカにおけるネーチャー・ライティングの祖として文学研究の対象としても注目されている。日本においては、彼らの著作において、東洋思想（インド哲学や孔子の引用など）の影響が顕著に見られることから朱子との比較や、日本のナチュラリストと標榜される鴨長明、宮沢賢治、南方熊楠との思想比較などが研究されている。本稿では、こうした従来の環境思想、あるいは比較思想的な分析の潮流とは異なり、現代アメリカにおける分析美学の潮流から派生した環境美学の原点として、改めてエマソンとソローの著作に着目する。エマソンとソローの語る「自然」概念が、同じ超絶主義哲学の範疇に分類されながらも、エマソンは概念的、形而上的自然概念を基に議論を進めたのに対し、ソローは実践を通じた感覚的自然概念に基づいた議論を展開したことを指摘する。また、エマソンとソローの思想を比較する試みを通して、現代に通底する自然保護における二元論的解釈、すなわち人間中心主義的自然観と生物中心主義的自然観が、既にエマソンとソローの思想から汲み取れることを指摘する。その上で、改めてエマソンとソローの思想が現代の自然保護思想の原点として与える含意を検討する。

Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) are both well known as active members of the American Transcendentalist movement which developed in the middle of the nineteenth century in New England, in the Eastern region of the United States. Emerson and his close follower Thoreau both emphasized the Transcendentalist idea of the unification of the individual and nature, attained through the quest for self-cultivation and deeper knowledge of the “Self”. Consequently, their attempts to establish a lasting connection with the principle of order underlying all things in the universe – what Emerson calls the “Supreme Being” and Thoreau calls the “laws of Nature” through the aesthetic appreciation of nature imply the importance of harmony between humans and nature. Whereas previous

scholarship on Emerson and Thoreau has emphasised the similarities and continuity between their views on nature as central figures of the Transcendentalist movement, in this article, I would like to suggest an alternative reading of Emerson's *Nature* and Thoreau's *Walden* to highlight their differing views on nature, which we might take as indications of a still-nascent but flourishing movement in environmental thinking in the United States during that time.

The first section consists of a brief overview and examination of the place of their thought within the context of Western perceptions of nature, focusing particularly on changes in perception which took place from the sixteenth to twentieth century. In the second section, by taking a closer look at their writings, especially their respective usages of "nature" and "Nature", their differing views on nature will be highlighted. The third section argues that though both Emerson and Thoreau appreciate nature in an aesthetic manner and emphasize the importance of individual's spiritual relationship with nature, Emerson has a rather more intuitive, ideological understanding of nature which paradoxically leads him to an anthropocentric view, whilst Thoreau, based on his lived experiences, has a practical understanding of nature leading him to form a bio-centric (eco-centric) view on nature.

1. Where Emerson and Thoreau Belong in the Historical Development of Western Perception of Nature

How has Western society perceived nature throughout its history, and where should Emerson and Thoreau be positioned in terms of the paradigm changes and shifts which have occurred in the perceptions of Western society toward nature? As Deborah Slicer notes, "American philosophers are still hesitant to include Emerson and Thoreau in their canon, finding Emerson's Transcendentalism/idealism too crude and mystical and, [...] Thoreau's *Walden* more rant than argument and/or more poetry than conceptual analysis."¹⁾ However, in this section, I would like to examine how their thoughts can be positioned with respect to Western philosophical views of nature, through a brief overview of the shifts in the perception of nature which have occurred in Western philosophy.

R. G. Collingwood²⁾ argued that the idea of nature has changed throughout history and that attempts to understand nature as an object are a reflection of an analogy between matter and mind.³⁾ By careful examination and analysis of the perception of "changing" and "unchanging" nature,⁴⁾ Collingwood divides the history of human perceptions of nature into

¹⁾ Deborah Slicer, "Thoreau's Evanescence", *Philosophy and Literature* 37, no. 1 (2013): 179-98, 182.

²⁾ Robin George Collingwood, *Idea of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

³⁾ Sociologist Murray Bookchin has further analysed the relationship of human and nature. He points out that "the domination of nature by human stems from the very real domination of human by human." Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005).

⁴⁾ Instead of "changing" and "unchanging", Worster uses the word "moved" and "unmoved mover". Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 128.

three stages: Ancient Greek,⁵⁾ Renaissance (sixteenth to eighteenth century),⁶⁾ and Modern.⁷⁾ Using his analysis as a basis, the challenge of this section is to examine where and whether Romanticism, which Emerson and Thoreau were greatly influenced by, might be placed as regards the changes and shifts in Western perceptions of nature.

In the ancient Greek-Roman stage, according to the cosmology of the times, nature was thought of as a macrocosm of organic matter with wisdom, whilst the human was thought of as a microcosm⁸⁾ residing in nature. For the Ancient Greeks, the world of nature is “a continual and all-pervading change”⁹⁾ – a Greek axiom being “nothing is knowable unless it is unchanging.”¹⁰⁾ During the sixteenth to eighteenth century (the Renaissance period according to Collingwood’s division), though both human and nature were believed to be the creation of God, nature was gradually regarded as something that connotes primeval barbarism. The Cartesian and Newtonian framework encouraged this perception by separating human from nature. It was argued that behind this world of so-called “secondary qualities”, there is a “law”: the true object of natural science. Natural laws were knowable because of their unchanging character, through observation of changing matter. Perceptions of nature shifted, in Cartesian thought, to one of nature as mechanical matter, and Newtonian thought added to this a materialistic view that sees nature as substance which simply follows the set of natural laws. With such a materialistic and mechanical view introduced, nature was gradually turned into a commodity that could be exploited for the sake of human needs.

According to Collingwood and Donald Worster, the Darwinian concept of evolution made a huge impact on Western views on nature: nature is no longer mechanical. It was the abandonment of the mechanical conception of nature, nature as a closed system, in favour of nature as an open system. The idea of “evolution” was an epoch-making discovery that changed the prevailing conception of living organisms from one in which all species came into existence “fully-formed” or complete and persisted unchanged (as a species) through time, to

⁵⁾ Collingwood analysed Ionians, Pythagoreans, and Aristotle in his Greek cosmology.

⁶⁾ The European Renaissance which began in Italy, is generally considered to have begun in the fourteenth century and lasted until the seventeenth century. Collingwood’s definition of Renaissance is therefore unique in a way. He referred to Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Bacon, Kepler, Galileo, Spinoza, Newton, Leibniz, Berkeley, Kant, and Hegel to summarize views on nature during Renaissance. He identified Hegel as a key person in the transition to the modern view of nature. Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, 4-9.

