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The positive reception of *Walden* in Germany has remained constant throughout the years because of Thoreau's truthfulness in depicting his life and American society. *Walden* was first published in Germany in 1897 by the Johann Palm publishing house in Munich and translated into German by Emma Emmerich who also provided the 18-page introduction. In her portrayal of Thoreau's life, Emmerich applauds the American author's moral principles, his loyalty to friends, his responsibility to his family, and his courage in encountering death. Emmerich's description of Thoreau's life reflects ideals that were essential to German society at the end of the 19th century. In 1905 Wilhelm Nobbe provided the second translation of *Walden* into German which was printed by the Eugen Diederichs publishing house in Jena and Leipzig. In his 23-page introduction, the translator praises Thoreau for his courage in criticizing American materialism and in pursuing his own vision of the world. In 1949 Anneliese Dangel provided a further translation of *Walden* into German for the Dieterich'sche publishing house. The twelve-page introduction accompanying the translation was written by Walther Fischer and outlines the history of New England Transcendentalism. Fischer stresses Thoreau's international importance by claiming that the American author provided the world with moral cosmopolitanism and that the topic of *Walden* is living one's life. Fischer's introduction is significant because it shows the need to find moral leadership in the aftermath of World War II.

***Walden*, German introduction by Emma Emmerich, 1897:**

He was not a misanthrope, although he avoided society. The manners and conversations of so-called educated people made no impression on him. He was the personified reaction to the semi-educated and over-educated upper classes. His company was limited to a few selected friends such as Alcott, Emerson, and Channing. His disinclination to associate with society was due in part to his desire to follow his inner life and to avoid everything that was frivolous. "Emerson said that his life was often so useless and shallow," Thoreau wrote in 1854, "that he had to find refuge in everything possible including people. I told him that we differ from one another only in our choice of methods; mine involves getting away from people. They interest me little as being tall or beautiful; but I know that every day there is a sunrise and a sunset. Recently I came together with more people than usual. I met one person, but I was again surprised to see what kind of mean companions they make."

"The high moral impulse that was lit during his childhood" Channing said, "burned bright and never deserted him throughout his life. As a young man he resolved not to read any book, to carry out any action, nor to do anything for which he himself could not assume responsibility." Truth was of the utmost importance for him. With each thought, with each breath, he strived for the noblest purity, the strictest fulfillment of his inner laws. He remained loyal to his friends just as he trusted them and steadfastly followed the path which he believed to be correct with an iron will.

Thoreau's relationship with his family was the most wonderful thing imaginable. He always extended the most attentive chivalrous politeness and the sincerest affection to all his family members, who in turn shrouded him in love and care. At home he was what one would call a genuine treasure because he was always there with a trained eye and a skilled hand ready to help out as a handyman. He provided his sister with flowers, picked the most wonderful melons and the finest fruit for her, and when he built a new house for his father, Thoreau took on most of the work and completed his task with calm patient diligence and outstanding skill as a craftsman.

Even during his last severe illness which confined him to his home for nearly two years, he never ceased to be the homespun philosopher that he had always been. "I am now happier than ever about my life" he wrote to Sanborn at that time, and after his death his sister told Sanborn: "It was impossible to be sad in his company. No dark cloud obscured any memory of my dear brother. Henry's entire life speaks out to my soul like a miracle."

He confronted his approaching death calmly and collectedly. He responded to an acquaintance who believed to have to comfort him: "When I was a small child someone told me that I had to die. I remembered this so now I am not disappointed." Concerning the question of whether he made his peace with God, he replied that he had never quarreled with him. And any attempt to call his attention to an afterworld, he dismissed with the words: "Oh, one world at a time!"

“The hermit of Walden Pond,” said Ende, “had one mission on Earth and he fulfilled it. No American author has ever lashed out more severely at the utterly senseless chase of the almighty dollar than he did in *Walden*. No one has depicted nature in a warmer and livelier manner than he has. No one has ever preached a nobler or wiser vision of the world. The pages of his book carry the scent of prairie grass when the spring wind gently blows over them. His work contains oxygen for the soul. It was not necessarily the French nor the Norman blood that brought his ancestors from Jersey because there was always something of a Nordic hero in this Yankee. The noblest and most powerful individuality that the American literary world has ever brought forth died along with Thoreau.”

