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**Henry David Thoreau's Walden: On the Revelation of the True Nature  
of Men**

**Bachelor's thesis**

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1. Introduction – Socio-cultural Context in America from 1830s to 1860s
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  - 3.2. Criticism of Society, or Finding of the True Nature
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4. Conclusion

### Seznam doporučené literatury:

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## **Introduction**

American national identity has been deeply influenced by the rapid growth of population, economy, development of the industrial world and the omnipresent unpleasant conditions of the surrounding environment. During his time, Henry David Thoreau noticed the downfall of society as well as its growing corruption and he wrote down his ideas based on his two-year experiment in the woods which led to the existence of one of the most influential works *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) in which Thoreau vividly described the rapid development of culture and industry and its subsequent impacts on the American society.

The aim of this thesis is thus the exploration of the implicit as well as the explicit remarks of the most important features written in *Walden* which have, in Thoreau's eyes, such a devastating repercussion for the American society. The main core of the thesis dealing with the actual interpretation of the book will be thus divided into five chapters in which I intend to describe and analyse the nine most important features.

However, before the actual interpretation of the work, a chapter about the socio-cultural context of the American society between the years 1830 and 1860 will be included to provide an insight into the potential occurrences to which Transcendentalism reacted. This chapter will be then followed by a brief description of the movement with an overview of Ralph Waldo Emerson's important contribution. Eventually, Henry David Thoreau's writing and philosophical career will be described in a separate chapter focusing on his influence on Transcendentalism and Environmentalism.

## 1. Socio-cultural Context in America from 1830s to 1860s

In a study dealing with Transcendentalism, it is important to introduce the overall context of society and its cultural, political and economic influences that played a significant role in sculpting North America during the movement's existence.

One of the most crucial influences that Transcendentalism has been dealing with is individuality and one's relation to Nature and society. Philosophers of the movement and their followers opposed all non-individualistic approaches of contemporary society and advocated the idea of self-knowledge and self-reliance. In the book *Topos lesa v americké literatuře* (2005), Michal Peprník writes about the intimate relationship between men and the forest. Peprník analyses Emerson's perception of the forest and describes it as "a privileged form of natural space" which "enables a transformation of consciousness – the act of transcendence." (Peprník 224) What makes such a process impossible is society. Michal Peprník describes the act of transcendence as an "act of communication with God" (Peprník 224). He then explains that this communication is done individually when one is away from the "distracting" society. In point of fact, when men act individually in a seclusion from other members of society only then can they reveal and explore the inner mind and its essence.

Another of the key elements on which Transcendentalism focuses is materialism as well as their obsessive need to acquire wealth and to gather more than they need. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the deteriorating economic situation in America contributed to the substantial change of society and the subsequent reorganization of values. Claude S. Fischer writes about this in her book *Made in America* (2010): "when the business cycle turned down, as it did in the panics of 1819 and 1837, urban workingmen faced spells of unemployment and depressed wages with little to fall back on." (Fischer 43) The moment when citizens had to take the responsibility to their own hands and gather property and money to avoid potential future misfortunes, might be the nascency of the mass hunt for the materialistic values which was supposed to secure one's safety in the capitalist world. However, from Thoreau's point of view, these events might be as well the right stimuli to commence a search for other values than those of materialistic world as we know it.

Howard Zinn explains in his book *A People's History of the United States* (1980) that the economy of growing America was deficient in its core:

The crisis was built into a system which was chaotic in its nature, in which only the very rich were secure. It was a system of periodic crisis-1837, 1857, 1873 (and later: 1893, 1907, 1919, 1929 that wiped out small businesses and brought cold, hunger, and death to working people while the fortunes of the Astors, Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Morgans, kept growing through war and peace, crisis and recovery. (Zinn 237)

Another effect of the capitalist mindset was cast on the interpersonal perception. All the gathered property afterwards began to serve as a measure of one's social status. Claude S. Fischer writes about Salem where "merchants and artisans in the 1830s and '40s faced growing competition from outside the community, but also growing opportunities." (Fischer 122) Additionally, it caused citizens to challenge even the long-established church and slavery. As Fischer continues, "both fear and ambition led them to challenge the church's restrictions on what they could make and sell and whom they could employ (including the church's injunction against using slaves)." (Fischer 122) Circumstances like this accelerated the rise of interpersonal comparison and competition not only at the level of mercantile relations but on the social level as well. Consequently, the thinkers of nascent Transcendentalist movement began a search for the true values of life.



## 2. The Essence of Transcendentalism

As an outcome of the rapid development of society and its culture, industry, politics and other elements of alike nature, many Transcendentalists believed that the innate and natural harmony of humans is being deteriorated. In the preface to the book *The Social Construction of Nature* (1988), Klaus Eder writes that “we are living in a culture that more or less unconsciously ‘forces’ us into a self-destructive relationship with nature.” (Eder vii-viii) Culture embraces humanity as a whole, and as a consequence of the transfer of focus on the exterior as well as the result of religious endeavour of Unitarianism, the internal spiritual wealth and harmony were lost. Furthermore, Tiffany K. Wayne writes in her book *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (2006) that, “although influenced by and helping to shape an overall shift in American culture toward a focus on the individual, American Transcendentalism began as a crisis of faith, as a reaction against Boston Unitarianism.” (Wayne vii) The progress of science and its subsequent prosperity transformed the focus from God to a more secular perception of reality, ergo on a palpable materialistic world and a society from the point of view of commerce, but, as then Wayne noted, Transcendentalism confronted the necessity of Christianity and turned to the belief in humankind’s ‘divinity’. The shift from the outside world to one’s core would enable the perception of reality according to one’s individual needs without any demand to achieve a unitarian fictitious purpose. With Unitarianism as well came the idea that god is one person, whereas, in comparison with Transcendentalism, the deity per se does not lie in something specific. It is rather believed that the transcendental ‘deity’ is in everything, meaning in Nature, therefore in men.

The shape of Transcendentalism, as Tiffany K. Wayne writes, was sculpted by the ideas of “German philosophers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Immanuel Kant (from whom the term transcendental was adapted), as well as by the leading figures of English romanticism, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge.” (Wayne viii) The theories of the movement were reactions on the emerging occurrences in America which caused the birth of such philosophical approaches to reality.