⁷⁾ Here, Collingwood analyses Darwin, Bergson for the concept of life, Alexander and Whitehead for the modern cosmology.

⁸⁾ In the field of environmental ethics, it is more common to compare the Judeo-Christian view with the Greco-Roman view on nature. As Lynn White pointed out in his article “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, both views are thought to be the origin of the traditional dualistic view which separates human from nature. According to the Judeo-Christian, humans are a special creation superior to other creatures. The Greco-Roman tradition regards the human as a creature in unique possession of rational powers which can be exercised over other creatures.

⁹⁾ Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, 11.

¹⁰⁾ *Ibid.*

one according to which various species might come into existence or become extinct, in which living organisms are subject to constant change.¹¹⁾

In his theory of the three stages set forth in *Idea of Nature*, Collingwood did not mention the cultural movement of Romanticism which, I would argue, can be understood as a kind of reversion of the perception of nature, countering the Cartesian-Newtonian view on nature. Romanticism, as it emerged in Europe, is often understood as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution,¹²⁾ the rapid and all-encompassing development of science and the scientific viewpoint, and the consequent rationalization of nature. The drastic change in lifestyle caused by the Industrial Revolution brought a boom among the newly emerging European middle class for finding the picturesque and sublime in the wilderness and for the new leisure-activity of traveling in the countryside to see the beauty of wild nature.¹³⁾ Such a movement can be described as a complete reversal of the attitude toward nature which had been prevalent in the sixteenth to eighteenth century.¹⁴⁾ From the Romantic viewpoint, the natural world “supersedes mere empirical description, and becomes about how consciousness finds itself, or a record of itself, in the world.”¹⁵⁾ Though the Romantic standpoint in viewing the natural world could be described as a shift in perception toward a more ecological or organic view that tries to unite humans and nature, its social impact on the Western view of nature and its influence on nature conservation and modern environmentalism have long been ignored and denied.^{16) 17)}

¹¹⁾ Although Darwinian theory differentiated between humans and nature, it also encouraged a view of human society as being involved in a process of development, a view which can be traced in the Marxist theory of historical materialism.

¹²⁾ Industrial Revolution is generally defined as the transition to new manufacturing processes in the period from about 1760 and 1770 to sometime between 1820 and 1840.

¹³⁾ The concepts of the “sublime” and “picturesque” emerged through the newly founded academic field of Aesthetics, started by Kant (1724-1804), followed by Edmund Burke (1729-1797) and Hegel (1770-1831).

¹⁴⁾ The development of, and the change in, the perception of nature at that time are well articulated by Marjorie Hope Nicolson through her careful literary study. According to Nicolson’s research, up to the Romantic era, mountains and wilderness were regarded as something to be feared and avoided. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959).

¹⁵⁾ Onno Oerlmans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002), 33.

¹⁶⁾ Alan Liu’s declaration that “there is no nature” in his reading of Wordsworth is regarded as a work representing a trend for negating Romanticism’s influence on environmentalism. Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 38.

¹⁷⁾ Jonathan Bate opened the door in connecting the romantic age to environmentalist thought. Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991). Following Bate, Onno Oerlmans has been attempting to “see an important and mutually beneficial overlap between romanticism and environmentalism” through his survey in the twentieth century environmentalists thought from Arne Naess through to Carolyn Merchant, Patrick Murphy, and Greg Easterbrook, finding a common aspiration to root value in the objective, physical world. Oerlmans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature*, 13.

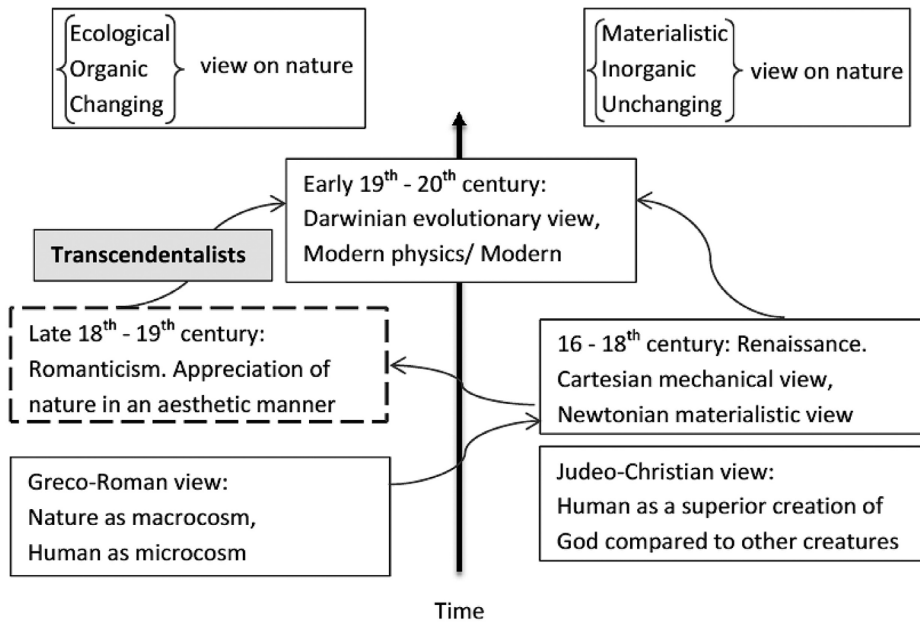


Figure 1 Changes in the Perception of Nature

The above argument can be illustrated as in Figure 1, a diagram of the changes which have occurred in the perception of nature from the Ancient Greeks to the nineteenth and twentieth century. The current of ecological thinking which regards nature in a holistic manner (nature as one huge organism including humans); and the materialistic view of nature (or the attempt to scientifically understand and utilize nature for the sake of human benefit) act as argument and counter-argument to each other over the course of the history of these changes in perception. I added Romanticism to Collingwood’s idea and placed Darwin’s view in between the organic and inorganic views of nature. Darwin’s view has been placed in the centre because of its complex conception of non-human living organisms, influenced by preceding Western views of whether such organisms have consciousness or not.¹⁸⁾

Emerging from the cultural periphery, the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century, sometime after Romanticism in Europe. Emerson, during his trip to Europe in 1833, is known to have been strongly influenced

