

## PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

**“I NEVER KNEW HIM TO SAY A GOOD WORD FOR PLATO.”<sup>1</sup>**



**WALDEN:** I aspire to be acquainted with wiser men than this our Concord soil has produced, whose names are hardly known here. Or shall I hear the name of Plato and never read his book? As if Plato were my townsman and I never saw him, -my next neighbor and I never heard him speak or attended to the wisdom of his words. But how actually is it? His Dialogues which contain what was immortal in him, lie on the next shelf, and yet I never read them. We are underbred and low-lived and illiterate; and in this respect I confess I do not make any very broad distinction between the illiterateness of my townsman who cannot read at all, and the illiterateness of him who has learned to read only what is for children and feeble intellects. We should be as good as the worthies of antiquity, but partly by first knowing how good they were. We are a race of tit-men, and soar but little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper.

**PLATO**

1. Per [Ellery Channing](#)'s THOREAU: THE POET-NATURALIST / WITH MEMORIAL VERSES (Boston: Roberts Brothers).



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“LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE”: The title *wise* is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men? -if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle? Does Wisdom work in a tread-mill? or does she teach how to succeed *by her example*? Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? It is pertinent to ask if Plato got his *living* in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries, - or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men? Did he seem to prevail over some of them merely by indifference, or by assuming grand airs? or find it easier to live, because his aunt remembered him in her will? The ways in which most men get their living, that is, live, are mere make-shifts, and a shirking of the real business of life -chiefly because they do not know, but partly because they do not mean, any better.

PLATO



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428 BCE

May 21: [Plato](#) was born, presumably in the vicinity of Athens, and was given the name Aristokles of Athens. His wealthy father, Ariston, was believed to have descended from Codrus, one of the ancient kings of Athens, and his mother, Perictione, was distantly related to the 6th-century BCE lawgiver [Solon of Athens](#). Plato became a wrestler and seems in that way to have picked up his nickname, “Platon,” meaning “Broad-Shouldered.” The family was very conservative in its politics: his uncles Charmides and Critias, who appear as characters in his dialogues, took part in the coup of The Thirty. Adiemantus and Glaucon, who appear in the *REPUBLIC*, were Plato’s brothers. His half-brother Antiphon (after his father’s early death, his mother had remarried, to an associate of Pericles named Pyrilampes) appears in the *PARMENIDES*. His sister Potone would have a son, Speusippus, who would succeed him as leader of his Academy. According to Aristotle’s *METAPHYSICS*, Plato was initially a follower of the Heraclitean philosopher Cratylus. Diogenes Laertius informs us that the given story was that [Socrates](#) of Athens in a dream “saw a swan on his knees, which all at once put forth plumage, and flew away after uttering a loud sweet note.” Another version of this dream has the swan as flying towards him. “And the next day Plato was introduced as a pupil, and thereupon he recognized in him the swan of his dreams.” Here is Plato’s mentor, virtualized first in antique petrification and then in modern pixilation:



(It was during the year 428 BCE that, in Israel, the Samaritans were building their temple on Mount Gerizim.)



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399 BCE

The concept of “soul” or “incorporeal life-force” entered mainstream Hellenic thought. The development is attributed to the school of an Athenian philosopher named Aristokles, who was called [Plato](#), or “broad,” after the shoulders that he had developed as a wrestler in his youth.



[Plato](#) was not present at his master [Socrates](#) of Athens’s execution/suicide after condemnation in a public assembly, by the drinking of a potion of hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), pleading that at the time he was ill (if his non-eyewitness description of this death is accurate, it is the only time that ingesting such a potion has not caused nausea, contortions, and extreme retching before the onset of the described numbness). Afterward, according to Hermodorus, Plato fled to Megara with other associates of Socrates, where they became guests of an associate of Socrates named Euclid (this of course isn’t the Euclid who was a geometer in Alexandria). We lose track of Plato for about a dozen years, until he reaches the age of 40. Some allege that he went to [Egypt](#) and to Cyrene to visit the mathematician Theodorus. Some claim he went to Persia and Babylonia and got himself initiated into the Chaldean Mysteries. Some claim he got as far as India. (He did eventually make his way to Sicily to visit the Pythagoreans Philolaus and Eurytus, making friends with Archytas, a ruler.)

PLANTS



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## Famous Last Words:



"What school is more profitably instructive than the death-bed of the righteous, impressing the understanding with a convincing evidence, that they have not followed cunningly devised fables, but solid substantial truth."

— A COLLECTION OF MEMORIALS CONCERNING DIVERS  
DECEASED MINISTERS, Philadelphia, 1787



"The death bed scenes & observations even of the best & wisest afford but a sorry picture of our humanity. Some men endeavor to live a constrained life — to subject their whole lives to their will as he who said he might give a sign if he were conscious after his head was cut off — but he gave no sign Dwell as near as possible to the channel in which your life flows."

—Thoreau's JOURNAL, March 12, 1853

<a href="#">399 BCE</a>	<a href="#">Socrates</a>	drinking the hemlock	"Crito, I owe a cock to <i>Aesclepius</i> ."
<a href="#">27 CE</a>	<a href="#">Jesus</a>	being crucified	"It is finished." [John 19:30]
<a href="#">1415</a>	<a href="#">John Huss</a>	being burned at the stake	"O, holy simplicity!"
<a href="#">May 30, 1431</a>	<a href="#">Joan of Arc</a>	being burned at the stake	"Hold the cross high so I may see it through the flames."
<a href="#">May 4, 1534</a>	<a href="#">Father John Houghton</a>	as he was being disemboweled	"And what wilt thou do with my heart, O Christ?"
<a href="#">July 6, 1535</a>	<a href="#">Sir Thomas More</a>	being beheaded	"The King's good servant, but God's First."
<a href="#">1536</a>	<a href="#">Anne Boleyn</a>	being beheaded	"Oh God, have pity on my soul."
<a href="#">February 18, 1546</a>	<a href="#">Martin Luther</a>	found on his chamber table	"We are beggars: this is true."
<a href="#">July 16, 1546</a>	<a href="#">Anne Askew</a>	being burned at the stake	"There he misseth, and speaketh without the book"
... other famous last words ...			



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391 BCE

September 14: Halley's Comet whipped around the sun. Plato, who has been credited with having written a little poem on the subject of stargazing, may have seen this comet this time, but actually we have no preserved confirming record.

SKY EVENT

This is what Halley's Comet looked like, the last time it passed us. We have records of the appearances of this comet on each and every one of its past 30 orbits, which is to say, we have spotty records of observations before that, in 1,404 BCE, → 1,057 BCE, → 466 BCE, → 391 BCE, → and 315 BCE, → but then on the 240 BCE → return the sightings record begins to be complete. The Babylonians recorded seeing it in 164 BCE → and again in 87 BCE, → and then it was recorded as being seen in 12 BCE, → 66 CE, → 141 CE, → 218 CE, → 295 CE, → 374 CE, → 451 CE, → 530 CE, → 607 CE, → 684 CE, → 760 CE (only by Chinese), → 837 CE, → 912 CE, → 989 CE, → 1066, → 1145, → 1222, → 1301, → 1378, → 1456, → 1531, → 1607, → 1682, → 1758, → 1835, → 1910, → and 1986 → - and we are confidently awaiting sightings in 2061 and 2134 even though due to a close conjunction with the earth we are presently unable to calculate what orbit it will have by the date of that approach. Each time P/Halley orbits in out of the Kuiper belt beyond the planets Neptune and Pluto and whips around the sun, it has been throwing off about one 10,000ths of its mass into a streaming tail, which means that this comet which we know to have been visiting us for at the very least the past 3,000 years or so is only going to be visiting us for perhaps another half a million years or so!



HALLEY'S COMET



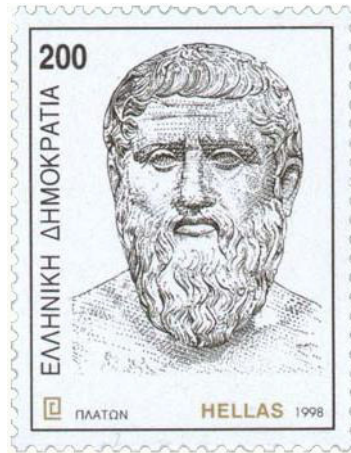
EDMOND HALLEY



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390 BCE

At about this point [Plato](#) began to develop his theory of knowledge. The first writing we have is his *EUTHYDEMUS*.



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**388 BCE**

At some point during this year or one of the following two years, [Plato](#)'s visit to Sicily would bring him to Syracuse, where he would become fast friends with Dion, the brother-in-law of Syracuse's tyrant, Dionysius I, and a member of his court. Dion was intrigued by philosophy and would make much of Plato. Plato seems to have become beguiled by the idea that he might be able to set up a polis led by philosophers, and attempted to provide philosophical instruction to the tyrant and, later, to his son Dionysius the Younger. (This would be, of course, a lost cause.)





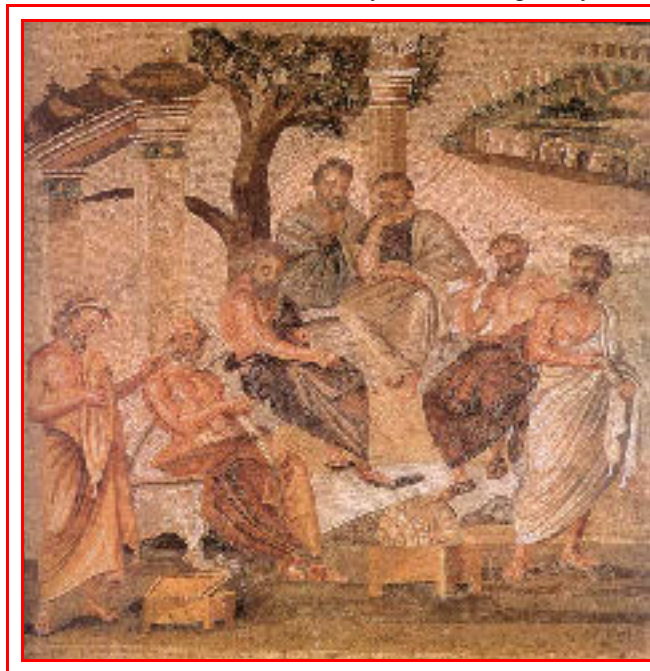
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387 BCE

When [Plato](#) returned from Sicily to Athens he founded, either at this point or within the following couple of years, the Athenian institution often characterized as the 1st European university. He rented a gymnasium in a wooded park outside Athens dedicated to the hero Academus, intending to create a school similar to other schools he had known and visited. Here the “Academy” of Plato is portrayed in a Roman mosaic:



The students at his Academy united themselves into what they then termed a “museum,” which is to say, a society devoted to the Muses of letters and music. People might involve themselves with the Academy for 20 years to life. Mathematics was an important component of the study.

The peace of Antalcidas was concluded among the Greeks by the mediation, and under the sanction, of the Persian king.

380 BCE

In about this timeframe [Plato](#) was writing his *CHARMIDES*, *EUTHYPHRO*, *GORGIAS*, *LACHES*, *LYSIS*, *MENO*, and *PROTAGORAS*.



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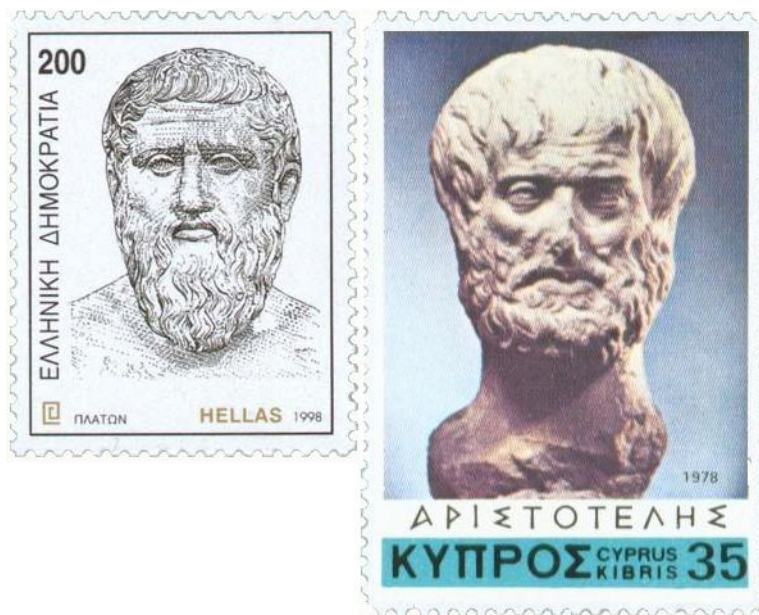
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370 BCE

In about this timeframe [Plato](#) was writing his *PARMENIDES*.

367 BCE

[Aristoteles](#) left Stageiros at the age of 17 to attend the Academy founded by Aristokles of Athens, a rich man known under his wrestling nickname “Platon” who was at this point pursuing an opportunity to combine philosophy and practical politics in Syracuse, a city-state on the island of Sicily, as the tutor the new ruler Dionysius the Younger. Plato returned to Syracuse with Xenocrates. Dionysius would eventually expel Plato’s local friend Dion on suspicions that he was plotting against him, and Plato out of loyalty would petition that his friend be recalled. Dionysius would never, however, permit Dion to return to Sicily, and so Dion would wind up enrolled as a more or less permanent pupil at the Academy. Aristotle would continue some two decades at the Academy, until at the death of the founder, in 347, [Plato](#)’s nephew and heir Speusippus would be selected to head the Academy.





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In THE REPUBLIC, in dialogs by Cratylus and by Charmides, in allegories on temperance and on the cave, and in quoting Socrates, [Plato](#) made frequent use of the expression “By the dog of Egypt!” This was a reference the [Egyptian](#) jackal-headed deity Anubis that sniffed the dead to ensure that they were fit for the afterlife. In THE BOOK OF THE DEAD, this deity was a figure of judgment and discernment. To swear by the dog of Egypt was thus a dramatic way to affirm that one’s declaration would withstand the most discerning scrutiny.