The first fragment of the birth of American Transcendentalism is connected to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s journey of his own philosophical conviction. As Richard Gray writes in his book *A history of American literature* (2003):

With Emerson, the inspiration came after he resigned his position as a Unitarian minister in 1832. He sailed to Europe, where he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth and began a lifelong friendship with Thomas Carlyle. Through them, he became intimately associated with transcendental thought and its sources in German idealism. (Gray 130)

Absorbing new and fresh thoughts allowed him to deal with different approaches to perceiving the correlation between the inner human qualities and their surroundings, ergo Nature. As Emerson wrote in 'Introduction' to his work *Nature* (1836), "OUR age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers." (Emerson 1) He believed that despite the fast development flaws our minds, the exact opposite, the excessive dwelling on the general truths of the past which survived until today, does the same. Furthermore, Emerson continues in the same chapter with an idea concerning the perception of the immediate occurrences and notes that the "foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face, through their eyes. Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" (Emerson 1) The implemented thought shows that the true importance lies in the occurrences that are happening in the immediate context of situation. In other words, the present moment offers men the truest guidelines and hints according to which they can effectively act in the most efficient way.

Emerson's *Nature* is considered as a creed of transcendental movement since it outlined the most crucial principles of the movement and additionally influenced the thinking of other key figures of Transcendentalism including Henry David Thoreau, Emerson's admirer and follower. *Nature* was written in 1836. Tiffany K. Wayne comments that this year "has been identified as the 'annus mirabilis', or miraculous year, of the Transcendentalist movement." (Wayne viii), for the year also witnessed the birth of the Transcendental Club which served as a home for the discussions of progressive transcendental thoughts.

## **2.1. Henry David Thoreau and Transcendentalism**

Henry David Thoreau's pursuit of the immediate experience underlined all the efforts to truly understand life, or Nature. As Lawrence Buell wrote in *Environmental Imagination* (1995), "Thoreau is the patron saint of American environmental writing." (Buell 115) His aim was to explore the true virtues of nature and to genuinely understand it. Thoreau can

be then seen as a man seeking for harmony between nature and its individual inhabitants. This might be as well considered as the core of transcendentalism, and it is thus not arbitrary that he is by some called “the patron saint of American environmental writing”. In most of his writings, Thoreau examines exactness<sup>1</sup> and its impact on cultural values and, as Lewis Mumford notes in his essay “The Golden Day” (1926), he tries to unearth the hypothetical universe in which mankind “had sought culture rather than material conquest, and an intensity of life, rather than mere extension over the continent.” (Paul 13)

Since Thoreau did not follow the mainstream, he was successful in creating an objective observing eyeball as he obtained a secluded point of view. He acquired a unique insight that enabled him to objectively observe without the omnipresent influence of public opinion. Therefore, his ability to seclude himself from such a public opinion unlocks the reasoning unbiased by the desires or the preconceptions of many. Lewis Mumford evolves this idea in “The Golden Day” (1926):

when men were on the move, he remained still; when men were on the make, he remained poor; when civil disobedience broke out in the lawlessness of the cattle thief and the mining town rowdy, by sheer neglect, Thoreau practiced civil disobedience as a principle, in protest against the Mexican War, the Fugitive Slave Law, and slavery itself. (Paul 13)

Looking back to the beginning of Thoreau’s philosophy, it is more than accurate to claim that his ideas were based on those of Emerson. Richard J. Schneider writes about Thoreau and his relationship with Emerson in the article “Life and Legacy” on a website *The Thoreau Society*: “Since Thoreau's graduation from Harvard, he had become a protégé of his famous neighbor and an informal student of Emerson's Transcendental ideas.” (Schneider *Life and Legacy*) Thoreau actually started his studying by reading Emerson’s works, yet, concerning his philosophy, he started where Emerson stopped. It is important to state that what Thoreau pursued was the imminent connection to his own personal experience and he tried to eliminate anything that was not closely connected to his life. Although he was not a hermit, the opinion of many on Thoreau is that he was an introvert who despised society and locked himself away from others. Yet, Thoreau was

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<sup>1</sup> By *exactness*, it is meant everything that adds superficial and non-essential values to men’s lives including material, wealth, whim etc. It can be associated with Thoreau’s term *ornament*.

not that radically sided against society and he was aware that Nature was not a permanent house for a man. Also, Lance Newman in his book *Our Common Dwelling. Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politic of Nature* (2005) writes:

But Thoreau changed over time, coming to see the natural and social worlds as inseparably integrated and concrete. His thinking about natural and human history developed in parallel until, in his final years, he connected issues of environmental and social justice into a synthetic critique of the priorities of capitalism. (Newman 162)

It was the misinterpreted individualism in the eyes of society that created such an erroneous perception. The individualism of both Emerson and Thoreau was the crucial element in the observation of society as they believed that it is important to be apt to break free from the stream of unitary thinking and to hear out one's individual needs, for without this derogation, the proper renaissance of society would not be likely to happen.

### **2.1.1. The Two Distinct Approaches of Thoreau and Emerson**

Because Thoreau was a follower and admirer of Emerson's ideas, he was deeply influenced by his thinking, however Thoreau's philosophical pursuit took the ideas outlined by his mentor further. In the essay "The Golden Day", Lewis Mumford writes that Thoreau "was ready to go to jail for his principles, and to mock Emerson for remaining outside." (Paul 15) The crucial difference between Henry David Thoreau's and Ralph Waldo Emerson's approaches lies in the revisionist perception of society and its culture and evolution as well as its burdens. Thoreau tends to describe the experienced occurrences from a more materialistic point of view. Lawrence Buell in his book *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) writes that "the idea that natural phenomena had spiritual as well as material significance appealed strongly to Thoreau throughout his life." (Buell 116) The tendency to prove the impact of materialism on society is accompanied by his effort to prove the self-sufficiency of a single human who rows for himself or herself in the pursuit of ensuring his or her own self-dependency and who does not let society exploit his own path.

