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Sensory and Intellectual Pleasure-Seeking in H. D. Thoreau's *Walden*

A Phylogenetic and Ontogenetic Developmental Paradigm

Master's Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Nautinnonhaun tärkeä rooli ihmisen käyttäytymisessä on tiedostettu antiikin filosofiasta lähtien, ja 1900-luvun jälkipuoliskolla sille on annettu tieteellinen pohja neurofysiologisten tutkimusten kautta. Tämän tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu neurofysiologiseen käyttäytymisteoriaan, jonka pohjalta ihmisen nautinnonhakumenetelmät on jaettu kahteen yläkategoriaan: aistinautintoihin ja älyllisiin nautintoihin. Tämän kahtiajaon pohjalta on tunnistettu fylogeneettinen ja ontogeneettinen ihmisen kehitysmalli, jonka mukaan ihmisen kehityshistoriassa aistinautinnot edeltävät älyllisiä nautintoja sekä laji- että yksilötasolla.

Tätä teoreettista viitekehystä käyttäen analysoidaan Henry David Thoreau'n klassikkokirjan henkilöhaahmojen edistystä kehitysmallin puitteissa. Alek Therienin käyttäytyminen esitetään kirjassa lapsenomaisena ja hänen nautinnonhakunsa pääosin aistien kautta tapahtuvana. Thoreau kuvaa hänen älyllistä kehitystään eläimen tasolla olevaksi ja toteaa saman pitävän paikkansa useimpien ihmisten kohdalla. Thoreau tunnistaa itsessään ihmisen kehitysmallin aistinautintojen hakijasta älyllisten nautintojen hakijaksi, ja *Walden* itsessään voidaankin nähdä Thoreau'n pyrkimyksenä edistää tätä kehitystä sekä muissa ihmisissä että hänessä itsessään.

Thoreau kritisoi teoksessaan voimakkaasti materialismia. Osasyyn tähän kritiikkiin on materialististen halujen hidastava vaikutus ihmisen älylliseen kehittymiseen. Älyllisen toiminnan tuloksilla on potentiaalisesti suurempi ja pitkäkestoisempi vaikutus ihmiskunnan kehitykseen, kun taas aistinautinnot nähdään ainoastaan ihmisrotua ylläpitävänä mekanismina ja ohikiitävän nautinnon saavuttamistapana. *Walden* sinänsä on todiste tästä: kirjoittamalla tämän kirjan Thoreau on vaikuttanut miljooniin ihmisiin tavalla, jota pelkkä aistinautintojen haku ei olisi mahdollistanut. Opiskelijan kannalta tässä tutkielmassa esitetyn kehitysmallin tunnistaminen itsessä auttaa määrittämään omia nautinnonhakumenetelmiä, henkilökohtaista kehitystä mallin viitekehyksessä sekä sitä kautta soveltuvuutta opiskelun edellyttämään pitkittettyyn älylliseen toimintaan.

KEYWORDS: pleasure, neurophysiology, human development, Transcendentalism, *Walden*, *philosophia perennis*

Heredity

*“I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon,
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.*

*The years-heired feature that can
In curve and voice and eye
Despise the human span
Of durance – that is I;
The eternal thing in man,
That heeds no call to die.”
—Thomas Hardy*

*“Life is a selection, no more.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

1 INTRODUCTION

“Not long since, a strolling Indian went to sell baskets at the house of a well-known lawyer in my neighborhood. ‘Do you wish to buy any baskets?’ he asked. ‘No, we do not want any,’ was the reply. ‘What!’ exclaimed the Indian as he went out the gate, ‘do you mean to starve us?’ Having seen his industrious white neighbors so well off, — that the lawyer had only to weave arguments, and, by some magic, wealth and standing followed, — he had said to himself: I will go into business; I will weave baskets; it is a thing which I can do. Thinking that when he had made the baskets he would have done his part, and then it would be the white man’s to buy them. He had not discovered that it was necessary for him to make it worth the other’s while to buy them, or at least make him think that it was so, or to make something else which it would be worth his while to buy. I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one’s while to buy them [*sic*]. Yet not the less, in my case, did I think it worth my while to weave them, and instead of studying how to make it worth men’s [*sic*] while to buy my baskets, I studied rather how to avoid the necessity of selling them.” (Thoreau 1957: 12–13.)¹

There is an air of embitterment in Henry David Thoreau’s writing when, in the above anecdote, he implicitly refers to his failure to attract an audience with his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) (“I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one’s while to buy them” [1957: 12]). A part of his experiment by Walden Pond, therefore, was to live as frugally as possible, so as to study how to elude altogether the necessity of “weaving and selling baskets”. In other words, he sought to reduce his wants in order to avoid wasting his time working. The important message of the above anecdote is not only the pronouncement of Thoreau’s wish to refrain from unnecessary labour and thus be able to pursue worthier causes, but also his revelation that if he wishes to succeed as a writer, he has to make it worth the reader’s while to read his work.