He is now buried in the small village cemetery of Concord surrounded by his family and friends. On the spot where his hut once stood at Walden Pond there is now a simple monument, plain and natural, like the man whom it honored. There is a pile of white pebble stones carried together by his friends which is growing year by year since each friend of his writings, who makes a pilgrimage to the site, adds a stone from the clear water which he so much loved.

***Walden*, German introduction by Wilhelm Nobbe, 1905:**

The pyramids of stones which mark the spot where Henry Thoreau’s hut once stood on Walden Pond are growing from year to year. They are a symbol not only of the increasing recognition that his countrymen and grateful people from all over the world pay to him, but they are also a symbol of the progress that ideal goods are making in materialist America. Whoever knows the sensitivity that Americans show towards any criticism of their country and “culture,” and, on the other hand, whoever reads how courageously and directly, how clearly and accurately Thoreau – inspired by the warm love of his homeland – tells his fellow countrymen the truth, and reveals to them their mistakes and weaknesses, and their vices and follies, this person will enjoy this poet and thinker with twice the amount of appreciation. Thoreau in his time was considered by some to be foolish and idle, and by most to be strange. For only a few—and these in fact included the best of his age: Emerson, Alcott and Channing –he was a prodigy, a poet, and a visionary. His life did not seem misspent to them because it was passed in solitude and did not strive for money. They realized that he could read from the sacred book of nature like no other and that he created a temple from his body for his pure soul. They knew or felt that an exceptional person, a special being, walked among them incomparable to any other in the world. According to them, he did not hate people, but rather brought them joy; he did not flee from the world, but rather explored it; and he was not a confused dreamer, but rather a philosopher who lived his own philosophy.

***Walden*, German introduction by Walther Fischer, 1949:**

It is justifiable to ask what this reclusive person from a remote corner of New England has to say to contemporary Europeans with his travel descriptions and nature observations. Emerson spoke highly of Thoreau’s patriotism which occasionally grew into a paradoxical local patriotism for the small village of Concord and he boasted that “New England did not build its houses on the ashes of earlier civilizations – like old England.” But for us the other side of Thoreau which makes up his innermost and truest being is more important, and it is not called nationalism, but rather moral cosmopolitanism. It is not by chance that *Walden*, the American classic, was recommended reading for the young British Labor Party because “living one’s life” is the actual topic of this culturally critical work. But its author does not condemn us to a solemn sermon—Thoreau never cared for verbose “reformers”—but it is rather the multifaceted depiction of a personal experiment. It is carried out by the cleverness of a man who knows how to combine his own intellectual experience with the worldly wisdom of earlier thinkers; it does not lack internal suspense, and the relationship between personal intellectual growth and moral development is one of its major topics. “How can we expect a harvest of thought if we have not had a seed time of character?” he wrote in his journal.

Thoreau’s seed time was his stay at Walden Pond which he presents to us here in reflections and a loosely constructed narration. Like Montaigne, he also dares “to speak only of himself”; like the French author, he is also “filled up with himself and satiated.”

But not in the sense that he is writing a strictly self-centered book, but rather his experience is an example for all people to take part in. Since there is nothing unhealthy about him—his Yankee intelligence

also shines through brightly here—he usually does not get carried away and avoids extremes. Occasionally his paradoxical thinking seems contradictory to us, such as his exaggerated contempt for the postal service and the press or his daring claim that youth cannot learn anything at all from old age. He also did not mention in detail that his experiment, as he carried it out, was in fact only possible because of the civilization around him and for someone connected to society. How else would the breadwinner of a family be able to solve the practical side of these problems! But for Thoreau only the fundamentals were important, the general direction of his ideas, and he tried to make this plausible to his indolent fellow citizens by poking fun at them through paradoxes. This is why his manner of speech had to be so “extravagant,” so excessive, in order to transcend the limitations of daily life.

Thoreau’s *Walden* continues to be regarded with high esteem in Germany since it courageously shows how to live one’s life deliberately and consciously in the modern world. The American author provides his readers with moral guidance in an age of technological advancement and economic growth. In a time of diminishing personal values, *Walden* serves as a modern-day manifesto and offers wisdom not only to Americans in their daily lives, but to the entire world as well.

Works Cited

- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Trans. Emma Emmerich. Munich: Johann Palm's Verlag, 1897.
Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Trans. Wilhelm Nobbe. Jena and Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1905.
Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Trans. Anneliese Dangel. Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1949.

Emmerich and Nobbe also wrote the introductions to their respective works. Walther Fischer wrote the introduction to Dangel's translation.