Lawrence Buell then vindicates his claim and notes that despite Thoreau took a different path than Emerson, they do not necessarily have to be thought of as two

contrasting philosophers. In fact, Thoreau pursued or at least built on the outline of Emerson's *Nature* in which he claimed that nature is "humankind's mystic counterpart, arguing (in "Language") that physical nature could be decoded as a spiritually coherent system of signs." (Buell 117)

### **3. Interpretation of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden***

#### **3.1. General Information about the Work**

Driven by an urge to revolutionize, Thoreau set out to pursue a closer insight into the kernel of society which was struggling to live in harmony with Nature. *Walden* presents vast majority of his ideas, opinions and philosophical meditations on this topic. In the book, Thoreau observes relations between beings, both humans and animals, and Nature, and tries to find the centre of gravity between the two. He primarily focuses on people and "their promising conditions" (Paul 2), for, according to Thoreau, humankind needs a renaissance of their own virtues, or, to give more palpable idea about his implicit intentions, their ways of living and the degree to which they venerate life per se.

To set a distance between himself and other people (the observer and the observed), he spent two years, two months and two days in a cottage which he himself built in Walden Pond where he set out to unearth the mystery that could elucidate the extent to which individuals can rely solely on themselves. This place thus became a default point of his newly made Cartesian coordinate system. From this place, Thoreau experienced, observed and truly existed as it was the centrepiece of his new ideal world which he attempted to describe in *Walden*.

After many adjustments, the final version of the book was finally published in 1854 by the Bostonian publisher *Ticknor and Fields*. In the book, given the date of publishing and the life span of the author, there could be potentially presented an overall insight into the most potent period of the Transcendentalist movement that bloomed predominantly during the 1820s and 1830s and which he himself experienced and helped to shape.

### **3.2. Criticism of Society in a State, or Finding of the True Nature**

The core message of *Walden* is, as many perceive, the effort to search for the true virtues of men's life. The idea is conveyed by often implicit criticism of society and its customs, inventions and overall tendencies. As it is somewhat perceptible in his theories, Thoreau thought about a state in a less formal and less political way, as Lewis Mumford writes in his essay "The Golden Day":

Thoreau's attitude toward the State, one must note, was just the opposite to that of the progressive pioneer. The latter did not care what sort of landscape he "located" in, so long as he could salute the flag of his country and cast his vote: Thoreau, on the contrary, was far too religious a man to commit the idolatry of saluting a symbol of secular power; and he realized that the affairs controlled by the vote represented only a small fraction of an interesting life... (Paul 16)

Thoreau did not reject society or its culture, for his aim was rather to point out the excess in which people are used to live, he did not criticize the essence of culture. For instance, he claims that he "could easily do without the post-office" (Thoreau 88) as he believes that "there are very few important communications made through it." (Thoreau 88) The same idea goes with reading newspapers. He claims that people do not need to read about each other because he believes that "to a philosopher all *news*, as it is called, is gossip". (Thoreau 88) Therefore, all the faculties that are an unarguable part of men's daily life, are far from being essential, and Thoreau argues that excessiveness and gathered property are some of the crucial causes of alienation from Nature. According to Lewis Mumford, as he notes in the same essay, things that Thoreau's contemporaries considered important and substantial for their daily lives, were only superficial and shallow for him, and did not, in point of fact, add any value to one's life.

### **3.3. The Nine Circles of Hell as the Flaws of Society**

Under the predicament that society needs to be revived, this chapter will focus on the possible interpretations from this point of view. Thoreau set out to describe how the world that we are living in and which we had shaped has become altered by the excessive requirements or needs that people tend to pursue. Because of a large quantity of elaborated

ideas which Thoreau rendered, I categorized the revisionist thoughts into nine features: Social Determination; Environmental Determination; Time; Culture; Excessive Luxury; Materialistic Burden; Development; Humankind's Competitiveness; and Whim. All the mentioned elements do not stand on their own as they are closely interrelated, thus each chapter will provide a synthesis of possible influences shared by more features at the same time. Even though these features do not stand on their own, it is essential to name the most peremptory ones which have the impact on the evolution of society.

### **3.3.1. Materialistic Burden and Excessive Luxury – the Rise and the Fall of Men**

Property is nowadays considered as a building stone of one's richness and people tend to assign great value to it. Fortune is measured by the property which people possess and, as Jerry Phillips and Andrew Ladd wrote about the impacts of capitalistic mindset on society in *Romanticism and Transcendentalism: 1800—1860* (2006): “emphasis on business, on growing personal wealth and getting ahead, became the underpinning for what most Americans believed was the ideal democratic society.” (Phillips & Ladd 32) However, these riches offer an unfortunate opportunity of the omnipresent comparison among the members of society. However, the acquired wealth is in fact a mere ornament<sup>2</sup> that gives no account of the true riches of any living being. The wealth as an ostensible ornament is thus far from being illustrative of the genuine values and men are then driven by the conventional urge to obtain and gain materialistic values to secure their imaginary position in a certain community, yet, they are being burdened by the accumulated material and then do not know how to deal with it. Paradoxically, Thoreau refers to the seemingly rich people as to the most impoverished ones. As if the property per se pauperized their souls. Lance Newman in his book *Our Common Dwelling. Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politic of Nature* (2005) writes that Thoreau's “valorization of wild land was a direct reaction to the rapid expansion of market capitalism to the position of dominance within the whole social process that it still occupies.” (Newman 190)

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<sup>2</sup> In *Walden*, Thoreau uses the word *ornament* to convey an idea of any excessive and inessential value that has predominantly superfluous qualities

Furthermore, Thoreau dwells on the illogicality of collective labour which is basically nourished and supported by the apparent need of unnecessary products which people think they yearn for and which they thus buy instead of creating them on their own or instead of settling with less. He disproves the idea of one working for many, and vice versa. At the same time, he claims that the time which an individual devotes to working for others in order to obtain money, could be better spent. Max Lerner supports this idea in his essay “Thoreau: No Hermit” (1939) where he writes that Thoreau “rejected the factory system because it meant the exploitations of others; he rejected the cult of success and the Puritan creed of persistent work because it meant the exploitation of oneself.” (Paul 21) Working society could be then perceived as a system of labour based on the exploitation of one’s energy. Thoreau chose to use the word penance to describe citizens working in their shops, offices and fields. At the same time, proving the objectivity of his observation, Thoreau finds this illogical and never-ending society’s behaviour rather remarkable and compares it to the Brahmins<sup>3</sup> who sit, or stand, on one leg until “it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position.” (Thoreau 4). The implied meaning again refers to the labour as to one’s life path of damnation accompanying him or her until the very end. There are, of course, certain reasons of working, yet none of it seems to be imminently necessary to Thoreau who searches for the essentiality in the first place. As people needed an exact rule-driven programme that would guide their lives, they created a state. The centralized life is then, as Thoreau claims, “ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim” (Thoreau 86) Thoreau then searches a way out of such a condition of state and concludes that “the only cure for it as for them is a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose.” (Thoreau 86)

He then writes that “the twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end.” (Thoreau 4) For the working class there is no “Iolaus<sup>4</sup>” to help them escape the vicious circle which their puritan religion basically supports as the trying work was among Puritans considered to be a way of praying.