¹ Throughout this thesis, the page numbers of *Walden* refer to the 1957 Mifflin edition. For ease of reference for readers using a different edition, the table of contents of the 1957 Mifflin edition is provided as an appendix. More often than not, the corresponding chapter title is mentioned in the thesis when discussing passages of *Walden*, but when that custom is not followed, the chapter may be determined by consulting the appendix. Furthermore, because Thoreau and most other writers cited in this thesis follow the usage of their time in using the word *man* and its derivatives to designate the entire human race, this sexist practice will not be specifically marked from now on.

I, too, have woven a kind of basket in the form of this thesis, sincerely hoping to have made it worth the reader's while to read it. To use H. J. Campbell's (1973) terms, the intention is that the reader will receive *intellectual pleasure* from the ideas presented in this thesis. However, if reading it fails to produce pleasure, the reader will be forced to seek more desirable forms of stimulus elsewhere: "when we find one occupation only faintly amusing, we start upon another. For instance, the people who munch *dragées*² in the theatre munch hardest when the acting is poor" (Aristotle 1955: 298). Certainly, little *sensory pleasure* is to be gained by reading this thesis, so those desiring it ought to turn elsewhere. *Intellectual pleasure*, on the contrary, may be derived liberally by the avid reader.

"Use me", declares Thoreau in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1985: 233), "if by any means ye may find me serviceable." The ambiguous words on the first page of *Walden* are serviceable in this context, which is why they are used by Thoreau's permission: "Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students.³ As for the rest of my readers, they will accept such portions as apply to them" (1957: 1). These words apply not only to *Walden*, but also to this thesis. By this is meant that the present thesis can aid students both in respect to their finances and their academic pursuits, thus counteracting both senses of the word *poor*. Other readers can freely take stock of the argument presented in it, bearing in mind that, although the argumentation may not be relevant *in toto* to themselves, to others it may well be: "I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits" (Thoreau 1957: 1).

Since a relatively unorthodox subject matter has been chosen as the topic of this thesis (using a neurophysiological theoretical framework in literary studies), a brief background explanation might be necessary. When I undertook my studies in philosophy at the University of Vaasa, my father advised me to read Herbert James Campbell's *The Pleasure Areas: A New Theory of Behavior* (1973) before I commenced

² Sugar-coated candies.

³ *Poor* in more than one sense of the word.

any such activity. I was intrigued by the ideas presented in the book, namely the theory that, anthropocentrically viewed, the meaning of life is the activation of the limbic “pleasure areas” in the brain, and that sensory pleasures precede intellectual ones in human development.

It was not until my Master’s thesis seminars began that I seriously thought about utilising the book’s ideas in literary studies; and my thesis plan started taking more shape after I read H. D. Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854). I had heard of this book during my undergraduate years when studying William Butler Yeats’ poetry, and felt it was such a one as I wished to read at some point during my studies: “I planned to live some day in a cottage on a little island called Innisfree”, writes Yeats, and “I thought that having conquered bodily desire and the inclination of my mind towards women and love, I should live, as Thoreau lived, seeking wisdom” (1999: 85). Yeats’ words held a curious fascination for me, and that was perhaps what made me resolve to read *Walden*.⁴

The beginning of the Master’s thesis seminars was the point in which I read it. Surprisingly, many of the phenomena discussed by Campbell (1973) have their equivalent in *Walden*. These include the negative assessment of people at large, the denigration of a life bereft of intellectual pleasure-seeking, and a shared hope of a more sophisticated human race. Gradually, I was convinced that writing a thesis about pleasure-seeking, focusing solely on *Walden* as the research material, was the most apposite course of action. Therefore, via a significant amount of research into both *Walden* and pleasure (including philosophical, psychological and neurophysiological approaches), the thesis took its final shape as an exploration of the developmental paradigm which recognises people initially as sensory pleasure-seekers and, if their full human potential is realised, finally as intellectual ones.

⁴ As Thoreau (1957: 147–148) anticipates in *Walden*: “It [was] a faint intimation, yet so are the first streaks of morning. [...] If one listens to the faintest but constant suggestions of his genius, which are certainly true, he sees not to what extremes, or even insanity, it may lead him; and yet that way, as he grows more resolute and faithful, his road lies.”

The reason for choosing this topic was that the pleasure-seeking theory was perceived to provide a fundamental explanation for human behaviour. Although there exist other theories which similarly seek to explain human behaviour, the pleasure-seeking theory was chosen as the theoretical framework of the thesis partly because its importance has been recognised already by ancient philosophers (such as Aristippus, Aristotle and Epicurus), partly because verification for it has been provided by modern neurophysiological research (e.g. Olds & Milner 1954; Campbell 1973; Cabanac 1992; Phillips 2003; Cabanac & Bonniot-Cabanac 2007; Frijda 2010), and partly because of the suitability of Campbell's (1973) developmental paradigm to elicit a thematic response to *Walden* which would otherwise be difficult to execute. Admittedly, Abraham Maslow's (1943) psychological theory of the hierarchy of human needs could similarly have been used to analyse *Walden*. Due to Thoreau's eccentric personality, however, an analysis along the lines of Maslow's theory would inevitably have turned out somewhat distorted.