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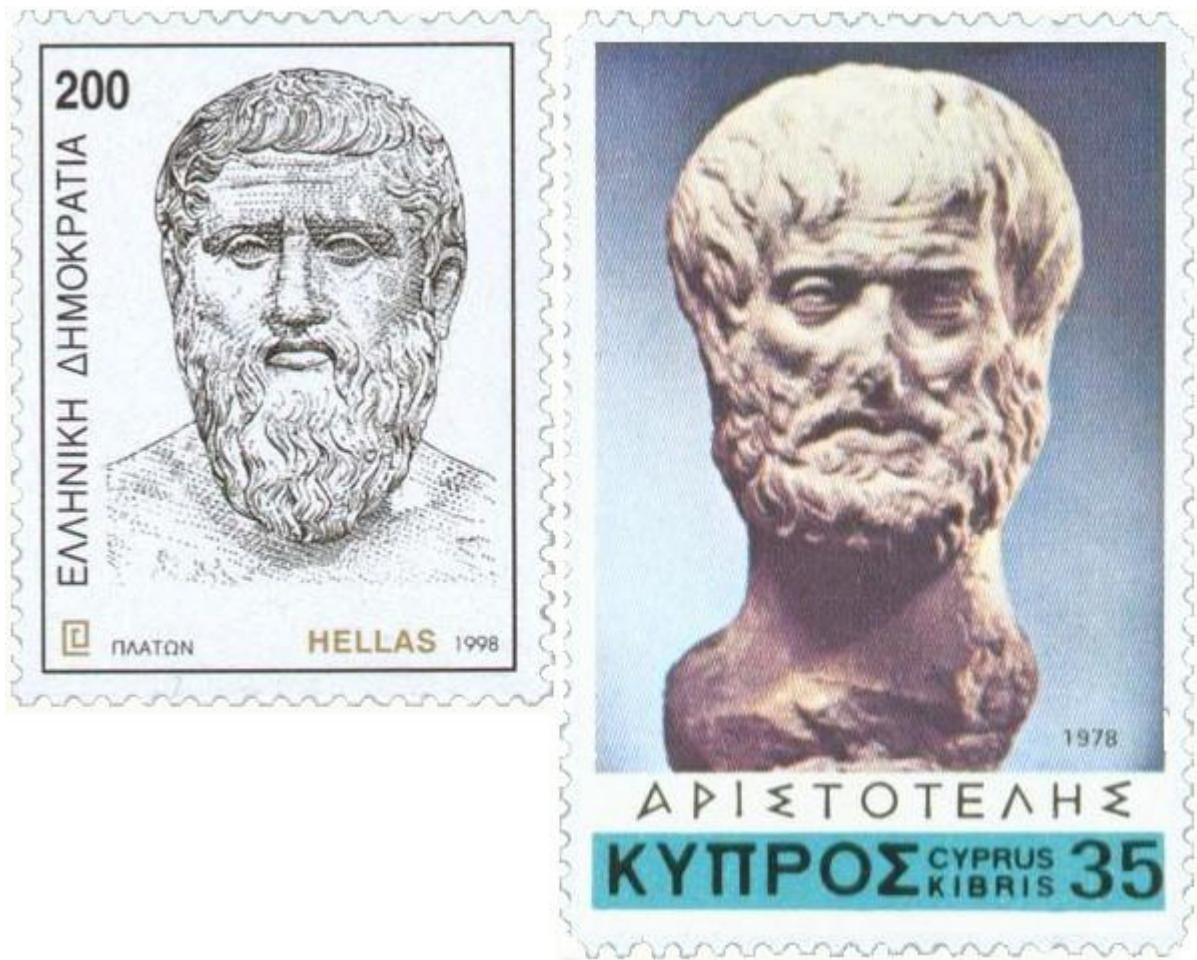
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363 BCE

[Aristotle](#) studied under [Plato](#).





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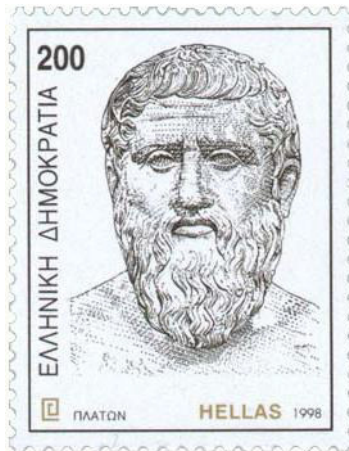
### PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN



**A WEEK:** The eye which can appreciate the naked and absolute beauty of a scientific truth is far more rare than that which is attracted by a moral one. Few detect the morality in the former, or the science in the latter. Aristotle defined art to be **Λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ἄνευ ὕλης**, **The principle of the work without the wood**; but most men prefer to have some of the wood along with the principle; they demand that the truth be clothed in flesh and blood and the warm colors of life. They prefer the partial statement because it fits and measures them and their commodities best. But science still exists everywhere as the sealer of weights and measures at least.

**361 BCE**

Dionysius invited **Plato** to return to Syracuse on the island of Sicily, promising that if he did so then Plato's friend Dion would be allowed also to return. However, after Plato had traveled to Sicily with Speusippus, Dionysius confiscated Dion's property — and Plato found himself again a virtual prisoner.



He would manage to leave the island only with the intervention of Archytas. The concluding years of Plato's life would be spent lecturing at the Academy in Athens, and writing.





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**360 BCE**

In about this timeframe [Plato](#) was writing his *PHAEDO*, *PHAEDRUS*, *CRITO*, *REPUBLIC*, *SOPHIST*, *SYMPOSIUM*, and *THEAETETUS*.

[Thoreau](#) would aver that he never read these dialogues (and we can find no record that he ever checked any of them out of any Massachusetts library) — and yet we seem to have decyphered in [WALDEN](#) references to the *APOLOGY*, the *TIMAEUS*, *CRITIAS*, and *REPUBLIC*:

[WALDEN](#): I aspire to be acquainted with wiser men than this our Concord soil has produced, whose names are hardly known here. Or shall I hear the name of Plato and never read his book? As if Plato were my townsman and I never saw him, —my next neighbor and I never heard him speak or attended to the wisdom of his words. But how actually is it? His Dialogues which contain what was immortal in him, lie on the next shelf, and yet I never read them. We are underbred and low-lived and illiterate; and in this respect I confess I do not make any very broad distinction between the illiterateness of my townsman who cannot read at all, and the illiterateness of him who has learned to read only what is for children and feeble intellects. We should be as good as the worthies of antiquity, but partly by first knowing how good they were. We are a race of tit-men, and soar but little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper.

PLATO

**357 BCE**

Dion returned to Syracuse on the island of Sicily with an army, and deposed the tyrant Dionysius. The so-called “Social War” broke out in Greece, between Athens and her allies, and this would last three years. Its result would check the attempt of Athens to regain her old maritime empire.



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**355 BCE**

Xenophon, Greek general and historian, died. He had, like [Plato](#), been a disciple of Socrates. He had accompanied Cyrus the Younger against Artaxerxes II and, after Cyrus's death at Cunaxa in 401 BCE, had led his army of 10,000 Greek soldiers to the Black Sea, an expedition recorded in his *ANABASIS*. His other works include *HELLENICA*, a history of Greece, and the *MEMORABILIA*, *APOLOGY*, and *SYMPOSIUM*, which contain his recollections of Socrates.

At some point during his life, Xenophon had objected to the use of torture deaths for the nobility, singling out decapitation as the most appropriate fate for errant Greek nobles ([Romans](#) also would reserve *capitis amputatio* for nobler folk).

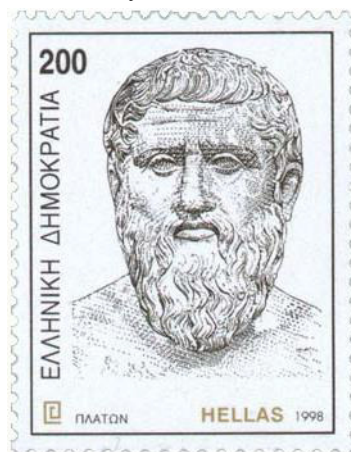
HEADCHOPPING

**354 BCE**

At Syracuse on the island of Sicily, Dion was assassinated at the instigation of an Athenian companion, Calippus, and then Calippus was able to set himself up as the tyrant.

**348 BCE**

[Plato](#) died at about the age of 80, having never married and having left no children, and his nephew and heir Speusippus was selected to head the Academy in Athens.





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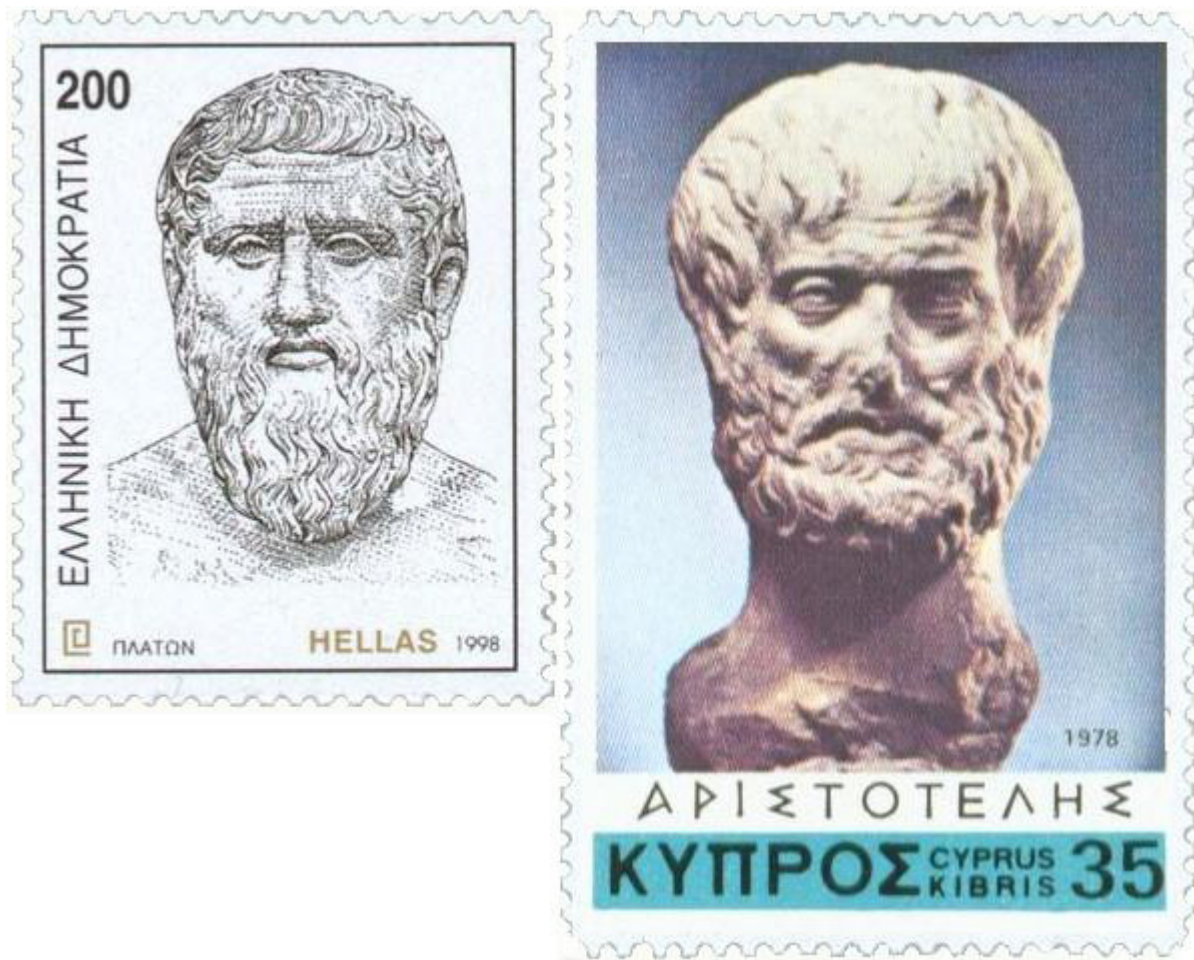
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**342 BCE**

[Aristotle](#), pupil of [Plato](#), arrived in Macedon, where his father was physician to King Philip, to take a position as tutor to Philip's son [Alexander \(the Great\)](#).



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100 BCE

By this point what our cultural historians denominate as “Middle [Platonism](#)” had become a neglected tradition.



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200 CE

During this century, Neo-[Platonism](#) would be developing in Alexandria.



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260 CE

The Emperor Valerian was captured by Shapur I, the Sassanid king of Persia, after a stunning defeat at Edessa, and would die in disgrace in captivity under torture. This Shapur styled himself “King of Kings of Iran and Non-Iran.” Gallienus became the sole emperor (although emperor wannabees of course appeared in outlying parts of the empire).



Sometime between 260 CE and 268 CE, [Plotinus](#) would sell his buddy the emperor Gallienus on the idea of founding an intentional community in Campania, to be denominated Platonopolis. The inhabitants of this new city were to lead lives according to the dictates of [Plato](#). This agenda would, however, be strongly opposed by

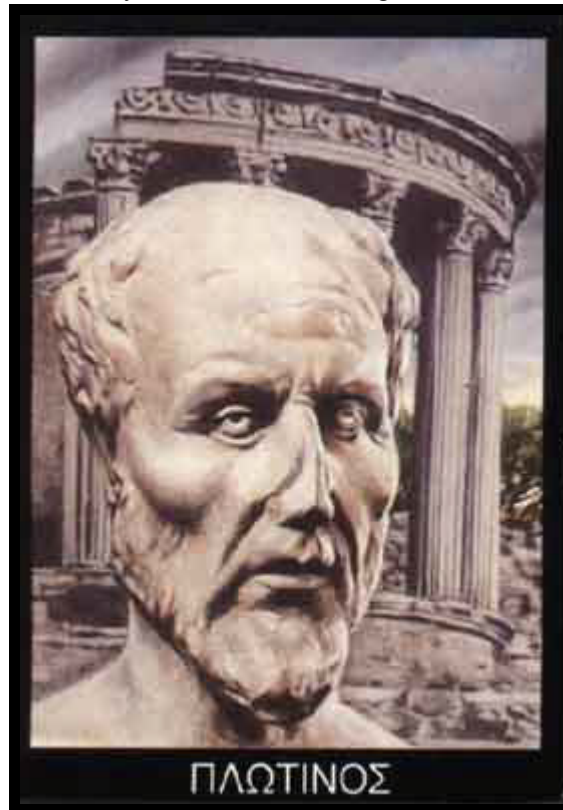


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imperial counselors, and fortunately would come to nothing.





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- 222 About this time the Roman empire begins to sink. The Barbarians begin their irruptions, and the Goths have annual tribute not to molest the empire.
- 260 Valerius is taken prisoner by Sapor, king of Persia, and flayed alive.
- 274 Silk first brought from India; the manufactory of it introduced into Europe by some monks, 551; first worn by the clergy in England, 1534.
- 306 Constantine the Great begins his reign.
- 308 Cardinals first made.
- 313 The tenth persecution ends by an edict of Constantine, who favours the Christians, and gives full liberty to their religion.
- 314 Three bishops or fathers are sent from Britain to assist at the council of Arles.
- 325 The first general council at Nice, when 318 fathers attended against Arius, where was composed the famous Nicene Creed, which we attribute to them.
- 328 Constantine removes the seat of empire from Rome to Byzantium, which is thenceforwards called Constantinople.
- 331 ——— orders all the heathen temples to be destroyed.
- 363 The Roman emperor, Julian, surnamed the Apostate, endeavours in vain to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.
- 364 The Roman empire is divided into the eastern (Constantinople the capital), and western (of which Rome continued to be the capital), each being now under the government of different emperors.
- 400 Bells invented by bishop Paulinus of Campagnia.
- 404 The kingdom of Caledonia, in Scotland, revives under Fergus.
- 406 The Vandals, Alans, and Suevi, spread into France and Spain, by a concession of Honorius, emperor of the West.
- 410 Rome taken and plundered by Alaric, king of the Vizi-Goths.
- 412 The Vandals begin their kingdom in Spain.
- 420 The kingdom of France begins upon the Lower Rhine, under Pharamond.
- 426 The Romans reduced to extremities at home, withdraw their troops from Britain, and never return; advising the Britons to arm in their own defence, and trust to their own valour.