As many other Transcendentalists, Thoreau dwells much on predetermination. He asks himself why people in society should “begin digging their graves as soon as they are

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<sup>3</sup> Brahmins are Hindu priests and teachers. They were generally respected in communities and held various occupations at the same time.

<sup>4</sup> Iolaus is a divine hero in Greek mythology who helped Heracles with some of his labours.



born?” (Thoreau 4) He claims that being born into a certain society predetermines a person to be bound by the rules and conventions of the given community right from their infancy which again indicates the burden of inheritance. They are condemned by the pressure of civilized modern life where men have no leisure and they must thus work, ergo they must become labouring machines. At the same time, Thoreau believes that the true potential of any change is obstructed by external influences that is stronger than one’s need of intervention, for “the public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates his fate.” (Thoreau 7) This actually the other two features of social and environmental determination according to which one’s life path is defined by the place and the social status of the family he or she is born to. Yet, Thoreau is convinced that people can shape their lives by simplifying their needs that are not essential and by converting their lives into “an art and an adventure”, as Paul Sherman called it in ‘Introduction’ to *Thoreau: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1963) which he edited.

Concerning the simplification of one’s needs, Thoreau explains:

The expression, *animal life*, is nearly synonymous with the expression, *animal heat*; for while Food may be regarded as the Fuel which keeps up the fire within us,—and Fuel serves only to prepare that Food or to increase the warmth of our bodies by addition from without,—Shelter and loathing also serve only to retain the *heat* thus generated and absorbed. (Thoreau 12)

The obvious higher need than material is the life-giving heat, or the energy. If we consider that life is truly based on obtaining heat, the aim of humans is then to feed themselves, warm up and keep the fire ablaze. However, society is far from surviving. It is the luxury to which we devote our energy and time assuming that it eases our lives. Thoreau believes that clothing is nowadays rather “whimsical” (Thoreau 26). He asks why people put so much effort in something as impalpable and mercurial as clothes when time devours the enterprise of fashion and in the end, nothing remains. For a man, “Clothing and Shelter are wholly or half unnecessary...With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor.” (Thoreau 13) People cultivate their surroundings but the imminent luxury lies much closer than it is commonly realized, Thoreau implies. It is the simplicity, or the sufficient amount

of external resources, that he considers to be the key of satisfaction, not the mentioned hunt for material estates that falsely brings us luxury or materialistic riches. In fact, a certain opposite happens. This way, men are burdened, and these excessive needs steal the awareness of their spirit and transfer it into the outer world instead. Thoreau gives examples of the ancient philosophers who were the poorest in outward riches, yet they were rich inward. Thoreau also claims that the wisest observer of human life must watch from the “voluntary poverty” (Thoreau 14).

Furthermore, Thoreau secured his extra expenses by growing a crop and selling it. He did not put any manure on his land which was criticised by some fellow farmers who claimed that it will be good for nothing. Thoreau claims:

If one would live simply and eat only the crop which he raised, and raise no more than he ate, and not exchange it for an insufficient quantity of more luxurious and expensive things, he would need to cultivate only a few rods of ground, and that it would be cheaper to spade up that than to use oxen to plough it, and select a fresh spot from time to time than to manure the old, and he could do all his necessary farm work as it were with his left hand at odd hours in the summer; and thus he would not be tied to an ox, or horse, or cow, or pig, as at present.” (Thoreau 52)

He was independent thanks to no ties. He was not “anchored to a house or farm” (Thoreau 53) and if something happened to his dwelling and crop, he would be in the same situation when he begun and would not be in debt. People tend to easier their labour by the exploitation of others – of animals, oxen etc. The same principle is applied in a feudal system as higher classes exploit the lower ones.

To conclude, men are driven by a conventional urge to obtain and gain materialistic values, yet, in reality, they are burdened, and they do not know what to do with it. In the chapter ‘Economy’, Thoreau describes how men inherit this burden from their ancestors. The mentioned inheritance might be a farm, or a house, or any other possession of either material or immaterial form. These heirs have to bear the weight of this responsibility which they, yet again, pass on their descendants.

Since the stimuli to undergo such an experiment portrayed in *Walden* was Thoreau’s desire to “live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life”. (Thoreau 85) it could be claimed that he felt a need to seize the essential life without the influence

of culture's tendency to live in excess, for he believed that it is the excess which prevents to live life in its purest form. He "wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life". (Thoreau 85).

One of the obstacles that men in a culture cast on themselves is the infinite presence of the idea of God and Devil. Thoreau's living in nature, opposed to living in towns, allowed him to escape and to assume a point of view from an objective distance from the core of society and he then could truly discern the virtues of life, as, according to Thoreau, "most men...are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of god, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to glorify God and enjoy him forever." (Thoreau 85)

As stated before, he elaborates on the true necessities of life, meaning the needs without which human beings cannot survive, or at least would have hard time surviving. He mentions the following four essential features: Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel. He explains that the ways how people obtain the first feature, of course, differ. Some hunt, some grow crop, and some buy food with money obtained from labour. However, people tend to exaggerate the need of food as well as the rest of these features. Humankind does not settle with the minimum that would suffice as they desperately pursue luxury, yet it only deepens the discomfort and does not quench the thirst in the first place. The truth is that people do not really want the thirst to be quenched. The pursuit itself gives them satisfaction, or in other words, approach per se is the principle of satisfaction, not the pursued. We do not really live in the present. In the corner of people's mind, there is the omnipresent future our self which we need to satisfy. Claude S. Fischer, in *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character* (2010), elaborates on Tocqueville's idea that Americans' purpose is a lust to obtain things, and he then compares the contemporary situation with the first half of the nineteenth century and notes that the like urge is no more different. He then emphasizes that "what mainly changed was the massive scaling up—the democratization of luxury." (Fischer 93)

Concerning the second feature, Shelter, Thoreau indicates that animals have shelter provided by their hide, whereas we differ in that we seek external resources to create it. He then continues and implies that mankind's cultivation of external resources leads to excessive dependency on it and thus making their innate abilities insufficient. Thoreau mentions Darwin's experience with the inhabitants of the Land of Fire. Darwin describes his stay there with a remarkable observation of these indigenous people. While Darwin's fellow visitors were far from being warm, Indians were warm while almost naked.