¹⁸⁾ According to Collingwood, “Darwin never for a moment thought of nature as a conscious agent”. Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, 135. However, Peter Singer argues that the concepts of animal liberation and animal rights are implicit in Darwin’s view and that their roots can be found in Darwin’s book entitled *Expression of the Emotions of Man and Animals*. Singer suggests that Darwin was already aware that animals also feel pain, indicating that he was prepared to recognize the equality of animal and human. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1990).

by the well-known leading authors of Romanticism, Wordsworth¹⁹⁾ and Coleridge.²⁰⁾ 21) Emerson's writings may be analysed as belonging to the late Romantic era, when the majority of the intellectuals associated with the movement held an ecological and organic view of nature as a counter-ideal to rapid industrialization.²²⁾ Emerson published *Nature* in 1836 with a first printing of 500 copies (according to Atkinson, it was not reissued until 1847).²³⁾ *Nature*, considered as "the philosophical constitution of transcendentalism",²⁴⁾ can be read as an expression of a "strong desire for self-definition and spiritual liberation"²⁵⁾ which also provokes awareness of the wonders of nature as manifestations of the Supreme Being, God.

Thoreau's *Walden*, first published in 1854, also garnered very little attention from the reading public. Though the strong influence of Emerson can be traced in *Walden*, Thoreau emphasizes the importance of living a simple life. Because of his detailed descriptions of the beauty of Walden Pond and his appraisals of wilderness,²⁶⁾ Thoreau is regarded as "one of the first environmentalists in American history."²⁷⁾ The underlying influence of Romanticism on both Emerson and Thoreau suggest that they can be interpreted as transitional figures in the change of perception from a Romantic to Darwinist view of nature.

¹⁹⁾ Worster writes: "Romanticism in western culture. Led by such figures as Wordsworth, Schelling, Goethe, and Thoreau, a new generation sought to redefine nature and man's place in the scheme of things" Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 81.

²⁰⁾ Richard E. Brantley, *Anglo American Antiphony: The Late Romanticism of Tennyson and Emerson* (Gainesville, Flo: University Press of Florida, 1994).

²¹⁾ Kerry McSweeney, *The Language of Senses: Sensory Perceptual Dynamics in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998).

²²⁾ Robin Grey, *The Complicity of Imagination: The American Renaissance - Contest of Authority, and Seventeenth century English culture* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²³⁾ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1950). Biographical introduction by Brooks Atkinson.

²⁴⁾ H. Clarke Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* (New York: Hillary House Publishers, 1960), 33.

²⁵⁾ Vassalina Runkwitz, "The Metaphysical Correspondence between Nature and Spirit in the Visions of the American Transcendentalists". *TRANS*, 12, 2011, available at <http://trans.revues.org/473> (accessed 10th September, 2014).

²⁶⁾ Thoreau writes, "How near to good is what is *wild!* Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him. One who pressed forward incessantly and never rested from his labors, grew fast and made infinite demands in life, would always find himself in a new country or wilderness, and surrounded by the raw materials of life" from "Walking". Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), 615.

²⁷⁾ Alireza Manzari, "Nature in American Transcendentalism," *English Language and Literature Studies* 2, no.3 (2012): 62.

Scholars such as Donald Worster,²⁸⁾ David Pepper,²⁹⁾ Timothy O’Riordan,³⁰⁾ and Roderick Nash³¹⁾ have endeavoured, from the perspective of environmental history, to inquire into how the modern American ecological view has been shaped. According to their studies, Emerson’s and Thoreau’s Romantic attitude toward nature can be considered “a remarkable source of inspiration and guidance for the subversive activism of the recent ecology movement.”³²⁾ One way of reading Transcendentalism is as “a response to scientific empiricism”,³³⁾ an attempt to view nature in a different way. The Transcendentalist movement might be considered a direct descendent of Romanticism, representative of a transitional era in the stream of changes undergone by the Western philosophical view of nature.

2. Differences between Emerson’s and Thoreau’s Views on Nature

Acknowledged as Transcendentalists of the mid-nineteenth century, both Emerson and Thoreau have been the subject of study mainly for literature scholars, especially those interested in nature writing (environmental writing).³⁴⁾ Transcendentalist interpretations of nature influenced American literature “in particular the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman”.³⁵⁾ Their works are often compared with those of British Romantics such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tennyson and Carlyle, or of German Romantics such as Goethe. The influence of Chinese philosophers, Lao-Tzu (老子), Zhuang-Zhou (莊子) and Zhu-Xi (朱子) on the Transcendentalists has also been studied among Chinese and Japanese scholars.^{36) 37)}

²⁸⁾ Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁹⁾ Pepper provides an overview and analysis of the development of modern environmental thoughts as being closely intertwined with the development of science and technology. David Pepper, *The Roots of Modern Environmentalism* (London: Routledge, 1984), Chapter 3.

³⁰⁾ O’Riordan, by dividing the modern twentieth century environmentalist movement into eco-centric and techno-centric, argues that eco-centrism in the modern environmentalist movement is rooted in late-nineteenth-century American Romantic Transcendentalism. Timothy O’Riordan, *Environmentalism*, (London: Pion, 1981).

³¹⁾ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

³²⁾ Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 58.

³³⁾ Christopher Windolf, *Emerson’s Nonlinear Nature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 49.

³⁴⁾ According to Thomas J. Lyon, the categorization of a given text as Nature Writing is based on whether they have the following three dimensions: “natural history information, personal responses to nature, and philosophical interpretation of nature”. Thomas Jefferson Lyon, *This Incomparable Land: A Guide to American Nature Writing* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2001), 20.

³⁵⁾ Manzari, “Nature in American Transcendentalism,” 61-68.

³⁶⁾ Yoshio Takanashi, *Emerson and Neo-Confucianism: Crossing Paths over the Pacific* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

³⁷⁾ Yao-hsin Chang, *Chinese Influence in Emerson, Thoreau, and Pound* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1984).

It is commonly accepted amongst scholars that Transcendentalists are “not systematic philosophers, bent on arranging the pattern of life into a logical sequence”,³⁸⁾ and their works are criticized as “little more than a collection of “thoughts”, of individual aspirations and manifestations distilled from the sunshine and the mist over the river”.³⁹⁾ Among the Transcendentalist group, the mutual friendship of Emerson and Thoreau has been closely studied and is a well-known fact from their biographies: Walden Pond situated in the woodlands of Concord, Massachusetts, where Thoreau spent his two years, was a property belonging to his friend and mentor, Emerson.⁴⁰⁾ Though their friendship and their ideological similarity have often been dealt with by scholars, Slicer concludes that Thoreau “disassociated himself from Emerson’s Transcendentalist view of nature as symbol”.⁴¹⁾

In the following section, I would like to compare their views on nature by focusing on Emerson’s *Nature* and Thoreau’s *Walden*. I would like to argue that although both of them are classified as Transcendentalists, their aesthetic appreciation and their interpretation of nature – inspired by finding beauty, good, and truth through observation of nature – can be read in such a way that their perceptions of nature can be seen to fundamentally differ from each other.