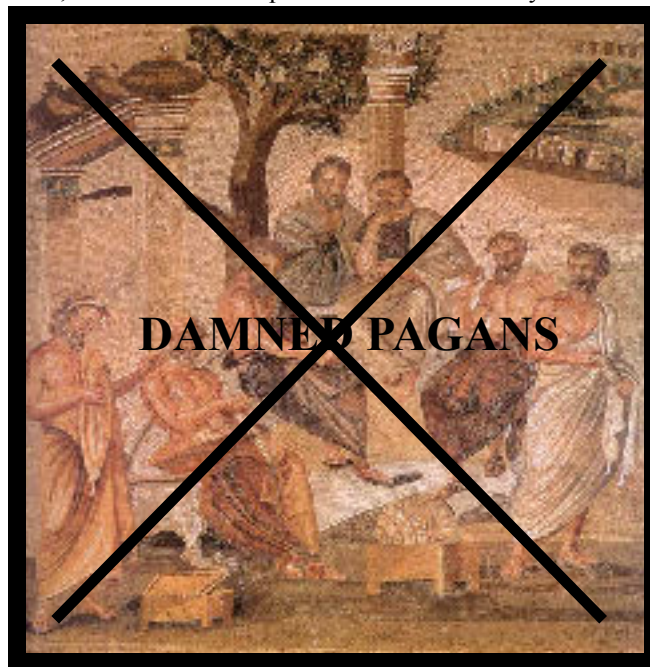
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529 CE

The emperor Justinian ordered the suppression of all non-Christian worship. As part of this orthodoxy, he ordered that after almost nine centuries of operation, the Academy of [Plato](#) outside Athens shut down its operation as inherently “Paganistic.” From this year into the year 534 CE this emperor would be introducing the “Corpus Juris Civilis,” which was a compilation of Roman law by Tribonian.







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446 The Britons, now left to themselves, are greatly harassed by the Scots and Picts, upon which they once more make their complaint to the Romans, but receive no assistance from that quarter.  
447 Attila (surnamed the Scourge of God) with his Huns, ravages the Roman empire.  
449 Vortigern, king of the Britons, invites the Saxons into Britain against the Scots and Picts.  
455 The Saxons having repulsed the Scots and Picts, invite over more of their countrymen, and begin to establish themselves in Kent, under Hengist.  
476 The western empire is finished, 523 years after the battle of Pharsalia; upon the ruins of which several new states arise in Italy and other parts, consisting of Goths, Vandals, Huns, and other Barbarians, under whom literature is extinguished, and the works of the learned are destroyed.  
496 Clovis, king of France, baptized, and Christianity begins in that kingdom.  
508 Prince Arthur begins his reign over the Britons.  
516 The computing of time by the Christian æra is introduced by Dionysius the monk.  
529 The code of Justinian, the eastern emperor, is published.  
581 Latin ceased to be spoken about this time in Italy.  
596 Augustine the monk comes into England with forty monks.  
606 Here begins the power of the popes, by the concessions of Phocas, emperor of the east.  
622 Mahomet, the false prophet, flies from Mecca to Medina, in Arabia, in the 44th year of his age, and 10th of his ministry, when he laid the foundation of the Saracen empire; and from whom the Mahometan princes to this day claim their descent. His followers compute their time from this æra, which in Arabic is called Hegira, i. e. the Flight.  
637 Jerusalem is taken by the Saracens, or followers of Mahomet.

1079

Yet another altercation: at Calavryta the Byzantines under Alexius Comnenus defeated the Byzantines under Nicephorus Bryennius, restoring the hegemony of [the Pax Romana](#).

In this year in which construction was beginning on Winchester Cathedral across the channel in England, [Peter Abélard](#) was born the son of a knight at Le Pallet, near Nantes in Brittany south of the Loire River. He would throw off both inheritance and the prospect of a military career in favor of philosophy, particularly logic. He would attack both his masters, Roscelin and Guillaume, who representing the two accredited philosophical orientations of that time. Roscelin of Compiègne held to the Nominalist attitude, according to which universals were derivative rather than primary, amounting to mere words; Guillaume de Champeaux held to a form of [Platonic](#) Realism according to which these universals had a real and independent and primary existence. Abélard would elaborate a new philosophy of language according to which words might have significance despite failing to produce information in regard to the nature of reality.



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1804



[Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando](#)'s *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie considérés relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines* was issued in Paris in three volumes.

Under Minister of the Interior Jean-Baptiste de Nompère de Champagny, 1st Duc de Cadore, [Baron de Gérando](#) became the Secretary General of that Ministry.



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1806



What would [Waldo Emerson](#) and [Henry Thoreau](#) be reading that had been attributed to the ancient [Zoroaster](#)? –Perhaps it would be this year’s THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES by Thomas Taylor in [The Monthly Magazine](#), and published independently, 1806. [Thomas “the Platonist” Taylor, born on May 15, 1758, lived in London to his death on November 1, 1835. After attending St. Paul’s school, he relocated to Sheerness and spent several years with a relative who worked on the docks. He studied for the dissenting ministry until an imprudent marriage and its financial obligations closed this path to him. He became a schoolmaster, then a clerk in Lubbock’s banking-house, and from 1798 to 1806 functioned as assistant secretary to a society for the encouragement of arts, manufactures, and commerce, until finally, with the patronage of the duke of Norfolk and of a Mr. Meredith (a retired tradesman of literary tastes), he was able to devote himself to the study of Neoplatonism. He made translations in whole or part of the writings of [Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), Plotinus, Proclus, Pausanias, Porphyry, Ocellus Lucanus, and the Orphic hymns, which were uniformly received unfavorably – almost contemptuously– by his audience, for their defects in scholarship and for the translator’s industry so

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much in excess of his critical faculty.]



CHALDEAN ORACLES



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A WEEK: It is remarkable that Homer and a few Hebrews are the most Oriental names which modern Europe, whose literature has taken its rise since the decline of the Persian, has admitted into her list of Worthies, and perhaps the **worthiest** of mankind, and the fathers of modern thinking, – for the contemplations of those Indian sages have influenced, and still influence, the intellectual development of mankind, – whose works even yet survive in wonderful completeness, are, for the most part, not recognized as ever having existed. If the lions had been the painters it would have been otherwise. In every one's youthful dreams philosophy is still vaguely but inseparably, and with singular truth, associated with the East, nor do after years discover its local habitation in the Western world. In comparison with the philosophers of the East, we may say that modern Europe has yet given birth to none. Beside the vast and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, even our Shakespeare seems sometimes youthfully green and practical merely. Some of these sublime sentences, as the Chaldaean oracles of Zoroaster, still surviving after a thousand revolutions and translations, alone make us doubt if the poetic form and dress are not transitory, and not essential to the most effective and enduring expression of thought. *Ex oriente lux* may still be the motto of scholars, for the Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light which it is destined to receive thence.

It would be worthy of the age to print together the collected Scriptures or Sacred Writings of the several nations, the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Persians, the Hebrews, and others, as the Scripture of mankind. The New Testament is still, perhaps, too much on the lips and in the hearts of men to be called a Scripture in this sense. Such a juxtaposition and comparison might help to liberalize the faith of men. This is a work which Time will surely edit, reserved to crown the labors of the printing-press. This would be the Bible, or Book of Books, which let the missionaries carry to the uttermost parts of the earth.

ÆSOP

XENOPHANES

A WEEK: The life of a wise man is most of all extemporaneous, for he lives out of an eternity which includes all time. The cunning mind travels further back than Zoroaster each instant, and comes quite down to the present with its revelation. The utmost thrift and industry of thinking give no man any stock in life; his credit with the inner world is no better, his capital no larger. He must try his fortune again to-day as yesterday. All questions rely on the present for their solution. Time measures nothing but itself. The word that is written may be postponed, but not that on the lip. If this is what the occasion says, let the occasion say it. All the world is forward to prompt him who gets up to live without his creed in his pocket.



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1821



Since [Waldo Emerson](#) began reading [Alexander von Humboldt](#), and referring to him in his JOURNAL, at this point, it seems likely that he had been told of this explorer and author by his professor [Edward Everett](#) while at [Harvard College](#).



Emerson would come to own many of Humboldt's books and it is likely that it was in these volumes that [Henry Thoreau](#) first encountered the explorer (he would by 1853 have studied Humboldt's major works).

Publication, in this year, by the firm of W. Allason etc., in London, of a new edition of the dozen volumes of [Edward Gibbon](#)'s THE HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE (this is the edition that



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**PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN**

would find its way into the personal library of [Emerson](#)).

<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL I</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL II</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL III</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL IV</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL V</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL VI</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL VII</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL VIII</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL IX</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL X</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL XI</b>
<b>GIBBON, DECLINE &amp; FALL XII</b>

At the end of the journal entries for 1820 and 1821, [Emerson](#) listed his recent readings in Oriental materials: “Cudworth (containing many quotations from the Neo-[Platonists](#)); Zendavesta (*apud* [Gibbon](#)).”

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/zor/>

ZOROASTER





## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

## PLATON OF ATHENS

### PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

As he completed his senior year, Waldo wrote a Bowdoin Prize essay “The Present State of Ethical Philosophy.” From this year into 1825, having acquired the status of college graduate, he would be teaching school.





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1822



Publication of the 2d edition of [Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando](#)'s *HISTOIRE COMPARÉE DES SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE, CONSIDÉRÉS RELATIVEMENT AUX PRINCIPES DES CONNAISSANCES HUMAINES*, a 4-volume work that would be available in the library of [Waldo Emerson](#) to be studied by [Henry Thoreau](#) during September 1840. Thoreau would take note of a passage: “[Plato](#) gives science sublime counsels, directs her toward the regions of the ideal; [Aristotle](#) gives her positive and severe laws, and directs her toward a practical end.”



SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE I

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE II

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE III

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE IV

The [Baron de Gérando](#) had in 1819 opened at the law-school of Paris a class of public and administrative law. In this year his class was suppressed by the French government (but in 1828 under the Martignac ministry it would be allowed to resume).



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1833



August 28, Wednesday: [Waldo Emerson](#) had met, while in [Rome](#), the Gustave d'Eichthal who had sent Saint-Simonian materials to [Thomas Carlyle](#), and this scion of a Jewish banking family had given to the American tourist a letter of introduction to the sympathetic Scottish author. On this August day, therefore, Emerson showed up on the doorstep of the farmhouse at Craigenputtock — this is how Emerson would describe, later, how the visit had gone down, in his ENGLISH TRAITS:

From Edinburgh I went to the Highlands. On my return, I came from Glasgow to Dumfries, and being intent on delivering a letter which I had brought from Rome, inquired for Craigenputtock. It was a farm in Nithsdale, in the parish of Dunscore, sixteen miles distant. No public coach passed near it, so I took a private carriage from the inn. I found the house amid desolate heathery hills, where the lonely scholar nourished his mighty heart. Carlyle was a man from his youth, an author who did not need to hide from his readers, and as absolute a man of the world, unknown and exiled on that hill-farm, as if holding on his own terms what is best in London. He was tall and gaunt, with a cliff-like brow, self-possessed, and holding his extraordinary powers of conversation in easy command; clinging to his northern accent with evident relish; full of lively anecdote, and with a streaming humor, which floated every thing he looked upon. His talk playfully exalting the familiar objects, put the companion at once into an acquaintance with his Lars and Lemurs, and it was very pleasant to learn what was predestined to be a pretty mythology. Few were the objects and lonely the man, "not a person to speak to within sixteen miles except the minister of Dunscore;" so that books inevitably made his topics. **[continued on following screen]**



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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He had names of his own for all the matters familiar to his discourse. "Blackwood's" was the "sand magazine;" "Fraser's" nearer approach to possibility of life was the "mud magazine;" a piece of road near by that marked some failed enterprise was the "grave of the last sixpence." When too much praise of any genius annoyed him, he professed hugely to admire the talent shown by his pig. He had spent much time and contrivance in confining the poor beast to one enclosure in his pen, but pig, by great strokes of judgment, had found out how to let a board down, and had foiled him. For all that, he still thought man the most plastic little fellow in the planet, and he liked Nero's death, "*Qualis artifex pereo!*" better than most history. He worships a man that will manifest any truth to him. At one time he had inquired and read a good deal about America. Landor's principle was mere rebellion, and **that** he feared was the American principle. The best thing he knew of that country was, that in it a man can have meat for his labor. He had read in Stewart's book, that when he inquired in a New York hotel for the Boots, he had been shown across the street and had found Mungo in his own house dining on roast turkey.

We talked of books. Plato he does not read, and he disparaged Socrates; and, when pressed, persisted in making Mirabeau a hero. Gibbon he called the splendid bridge from the old world to the new. His own reading had been multifarious. Tristram Shandy was one of his first books after ROBINSON CRUSOE, and Robertson's America an early favorite. Rousseau's CONFESSIONS had discovered to him that he was not a dunce; and it was now ten years since he had learned German, by the advice of a man who told him he would find in that language what he wanted.

He took despairing or satirical views of literature at this moment; recounted the incredible sums paid in one year by the great booksellers for puffing. Hence it comes that no newspaper is trusted now, no books are bought, and the booksellers are on the eve of bankruptcy.

He still returned to English pauperism, the crowded country, the selfish abdication by public men of all that public persons should perform. "Government should direct poor men what to do. Poor Irish folk come wandering over these moors. My dame makes it a rule to give to every son of Adam bread to eat, and supplies his wants to the next house. But here are thousands of acres which might give them all meat, and nobody to bid these poor Irish go to the moor and till it. They burned the stacks, and so found a way to force the rich people to attend to them."

We went out to walk over long hills, and looked at Criffel, then without his cap, and down into Wordsworth's country. There we sat down, and talked of the immortality of the soul. It was not Carlyle's fault that we talked on that topic, for he had the natural disinclination of every nimble spirit to bruise itself against walls, and did not like to place himself where no step can be taken. But he was honest and true, and cognizant of the subtle links that bind ages together, and saw how every event affects all the future. "Christ died on the tree: that built Dunscore kirk yonder: that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence."

He was already turning his eyes towards London with a scholar's appreciation. London is the heart of the world, he said, wonderful only from the mass of human beings. He liked the huge machine. Each keeps its own round. The baker's boy brings muffins to the window at a fixed hour every day, and that is all the Londoner knows or wishes to know on the subject. But it "~~turned out good men~~" He named certain individuals, especially one man of letters, his friend, the best mind he knew, whom London had well served.



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1834



February: Over the next seven months [Bronson Alcott](#) would read [Plato](#),<sup>2</sup> [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#), [Immanuel Kant](#), [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#), [Thomas Carlyle](#), and [William Wordsworth](#) in the Loganian Library in Philadelphia, and gradually be weaned out of his Lockean empiricism and 18th-Century rationalism into the Platonic idealism which he would maintain for the duration of his long life. The pre-existence of the soul and its inherently good godlikeness were at the core of all his subsequent thought. Plato's doctrine of the paideutic drawing out of pre-existent, half-forgotten ideas became the basis of his educational efforts, and he began his manuscript OBSERVATIONS ON THE SPIRITUAL NURTURE OF MY CHILDREN. Unfortunately, over these months of study, he became practically estranged for a time from his wife and his little girls, and remained so until Abba Alcott had a miscarriage.