(Thoreau 12-13) As he even later describes, men use fire to heat more space than the imminent space of their body to warm up an entire house which is also considered and excessive luxury and a waste of energy. Shelter and clothing and their function which is nowadays primarily ornamental, Thoreau claims. Civilization stepped over the practical purpose of shelter and has been parallelly focusing on the improving of its unnecessary ornaments. Something that has once been a substantially practical became rather a vessel of social and cultural comparison.

Humans use their dwellings for safety, yet the most proximate danger eventually became the other members of society. The purpose of shelter as a hideout enabling men to hide from the weather and predators was exceeded by the purpose of hiding from other people. To keep secrets and maintain privacy. Thoreau writes that he does not need any curtains because there are no gazers in the woods. Only the sun and the moon which he accepts and welcomes. Even if it is too warm, he prefers to hide in shadows cast by nature (Thoreau 63) To some extent, the product of men became the product against other men and even against the owners themselves. Referring to the chapter 'Economy', *owner* is not a proper term because most owners do not always own their houses. Thoreau describes the false image of ownership. He writes that "our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them." (Thoreau 36) People rent their houses and instead of creating the freedom offered by the privacy, it becomes their prison as they are sentenced to hard labour. They condemn their time to obtain imaginary units of power, or survival, known as money. Their time thus becomes the time of the gods of economy. Surely, humans would find it insensate to make a deal with the Devil, however something more diabolic as the Rental agreement slips their field of focus due to its disguise of the wolf in sheep's clothing. What is not seen as an explicit or immediate danger is often moved aside. In this manner, men detach from nature. They cease to rely on their instincts and bury themselves lower to the depths of civilization, ergo the grounds of artificiality.

Another of the essential points associated with excessive luxury and material that Thoreau makes in *Walden* is the Savage's naturality. He uses the example of Savages to describe the true virtues. Concerning houses (or shelters), Thoreau denotes back to the opening chapter about Economy and describes the vicious circle of a "civilized" men and their endless and nonsensical labour. The core of this artificiality and absurdity lies in that people work irrationally over the excess of their own needs only to afford another possessions which they do not need but are in a certain sense forced to own, such as big

houses with pointless empty rooms or clothing with unnecessary expensive threads only to show their social status or another form of power. They labour most of their time instead of a much richer and less time-devouring practices such as creating these possessions themselves. Thoreau writes that “this spending of the best part of one’s life earning money to enjoy a questionably liberty during the last valuable part of it” (Thoreau 50-51) causes a loss of freedom because of the conventional urge to obtain luxurious things.

Materialism and the subsequent excessive luxury is reflected in all other ‘circles’ as Thoreau himself pays most of his attention to this phenomenon which he sees as the closest companion of men. For this reason, it is the first of the nine circles mentioned in this paper.

### **3.3.2. Time and Society – the Imminent Experience**

Another way to approach the phenomenon of the disarray of society was to get hold of time and even mark its progress that seems to be mercurial. Thoreau felt an inner need to “stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.” (Thoreau 16) The present moment is, though still alongside each of us, something that evades because people tend to live in the future or precisely oppositely dwell too much on the past. Their ubiquitous perception of future is being fed by their responsibility of labour and other responsibilities connected with the life in society. In fact, to live in society without paying attention to time is rather unsustainable because society is driven by working hours. Without it, people would have hard time to plan their daily routines. Routines are the basic principle of materialistic and financial stability in every community based on economy. The sense of time is therefore one of the most crucial differences between the civilization and wilderness. The initial purpose of time was to improve people’s lives (to better coordinate their daily routines), yet instead of improving their lives, it disposed them of naturality.

Because the past is an inseparable part of the worldly life, Thoreau dwells on its analysis. The impulse of this idea in all probability comes from Emerson’s work *Nature* (1836) in which he claims that the past might be misleading. (Emerson 1) Thoreau evolves this idea at the beginning of *Walden* and claims that “it is never too late to give up... what old people say you cannot do you try and find that you can.” (Thoreau 8) Therefore, today’s society should not look back to the past and blindly follow ancestors’ modes of

living. It is important to observe and objectively think about the advantages and, at the same time, the disadvantages of the observed. In fact, some of these ideas were reinterpreted in Emerson's another work, "The American Scholar" (1837), in which he thoroughly dwells on the criticizing eyes of educated people who should apply all the knowledge to the actual world and test it. In this sense, Thoreau mildly differs as he thinks that one should be instead educated by the imminent experience. This means that instead of learning how to do things, it is much more practical to do them at first hand and this way the true purpose can be discovered. In other words, Emerson advocates the top-down approach whereas Thoreau believes that bottom-up way is more efficient as he wrote in *Walden*:

Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month, – the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted...or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the mean while, and had received a Rogers' penknife from his father? (Thoreau 48)

Emerson wrote about the imminent experience and criticising eyes, yet Thoreau did not only write about them but he, as a matter of fact, practiced them and in his two-year experiment, he devoted his observation and the subsequent views to the imminent and present experience which he considered natural. This advocates the idea that Thoreau indeed brought Emerson's ideas further and actually tested them himself. Moreover, Claude S. Fischer notes in *Made in America* (2010): "Hegel and Marx, for example, 'were convinced that the novelties of any particular era represented the fulfillment of some hidden purpose implicit throughout earlier historical progression.'" (Fischer 5) The idea supports the claim that today's society relies on the prior knowledge that is conveyed mainly theoretically and does not bother to look presently on the immediate context. People blindly follow the conventional rules despite the fact they are far from being efficacious. The reason might be the lack of opportunities due to which people do not try to experience for themselves as there is a risk of failure. Maybe they would have tried it were they not flooded with all the obligations connected with their labour and the social competition.<sup>5</sup> Modern world has no space for failure. What is then left, is to believe in an