2.1 The Uses of *Nature* and *nature* in Emerson and Thoreau

To reveal the fundamental notion underlying Emerson’s and Thoreau’s views on nature, I would like to focus on their usage of the word, ‘nature’. They both appear to intentionally differentiate between the usage of “nature” (with ‘n’ uncapitalized) and “Nature”⁴²⁾ (with ‘n’ capitalized). A careful reader will surely notice that “nature” and “Nature” have different connotations in both of their writings. However, to my knowledge, this has not yet been given sufficient attention. The word “nature” can be found 156 times in Emerson’s *Nature*, whilst in Thoreau’s *Walden* it only appears 100 times. Among the 156 occurrences of the word “nature” in Emerson’s *Nature*, 17 of them (approximately 10%) start with a capitalized N differentiated from “nature” written in small letters, the corresponding share in Thoreau being 50 of the 100 (50%).⁴³⁾

2.2 Emerson’s View on “nature” and “Nature”

Emerson describes “nature” as follows: “Under the general name of commodity, I rank

³⁸⁾ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, xiv.

³⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁴⁰⁾ John T. Lysaker and William John Rossi, *Emerson & Thoreau: Figures of Friendship* (Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press).

⁴¹⁾ Slicer, “Thoreau’s Evanescence,” 179-98, 181.

⁴²⁾ Emerson also uses “*Nature*” in italics and “NATURE” in capitals, both seen on p.4 of *Nature* in R.W. Emerson, *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 1950).

⁴³⁾ To clarify the different usages, occurrences of the word “Nature” found at the beginning of sentences are excluded, and only “Nature”, with ‘n’ capitalized, found in the sentences are counted.

all those advantages which our senses owe to *nature*.⁴⁴⁾ [...] these splendid ornaments, these rich conveniences, this ocean of air above, this ocean of water beneath, this firmament of earth between[,] this zodiac of lights, this tent of dropping clouds, this striped coat of climates, this fourfold year. Beasts, fire, water, stones, and corn serve him.”⁴⁵⁾ ⁴⁶⁾ His description of “nature” begins with the commodity of the raw materials of nature, and is followed by the depiction of the abundant natural environment surroundings us. In his view, “nature” never fails to recall in him beauty and sublimity, which is evident from his including a separate chapter on “*Beauty*”. In his view nature is a source for humans to recognize beauty: “A NOBLER want of man is served by *nature*, namely, the love of Beauty. [...] the simple perception of natural forms is a delight. The influence of the forms and actions in *nature* is so needful to man, that, in its lowest functions, it seems to lie on the confines of commodity and beauty.”⁴⁷⁾ And through the divine beauty of “nature”, through “the dewy morning, the rainbow, the mountains, orchards in blossom, stars, moonlight, shadows in water”⁴⁸⁾ in “combination with the human will”,⁴⁹⁾ humans are able to see the “mark”⁵⁰⁾ of the “Supreme Being”,⁵¹⁾ God.

Emerson also regards “nature” as a simple reflection of the immanent self, using it as a symbol or metaphor for the human mind: “Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in *nature* corresponds to some state of the mind”.⁵²⁾ Following this logic, because “nature” is a narrative of the individual’s state of mind “few adult persons can see *nature*. [...] The lover of *nature* is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood.”⁵³⁾

Emerson explains further that “because the whole of *nature* is a metaphor of the human mind”,⁵⁴⁾ what is disagreeable in “nature” could be interpreted merely as a state of the pure mind or spirit of the person who observes it: “The immobility or bruteness of *nature*, is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient.”⁵⁵⁾ Because of man’s mind, nature can be seen as multifaceted - beautiful and sublime yet brutal, sordid, and filthy. For Emerson, nature is a “spectacle”⁵⁶⁾ and a “phenomenon”,⁵⁷⁾ as are the ever-changing state

⁴⁴⁾ In order to highlight their usage, I have chosen to italicize “nature” and “Nature” cited above and henceforth throughout this paper, though they are not italicized in the original texts.

⁴⁵⁾ From the passages before, “him” stands for “man”.

⁴⁶⁾ Ibid., 7-8.

⁴⁷⁾ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸⁾ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁾ Ibid.

⁵¹⁾ Ibid., 35.

⁵²⁾ Ibid., 15.

⁵³⁾ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁴⁾ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁵⁾ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁶⁾ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁷⁾ Ibid., 31.

of man's culture and the subordinating powers of his mind: "It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind [...] to lead us to regard *nature* as phenomenon, not a substance."⁵⁸⁾

In contrast to the underlying notion he gave to "nature", he describes "Nature" as follows: "Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of *Nature* and the Soul."⁵⁹⁾ ⁶⁰⁾ [...] *Nature*,⁶¹⁾ in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man."⁶²⁾ This implies "Nature" consonant with "the universal soul he [man]⁶³⁾ calls Reason".⁶⁴⁾ In fact, in Emerson's mind "Nature" is another name for the "Supreme Being" and it is only through "nature" that humans can intuitively sense the existence of "Nature". He thus writes, "The aspect of *Nature* is devout. Like the figures of Jesus, she stands with bended head and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from *nature* the lesson of worship."⁶⁵⁾ "Therefore is *Nature* ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of *nature*, as to seem the end for which it was made."⁶⁶⁾ Emerson uses "Nature", in a way, as a conceptual focal point for the "Supreme Being",⁶⁷⁾ the incorporeal existence of which we learn through the unfolding of "nature".