Before the evening was half over, Jo felt so completely *désillusionnée*, that she sat down in a corner to recover herself. Mr. Bhaer soon joined her, looking rather out of his element, and presently several of the philosophers, each mounted on his hobby, came ambling up to hold an intellectual tournament in the recess. The conversations were miles beyond Jo's comprehension, but she enjoyed it, though Kant and Hegel were unknown gods, the Subjective and Objective unintelligible terms, and the only thing 'evolved from her inner consciousness' was a bad headache after it was all over. It dawned upon her gradually that the world was being picked to pieces, and put together on new and, according to the talkers, on infinitely better principles than before, that religion was in a fair way to be reasoned into nothingness, and intellect was to be the only God. Jo knew nothing about philosophy or metaphysics of any sort, but a curious excitement, half pleasurable, half painful, came over her as she listened with a sense of being turned adrift into time and space, like a young balloon out on a holiday.

THE ALCOTT FAMILY

2. Eventually a group of English educators would come to consider Bronson to be "the Concord [Plato](#)."



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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1836



September 9, Friday: Abraham Lincoln received his Illinois law license.

[Waldo Emerson](#)'s [NATURE](#) was self-published in [Boston](#), 1,000 copies that cost him a little over \$100.<sup>00</sup>, or 10¢ the copy. The first advertisements for this small volume appeared.



This 1st edition contained not the pseudoevolutionistic epigraph on the worm aspiring to be man with which we are now so familiar, but in its place a quote from [Plotinus](#):

Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know.

[Jones Very](#), having completed his undergraduate education at [Harvard College](#), preparing for his entry into the [Harvard Divinity School](#) (where he was planning to make quite a splash on account of his principled repudiation of all deliberation and “taking thought” in favor of what he was terming “conversing with Heaven,” in a state of artlessness and immediacy and spontaneity), would purchase this little volume on nature and naturalness and heavily mark it up. Courtesy of Parkman D. Howe of Needham, we know how he marked it up. We can note that almost half his markings, including all but two of his marginal comments, were confined to the chapter on “Idealism.” We can also know that he responded quite idiosyncratically to Emerson’s trope on infancy, “Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which come into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to paradise,” in a manner which prefigured his later mental collapse.



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The most comprehensive explanation, however is to be found in his personal copy of a small blue book with covers decorated by tree-like vines. Mr. Tutor Very purchased it in September 1836, only a few days after it was published. The timing of its acquisition at once suggests that he was already familiar with the latest modes of nonconformity, and perhaps was even anticipating the book's publication. At the end of August, in his Commencement Address, had he not expressed his confidence in the power of "new principles of action" to resist the "mechanical spirit" of the times, which he felt was suppressing the more heroic and precious forms of individuality? Now the opportunity arose for him to study the detailed grounds of another man's affirmations and dissents, a man somewhat older than he, and more knowing in the ways of spiritual heroism, about which the Divinity School evidently could teach him nothing. He may have first learned of Ralph Waldo Emerson during the winter of 1835-1836, when the latter delivered a series of ten lectures on English literature, from [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) to [William Shakespeare](#), to Byron and Coleridge, at Boston's Masonic Temple. Or, as was perhaps more likely, when Very visited Boston that winter to listen to sermons (as he must have done, following his **change of heart** and recent choice of a ministerial career), he may have heard Emerson in one of his church appearances, since he preached usually twice a week during the run of his lecture course. Or, between January and May 1836, after walking the seventeen miles of turnpike linking Cambridge with his home, he may have attended one of the approximately fifteen lectures on biography and English literature Emerson delivered at the Salem Lyceum in two series. (In view of the attitudes Very was cultivating at the time, the [Martin Luther](#), [John Milton](#), and [George Fox](#) lectures might well have tempted him.) But whatever the way he discovered Emerson -and there were sufficient opportunities for him to have at least heard about him as early as 1835- it is certain he read [NATURE](#) eagerly in 1836, with pencil in hand, scoring margins, underlining sentences, and making written comments.

[CONTINUED ON NEXT SCREEN]



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PLATON OF ATHENS

**PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN**

**[CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS SCREEN]**

Most striking about Very's markings and marginalia is that they indicate he was not at all surprised by Emerson's aerial prose poem; instead, he apparently found what he expected – and this neither confounded nor offended him, as it did most readers. Several times he questioned what he read, but never did he challenge Emerson: his mood seemed respectful throughout. It was as if his reading confirmed suspicions that the author was a thoughtful man whose reflections repaid close scrutiny. (Though a minor aspect of Very's use of NATURE it is indicative of his attitude toward it that he treated it incidentally as a source book for the compatible ideas of others, of Coleridge for example, and of William Shakespeare, Michaelangelo, George Herbert, and even of the unnamed "orphanic poet.") He read NATURE then as a literal rather than figurative testament about the nature of God, and about the relationship between God and man. He read it as if it were a conduct-book filled with supernal imperatives. While certainly not a usual approach to the book, it still was a valid one, given the disposition of the reader in September 1836. He was looking for certain information, and believed it might be found here rather than in the Divinity School. Very was particularly curious about the effects of nature upon Emerson, about his emotional and artistic responses to the natural world. Moreover, Very seemed interested in external nature as the basis for communion with God, and this accorded well with the viewpoint Emerson developed. (The professors would have shouted Very down had he suggested such an idea in the classroom.) He was concerned too with the relationship between personal morals and the morality of art, and specifically of literary art. But he seemed not so interested as Emerson in attempting to explore the philosophical middle ground between idealism and materialism. Several of the statements recalled to him verses from the Book of Revelation, and several others reminded him of the corrosive powers of sin. Emerson's book therefore generally served to stimulate his own distinctive thoughts in an original way, one which at times was inconsistent with Emerson's intentions; that is, from the marginalia in his copy, Very's NATURE seems not quite the book that Emerson wrote. But this does not mean that his comments and markings conformed to any viewpoint even remotely acceptable to the provincial orthodoxy maintained by Andrews Norton and his colleagues.



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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Since many scholars have assumed that this manifesto [NATURE](#) must have influenced [Henry David Thoreau](#) in one way or another, and since such an assumption has always seemed to me to be presumptuous, I will insert here the short synopsis Catherine Albanese used to introduce the work in her THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE AMERICAN [TRANSCENDENTALISTS](#):



When Emerson published his slim volume [NATURE](#) in 1836, he had produced a manifesto for the emerging transcendental movement. Seen in juxtaposition to his farewell sermon at the Second Church, [NATURE](#) offers Emerson's spiritual alternative to the inherited forms of the church. Throughout the work he stands in the [Platonic](#) lineage and, especially, that lineage as read through a revived metaphysical tradition in the West. Hence, in [NATURE](#) the world of the "not-me" that Emerson celebrates is seen ultimately as a reflection of the one Mind or Spirit present in the human soul and in the realm of the Ideas. Refracted through the Neoplatonic teaching of the One (the Soul) and the Many (Nature), Emerson articulates a Swedenborgian doctrine of correspondence, expresses enthusiasm for magic and miracle, and speaks prophetically of human powers that seem, indeed, god-like. The while he employs the Kantian-Coleridgean distinction between the Reason and the Understanding (as he understands it) to contrast true and deceptive visions of the world. He sees in a hieroglyphic of symbols the means for the Reason to discern the secret message of Spirit encoded in matter. The metaphysical tradition that Emerson embraces in [NATURE](#) would enjoy a considerable following in the nineteenth century. Even as Emerson owed a debt to Emmanuel Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, others –like the followers of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) in Christian Science and followers of forms of mind cure in New Thought– would owe a debt to Emerson. In the twentieth century the "positive thinking" of Norman Vincent Peale (b. 1898) and others also had its roots in Emerson's teaching. Beyond that, in [NATURE](#) Emerson gives voice to a characteristic American millennialism, a sense that a new age with new powers and energies has dawned or is about to dawn. Despite his idealism, he exalts a landscape that will form the earthly paradise for a later wilderness preservation movement. He speaks with a largeness of vision and a confidence in human capacity that, in a host of different ways, finds expression in the culture of the era. Situated in a new space, Emerson and other Americans concluded that they were also living in a new time and that, as Gods, they should stretch their spirits to the demands of the age.



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(This, it seems to me, is a *reductio ad absurdum*, for no-one but a fool would attempt to send Henry Thoreau sailing away in the same tub with a threesome such as Emmanuel Swedenborg, Mary Baker Eddy, and Norman Vincent Peale.)

At the Krontal spa north of Frankfurt, Felix Mendelssohn proposed to Cecile Jeanrenaud. She accepted.

In Dresden, [Frédéric François Chopin](#) may have proposed to Maria Wodzinska, sister of his boyhood friends, and he may have been offered some grounds for hope (on the other hand it is possible that nothing like this actually happened).

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*6th day 9th of 9th M 1836 / Rose early this Morning & got in readiness for the boat which arrived at the Long Wharf at 6 OC & I was there in season to get on board - we arrived in season for me to get to the House of my late dear friend [Moses Brown](#) nearly an hour & an half before the time appointed for his funeral to Meet at the House which was 10 OClock, & 11 O C at the Meeting House - I had a good opportunity for reflection & feel that it was the last time I should ever see his remains in his own house & in the parlour where I have spent so many & so pleasant & interesting hours with him - His corpse was singularly natural, he lay in his coffin with the same solid reverent & retired countenance as I have often seen upon him, when sitting in religious opportunities & his Mind gathering up to say something - very Many came into the room to view his remains for the last time, & after a few moments quiet Rowland Greene called the attention of the Audience to the solemnity of the occasion & the very great loss we had sustained in the removal of this our Ancient Father in the Church who had walked so long & so pleasantly affectionately & usefully among us. - The funeral then proceeded to the Meeting House - The Governor of the State [John Brown Francis] - ex- Gov Fenner Some of the Senators & Representatives of the Assembly, the Secretary of our State - Judges of our State Courts & the Judge of the United States Court - The President of Brown University & the Officers of it - President of the R I Historical Society & many of the Officers of it, together with many people of the first Standing in [Providence](#) were present - but none of these were as intersting to me as to see the teachers & Schollars of the YMB School walk in, in a solid manner, & go into the galery - as I saw them come in the Muscles of my face were affected, my eyes filled with tears & my whole frame so affected that it was with great difficulty that I could refrain from loud weeping - when it rushed on my mind that they had been the objects of his peculiar care & regard for many years, & that this was the last office to be performed - my mind has seldom been so much affected. -*

*Rowland Greene was first engaged in testimony to the valuable life of the deceased & the accordancy of it with the christian principles which he professed - Then Thos Anthony to the same effect - then Mary B Allen in supplication - then John Wilbur -*



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*then Anna A Jenkins in Supplication - the Meeting closed & we proceeded to the place of internment which was in the burying ground which he gave to friends*

*The pause at the grave after the remains was laid over it was unusually long, not far from 15 minutes in which Rowland Greene was engaged in supplication, the the remains was lowered down & covered up to be Seen of Men no more. -*

*I went the the School House & dined & after dinner rode into Town & attended to a little buisness I had there & returned to the School House & Lodged.*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



October 28, Friday: [David Henry Thoreau](#)'s [Harvard College](#) essay on assignment "What is the meaning of 'Fate' in the ancient use of the word? What its popular signification now?" Thoreau confessed an attraction for the attitude of [Plato](#) as exemplified in the Cambridge Platonists as modified by the "common sense" philosophy of Edinburgh, over and above the attitude taken by [John Locke](#). Plato's antique views appear to have been more correct than those of Locke, he explains, because Plato had offered that although everything is within fate's sphere or scheme, not all things are fated, for "it is not in fate that one man shall do so and so, and another suffer so and so; for that would be the destruction of our free agency and liberty: but if any one should choose such a life, and do such and such things — then it is in fate that such or such consequences shall ensue upon it."

### THE ACTUAL DOCUMENT



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What is the meaning of "Fate", in the ancient use of the word?

What its popular signification now?

No language is so meagre, or so imperfect, as not to contain a term very nearly, if not exactly, synonymous with our word Fate. This proves the universality of the idea. But men, in different ages and under different circumstances, have attributed to various causes the same or similar phenomena; though the <sup>of fate</sup> works have been the same, yet fate itself has undergone an almost infinite variety of modifications. Hence we read that on old times a certain reasonable trio, called "Moirai", commencing with the raw material, spun out and finally severed the thread of human life, in these days of innovation one is compelled to do the work of three. I have said that the idea was universal and though many deny that there is any such



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thing as fate, and others differ in the views they take of it, yet we all have a sufficiently clear idea of what it is to write about it. They about it, if not upon it. Some could at once reject the term, while others could modify its signification to adapt it to their own opinion.

There appear to have been those of every age and nation, who have risen above the sensual conceptions of the multitude — who, satisfied if they could search out the causes of things by the aid of the mental eye alone, have thus from time to time rescued some fragments of truth from the general wreck.

According to the belief of the mass of the Greeks, 3 Sisters, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, presided over the destinies of men. They were acquainted with the past, the present, and the future, and were represented with Spindles which they keep constantly in motion, spinning the thread of human life, and singing the fate of mortals. The Romans had their Parcae and the Northerners their Nornes.

These Sisters were regarded either as independent powers — the originators as well as executors of certain inevitable, though not in-



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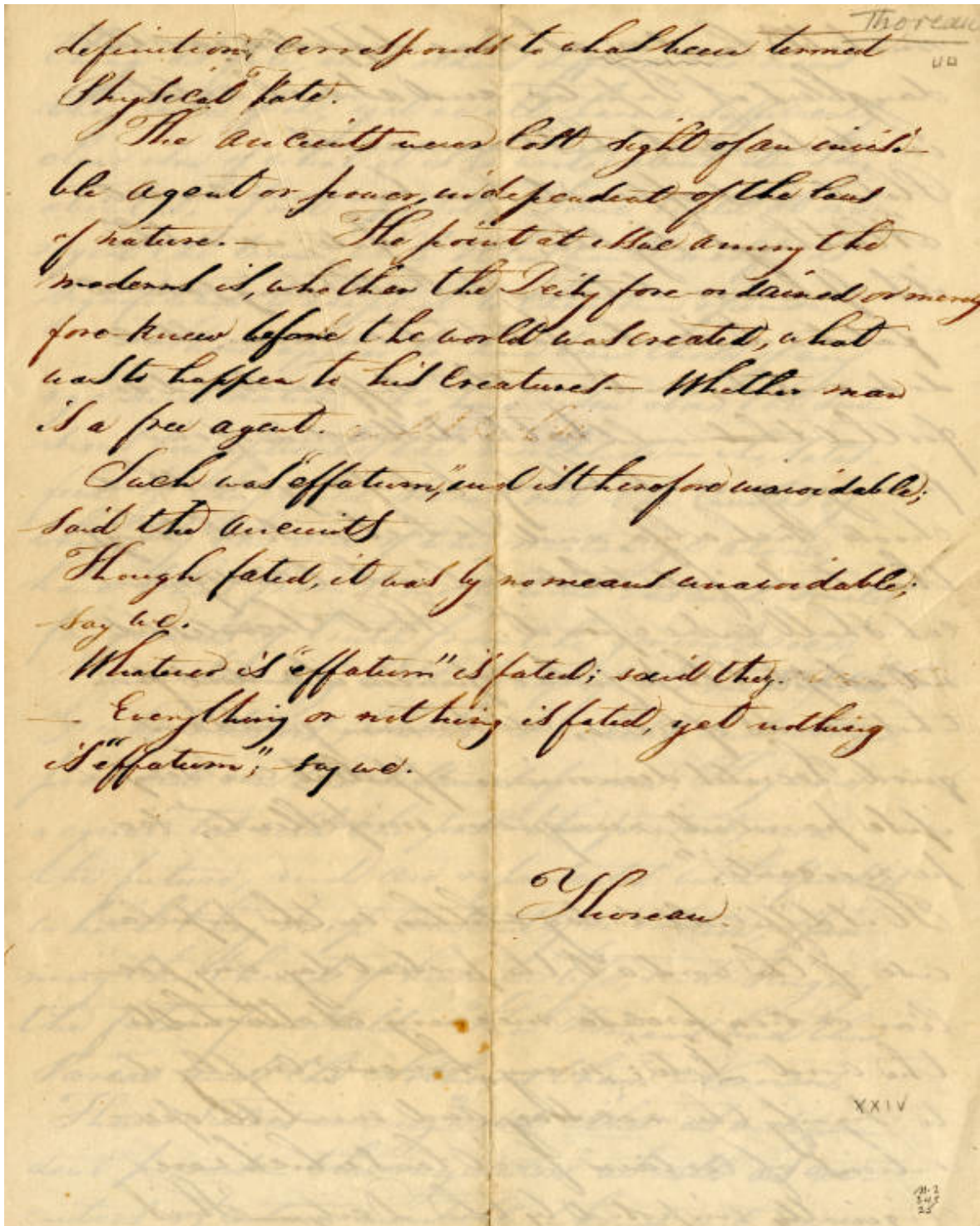
mutable, laws, or, as some supposed, even the  
 daughters of Jupiter, and all such acted  
 in obedience to his commands.  
 Plato's views appear to have been more correct.  
 "All things," says he, "are in fate; i.e. within  
 its sphere or scheme, but all things are not  
 fated: it is not in fate that one man shall  
 do so and so, and another suffer so and so,  
 for that that would be the destruction of our  
 free agency and liberty: but if any one should  
 choose such a life, and do such or such things,  
 then it is in fate that such or such consequen-  
 ces shall ensue upon it." That Socrates did  
 not adopt the popular opinion is evident from  
 those words of Cicero, "esse divinum quoddam,  
 quod Socrates demonium appellat, cui semper  
 ipse parcerit, nunquam impellenti, sac-  
 pe recedente."  
 It is difficult to say whether, in the popular  
 use of the word at the present day, any pecu-  
 liar or even precise meaning is attached to  
 the word "fate"; many, however, employ it  
 to signify the necessary and inevitable ope-  
 rations of certain fixed laws, which were  
 originally imposed by the Deity. This