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<sup>5</sup> Social competition appears in a community whose members struggle to maintain certain social statuses or to achieve a higher social classes which are measured by money, property, quality of ornaments etc.

established course of customs and to fulfil the prescribed daily plan. This vicious circle is thus secured as society considers the daily labour routine as being solemn. This sanctity shall not be in any way touched or changed. The fact that people do not see behind their actions as they follow their everyday tasks and cannot see the unambiguous truth, greatly nourishes this seemingly unavoidable course of occurrences. The advantage of reasoning and complex thinking leads to the artificiality and distancing from our instincts. This is another of the crucial differences between wilderness and society. It lies in the approach to actions. Wilderness, including savages, is natural and most efficient as it relies on its instincts and on Nature itself.

With the proposed question: “Is it impossible to combine the hardiness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man?” (Thoreau 12) Thoreau tries to answer, whether cultivation, culture and knowledge cause alienation from Nature and terminates mankind’s chance to maintain the basic needs of individuals without additional external resources. Men rather transfer their focus on external cultivation instead of the cultivation of their inner souls. They alienate themselves from their selves. For society, each individual member is equally important as each contributes to it. From the point of view of one of the basic principles of Transcendentalism preaching that universe could be explored by the exploration of each individual’s inner world, it is important that members of society work on their own cultivation prior to contributing to the community.

### **3.3.2.1. Culture and Society as the Alienation from Nature**

Social and environmental determination cast certain conditions that influence progress of one’s life path, however the way people deal with the upcoming choices can alter the given predestination. The limitations on men cast by civilized society are their exact experience and ability to examine and prescribe. Thoreau describes that in society, visitors tend to leave a card behind to mark their presence, yet while he lived in solitude, he began to perceive presence of other people by their odour and by the bent grass. (Thoreau 121) All the exactness forces one to perceive world through the categorized relations, yet if one is freed from such an influence, he or she can look at the world from a different perspective.

Another effect that society and its culture created is fear. As Thoreau writes: “men are generally still a little afraid of the dark, though the witches are all hung, and

Christianity and candles have been introduced.” (Thoreau 122) This could be also associated with the way the education system is maintained as it is not looked at the immediate core of things. Perhaps, all the fear of evil and witches would cease if people had relied less on the “prescriptions” made by society and more on their own reasoning and understanding of the present occurrences.

Furthermore, with culture comes an implicit inner responsibility to achieve higher aims or the responsibility to behave according to opinion of public which has the power to deteriorate one’s sanity. Thoreau thus asks what is then truly necessary: “consider for a moment what most of the trouble and anxiety which I have referred to is about, and how much it is necessary that we be troubled, or, at least, careful.” (Thoreau 11) He then notes that living a primitive life without the hunt for success or the desire for improvement would enrich the ones who struggle:

It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization. For the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man’s existence; as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.” (Thoreau 11)

It comes back to the mode of living which is now followed according to our ancestors. For us, it is then necessary what was necessary for them. And if our mode of living differs from that of theirs, we do not live right. The hindrance is that today’s society fettered itself by the fictitious watchmen from the past who examine how we refine our culture. Yet, in fact, it is important to seize the imminent riches of Nature and the essence of life per se, not the artificial creations of men that fasten our hands while we are trying to reach for the inner harmony. Also, looking back to Emerson’s and thus also Thoreau’s approach to the exploration of our environment and life’s vices, they many times dwell on the general need to experience the world through the practice itself. Therefore, knowing things and being able to execute them is much more crucial than being able to name them. With society comes culture which brings knowledge. Knowledge then offers an ability to name things which creates a process of categorization of the world. This thus constructs a completely new world, for Nature cannot be described by the men-made arbitrary words in its full depth. On Nature, a detail is then cast and Thoreau claims that “our life is frittered away by detail”. (Thoreau 85) Furthermore, as Emerson notes in “The American Scholar” (1837), culture carries backgrounded knowledge that is not applied to



a test anymore. For instance, Thoreau broke a conventional way of making bread. Despite a women of civilized life told him that it is not good to make a bread without yeast, he tried to make one without it and it turned out well.

In addition, society is intertwined with various mental apprehensions. Thoreau writes: “There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still” (Thoreau 123). The idea is that while in civilization, men are burdened by the responsibilities and requirements of society as they themselves assign certain occurrences to either good or bad qualities. However, to ascribe an occurrence to a certain point on the *good/bad scale* is not a part of human nature per se, for if one is situated in a seclusion, he or she can cleanse himself or herself from such a tendency of classification as these labels of good and evil are man-made, not natural. From the point of view of the predetermination, one is born with a potential of prejudices and is then predestined to follow the established ways. Thus, men’s existence in society forces them to compare themselves and subsequently realize their position on other scales as well, such as richness, popularity etc. In nature, there is nothing that is evil or good. If something “wrong” in the eyes of society happens, such as one animal killing another, it is actually an instinctive survival and it has no polarity on the ephemeral scale. Nature is a circle and where is a progress, there must be a regress and such a harmony must be preserved.

### **3.3.2.2. Whim as the Product of a Cultivated Life**

Another of the circles of hell is whim. Because humans acquired additional energy as they improved their social spirit, they have been since able to develop their culture and other forms of cultivation that brought surplus and devastating features into their lives as being born into a society determines that one must choose his or her religious faith, or (if there is a freedom of choice) whether to have any at all. Towards the end of the chapter ‘Economy’, Thoreau questions the approach to God as he writes that “our manners have been corrupted by communication with the saints.” (Thoreau 74) Thoreau then argues that there are no proofs that God stands behind the “gift of life” (Thoreau 74) and continues to support the sanctity and the democratic equality of Nature. Society predetermines one to lead sometimes a whimsical life in the mind and to transfer his or her focus on rather unessential values. Basically, the moment men had secured these basic necessities of life, they have from then on focused on improving the quality of their lives

and on their culture. At this breaking point men ceased to focus on a sole survival, and they began to pay attention to more metaphysical aspects of their surroundings such as aesthetics, art, philosophy and other cultivating aspects of the universe.