Other than the intuitive understanding of "Nature", Emerson emphasizes the importance of Art, that "Nature" reveals itself through the will of humans and the work of "nature", and that only through the collaborative work of human and "nature" can ultimate beauty be realized: "Thus is Art a *nature* passed through the alembic of man. Thus in art does *Nature* work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works. [...] But beauty in *nature* is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good. It must stand as a part, and not as yet the last or highest expression of the final cause of *Nature*."⁶⁸⁾

Emerson emphasizes not only the importance of Art but also the Ideal philosophy as the manifestation of "Nature", writing, "Our first institution in the Ideal philosophy is a hint from

⁵⁸⁾ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁹⁾ According to the study done by Buell, "Emerson's concept of Spirit, Mind and Soul is treated as synonyms". Lawrence Buell, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *The American Renaissance in New England* eds. Joel Myerson and Wesley T. Mott (Detroit, Michigan, Gale Research Co. 1986), 5. Lawrence Buell, *New England Literary Culture from Revolution Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶⁰⁾ Bishop has analysed and discussed Emerson's view on morality and understanding of the "Over-Soul". Jonathan Bishop, *Emerson on the Soul* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

⁶¹⁾ This "Nature" is originally printed in Italic.

⁶²⁾ Ibid., 4.

⁶³⁾ The word in square brackets is not in the original text.

⁶⁴⁾ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁵⁾ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁶⁾ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁷⁾ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁸⁾ Ibid., 14.

Nature herself.”⁶⁹⁾ Because of what “Nature” implies in Emerson’s philosophy (a higher being from the perspective of humans), a harmony has to be built between human and “Nature” (not “nature”) with the state of mind of humans being reflected in Nature: “A life in harmony with *Nature*, the love of truth and virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text.”⁷⁰⁾

2.3 Thoreau’s View on “nature” and “Nature”

Thoreau, influenced by Emerson in the early stages of his career, also differentiates between “nature” and “Nature” in his usage of the terms. Though Thoreau uses “nature” multiple times to mean “the basic or inherent features, character, or qualities of something,”⁷¹⁾ in this section, I will focus only on the word “nature” used to refer to “the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.”⁷²⁾

Thoreau’s references to “nature” suggest a conception of simple nature providing what is “*necessary of life* ... Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel”⁷³⁾ and where all living things reside. For example, he writes of “the variety and capacity of that *nature* which is our common dwelling.”⁷⁴⁾ He often laments that the nature seen by humans is limited, and believes that other living animals see nature in a different way from how humans do. This leads him to think that the hooting of owls under the twilight woods points to “a vast and undeveloped *nature* which men have not recognized.”⁷⁵⁾

Thoreau frequently mentions animals and it is interesting to see that in his first chapter, “*Economy*”, there appear tamed animals such as hens, cats, oxen, horses, rams, lambs, and dogs. Over the course of the book, his field of vision gradually widens to include wild and smaller animals such as worms, sparrows, wild pigeons, owls, hawks, foxes, squirrels, skunks, rabbits, marmots, and woodchucks. Through reading his detailed observations of the interrelations among living organisms, it becomes clear that Thoreau has an openhearted trust in the optimizing work of nature, which becomes fully evident in the chapter entitled “*Spring*”. The lively description of nature awakening from its winter sleep convinces him of the harmonious work of nature: “In almost all climes the tortoise and the frog are among the precursors and heralds of this season, and birds fly with song and glancing plumage, and plants spring and bloom [...] and preserve the equilibrium of *nature*.”⁷⁶⁾

⁶⁹⁾ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁰⁾ Ibid., 20.

⁷¹⁾ “nature,” Oxford Dictionaries, accessed 10th September, 2014. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/nature>.

⁷²⁾ Ibid.

⁷³⁾ Ibid., 11. Italic and capital letters as in the original text.

⁷⁴⁾ Ibid., 113. “nature” is originally not in italics.

⁷⁵⁾ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁶⁾ Ibid., 279.

Thoreau's doubtfulness and his cynical views on human society and the societal system can be traced in every chapter of *Walden*. When relating his views on nature, his ironical question paradoxically signifies the purity and earnestness of nature in contrast to the human, as he writes: "who estimates the value of the crop which *nature* yields in the still wilder fields unimproved by man?"⁷⁷⁾ For Thoreau, nature is a substance that is being plundered by humans, as can be seen in his harsh criticism of the traders in Concord, who take whatever the nature can provide and turn their takings into commercial commodities without paying much attention to nature's genuine work: "animal, vegetable, or mineral [...] will come out an excellent dun-fish for a Saturday's dinner."⁷⁸⁾ In contrast to his views on people coming from urban areas to Concord, he openly admires people who live closer to nature, of whom he writes, "His life itself passes deeper in *nature* than the studies of the naturalist penetrate; himself a subject for the naturalist. [...] He gets his living by barking trees. Such a man has some right to fish, and I love to see *nature* carried out in him."⁷⁹⁾ He further mentions concretely: "Fishermen, hunters, woodchoppers, and others, spending their lives in the fields and woods, in a peculiar sense a part of *Nature* themselves, are often in a more favorable mood for observing her".⁸⁰⁾ Because of his idealism concerning a way of life closer to nature, Thoreau is known to have begun extensive reading on indigenous American Indians in his later years, during the 1850's.⁸¹⁾ Unlike Emerson's "nature" as "immanent self", Thoreau uses "nature" as a more concrete, direct term to refer to nature as matter per se.

For Thoreau, "Nature" is not always something that is related to the doctrine of the Supreme Being as Emerson conceives of it. Rather "Nature" recalls in him something of those natural laws which are the essence of nature at work, what he explicitly calls the "principle of all the operations of *Nature*".⁸³⁾ A further explanation of this principle can be found in the following passage: "the laws of *Nature*, we should need only one fact, or the description of one actual phenomenon, to only a few laws, and our result is vitiated, not, of course, by any confusion or irregularity in *Nature*, but by our ignorance of essential elements in the calculation."⁸⁴⁾

Based on empirical knowledge attained through farming and careful observation of nature, Thoreau sees the world flourishing with other living organisms and he confesses, "We are not

⁷⁷⁾ Ibid., 142.

⁷⁸⁾ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁹⁾ Ibid., 254.

⁸⁰⁾ Ibid., 189.

⁸¹⁾ Thoreau's interest on American Indians is articulated in Robert Sayre, *Thoreau and the American Indians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

⁸²⁾ Some of the other materials on Thoreau's writings on American Indians can be downloaded: "Selections from 'The Indian Notebooks' (1847-1861) of Henry D. Thoreau", <https://www.walden.org/documents/file/Library/Thoreau/writings/Notebooks/IndianNotebooks.pdf>, (accessed 10th September, 2014).

⁸³⁾ Ibid., 275.