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1837

 April (?): Two months after the publication of [Bronson Alcott](#)'s CONVERSATIONS, Harriet Martineau's book SOCIETY IN AMERICA appeared in America:

"There is fear of vulgarity, fear of responsibility; and above all, fear of singularity."

"There is a school in Boston (a large one, when I left the city,) conducted on this principle [the principle of [Platonic](#) idealism, that the spirit precedes the body rather than vice versa, that in general it is ideals or ideas that create their own manifestations in the realm of sense rather than vice versa]. The master presupposes his little pupils possessed of all truth in philosophy and morals, and that his business is to bring it out into expression, to help the outward life to conform to the inner light; and especially to learn of these enlightened babes, with all humility. Large exposures might be made of the mischief this gentleman is doing to his pupils by relaxing their bodies, pampering their imaginations, over-stimulating the consciences of some, and hardening those of others; and by his extraordinary management, offering them inducements to falsehood and



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hypocrisy."



Many years later Abba Alcott would comment succinctly on the above paragraph:

"Thus Harriet Martineau took the bread from the mouths of my family."

#### THE ALCOTT FAMILY

Harriet Martineau, reporting to her British readers about the state of America, complained of the moral cowardice of the conservative Unitarian leadership, with a handful of exceptions. The schism that divided Unitarians into a conservative institution versus a more radical opposition in the 1820s was epitomized in Emerson's resignation from the ministry in 1832 and his famous dissatisfaction with the doctrine's "corpse-cold" institutionalization. The Reverend [Charles Follen](#), a German professor and political radical who arrived in Boston in 1825 and managed to impress both Boston's conservative-Unitarian establishment and its breakaway intellectuals with his firsthand familiarity with the new ideas and practices in his native land, was also one of Martineau's exceptions, as he was active in both in Unitarianism and in abolitionism. According to Edmund Spivack's *CHARLES FOLLEN'S SEARCH FOR NATIONALITY AND FREEDOM* (Harvard UP, 1997, pages 138ff, 284-85 notes 63 and 65), he became America's first Germanist, and apparently sat in on some early sessions of Hedge's transcendental "club." Here is the matter as expressed by Martineau in her Part IV, Chapter 3, "Administration of Religion."

...On one side is the oppressor, struggling to keep his power for the sake of his gold; and with him the mercenary, the faithlessly timid, the ambitious, and the weak. On the other side are the friends of the slave; and with them those who, without possibility of recompense, are sacrificing their



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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reputations, their fortunes, their quiet, and risking their lives, for the principle of freedom. What are the Unitarian clergy doing amidst this war which admits of neither peace nor truce, but which must end the subjugation of the principle of freedom, or of oppression?

I believe Mr. [Samuel] May had the honour of being the first Unitarian pastor who sided with the right. Whether he has sacrificed to his intrepidity one christian grace; whether he has lost one charm of his piety, gentleness, and charity, amidst the trials of insult which he has had to undergo, I dare appeal to his worst enemy. Instead of this, his devotion to a most difficult duty has called forth in him a force of character, a strength of reason, of which his best friends were before unaware. It filled me with awe for the weakness of men, in their noblest offices, to hear the insolent compassion with which some of his priestly brethren spoke of a man whom they have not light and courage enough to follow through the thickets and deserts of duty, and upon whom they therefore bestow their scornful pity from out of their shady bowers of complacency. -Dr. Follen came next: and there is nothing in his power that he has not done and sacrificed in identifying himself with the cause of emancipation. I heard him, in a perilous time, pray in church for the "miserable, degraded, insulted slave; in chains of iron, and chains of gold." This is not the place in which to exhibit what his sacrifices have really been. -Dr. Channing's later services are well known. I know of two more of the Unitarian clergy who have made an open and dangerous avowal of the right: and of one or two who have in private resisted wrong in the cause. But this is all. As a body they must, though disapproving slavery, be ranked as the enemies of the abolitionists. Some have pleaded to me that it is a distasteful subject. Some think it sufficient that they can see faults in individual abolitionists. Some say that their pulpits are the property of their people, who are not therefore to have their minds disturbed by what they hear thence. Some say that the question is no business of theirs. Some urge that they should be turned out of their pulpits before the next Sunday, if they touched upon Human Rights. Some think the subject not spiritual enough. The greater number excuse themselves on the ground of a doctrine which, I cannot but think, has grown out of the circumstances; that the duty of the clergy is to decide on how much truth the people can bear, and to administer it accordingly. -So, while society is going through the greatest of moral revolutions, casting out its most vicious anomaly, and bringing its Christianity into its politics and its social conduct, the clergy, even the Unitarian clergy, are some pitying and some ridiculing the apostles of the revolution; preaching spiritualism, learning, speculation; advocating third and fourth-rate objects of human exertion and amelioration, and leaving it to the laity to carry out the first and pressing moral reform of the age. They are blind to their noble mission of enlightening and guiding the moral sentiment of society in its greatest crisis. They not only decline aiding the cause in





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weekdays by deed or pen, or spoken words; but they agree in private to avoid the subject of Human Rights in the pulpit till the crisis be past. No one asks them to harrow the feelings of their hearers by sermons on slavery: but they avoid offering those christian principles of faith and liberty with which slavery cannot co-exist.

**1838**

The London group organized around James Pierrepont Greaves began a coeducational school for boarding students and day students at nearby Ham Common in Surrey and christened it “Alcott House” in honor of the American [Bronson Alcott](#), author of RECORD OF A SCHOOL and CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN ON THE GOSPELS, whom they were considering to be “the Concord [Plato](#).”



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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1840

James Pierrepont Greaves wrote to [Bronson Alcott](#) from England. Harriet Martineau had taken Miss [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#)'s RECORD OF MR. ALCOTT'S SCHOOL<sup>3</sup> back to London with her, and had been showing it around as an example of the bad things she had found in America, and Greaves had seen this book



### RECORD OF A SCHOOL

and instead of being dismayed by it — was fascinated. In this era of hopelessly high postage rates, when people were writing on tissue paper and were over-writing their left-to-right lines with bottom-to-top lines in order to save on postage weight, the intercontinental letter which Greaves would post to Alcott would be all of 30 pages long. Greaves was translating the works of [Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi](#) into English and had for a time been associated with Robert Dale Owen in the Infant School Society. He believed that the world was midway on a journey toward what he termed Love Spirit, and that this unfolding spirit could manifest itself in lives only

3. [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#). RECORD OF MR. ALCOTT'S SCHOOL, EXEMPLIFYING THE PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF MORAL CULTURE. Boston, New-York, Philadelphia: James Munroe and Company, 1835, 208 pages (2d edition 1836, Boston, New-York: Russell, Shattuck and Company, 198 pages; 3d edition 1874, Boston: Roberts Brothers)

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THE TUITION AND DISCIPLINE ARE ADDRESSED IN DUE PROPORTION TO THE THREEFOLD NATURE OF CHILDHOOD.									
TIME.	THE SPIRITUAL FACULTY.			THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY.			THE RATIONAL FACULTY.		
	MEANS OF ITS DIRECT CULTURE.			MEANS OF ITS DIRECT CULTURE.			MEANS OF ITS DIRECT CULTURE.		
	1. Listening to Sacred Readings. 2. Conversations on the GOSPELS. 3. Writing Journals. 4. Self-Analysis and Self-Discipline. 5. Listening to Readings from Works of Genius. 6. Motives to Study and Action. 7. Government of the School.			1. Spelling and Reading. 2. Writing and Sketching from Nature. 3. Picturesque Geography. 4. Writing Journals and Epistles. 5. Illustrating Words. 6. Listening to Readings. 7. Conversation.			1. Defining Words. 2. Analysing Speech. 3. Self-Analysis. 4. Arithmetic. 5. Study of the HUMAN BODY. 6. Reasonings on Conduct. 7. Discipline.		
	<i>The Subjects of Study and Means of Discipline are disposed through the Week in the following general Order.</i>								
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IX	Sacred READINGS with Conversations.	STUDYING Spelling & Defining and Writing in Journals.	STUDYING Geography and Sketching Maps in Journals.	STUDYING THE GOSPEL and Writing in Journals.	STUDYING Parsing Lesson and Writing in Journals.	PARAPHRASING Text of Readings and Writing in Journals.	COMPLETING Account of Week's Studies in Journals.		
X	Listening to Services at CHURCH and Reading	SPELLING with Illustrative Conversations on the Meaning & Use of Words.	RECITATIONS in Geography with Picturesque Readings and Conversations.	READINGS and Conversations on SPIRIT as displayed in the Life of CHRIST.	ANALYSING Speech on Written and Vocal Tablets with Illustrative Conversations.	READINGS with Illustrative Conversations on the Sense of the Text.	READINGS from Works of Genius with Applications and Conversations.		
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TEMPLE No. 7, MARCH 1st 1836.



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through people's **being**, never their mere **doing**.

*Spirit alone can whole.*

Note that these English love-enthusiasts, although it appeared they were on the same road as Alcott, were in actuality going in the opposite direction. For Alcott, the world was good and life in the world was to be appreciated as a gift. For these people, the world was evil, propagation was evil, and life itself was to be regarded as an insult and an injury. Nevertheless, Alcott House in England was doing well, and the people there, who had come to think of Bronson as "the Concord [Plato](#)," were even suggesting to Alcott in Concord that he should come and be their Director.

#### THE ALCOTT FAMILY

[Waldo Emerson](#)'s "Thoughts on Modern Literature" in [THE DIAL](#) praised [Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi](#) (see **boldface**) as a change agent:

The favorable side of this research and love of facts is the bold and systematic criticism, which has appeared in every department of literature. From Wolf's attack upon the authenticity of the Homeric Poems, dates a new epoch in learning. Ancient history has been found to be not yet settled. It is to be subjected to common sense. It is to be cross examined. It is to be seen, whether its traditions will consist not with universal belief, but with universal experience. Niebuhr has sifted Roman history by the like methods. Heeren has made good essays towards ascertaining the necessary facts in the Grecian, Persian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Carthaginian nations. English history has been analyzed by Turner, Hallam, Brodie, Lingard, Palgrave. Goethe has gone the circuit of human knowledge, as Lord Bacon did before him, writing True or False on every article. Bentham has attempted the same scrutiny in reference to Civil Law. **Pestalozzi out of a deep love undertook the reform of education.** The ambition of Coleridge in England embraced the whole problem of philosophy; to find, that is, a foundation in thought for everything that existed in fact. The German philosophers, Schelling, Kant, Fichte, have applied their analysis to nature and thought with an antique boldness. There can be no honest inquiry, which is not better than acquiescence. Inquiries, which once looked grave and vital no doubt, change their appearance very fast, and come to look frivolous beside the later queries to which they gave occasion.

February 18, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote in his journal:



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February 18: All romance is grounded on friendship. What is this rural, this pastoral, this poetical life but its invention? Does not the moon shine for Endymion? Smooth pastures and mild airs are for some Corydon and Phyllis. Paradise belongs to Adam and Eve. [Plato](#)'s republic is governed by Platonic love.

July 27: x



July 27: By the last breath of the May air I inhale I am reminded that the ages never got so far down as this before. The wood thrush [**Wood Thrush** [Catharus mustelina](#)] is a more modern philosopher than Plato and Aristotle. They are now a dogma, but he preaches the doctrine of this hour.



TIME AND ETERNITY

ARISTOTLE

PLATO

September 21: Evidently in this timeframe [Henry Thoreau](#) was studying not only in Professor [Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat](#)'s 1817 translation from Confucius, *L'INVARIABLE MILIEU*, but also in a book from [Waldo Emerson](#)'s library, the 2d edition of [Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando](#)'s *HISTOIRE COMPARÉE DES SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE, CONSIDÉRÉS RELATIVEMENT AUX PRINCIPES DES CONNAISSANCES HUMAINES*. For instance, "[Plato](#) gives science sublime counsels, directs her toward the regions of the ideal; [Aristotle](#) gives her positive and severe laws, and directs her toward a practical end." Degerando."



SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE I

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE II

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE III

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE IV



September 21: In the old Chinese book which the French call "L'Invariable Milieu" occurs this sentence — "L'ordre établie par le ciel s'appelle *nature*; ce qui est conforme à la nature s'appelle *loi*; l'établissement de la loi s'appelle *instruction*."

God's order is nature — man's order is law — and the establishment of law is the subject of instruction.

Some of these old distinctions imply a certain grandeur and completeness in the view, far better than any modern acuteness and accuracy.— They are a thought which darted through the universe and solved all its problems.



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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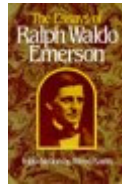
### PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

The French call writing a dead speech –une parole morte– and articulate language a living speech — une parole vive.

To [Thales](#) is attributed the saying– “It is hard, but good, to know oneself; virtue consists in leading a life conformable to nature.”

1841

March 20: [Waldo Emerson](#)’s [ESSAYS: 1ST SERIES](#).