### 3.3.3. Development and Science

The advance of inventions which were created to ease men's lives is one of the causes that preclude humankind from the individualistic approach. During Thoreau's life, industrialism was in its potent form and the demand for a higher quantity and quality of goods emerged. Additionally, new technology was being created, new modes of living were being prosecuted and that might be one of the reasons why people cannot live freely and individually. The created technology directs the way of living. Indubitably, development is important, and Thoreau did not neglect this reality as he was not against science and advancement as such. He simply did not want all the measurements and numerations to take over the immediate experience of living. Lance Newman writes about Thoreau's relationship with science and his idea of education through experience:

Thoreau's interest in science and the philosophy of science is recognizable as early as his first piece of environmental writing, "The Natural History of Massachusetts," which he ends by observing, "we do not learn by inference and deduction and the application of mathematics to philosophy, but by direct intercourse and sympathy." (Newman 164-165)

Additionally, a peculiar idea was pointed out by Lawrence Buell about Thoreau's attitude towards the development and its fatal impact on the suffering landscape. He notes that even though Thoreau knew that deforestation in Walden was done because of the railroad construction and because of fuel needed to power the trains, he did not write about the devastating impact on nature in *Walden*. (Buell 120)

The aim humans should accomplish, according to Thoreau, is to perceive things such as they are, which actually advocates his belief that science is a part of human life. Yet, as scientists in their papers omit the true circumstances of their discoveries, such as "Pupin, finding the path to physics through his contemplation of the stars he watched as a herd-boy through the night" (Paul 15). To elaborate on Mumford's idea, science becomes rather secluded from the context of Nature and becomes just a mere field of

study. Thoreau's approach to the study of Nature was of metaphysical quality which was hard for contemporary scientists to understand. Thus, the individualistic approach to science, which was impossible not only due to people's stance towards the development, was for Thoreau and Emerson "the necessary complement of thoroughly socialized existence of the New England town." (Paul 18) Basically, individualism was the key to retain one's own emotions and feelings which enable us to differ from our fellows and to avoid the unitarian capitalistic drives. For instance, Richard J. Gray writes about Edgar Allan Poe and his attitude towards the development and its effect on men in *A History of American literature* (2003):

Even when Poe had become, to all intents and purposes, an exile from the South, he clung to its conservatism and many of its prejudices. 'I have no faith in human perfectibility,' he wrote to James Russell Lowell in 1844, 'I think that human exertion will have no appreciable effect on humanity. Man is now only more active – not more happy – nor more wise, than he was 6,000 years ago.' (Gray 118)

People strive to develop, invent and to achieve something, however, they lack the purpose. They feel like we have to act fast and they thus foreground quantity over quality as Thoreau writes that "we suffer to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate." (Thoreau 49)

Thoreau also compares the means of transportation. He did an experiment in which he compared reaching the desired destination by foot and by train to reveal who will get to the end point faster. He himself walked whereas his friend took the train. The idea of time was recalculated with respect to money one needs to take the train (the full day of working to obtain the needed amount of money included). To conclude, walking to the destination was faster as the full day of working to obtain money for the train ticket and the time spent traveling by train per se added few hours for the final comparison.

## Conclusion

So far, this paper has dealt with Thoreau's revisionist ideas which he described in the book *Walden* (1854).

At the beginning of the thesis, I described the socio-cultural historical background between the years 1830 and 1860 in order to introduce the accompanying occurrences that gave rise to the Transcendental movement whereas I focused namely on the economic situation and human spirit followed by the alienation from Nature.

Afterwards, I offered a description of the core principles of Transcendentalism as such, as well as the summary of Emerson's and Thoreau's philosophical and writing career connected to the movement. A portion of attention was also paid to a comparison of the two thinkers.

Concerning the main part of the thesis, the proposed statement is that *Walden* discusses the true virtues of men who gradually alienate from Nature and become a product of society. Various interpretations are needed due to Thoreau's metaphorical expressions which may be understood differently and only with rising number of individual readings can we achieve a more accurate idea of his messages. During my own interpretation, I focused on the most recurrent observations of attributes affecting the nature of individuals. As a result, I came up with the already mentioned classification of such attributes which I then categorized into nine parts and which I subsequently attempted to prove. The nine features bear a label *The Nine Circles of Hell*. The name is a reference to Dante Alighieri's conception of hell which consists of nine circles. The created categories are: Social and Environmental Determination; Time; Culture; Excessive Luxury; Materialistic Burden; Development; Humankind's competitiveness; and Whim. Since all the features concern human beings, they are all intertwined with each other and they thus create a single unit, therefore each element was analysed in relation to other constituents.

In toto, the proposed nine circles were indeed proven to appear throughout the book. To summarize the first two, Social and Environmental Determination, Thoreau claims that if one is born into a certain family with a certain social status, it will affect his or her future in society and how he or she is then treated by other members of the community. The same idea goes with the predestination created by the environment. Such environmental influences can be for instance language and skin colour resulting in acquiring a certain social status.

Next factor is Time. In Thoreau's eyes, time can be perceived on several levels. First, time as the heartbeat of society which directs when, where and what do people do. Secondly, time connected to whim as a luxury of life in society. This idea which synthesizes the three of the nine circles argues that as people were freed from the imminent danger of their predators, they began to acquire different perspectives and we could say that their minds were free to think. However, such a freedom of thought was on the other hand accompanied by different obstacles, namely survival in the community which brings another of the circles, Humankind's Competitiveness, Excessive luxury and Materialism. The transfer of focus to a materialistic world to which people assigned much greater a value than it really has (compared to the spiritual world), is one of the causes of alienation from Nature, for one is able to perceive Nature through his or her own self and as men began to focus on external values, they became unable to undergo the introspection, or an act of communication with the deity within.

As a final point, with community came culture. Such a community devotes its energy into the industrial and cultural development in order to overcome the competing settlements. The purpose of development lies in the development per se, not in the need for a specific improvement. The false desire for growth forces people to live in future and thus to lose the ability to meditate on the present and observe Nature as it is.