⁸⁴⁾ Ibid., 259.

wholly involved in *Nature*. [...] I only know myself as a human entity.”⁸⁵⁾ In his view, “Nature” is filled with lively living organisms, a constantly changing substance: “There is nothing inorganic. [...] *Nature* is ‘in full blast’ within.”⁸⁶⁾ Thoreau’s “Nature”, “continually repairs”⁸⁷⁾ and reproduce itself as a holistic living organism: “I love to see that *Nature* is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another.”⁸⁸⁾

Though the difference between Thoreau’s usages of “nature” and “Nature” is subtle when compared to that of Emerson’s, “Nature” for Thoreau can be summarized as a manifestation of conceptual universal truth which human should learn from: “let us first be as simple and well as *Nature* ourselves”.⁸⁹⁾ For Thoreau, “Nature” does not imply the existence of the Supreme Being, but is a manifestation of universal truth itself, a truth according to which humans - along with other living organisms - live in an ideal balance with each other and where the economics of nature take place on a daily basis. Thus, whereas Emerson’s sense of “Nature” is more vertical, Thoreau sees “Nature” in more horizontal and perhaps more liberal terms: “I go and come with a strange liberty in *Nature*, a part of herself.”⁹⁰⁾

Table 1 Comparison of “nature” and “Nature” in Emerson and Thoreau

	Emerson	Thoreau
Appearances of <i>nature</i>	124 times	45 times
Appearances of <i>Nature</i>	17 (+15 as for sentence start)	50 (+5 as for sentence start)
Appreciation of <i>nature</i>	“nature” as ephemeral phenomena: as a reflection of “mind” “self”	“nature” as matter: nature per se (in regard to human)
Appreciation of <i>Nature</i>	“Nature” as a conceptual focal point to the “Supreme Being”	“Nature” as a manifestation of conceptual Universal truth
Consequence of Appreciation	Conceptual, Metaphysical	Practical, Physical, Empirical

The above argument can be summarized in Table 1. For Emerson, “nature” is a reflection of the human “mind” and “self”, thus more ephemeral “phenomena” than mere material substance. Thoreau uses “nature” in a straightforward way, as substantial matter, as nature per se. When Emerson uses “Nature”, it is used as a conceptual focal point for the “Supreme Being”. According to Emerson’s interpretation of the doctrine of the “Supreme Being”, it is only through “nature” that humans can sense the existence of Spirit, Mind and Soul. On the

⁸⁵⁾ Ibid., 122.

⁸⁶⁾ Ibid., 275.

⁸⁷⁾ Ibid., 170.

⁸⁸⁾ Ibid., 283.

⁸⁹⁾ Ibid., 70.

⁹⁰⁾ Ibid., 117.

⁹¹⁾ Ibid., 259.

other hand, for Thoreau, “Nature” is used, in a certain sense, as a manifestation of conceptual universal truth, or natural law, or in his words, “the description of one actual phenomenon”.⁹¹⁾

The conceptual distinctions evident in the differing usages of “nature” and “Nature” by Emerson and Thoreau reveal fundamental differences in their respective underlying notions of nature. Though they both appreciate nature in an aesthetic way, it is apparent that they strove toward different styles in their interpretations of nature. It can be concluded that while Emerson appreciates nature on a conceptual and metaphysical level, Thoreau, based on his empirical relation with nature, appreciates nature on a practical and physical level.

3. Emerson’s and Thoreau’s Views on the Human-Nature Relationship

Continuing the line of argument begun in Section 2, in this section, I would like to draw out Emerson’s and Thoreau’s views on the relationship between humans and nature implicit in the distinction they make between “nature” and “Nature”. Here, I would like to argue that with his conceptual and metaphysical bent of mind with a way of thinking which tended toward the conceptual and metaphysical, Emerson’s sense of “nature” tends towards an anthropocentric viewpoint, while his sense of “Nature” points to a monistic view of the human-nature relationship. On the other hand, due to his physical and practical experiences, Thoreau’s views on “nature” suggest bio-centrism (eco-centrism),⁹²⁾ while his usage of “Nature” is indicative of his dualistic view of the human-nature relationship. The rest of this paper will endeavour to present possible reasons for, and the internal logic behind, their respectively anthropocentric and bio-centric views on nature. From this point on, *nature* will be used solely to mean “*nature per se*”.

3.1 Emerson’s Anthropocentrism through His View on “nature”

Emerson acknowledges that “A man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work”,⁹³⁾ that human have to work to gain benefits from *nature*. He recognizes the delicately intertwined work of *nature*’s on-going process and its results. Yet he writes: “*Nature*, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other’s hands for the profit of man.”⁹⁴⁾ Although he seems to have recognized *nature* in terms of contemporary ecology, he views *nature* as a substance inferior to man. Why does this overturning in understanding occur?

Recall that by his usage of “nature”, Emerson means phenomena, reflections of “mind” and “self”, rather than a material substance. Because of this notion underlying his views on (or

⁹²⁾ I chose to use “bio-centric” as I thought it better fits Thoreau’s views on nature. Thoreau mentions Darwin once in *Walden* (Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, 11), which suggests that his interests always lay in living organisms.

⁹³⁾ Emerson, *The Complete Essays and other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 9.

⁹⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, 8.

understanding of) “nature”, to see *nature* as a material substance is, for Emerson, to see it as an object subordinate to the human. This idea recurs in several phrases throughout his essay on “*Nature*”. Here, I would like to quote what can be read as the most obvious passage expressing his view: “*Nature* is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode. It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mold into what is useful. Man is never weary of working it up. [...] One after another his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes at last only a realized will – the double of the man.”⁹⁵⁾

Emerson clearly writes that *nature* is abundant and all things are good, as long as it serves the humans, making evident his anthropocentric views on *nature*: “Nothing in *nature* is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service. [...] that a thing is good so far as it serves.”⁹⁶⁾ Emerson has a tendency to view *nature* as a substance subordinate to the human, writing: “*nature* became ancillary to a man.”⁹⁷⁾ *Nature*, as natural material, can be utilized thoroughly, as long as its purpose of usage is for human benefits. Such a viewpoint on *nature* is suggestive of an anthropocentrism which establishes a vertical relationship between human and *nature*, human as predator and *nature* as silent object which serves human.⁹⁸⁾

3.2 Thoreau’s Bio-Centrism through His View on “nature”

Thoreau, on the other hand, has a view opposite to Emerson’s, which could be interpreted as bio-centric. Though he admits that in his experiences of farming, his enemies are worms, woodchucks, and weeds, his bio-centric view can be detected by the way he poses the question to himself: “But what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden?”⁹⁹⁾ With Thoreau, animals¹⁰⁰⁾ are taken for granted as substantial “others” that have the right to share in the bounty of *nature*. He also thinks that the selective taste of humans for certain products of *nature* is unfair toward *nature*, which produces goods without preferences: “These beans have results which are not harvested by me. Do they not grow for woodchucks partly? [...] How, then, can our harvest fail? Shall I not rejoice also at the abundance of the weeds whose seeds are the granary of the birds? It matters little comparatively whether the fields fill the farmer’s barns.”¹⁰¹⁾

⁹⁵⁾ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁶⁾ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁷⁾ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁸⁾ Donald Worster also writes that Emerson “tended to devalue the material world except insofar as it could be put to higher spiritual use by the human mind”. Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 99.