### ESSAYS, 1ST SERIES

It will be instructive to consider in what manner Robert Richardson went wrong, in smoothly ascribing to Emerson the attitude I found admirable in Thoreau. He simply had no idea what it was that I was talking about. The words I were using were the same words he deployed, and clearly these words meant something entirely different to him than they meant to me. I will elaborate here a bit on what these words mean to me, so that others will not commit such an egregious and tendentious blunder:

All sins are an attempt to escape from time.

- Simone Weil, *FIRST AND LAST NOTEBOOKS*, p. 102  
[She also says that the root of evil is an exercise of the imagination as an escape from reality.]

We think that time has a beginning and an end. We think of it as arising from and returning to an unchanging eternity. This makes eternity into a kind of time “before” the beginning of time, and a kind of time “after” the end of time. The time “before” and “after” time, the time “when” time is not, is thought as a time without change. But all the change of which we know is change that is relative to something unchanged which serves as a point of reference: there is always more change or less change, there is never all change and there is never no change. Our experience of eternity is direct, and immediate, and our experience of change in no way invalidates this experience or calls it into question. Nothing about this style of thought, in which time is immersed in metatime, can withstand the most superficial examination, yet the fact that this is a ridiculous way to think does not seem to prevent us from thinking this way, does not force us to acknowledge that there cannot be a time “before” time or a time “after” time, a time “when” time is not – it does not induce us to recognize that time, the frame with which we think about things that begin and end, cannot itself be a thing which begins and ends within a 2d-order time. This would be an infinite regress, and infinite regresses are non-explanatory even for those of us who suppose that that famous image “Save your breath, Sonny, it’s turtles all the way down” is not philosophy but the punchline of a forgotten old joke. The only way anyone has ever figured out, to avoid an endless “But then, **who made God?**” regress in our thinking, is to acknowledge that it makes no linguistic sense to think of the past as having had any sort of real beginning, and that likewise it makes no linguistic sense to think of the future as having any sort of real end. To think this way, to think realistically





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rather than fantastically, is not to collapse eternity into time, for if time were real it really would have to have a beginning and an end, but to collapse time into eternity, to recognize that since time really cannot have a beginning or an end, reality cannot be anything other than a changeful eternity. We do not live in time (that is only a superficial impression caused by our difficulty in comprehending how something that is eternal can be eternally changeful), we live in eternity. This, that you see and hear and feel right now: this is eternity.

Nevertheless, there is nothing about the changefulness of the instant of eternity that involves any sense of vanishing into nonexistence, or any sense of loss:



In this instant there is nothing which comes to be. In this instant there is nothing which ceases to be. Thus there is no birth-and-death to be brought to an end. Wherefore the absolute tranquility is this present instant. Though it is at this instant, there is no limit to this instant, and herein is eternal delight.

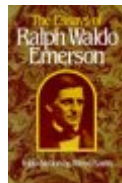
As Nietzsche knew, to recognize the reality of change is to “impose upon becoming the character of being.”<sup>4</sup> As Yehoshua, the greatest believer, and Nietzsche, the greatest disbeliever, tried to show us, we must shatter the chains of an intolerable bondage to time, the “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” that takes us, foolish victims, “the way to dusty death.” Our thought of time is a tale told by an idiot — and our idiot needs finally to become wise.

I regard nothing I have said in the above paragraphs as in any way mysterious or mystical or even fine-tuned. To me these ruminations seem the plainest and the commonest of plain common sense, most plainly expressed. If you are encountering them as something other than the plainest and the commonest of plain common sense, then there’s something seriously wrong either with your background or with mine.



“[Aristotle](#) and [Plato](#) are reckoned the respective heads of two schools. A wise man will see that Aristotle Platonizes.”

— [Waldo Emerson](#), “Circles”  
in ESSAYS: 1ST SERIES, 1841



In regard to the publication of [Waldo Emerson](#)’s essay “History” on March 20, 1841: After the “Thoreau Quiz” part of the celebrations in Concord in 1992, Robert Richardson, Jr., the self-styled “intellectual biographer of Henry David Thoreau,” approached me in the basement of the First Parish Church to engage in a bit of casual conversation. He wanted to enquire why I was engaged in this “Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” project, what was motivating me to do all this work and put up with all the grief I was getting from old-style scholars who had no time for people who dealt with computers. So I told him it was because I was intrigued by [Henry Thoreau](#)’s attitude toward time and eternity and wanted to ascertain when and where and how he had created this attitude. Did Thoreau create this attitude out of whole cloth, or was he receiving inspiration from some source that has been neglected in current historical and cultural accounts of the period? What was the context

4. Musarion-Ausgabe edition, Volume XIX, 330; THE WILL TO POWER, 617.



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in which such an attitude as his had originated? Was this something he learned from his experience of dealing with the loss of his brother John? Etc. Richardson had a ready answer, typical of him: “He got it from Emerson. It’s all in Emerson’s essay ‘History.’” Well, Richardson had offered advice to me before, and it had always proven to be a waste of my time to check out the leads he had supplied, but this topic was just too important. Even if Richardson had his head up his ass yet again — he might have his head up his ass in some important way. So I have included, at this point, the various remarks that Emerson made in that essay “History,” that had to do with eternity and with Emerson’s sophomoric [Platonism](#) in regard to “eternity,” so callow and so totally at variance with anything that Thoreau ever said or did. And I think it is indeed significant, that when a researcher says that the topic is Thoreau’s attitude toward time and eternity, this is the sort of thing that would be suggested by an Emerson scholar. There is a curious lack of comprehension, a “flattening” I would want to call it, which occurs when the Emerson scholars confront such a topic, and it would be a mistake for anyone to suppose that I have any grasp of what it is that is going wrong in their minds when they get into such a mode. At any rate, here are the relevant passages from Emerson’s essay “History” that was published on March 20,



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1841.



Page 7: "What is history," said Napoleon, "but a fable agreed upon?" This life of ours is stuck round with Egypt, Greece, Gaul, England, War, Colonization, Church, Court, and Commerce, as with so many flowers and wild ornaments grave and gay. I will not make more account of them. I believe in Eternity. I can find Greece, Asia, Italy, Spain, and the Islands, – the genius and creative principle of each and of all eras in my own mind.

Page 10: Why should we make account of time, or of magnitude, or of figure? The soul knows them not; and genius, obeying its law, knows how to play with them as a young child plays with graybeards and in churches. Genius studies the casual thought, and, far back in the womb of things, sees ... through all the kingdoms of organized life, the eternal unity. Nature is a mutable cloud, which is always and never the same. She casts the same thought into troops of forms, as a poet makes twenty fables with one moral. Through the brutality and toughness of matter, a subtle spirit bends all things to its own will.... In man we still trace the remains or hints of all that we esteem badges of servitude in the lower races....

Page 12: Nature is an endless combination and repetition of a very few laws. She hums the old well-known air through innumerable variations.

Pages 18-19: Our admiration of the antique is not admiration of the old, but of the natural.... [The Greeks] combine the energy of manhood with the engaging unconsciousness of childhood.... A person of childlike genius and inborn energy is still a Greek ... In reading [the Philoctetes] ... I feel time passing away as an ebbing sea. I feel the eternity of man, the identity of his thought.... Then the vaunted distinction between Greek and English, between Classic and Romantic schools, seems superficial and pedantic. When a thought of [Plato](#) becomes a thought to me, when a truth that fired the soul of [Pindar](#) fires mine, time is no more....

1842



March 28. Monday. How often must one feel, as he looks back on his past life, that he has gained a talent but lost a character! My life has got down into my fingers. My inspiration at length is only so much breath as I can breathe.



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Society affects to estimate men by their talents, but really feels and knows them by their characters. What a man does, compared with what he is, is but a small part. To require that our friend possess a certain skill is not to be satisfied till he is something less than our friend.

Friendship should be a great promise, a perennial springtime.

I can conceive how the life of the gods may be dull and tame, if it is not disappointed and insatiate.

One may well feel chagrined when he finds he can do nearly all he can conceive.

Some books ripple on like a stream, and we feel that the author is in the full tide of discourse. [Plato](#) and [Jamblichus](#) and [Pythagoras](#) and [Bacon](#) halt beside them. Long, stringy, slimy thoughts which flow or run together. They read as if written for military men or men of business, there is such a dispatch in them, and a double-quick time, a Saratoga march with beat of drum. But the grave thinkers and philosophers seem not to have got their swaddling-clothes off; they are slower than a Roman army on its march, the rear encampment to-night where the van camped last night. The wise [Jamblichus](#) eddies and gleams like a watery slough.

But the reviewer seizes the pen and shouts, "Forward! Alamo and Fanning!" and after rolls the tide of war. Immediately the author discovers himself launched, and if the slope was easy and the grease good, does not go to the bottom.

They flow as glibly as mill-streams sucking under a race-way. The flow is oftentimes in the poor reader who makes such haste over their pages, as to the traveller the walls and fences seem to travel. But the most rapid trot is no flow after all.

If I cannot chop wood in the yard, can I not chop wood in my journal? Can I not give vent to that appetite so? I wish to relieve myself of superfluous energy. How poor is the life of the best and wisest! The petty side will appear at last. Understand once how the best in society live, — with what routine, with what tedium and insipidity, with what grimness and defiance, with what chuckling over an exaggeration of the sunshine. Altogether, are not the actions of your great man poor, even pitiful and ludicrous?

I am astonished, I must confess, that man looks so respectable in nature, considering the littlenesses Socrates must descend to in the twenty-four hours, that he yet wears a serene countenance and even adorns nature.



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1845



December 18: Thoreau surveyed a woodlot and made a farm plan for the Misses Hosmer.



**The Hosmer Home**

We do not have this survey. All we have is the signed receipt from the Misses Hosmer. View [Henry Thoreau](#)'s personal working drafts of his surveys beginning with his survey of Walden Pond through the ice in 1846, and continuing with the Field Notes book that he began in 1849 when he did a survey for Isaac Watts, courtesy of AT&T and the Concord Free Public Library:

[http://www.concordlibrary.org/collect/Thoreau\\_Surveys/Thoreau\\_Surveys.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/collect/Thoreau_Surveys/Thoreau_Surveys.htm)

(The official copy of this survey of course had become the property of the person or persons who had hired this Concord town surveyor to do their surveying work during the 19th Century. Such materials have yet to be recovered.)

[Waldo Emerson](#) lectured in [Boston](#). This was the 2d lecture of the 7-lecture series "Representative Man": [Plato](#), or the Philosopher.



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

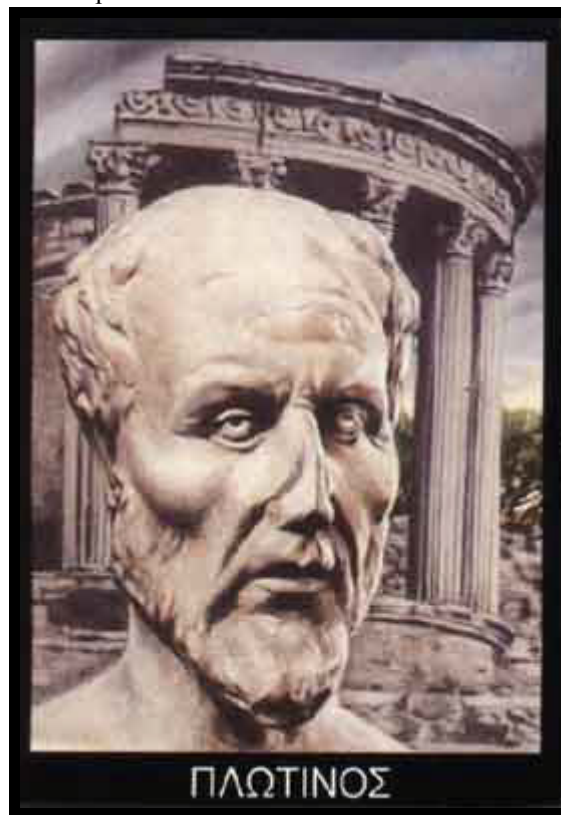
## PLATON OF ATHENS

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December 31, day: [Waldo Emerson](#) began to repeat his current [Boston](#) lecture series, “Representative Man,” at the Concord Lyceum. This was the initial lecture of the 7-lecture series: [Plato](#), or the Philosopher.

1849

Spring: [Waldo Emerson](#) planned a volume titled NATURE, ADDRESSES, AND LECTURES, and planned to replace the epigraph he had used from [Plotinus](#) “Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know” in the original little volume NATURE with one of his own poems based on Neoplatonism, the one ending with the Lamarckian couplet “And, striving to be man, the worm / Mounts through all the spires of form.”



1850

June: [Henry Thoreau](#) would be making journal entries from this point into June 1854 which would represent about  $\frac{2}{3}$ ds of the lecture “Life without Principle,” most of which materials would come to him between January 1851 and August 1852.



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“LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE”: That excitement about Kossuth, consider how characteristic, but superficial, it was! -only another kind of politics or dancing. Men were making speeches to him all over the country, but each expressed only the thought, or the want of thought, of the multitude. No man stood on truth. They were merely banded together, as usual, one leaning on another, and all together on nothing; as the Hindoos made the world rest on an elephant, the elephant on a tortoise, and the tortoise on a serpent, and had nothing to put under the serpent. For all fruit of that stir we have the Kossuth hat.





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“LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE”: The title *wise* is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men? -if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle? Does Wisdom work in a tread-mill? or does she teach how to succeed *by her example*? Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? It is pertinent to ask if Plato got his *living* in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries, - or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men? Did he seem to prevail over some of them merely by indifference, or by assuming grand airs? or find it easier to live, because his aunt remembered him in her will? The ways in which most men get their living, that is, live, are mere make-shifts, and a shirking of the real business of life -chiefly because they do not know, but partly because they do not mean, any better.

PLATO



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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### PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1851

October: Publication of a *ms* that had been entitled “The Whale,” as MOBY-DICK; OR, THE WHALE, dedicated to [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#). In 1833, Dr. James Cowles Prichard had pioneered “the term monomania, meaning madness affecting one train of thought ... adopted in late times instead of melancholia.”



Melville’s father-in-law, Chief Justice [Lemuel Shaw](#), had utilized this concept in a legal opinion in 1844, and Melville had deployed it in 1849 in MARDI AND A VOYAGE THITHER, and here he deployed it as the defining characteristic of the psychology of the maimed Captain Ahab. This book was considered, however, by [Herman Melville](#)’s boss at the Literary World, Evert Augustus Duyckinck, to be immoral.<sup>5</sup> Immoral it may not be —



but is it accurate? It states that the skeleton of Bentham hangs for candelabra in the library of one of his executors, and although it is true that Bentham had suggested that the bodies of the dead be used as remembrances of them, and invented the term “auto-icon” for such use, and had suggested that the dead person’s face might be preserved with copal varnish, it is also the case that his own face looked so gruesome

5. One wonders whether Bronson Alcott ever read this MOBY-DICK book. In Chapter 35 we read that you’ll never get rich if you let yourself get taken in tow by a “sunken-eyed young Platonist.” In Chapter 78 we read of a honey-collector in Ohio who leaned into a honey tree, slipped, and was embalmed, and then [Melville](#) hits us with this punchline: “How many, think ye, have likewise fallen into [Plato](#)’s honey head, and sweetly perished there?”



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after death and autopsy that the embalming surgeon preserved the body merely by placing a waxen image on top of his dressed-up skull.



