

Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is a philosophical movement that developed in the late 1820s and 1830s in the eastern United States. The main principle of this movement is the belief that people are inherently good but society and its institutions have corrupted the purity of the individual. Therefore, the Transcendentalists believe that people should be left alone and should be independent.

Every individual is able to learn and do anything on his / her own. He does not need to acquire education or go to school to learn. God has given every person enough spiritual power, grace and the ability to achieve and understand everything. If society interferes, it will corrupt people. Transcendentalists believe that society and its institutions (especially the church) corrupt the purity of the individual. An individual should therefore be free from society. This belief in the independence of the individual is called “individualism”.

Man should leave urban life and return to nature. To be in the lap of nature is to be close to God, because God is revealed through nature. In his 1842 lecture "The Transcendentalist", Emerson states that “In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, — no disgrace, no calamity I am part or particle of God.”

Transcendentalists also believe that the spiritual world and the physical world are not separate entities. Spiritual experience is not confined to the hereafter. It could be part of our everyday activities.

Transcendentalists also believe in “idealism”. If every individual searches inside his soul for divine light and truth, then these individuals will make a perfect or ideal society. However, it is difficult to achieve idealism. In "The Transcendentalist", Emerson suggests that the goal of a purely transcendental outlook on life was impossible to attain in practice. He states that “there is no pure transcendentalist I mean, we have yet no man who has leaned entirely on his character”.