⁹⁹⁾ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, 140.

¹⁰⁰⁾ Surprisingly, in Emerson’s “*Nature*”, animals are not much mentioned, instead of which picturesque landscapes often make an appearance.

¹⁰¹⁾ Ibid., 150.

Thoreau views human activities as a small contribution compared to the work of *nature*, that no matter where human interests lie, *nature* simply follows its own law as “purposiveness without purpose”.¹⁰²⁾ In this sense, for Thoreau, *nature* is superior to human; whatever the work done by humans, it is partial in comparison with the work of nature and is already embedded in the whole activity of nature.

Thoreau’s view on animals is also very unique, for example, he calls small animals, such as the foxes, skunks, and rabbits found in the woods, his little friends or “*Nature’s* watchmen”.¹⁰³⁾ He also mentions that domestic animals look much freer than their keepers: “I am wont to think that men are not so much the keepers of herds as herds are the keepers of men, the former are so much the freer.”¹⁰⁴⁾ He views other living things as siblings of the human, both part and parcel of the work of nature. Thoreau’s writing indicates that he has a rather bio-centric attitude toward *nature*.

In a chapter named “*Higher Laws*” in *Walden*, he often mentions his refusal to eat meat. He quotes Mencius and the Hindu Vedas to argue that the determination to refrain from eating meat is important in man’s withdrawal from his role as predator.¹⁰⁵⁾ The frequently quoted phrases,¹⁰⁶⁾ “Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?”,¹⁰⁷⁾ and “I may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it”,¹⁰⁸⁾ indicate his acknowledgement of his own existence as equal to that of other organisms. It can thus be concluded that his views on *nature* are bio-centric.

Thoreau’s views on *nature* can also be read as idealism, as wishing for the harmonious co-existence of humans and wildlife in *nature*. With his sensitive and close observations of *nature* and his practical views on “nature”, it is logical for him to develop a bio-centric perspective on *nature* - that humans are not the predominant rulers of *nature*, but rather occupy a part of “living” *nature*, where all living things are equal and organically interrelated with each other, and that *nature* should be carefully treated with an awareness of the exquisite balance of its work. The following passage articulates clearly his view on *nature* as a “living” organism: “The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, [...] not a fossil earth, but a living earth.”¹⁰⁹⁾ After all, for Thoreau, the human is “a sojourner in *nature*”.¹¹⁰⁾ His writings thus give us the impression that he has a bio-centric view of *nature*, a view based upon a conception of *nature* as a common dwelling place for all living organisms,

¹⁰²⁾ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1951).

¹⁰³⁾ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, 117.

¹⁰⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰⁶⁾ This sentence is often quoted in papers focusing on Thoreau’s thought in relation to Asian thought.

¹⁰⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁰⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹¹⁰⁾ *Ibid.*, 33.

with a horizontal relationship subsisting between human and *nature*.

3.3 Emerson's Dualistic Human-nature View

For Emerson, who granted that *nature* has basic value as a material commodity, the “Supreme Being” exists as the pinnacle of “Nature”. It can be concluded that he has a rather monistic view when it comes to the human-“Nature” relationship, as he can only view the “Supreme Being” immanent in *nature* from the perspective of humans (see Figure 2, Diagram Dimension A under Emerson's Conceptual Model). Because of his view, he emphasises unity: “The unity of *Nature* – the unity in variety [...] the same entity in the tedious variety of forms. [...] Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world.”¹¹¹⁾ His view, which might be termed human-*nature*-monism, can be seen clearly from the following sentence on beauty: “Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace. [...] Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All.”¹¹²⁾ Emerson regards all the variety observable in *nature* as nothing but a representation of the “Supreme Being”.

If Emerson sees the human-“Nature” relationship monistically, we might think that he would consequently have a bio-centric attitude towards *nature*, that *nature* per se, mirroring the human, should not be over-exploited but rather conserved, because damaging *nature* is similar to damaging oneself. Paradoxically, however, as I have argued in the previous section, Emerson has an anthropocentric view on *nature*. This paradox can be better understood when we consider his views from another angle, as diagrammed in Figure 2, Diagram Dimension B of Emerson's Conceptual Model. As indicated in the rectangle in the middle of Figure 2, we are discussing different aspects of Emerson's single idea. For Emerson, *nature* is like a crystal ball that projects the existence of the “Supreme Being”. The Human-*nature* relationship is thus strictly distinguished from brute *nature* (*nature* as such): human as subject is always kept separate from *nature* as object. Therefore, whilst preserving the monistic human-“Nature” idea, he views the human-*nature* relationship in a dualistic way, enabling him to have a monistic, yet anthropocentric understanding of *nature*.

¹¹¹⁾ Emerson, *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 24.