His body bones are not within the dummy underneath that authentic wax-encrusted skull in the closet at Cambridge, but this Melvillian disposition of Bentham's body bones is something of which I have not elsewhere seen confirmation:

But it may be fancied, that from the naked skeleton of the stranded whale, accurate hints may be derived touching his true form. Not at all. For it is one of the more curious things about this Leviathan, that his skeleton gives very little idea of his general shape. Though [Jeremy Bentham](#)'s skeleton, which hangs for candelabra in the library of one of his executors, correctly conveys the idea of a burly-browed utilitarian old gentleman, with all Jeremy's other leading personal characteristics; yet nothing of this kind could be inferred from any Leviathan's articulated bones. In fact, as the great Hunter says, the mere skeleton of the whale bears the same relation to the fully invested and padded animal as the insect does to the chrysalis

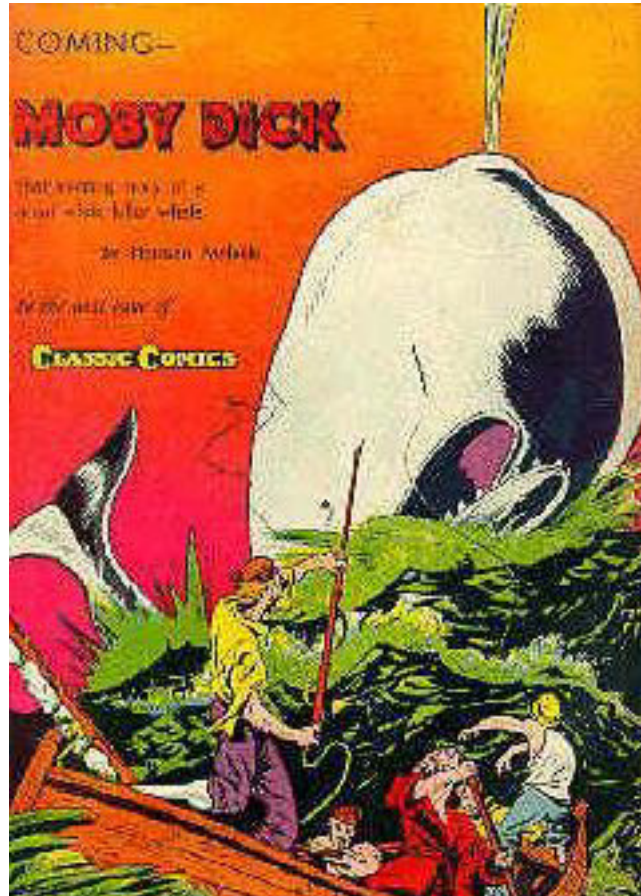
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that so roundly envelopes it.



There was a speed and pulling contest between various designs of locomotives on the Western Railroad between Wilmington MA and Lowell MA. William Mason, a textile manufacturer of Taunton MA, witnessed this contest and determined to enter the business of manufacturing locomotives. Perhaps some of Mr. Mason's locomotives would assist some Americans in obtaining the comparative freedom of Canada, Americans such as this Henry Williams who was fleeing his father and owner, locomotives such as this one pulling the SPM train north out of Concord, upon which our Henry had positioned this fleeing Henry.

[UNDERGROUND RAILROAD](#)



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1852

July: [Waldo Emerson](#) to his journal:

*Henry T. rightly said, the other evening, talking of lightning-rods, that the only rod of safety was in the vertebrae of his own spine.*

Also:

*What Aeschylus will translate our heaventempting politics into a warning ode, strophe & antistrophe? A slave, son of a member of Congress, flees from the plantation-whip to Boston, is snatched by the marshal, is rescued by the citizens; an excited population; a strong chain is stretched around the Court House. Webster telegraphs from Washington urgent orders to prosecute rigorously. Whig orators & interests intervene. Whig wisdom of waiting to be last devoured. Slave is caught, tried, marched at midnight under guard of marshals & pike & sword-bearing police to Long Wharf & embarked for Baltimore. "Thank-God-Choate" thanks God five times in one speech; Boston thanks God. Presidential Election comes on. Webster triumphant, Boston sends a thousand rich men to Baltimore: Convention meets: Webster cannot get one vote, from Baltimore to the Gulf – not one. The competitor is chosen. The Washington wine sour, dinners disturbed. The mob at Washington turns out, at night, to exult in Scott's election. Goes to Webster's house & raises an outcry for Webster to come out & address them. He resists; the mob is violent – will not be refused. He is obliged to come in his night-shirt, & speak from his window to the riff-raff of Washington in honor of the election of Scott. Pleasant conversation of the Boston delegation on their return home! The cars unusually swift.*





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Also:

*A man avails much to us, like a point of departure to the seaman, or his stake & stones to the surveyor. I am my own man more than most men, yet the loss of a few persons would be most impoverishing – a few persons, who give flesh to what were, else, mere thoughts, and which, now, I am not at liberty to slight, or, in any manner, treat as fictions. It were too much to say that the Platonic world I might have learned to treat as cloud-land, had I not known Alcott, who is a native of that country, yet I will say that he makes it as solid as Massachusetts to me. And Thoreau gives me in flesh & blood & pertinacious Saxon belief, my own ethics. He is far more real, & daily practically obeying them, than I; and fortifies my memory at all times with an affirmative experience which refuses to be set aside.*

PLATO

Also:

*I live a good while & acquire as much skill in literature as an old carpenter does in wood. It occurs, then, what pity, that now, when you know something, have at least learned so much good omission, your organs should fail you; your eyes, health, fire & zeal of work, should decay daily. Then I remember that it is the mind of the world which is the good carpenter, the good scholar, sailor, or blacksmith, thousand-handed, versatile, all-applicable.... In you, this rich soul has peeped, despite your horny muddy eyes, at books & poetry. Well, it took you up, & showed you something to the purpose; that there was something there. Look, look, old mole! there, straight up before you, is the magnificent Sun. If only for the instant, you see it. Well, in this way it educates the youth of the Universe; in this way, warms, suns, refines every particle; then it drops the little channel or canal, through which the Life rolled beatific –like a fossil to the ground– thus touched & educated by a moment of sunshine, to be the fairer material for future channels & canals, through which the old Glory shall dart again, in new directions, until the Universe shall have been shot through & through, **tilled** with light.*



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Also:

*Lovejoy the preacher came to Concord, & hoped Henry T. would go to hear him. "I have got a sermon on purpose for him." – "No," the aunts said, "we are afraid not." Then he wished to be introduced to him at the house. So he was confronted. Then he put his hand behind Henry, tapping his back, & said, "Here's the chap who camped in the woods." Henry looked round, & said, "And here's the chap who camps in a pulpit." Lovejoy looked disconcerted, & said no more.*





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1858

November 29: After visiting the “Hill,” [Henry Thoreau](#) went with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to one of [Bronson Alcott](#)’s “Conversations,” held at the Emerson home. The topic of this particular conversation was “Private Life.” Also attending were Henry James, Sr., [Ellery Channing](#), Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#) and Miss [Mary Moody Emerson](#), the Pratts (John Bridge Pratt, his sister Caroline Pratt, and their mother?), Miss Ripley, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Albert Stacy, and Samuel Gray Ward. After a number of confrontations and verbal



exchanges one-to-one, the Concord people finally ganged up on James. The *coup de grace* was administered as a monologue by Miss [Mary](#), and is unrecorded except for her peroration “Let me confront the monster.” James made a record that “The old lady had the flavour to me of primitive woods wherein the wolf howls, and the owl has never been dislodged; and I enjoyed the novelty of her apparition in these days too much to mind the scratches I got in making her better acquaintance.” Indeed. However unrecorded in detail, we know the monologue was effective, for [Bronson](#), who earlier that evening had been reduced to silence by Henry James, Sr.’s gibes, recorded in his journal that her “gifts of speech and mode of handling poor James, win the admiration of the party and the thanks of everyone present.”

Here is biographer Phyllis Cole’s account of the Alcott reading in the Emerson parlor, with the famous encounter between Henry James, Sr. and Mary Moody Emerson. Note that she considers Bronson Alcott and Miss Mary Moody Emerson as “two [Platonists](#)”:



Only the immediacy of conversation now brought out Mary’s fullest verbal power. Bronson Alcott, who had won enough of Mary’s confidence to attract her to his public conversations, offered dinner and an afternoon’s talk in early September. She appeared witty and incisive, regaling the company with stories about Waldo’s childhood and forbears. The two Platonists finally



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pursued their common ground as well: Alcott declared her "metaphysical in her tendencies and a match for any theologian," favoring Dr. Price and his school.

Their reconciliation came just in time for Mary to make her justly famous last stand in Concord a defense of Bronson Alcott. Waldo was out of town lecturing the evening of Alcott's conversation on "Private Life" in the Emersons' parlor; but those present, in addition to Mary, included Henry Thoreau and his sister Sophia, Ellery Channing, Franklin Sanborn, Lidian Emerson, Mary Brooks and her son George, Sarah Ripley's daughter Elizabeth, "others of our townfolk," and from out of town Sam Ward and Henry James Sr. Alcott's list of guests amounts to a group photograph of a Concord cultural event, rather easily blending genders and generations, writers and their neighbors. But Sanborn's report of the evening brings the photograph to life. James did not understand Alcottian conversation and took charge, so that neither Alcott nor Thoreau could "check the flow of the semi-Hibernian rhetoric." Even worse, James's point was to exonerate criminals from their crimes and charge society instead. Such moral relativism appealed to no Concordian. But Mary, amidst the men's consternation, grappled with the enemy directly. When James "spoke repeatedly and scornfully of the Moral Law," she burst forth to the whole group.

Rising from her chair at the west side of the room, and turning her oddly-garnished head toward the south side, where the offender smilingly sat, she clasped her little wrinkled hands and raised them toward the black band over her left temple (a habit she had when deeply moved), and began her answer to these doctrines of Satan, as she thought them. She expressed her amazement that any man should denounce the Moral Law, – the only tie of society, except religion, to which, she saw, the speaker made no claim. She referred him to the Bible and to Dr. Adam Clark (one of her great authorities from childhood) and she denounced him personally in the most racy terms. She did not cross the room and shake him, as some author, not an eye-witness, has fancied, – but she retained her position, sat down quietly when she had finished, and was complemented by the smiling James, who then perhaps for the first time had felt the force of her untaught rhetoric.

Sanborn's account of Mary's gestures and style of speech is unparalleled among all her chroniclers, but he did not fully grasp the issues at stake in this encounter. Mistaken in the name of Mary's philosopher (it was Dr. **Samuel** Clarke), he knew even less about the eighteenth-century school to which Clarke, along with Price, belonged. In fact, moral law was the center of the Enlightenment ethics, allowing for an affirmation at once of the mind's intuition and of God's universal truths. The "fitness" between these two realities had been the formative discovery of Mary's youth and the basis of her first argument



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with Alcott in 1834. Now it was her bond to the Transcendentalists, despite their replacement of Clarke with Kant: Waldo had written in 1841 that he and Mary could meet across generations "where truly we are one in our perception of one Law in our adoration of the Moral Sentiment." All of the inhabitants and visitors at the Emerson house except James wanted to affirm the individual's intuition of moral right as one with a "higher law."

Sanborn seriously underestimated Mary as well in calling the speech a piece of "untaught rhetoric," as though it were the natural effusion of her soul rather than the result of long and difficult self-education. James himself was guilty of much greater condescension in his description of Mary several years later. He had not really been upset at "that confabulation at Mr Emerson's," James recalled, when "'shamefully treated' by the old Lady from Maine." "The old lady had the flavour to me of primitive woods wherein the wolf howls, and the owl has never been dislodged; and I enjoyed the novelty of her apparition in those days too much to mind the few scratches I got in making her better acquaintance." Leaving Clarke and the issues of universal ethics wholly behind, he jovially dismissed his critic by lowering her to a backwoods animality beneath mental life.

In truth her response to James was a triumphant ending to Mary's years of intellectual exchange in Concord, at once a recollection of her reading as a young woman at the Manse and a major defense of her vexatious allies the Transcendentalists. Alcott recorded that she won "the admiration of the party and thanks of everyone present." Then, after a Thanksgiving including all the Emersons and Ripleys, she was gone, finally assenting to Hannah Parsons's request that she come live in Williamsburg. Lidian and Ellen put in several hours packing her worldly goods and papers at the Brown house (she had either gotten them from Maine or collected more); Waldo accompanied her by train through Hartford, where they stayed in a hotel that was an "old lady's paradise"; William and his wife welcomed her for dinner at their Manhattan townhouse on December 15. At the age of eighty-four, Mary became a New Yorker.



November 29: P.M.—To Hill.

About three inches of snow fell last evening, and a few cows on the hillside have wandered about in vain to come at the grass. They have at length found that place high on the south side where the snow is thinnest.

How bright and light the day now! Methinks it is as good as half an hour added to the day. White houses no longer stand out and stare in the landscape. The pine woods snowed up look more like the bare oak woods with their gray boughs. The river meadows show now far off a dull straw-color or pale brown amid the general white, where the coarse sedge rises above the snow; and distant oak woods are now more distinctly reddish. It is a clear and pleasant winter day. The snow has taken all the November out of the sky. Now blue shadows, green rivers,—both which I see,—and still winter life.

I see partridge and mice tracks and fox tracks, and crows sit silent on a bare oak-top. I see a living shrike caught to-day in the barn of the Middlesex House.





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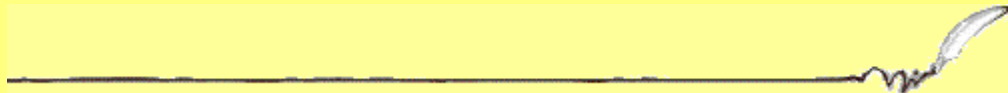
### PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1859

Fall: It was perhaps during this fall season that, as [Waldo Emerson](#) mused in his journal about a discussion with Mrs. Anna Barker Ward (the banker's wife who had gone from Quakerism to Unitarianism to Catholicism) and about a remark [Henry Thoreau](#) has made about the education of the young in regard to the eloquence of John Brown, he began to think of the imminence of an unjust death for Brown and this thought of Brown's truthfulness, combined with this thought of Thoreau's advice, began to lead Emerson's mind toward the wisdom of "drop[ping] the load of Memory & of Futurity, Memory & Care, & let[ting] the moment suffice us." Frightened by this devouring thought, Emerson's pen immediately secreted a blot of [Platonism](#), and in the midst of an obscuring cloud his mind made its usual escape. When his mind re-emerges from its cloud, Thoreau is absent and Emerson is with his maidservant.<sup>6</sup>

*Anna Ward was at a loss in talking with me, because I had no church whose weakness she could show up, in return for my charges upon hers [Roman Catholic??]. I said to her, Do you not see that though I have no eloquence & no flow of thought, yet that I do not stoop to accept any thing less than truth? that I sit here contented with my poverty, mendicity [sic], & deaf & dumb estate, from year to year, from youth to age, rather than adorn myself with any red rag of false church or false association? My low & lonely sitting here by the wayside, is my homage to truth, which I see is sufficient without me; which is honored by my abstaining, not by superserviceableness. I see how grand & selfsufficing it is; how it burns up, & will none of your shiftty patchwork of additions & ingenuities.*

*Brown shows us, said H.D.T., another school to send our boys to – that the best lesson of oratory is to speak the truth. A lesson rarely learned – To stand by the truth. We stand by our party, our trade, our reputation, our talent, but these each lead away from the truth. That is so volatile & vital, evanescent instantly from all but dedication to it. And yet inspiration is that, to be so quick as truth; to drop the load of Memory & of Futurity, Memory & Care, & let the moment suffice us: then one discovers that the first thought is related to all thought & carries power & fate in its womb. Mattie Griffith says, if Brown is hung, the gallows will be sacred as the cross.*



6. This Mattie Griffith of whom [Waldo Emerson](#) wrote was the daughter of a Southern slavemaster who had in 1856 authored a novel which had posed falsely as an authentic slave narrative, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A FEMALE SLAVE.