To recapitulate, the system of categorization was a crucial method in the analysis of *Walden*, for the ideas which Thoreau rendered were rather scattered, disordered and often indirect. By presenting the categorization, I as well gave a palpable frame to some implicit thoughts which may prove constructive for future interpretations.

## Resumé

Tato práce se dosud zabývala interpretací Thoreauových revizionistických myšlenek, které vylíčil ve své knize *Walden* (1854).

V úvodní části práce jsem popsal sociokulturní historické pozadí mezi lety 1830 a 1860 s cílem představit okolnosti, které zapříčinily vznik Transcendentalismu, přičemž jsem se soustředil zejména na ekonomickou situaci a lidskou podstatu včetně odlučování od přírody.

Následně jsem poskytl popis základních principů Transcendentalismu jako takového, stejně tak i shrnutí Emersonovy a Thoreauovy filozofické a spisovatelské kariéry, jež se s hnutím značně protínaly. Část pozornosti byla také věnována porovnání přístupů těchto dvou myslitelů ke svému oboru.

Pokud jde o hlavní část práce, navrhované tvrzení bylo, že ve *Waldenu* Thoreau diskutuje o pravé podstatě lidí, kteří se postupně odlučují od přírody a stávají se produktem společnosti. Kvůli Thoreauovým metaforickým výrazům, které mohou být pochopené odlišnými způsoby, jsou různé interpretace potřebné, a pouze se zvyšujícím počtem individuálních výkladů můžeme dosáhnout přesnějšího pojetí jeho poselství. Během vlastní interpretace jsem se soustředil na nejfrekventovaněji vyskytující se vlastnosti, které ovlivňují povahu jednotlivců. Výsledkem bylo sestavení již zmíněné klasifikace těchto vlastností, které jsem dále kategorizoval do devíti skupin, jejichž relevanci jsem se následně pokusil dokázat. Těchto devět skupin, které nazývám *Devět kruhů pekelných*, tvoří: Determinace prostředím a společností; Čas; Kultura; Přebytný luxus; Břemeno materiálu; Rozvoj; Lidská soutěživost; a Rozmar. Jelikož jsou všechny tyto rysy součástí lidských vlastností, jsou vzájemně propletené a tvoří jeden celek. Z tohoto důvodu byl každý z elementů analyzován ve spojitosti s ostatními složkami této klasifikace.

Shrneme-li stanovená fakta, existence navržených devíti faktorů v knize se vskutku prokázala. První dva kruhy, Determinace prostředím a společností, vypovídají o Thoreauově tvrzení, že narození v určité rodině s určitým společenským postavením ovlivňuje budoucnost jedince ve společnosti a způsob chování ostatních vůči němu. Stejná myšlenka platí z hlediska předurčení vytvořenému prostředím. Mezi takové vlivy determinace prostředím patří například jazyk a barva kůže, které se také promítají do stanovení určitého společenského postavení.

Dalším vlivem je čas. Z pohledu Thoreaua může být čas viděn hned v několika rovinách. Zaprvé může být vnímán jako tlukot srdce společnosti, který řídí kdy, kde a co lidé dělají. Zadruhé, jako čas spojený s rozmarem, který je definován jako luxus, který s sebou život ve společnosti přináší. Tato myšlenka, která syntetizuje tři z těchto kruhů popisuje, že jakmile byli lidé osvobozeni z bezprostředního nebezpečí před predátory, začali pohlížet na svět z jiné perspektivy a můžeme tak tvrdit, že jim bylo umožněno svobodně myslet. Na druhou stranu byla tato svoboda myšlení doprovázena dalšími překážkami, zejména přežíváním ve společnosti, které s sebou přináší další kruhy: Lidská soutěživost, Přebytečný luxus a Materialismus. Tento přesun pozornosti na materiální svět, kterému lidé přisuzují mnohem vyšší hodnotu, než ve skutečnosti má (v porovnání se světem duševním), je jednou z příčin odcizování od přírody, neboť člověk vnímá přírodu skrze sebe sama a ono soustředění na externí hodnoty zapříčinilo neschopnost introspekce nebo aktu komunikace s vnitřním božstvem.

Závěr práce pojednával o Thoreauovu pohledu na komunitu a její kulturu. Taková komunita věnuje svou energii do průmyslového a kulturního rozvoje, aby překonala konkurující osady. Podstata rozvoje následně neleží v samotné potřebě posunout se vpřed v určitém aspektu, nýbrž v tom, aby došlo k vývoji jako takovému. Falešná touha po růstu nutí lidstvo žít v budoucnosti, čímž také ztrácí schopnost meditace nad přítomností a schopnost pozorovat přírodu takovou, jaká je.

Jelikož byly myšlenky, které Thoreau představil, poněkud roztroušené, neuspořádané a mnohdy nepřímé, byl tento systém kategorizace pro analýzu *Waldenu* klíčovou metodou. Představením této klasifikace jsem také poskytl hmatatelný rámec některým implicitním myšlenkám, který se může prokázat konstruktivním pro budoucí interpretace.

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Abstract: This bachelor thesis discusses the key causes of the disarray of society which were conveyed in Henry David Thoreau's book *Walden*. In this paper, I heavily drew on the ideas written in the book as well as on the interpretations of various academics. During my own analysis, I suggested the categorization of Thoreau's claims into nine features which I then described. Before the analysis of the book as such, this paper offers a brief introduction to the historical context of the first half of the nineteenth century in order to give an understanding of the occurrences with which Americans dealt.

## **Anotace**

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Abstrakt: Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zásadními příčinami úpadku společnosti, které Henry David Thoreau sdělil v knize *Walden*. V této práci jsem čerpal zejména z myšlenek zaznamenaných v knize a z interpretací nejrůznějších akademiků. Během vlastní analýzy těchto myšlenek jsem navrhl kategorizaci Thoreauových tvrzení do devíti rysů, které jsem následně popsal. Před samotnou analýzou knihy jako takové nabízí tato práce kromě základního popisu transcendentalismu a jeho stoupenců také úvod do historického kontextu první poloviny devatenáctého století za účelem poskytnutí porozumění okolnostem, se kterými se Američané potýkali.