¹¹²⁾ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

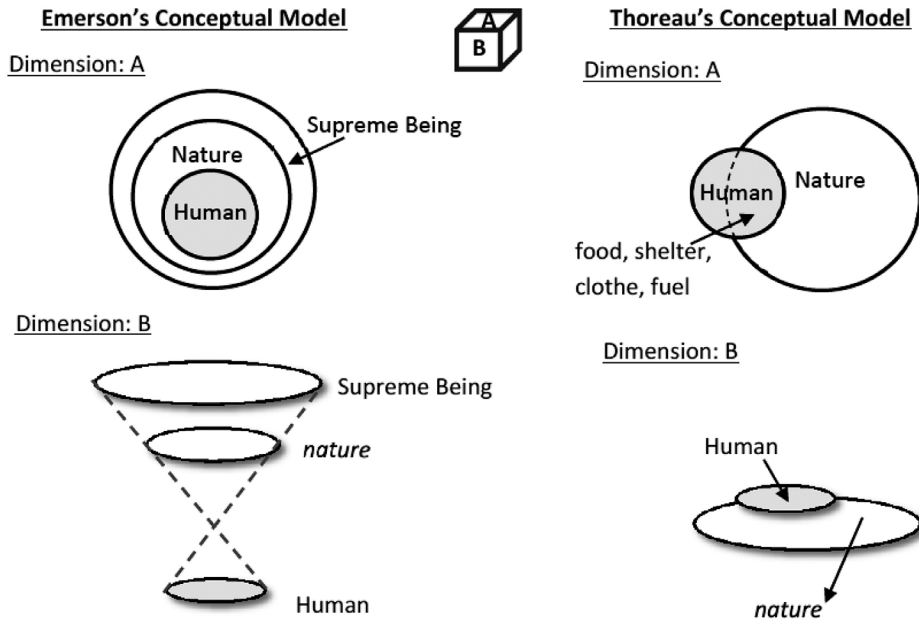


Figure 2 Diagram of Human-Nature Conceptual Models

3.4 Thoreau's Monistic Human-nature View

Thoreau, on the other hand, sees "Nature" as a manifestation of conceptual universal truth. Because of his view, "Nature" is easily connected to material commodities: "Nature" is viewed as the generous provider of "the necessities of life [...] Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel."¹¹³⁾ Therefore, he has a dualistic view when it comes to the human-"Nature" relationship; "Nature" is viewed as a provider and the human is viewed as a user of what "Nature" generously provides (see Figure 2, Diagram Dimension A under Thoreau's Conceptual Model). Thoreau's writings indicate his dualistic understanding, and if we include not only humans but other living organisms, his view may be interpreted as pluralistic: "What distant and different beings in the various mansions of the universe are contemplating the same one at the same moment! *Nature* and human life are as various as our several constitutions."¹¹⁴⁾ Due to his empirical relation with "nature", Thoreau takes *nature* for granted as material substance, from which humans are provided what is "necessary of life": "nature" is *nature* and human is human. According to Emerson's conception of the human-*nature* bond, the "Supreme Being" functions as the link establishing the bond between human and *nature*. With Thoreau, however, because of his horizontal conceptualization of the relationship between human and *nature*, his views on the human-"Nature" relationship should be interpreted as dualistic: *nature* separated from human.

¹¹³⁾ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, 11.

¹¹⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, 9.

If Thoreau sees the human-“Nature” relation in a dualistic way, we might think that he would have an anthropocentric view, that “Nature”, exceeding human ability, would be able to provide whatever humans need, and that the products or commodities of “Nature” can be used by humans relying without limit on its abundance. However, as argued in Section 3.2, he has a bio-centric view. How can this paradox be explained?

The key to finding an answer is similar to what we have observed in Emerson’s Conceptual Model. Though Thoreau’s idea appears to be dualistic, it could be considered bio-centric when seen in a different dimension, as shown in Figure 2, Diagram Dimension B of Thoreau’s Conceptual Model. For Thoreau, though *nature* is regarded in dualistic terms as, *qua* brute matters, the Other of human beings (the object set against the human subject, human as a subject and *nature* as object, i.e. subject-object dualism), the human-*nature* relationship is seen as monistic. Thoreau, whilst preserving the dualistic idea, views the human-*nature* relationship in a monistic way, enabling him to have a dualistic, yet bio-centric view on *nature*. His contradictory attitude toward *nature* is evident from his writing: “What shall I learn of beans or beans of me?”,¹¹⁵⁾ “It was no longer beans that I hoed, no that I hoed beans”.¹¹⁶⁾

The above argument can be summarized as in Table 2. Emerson’s vertical view on the human-*nature* relationship seems to imply anthropocentrism. However, his view can be summarized as human-“Nature”-monism. On the contrary, when considering his views on the human-*nature* relationship, he has a dualistic view which enables him to keep his anthropocentric view of *nature*. For Thoreau, his horizontal understanding of the human-*nature* relationship reveals his bio-centric views. However when we summarize his views on “Nature”, he seemingly has a human-“Nature”-dualistic view. This apparent contradiction is resolved when seen in a different dimension, through which it becomes clear that while retaining human-“Nature” dualism, he has a human-*nature*-monistic view, thus explaining his bio-centric views on *nature*.

Table 2 Comparison of “nature” and “Nature” in Emerson and Thoreau

	Emerson	Thoreau
View on Human – “nature” relationship	<u>Vertical</u> : “nature” as a commodity that serves human; implies anthropocentrism	<u>Horizontal</u> : “nature” as a common dwelling; implies bio-centrism
View on Human – “Nature” relationship	<u>Monistic</u> : “Nature” as a “Supreme Being” to seek harmony with	<u>Dualistic</u> : “Nature” as a perpetual host to living organisms (including animals and plants)
View on Human – <i>nature</i> relationship	<u>Monistic Dualism</u> : Humans have responsibility to optimize the usage of nature (utilitarian view)	<u>Dualistic Monism</u> : Humans need to protect and conserve nature (conservationist view)

¹¹⁵⁾ Ibid., 140.

¹¹⁶⁾ Ibid., 143.

Conclusion

In this paper Emerson's and Thoreau's views on nature have been compared and analysed. Firstly, the place of Transcendentalist views on nature in the history of changes in the Western perception of nature was discussed. The Transcendentalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century was identified as a view which emerged in the midst of one such change of perception in the Western context. Though both Emerson and Thoreau are classified as Transcendentalist thinkers, through a close examination and reading of the differences in their respective uses of "nature" and "Nature", it has become clear that though they both appreciated nature in an aesthetic way, their underlying attitudes toward nature show that they reached completely different styles of approaching and understanding nature.

By analysing their differing views on nature and considering the internal logic of their views, it can be concluded that Emerson had an anthropocentric and dualistic (monistic-dualism) view of the human-*nature* relationship, which implied the responsibility of humans to optimize their usage of nature; whereas Thoreau had an eco-centric and monistic (dualistic-monism) view on the human-*nature* relationship, which implied the responsibility of humans to protect and conserve nature. Their respective views remain the two dominant currents in environmental thoughts and environmental ethics in contemporary society. Their work reveals that they were living in an era when older static models of nature were rapidly being replaced by a new model. Therefore, though they are both classified as Transcendentalists, their views on "nature" differ, making clear the rapid changes undergone by the Transcendentalist movement during that era.