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**1862**

Professor James Dwight Dana of Yale College, in offering his MANUAL OF GEOLOGY in this year, felt obliged to denigrate the new theory of descent with modification — despite the fact that he had not as yet perused the copy of THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES with which he had been presented by his friend [Charles Darwin](#).



He explained privately that he had not had time to consider his correspondent's various arguments about evolution because "my head has all it can now do in my college duties," a remark which of course amounted to a jibe at the fact that Darwin was merely an independent scholar, rather than an accredited and accomplished academician such as himself. Darwin would respond by personal letter, that he wished his friend had read his book because he might thereby "have been here or there staggered."

### ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

Despite being a careful scientist, this American thinker had such an investment in the Providence of Deity, such a conceptual lock based on his understanding of the white man's place and role in God's Creation, that he would not until the mid-1870s be forced to succumb to the evidences of Darwinian evolution. To put the matter plainly, Yale Professor Dana had, like his fellow the benighted Harvard Professor [Louis Agassiz](#), been a committed Platonist, and a Providentialist, as well as a racist self-privileger — and this [Platonism](#), this Providentialism, and this racist self-privileging were dying a painfully hard and slow death:

Dana viewed the entire geological history of the earth and life as one long, coherent, and heroic story with a moral — a tale of inexorable progress, expressed in both physical and biological history, and leading, inevitably and purposefully, to God's final goal of a species imbued with sufficient consciousness to glorify His name and works.

### EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS



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“LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE”: “The title **wise** is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better to live than other men? —if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle? Does wisdom work in a tread-mill? or does she teach how to succeed **by her example**? Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? It is pertinent to ask if Plato got his **living** in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries, — or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men?”

1876

November: Styling himself “once a pure Transcendentalist,” Octavius Brooks Frothingham offered a treatise on [TRANSCENDENTALISM](#) IN NEW ENGLAND within the pages of which various historical persons stood as tropes more or less in the same manner in which, in *Æsop’s* animal fables, various species stand as tropes (in this treatise, gratefully, [Henry Thoreau](#) figured merely as a contributor to [The Dial](#), else who knows how he might have figured!):

Personage	Trope
W. Emerson	The Seer
B. Alcott	The Mystic
M. Fuller	The Critic
T. Parker	The Preacher
G. Ripley	Man of Letters

Species	Trope
Lion	Courage
Ant	Industry
Grasshopper	Sloth
Fox	Slyness
&c.	&c.

This author’s take on what Transcendentalism had amounted to was that it had been a reinvigoration of the tradition of Cambridge [Platonism](#).

The idea that America had undergone a phenomenon akin to the European Renaissance, a literary renaissance in New England in the first half of the 19th Century, surfaced at this point for the first time. It was hypothesized in an review by the Reverend Samuel Osgood. This category arose in opposition to the valorization of the Transcendentalist writers as a category, and one of the functions of the projected categorization was the devalorization and virtual exclusion from the forming canon of the writings of women such as [Margaret Fuller](#), of persons of color such as Frederick Douglass, and of persons of lower origin such as [Thoreau](#).

Frothingham had the following to offer about [George Bancroft](#):

The Philosophical Miscellanies of Cousin were much noticed by the press, George Bancroft in especial sparing no pains to commend them and the views they presented. The spiritual philosophy had no more fervent or eloquent champion than he. No reader of his “History of the United States,” has forgotten the noble tribute paid to it under the name of Quakerism, or the striking parallel between the two systems represented in the history by John Locke and William Penn, both of whom framed



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constitutions for the new world. For keenness of apprehension and fullness of statement the passages deserve to be quoted here. They occur in the XVI. chapter of the History.

"The elements of humanity are always the same, the inner light dawns upon every nation, and is the same in every age; and the French revolution was a result of the same principles as those of George Fox, gaining dominion over the mind of Europe. They are expressed in the burning and often profound eloquence of Rousseau; they reappear in the masculine philosophy of Kant. The professor of Königsberg, like Fox and Barclay and Penn, derived philosophy from the voice in the soul; like them, he made the oracle within the categorical rule of practical morality, the motive to disinterested virtue; like them, he esteemed the Inner Light, which discerns universal and necessary truths, an element of humanity; and therefore his philosophy claims for humanity the right of ever renewed progress and reform. If the Quakers disguised their doctrine under the form of theology, Kant concealed it for a season under the jargon of a nervous but unusual diction. But Schiller has reproduced the great idea in beautiful verse; Chateaubriand avowed himself its advocate; Coleridge has repeated the doctrine in misty language; it beams through the poetry of Lamartine and Wordsworth; while in the country of beautiful prose, the eloquent Cousin, listening to the same eternal voice which connects humanity with universal reason, has gained a wide fame for the 'divine principle,' and in explaining the harmony between that light and the light of Christianity, has often unconsciously borrowed the language, and employed the arguments of Barclay and Penn."

A few pages he attempts to characterize the essential difference between this Transcendentalism and the philosophy of Locke:

"Locke, like William Penn, was tolerant; both loved freedom, both cherished truth in sincerity. But Locke kindled the torch of liberty at the fires of tradition; Penn at the living light in the soul. Locke sought truth through the senses and the outward world; Penn looked inward to the divine revelations in every mind. Locke compared the soul to a sheet of white paper, just as Hobbes had compared it to a slate on which time and chance might scrawl their experience. To Penn the soul was an organ which of itself instinctively breathes divine harmonies, like those musical instruments which are so curiously and perfectly formed, that when once set in motion, they of themselves give forth all the melodies designed by the artist that made them. To Locke, conscience is nothing else than our own opinion



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of our own actions; to Penn, it is the image of God and his oracle in the soul.... In studying the understanding Locke begins with the sources of knowledge; Penn with an inventory of our intellectual treasures.... The system of Locke lends itself to contending factions of the most opposite interests and purposes; the doctrine of Fox and Penn, being but the common creed of humanity, forbids division and insures the highest moral unity. To Locke, happiness is pleasure, and things are good and evil only in reference to pleasure and pain; and to 'inquire after the highest good is as absurd as to dispute whether the best relish be in apples, plums or nuts.' Penn esteemed happiness to lie in the subjection of the baser instincts to the instinct of Deity in the breast; good and evil to be eternally and always as unlike as truth and falsehood; and the inquiry after the highest good to involve the purpose of existence. Locke says plainly that, but for rewards and punishments beyond the grave, 'it is certainly right to eat and drink, and enjoy what we delight in.' Penn, like Plato and Fenelon, maintained the doctrine so terrible to despots, that God is to be loved for His own sake, and virtue to be practised for its intrinsic loveliness. Locke derives the idea of infinity from the senses, describes it as purely negative, and attributes it to nothing but space, duration and number; Penn derived the idea from the soul, and ascribed it to truth and virtue and God. Locke declares immortality a matter with which reason has nothing to do; and that revealed truth must be sustained by outward signs and visible acts of power; Penn saw truth by its own light and summoned the soul to bear witness to its own glory."

The justice of the comparison, in the first part of the above extract, of Quakerism with Transcendentalism, may be disputed. Some may be of opinion that inasmuch as Quakerism traces the source of the Inner Light to the supernatural illumination of the Holy Spirit, while Transcendentalism regards it as a natural endowment of the human mind, the two are fundamentally opposed while superficially in agreement. However this may be, the practical issues of the two coincide, and the truth of the contrast presented between the philosophies, designated by the name of Locke on the one side, and of Penn on the other, will not be disputed. Mr. Bancroft's statement, though dazzling, is exact. It was made in 1837. The third edition from which the above citation was made, was published in 1838, the year of Mr. Emerson's address to the Divinity students at Cambridge.

Octavius Brooks Frothingham. TRANSCENDENTALISM IN NEW ENGLAND. NY:





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Putnam's:

[A]s high priests of the Genteel Tradition, the scholars who gave shape to Transcendentalism as an academic field were products of values and assumptions akin to those against which Transcendentalism reacted in the first place, however much these values may have assumed an aspect derived from Transcendentalism to preserve them in a new age. As a result, generations of scholars have both scorned and domesticated Transcendentalist writing, turning it to their own purposes. Transcendentalism has been not so much a subject of study as a placeholder for the ideologies and professional motives of its commentators. In effect, the criticism of Transcendentalism, and of American literature, has been entrusted to the Unitarians. The result is as predictable as if the history of the American Indians had been written exclusively by the cowboys, as until recently, it had.... The first major landmark of Transcendentalist criticism is O.B. Frothingham's *TRANSCENDENTALISM IN NEW ENGLAND*. Frothingham has a privileged place in the discourse about Transcendentalism. The son of N.L. Frothingham, whose prominence as a minister to Boston's First Church put him at the center of Unitarian society, Frothingham knew the religious and social controversies of the 1840s firsthand. So, in addition to being the first "scholarly" study, *TRANSCENDENTALISM IN NEW ENGLAND* might also be described as the last account by a "contemporary." [...It] allows modern scholars to claim a direct connection through Frothingham with their subject, much as Christ's elevation of Peter allows the church to claim a direct historical connection with God.

—Carafiol, Peter C. *THE AMERICAN IDEAL: LITERARY HISTORY AS A WORLDLY ACTIVITY*. NY: Oxford UP, 1991, pages 43-44, 46-47.



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1981

In regard to epistemology at least, Claude Gayet insists on page 15 of his Uppsala doctoral dissertation THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU, “Thoreau came to bear much the same relation to Emerson as Aristotle bore to Plato.”<sup>7</sup>



Emerson Thoreau

ARISTOTLE	HENRY THOREAU
PLATO	WALDO EMERSON

### Plato : Aristotle :: Emerson : Thoreau

The Thoreauvian concept of “wildness” causes me to flash back to my grad-student days at Harvard. In Professor Rogers Albritton’s class on Aristotle in 1861, my term paper was on the term ousia as deployed by Plato versus that same term as deployed by Aristotle. The classic Greek concept “ousia” normally gets translated as “substance” both in English versions of Plato’s dialogues and in English versions of Aristotle’s treatments, such as the “Metaphysics.” However, Aristokles of Athens and Aristoteles of Stageira used the term “ousia” in such different ways, I proposed to Professor Albritton, that it should be being transliterated into English differently in the case of Aristotle.

For Platon, substance was this-worldly and utterly inert, whereas energy and perfection are higher, indeed other-worldly. However, somehow it was filled with an urge, an “urgos,” that was separate from its lumpish inertness, and this urge caused it to attempt to mold itself into the Forms of the Ideal. Thus a lump of rock becomes, over the ages, a perfectly shaped seashell but made out of rock rather than of calcium, because the form of the seashell has attracted the urgors buried inside the inert substance, and has caused it to aspire to achieve an instance of the Ideal Form of seashell. Which is to say, fossils were never alive, but everything aspires to the forms of life.

For Aristotle, however, the urge that drove the universe, and the forms into which the universe flowed, were all here already here below, all this-worldly. Nothing was ever inert, nothing was ever merely acted upon. For Aristotle, there was no inert ousia of the Platonic variety. The ousia of Aristotle was driven, from within, to achieve forms which, also, were specified from within.

Thus I proposed that the ousia of Platon should remain translated as “sub-stance” or “sub-strate,” but that the ousia of Aristoteles should be translated instead as “active agency.”

I would now like to add to these 1961 thoughts with some later thoughts about Thoreau. we notice that Claude

7. Claude Gayet. THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU. Doctoral Dissertation, Uppsala, Sweden: Textgruppen i Uppsala AB, 1981



## THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

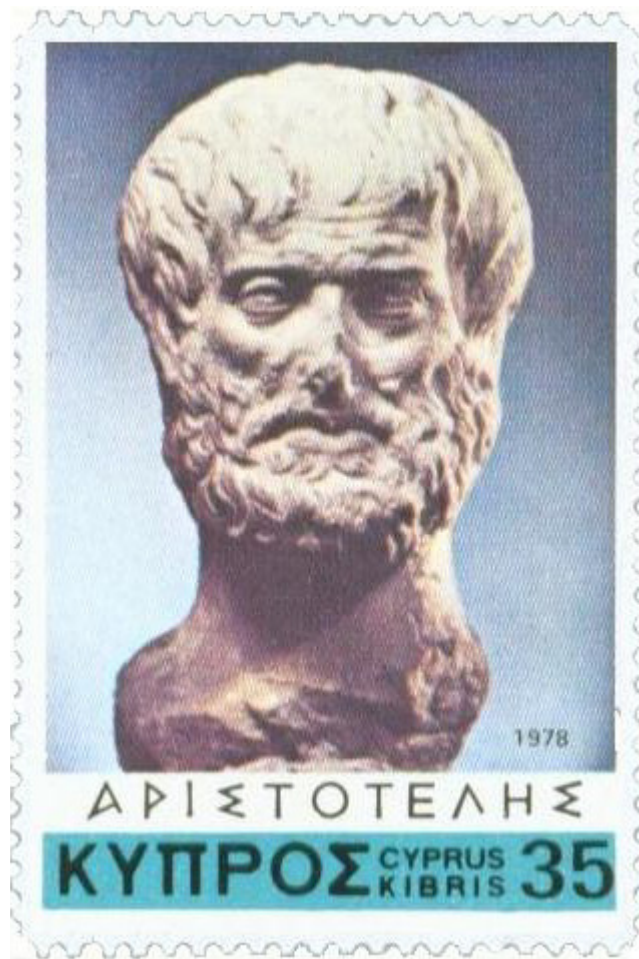
## PLATON OF ATHENS

### PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

Gayet has here commented that the pairing “Plato/Aristotle” has been matched in “Emerson/Thoreau,” with Emerson being the idealist like Plato and Thoreau being the biologist like Aristotle. That’s simplistic, of course, but there is a kernel of important truth in it. Thoreau really did progress from being a Platonist to being an Aristotelian, and the mark of this progress came with his use of his term “wildness.”

Thoreau came to recognize that what caused us to excel was not something different from what it was that caused us merely to exist. The urges that caused us to behave, it was commonly presumed, if present in excess, would cause us to misbehave. Not so, Thoreau learned. It is possessing in excess the urges that cause us to behave at all, that causes us to behave extraordinarily well. Thoreau was not namby-pamby: the person who has more life has more virtue.

Thoreau came to be a believer in Aristotle’s version of ousia, “active agency.”





THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

PLATON OF ATHENS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

2012

Rick Anthony Furtak, Jonathan Ellsworth, and James D. Reid's THOREAU'S IMPORTANCE FOR PHILOSOPHY (Fordham UP). What follows is Jonathan Ellsworth's essay in this volume, "How Walden Works" — in which he discovers that [Socrates](#) is peeking out from behind a shrub in Walden Woods and winking at us.

[text to be added]



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

– Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: May 18, 2013



THE PEOPLE OF WALDEN:

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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a





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button.

Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.  
Arrgh.