Nevertheless, the kind of (anthropocentric) universality provided by the pleasure-seeking theory is compelling, for all phenomena of human behaviour are reducible to it.⁵ According to the saying, "if you give a boy a hammer, the whole world becomes a nail." I have certainly come to realise that all phenomena of human behaviour are nails that can be hammered with the pleasure-seeking theory. And since the developmental paradigm suggested by Campbell (1973) so lucidly manifests itself in *Walden*, the synthetic analysis of them has been both interesting and illuminating.

Moreover, as the gradual shift from sensory pleasure-seeking to intellectual pleasure-seeking is a defining milepost in a student's life, the research undertaken in this thesis constitutes an extremely relevant group of ideas for any ambitious and dedicated student. Being surrounded with university students who are facing the sensory/intellectual dichotomy daily, this has naturally been an extremely fertile ground for conversations on lunch breaks and similar social occasions. Thoreau's (1957: 1–55)

⁵ Cf. Bentham's (2000: 14) similar statement on the next page. However, as Alexandre Dumas *films* points out: "All generalizations are dangerous, even this one" (quoted in Cohen & Cohen 1970: 149).

instructions on economical living will, on their part, be equally thought-provoking – if not directly helpful – to students having to get on with a meagre income, thus making the reading of Thoreau and Campbell doubly justified.

Since pleasure-seeking (and pain-avoidance) is a fundamental driving force of human behaviour, it is not surprising that philosophers down the ages have acknowledged its important role as well. For example, the pursuit of pleasure plays an integral role in Epicurus' (341–271 BC) philosophy. Epicureanism holds that the only good that exists is pleasure and, in order to maximise pleasure, one should only enjoy the pleasures that one can control. In that sense, Epicureanism is a more refined version of hedonism, which places an unrestricted search for pleasure as the highest goal of human beings. In Sigmund Freud's thinking, hedonism and Epicureanism find almost exact equivalents in what he calls *the pleasure principle* and *the reality principle*. Freud sees them on a developmental continuum: an immature person seeks pleasure *tout court*, whereas a mature person realises that it is sometimes necessary to renounce some pleasures altogether and even to put up with some displeasure. (Freud 1973: 402–403.)

Jeremy Bentham also acknowledges the importance of pleasure in human behaviour. He lays the foundation for utilitarianism by recognising at the beginning of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781) that

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. (Bentham 2000: 14.) (Emphasis original.)

This powerful statement attempts to convince the reader of the important guiding role that the search of pleasure and the avoidance of pain have in determining the behaviour of human beings. In addition to these influential but rather suppositious statements about the role of pleasure in behaviour, more recent research has given a scientific basis for it.

In line with Bentham and Freud, H. J. Campbell begins his book *The Pleasure Areas: A New Theory of Behavior* with the following remark: “If the reader is not a plant, he is a pleasure-seeker, for that is what all animals are” (Campbell 1973: 1). Indeed, that all animals and humans are intrinsically pleasure-seekers is the premise on which he builds his behavioural theory. As he demonstrates in his book, the activation of the limbic “pleasure areas” of the brain is the sole goal which all our behaviour is geared towards. This means that all the parts of the body, as well as all the other parts of the brain, are subservient to the activation of the limbic system. (Campbell 1973: 68.) Because this is seen as the ultimate motivator for human behaviour, it is relevant to the present analysis which revolves around the theme of human behaviour and its development in *Walden*.

In Campbell’s terminology, *pleasure* is defined neurophysiologically as *the activation of the limbic areas of the brain*. This usage differs from general usage, which attributes the term *pleasure* to a relatively nebulous mental state of well-being. Campbell recognises the confusion between these usages, regrets the fact that the same term has come to be used in neurophysiology, but does not diverge from it for reasons of coherence with previous research. While in general usage *pleasure* denotes some state which is abnormally enjoyable, stimuli are neurophysiologically either pleasurable, displeasurable or both in varying degrees – but never completely neutral. (Campbell 1973: 68–69.)

This means, significantly, that the threshold of classifying something as a *pleasure* is lower in its neurophysiological application than in its regular use (Campbell 1973: 68–69). The term *pleasure-seeking* might in common use too emphatically imply the *conscious* seeking of pleasure for its own sake. That is not the sense in which the term is used in its neurophysiological application. Rather, *pleasure-seeking* simply denotes *activities which a person likes to engage in*, irrespective of whether pleasure as such is consciously sought or not. It has, nonetheless, been proved neurophysiologically that all behaviour aims at keeping the limbic areas of the brain activated (Campbell 1973: 68). That is what makes people engage in their preferred forms of behaviour and, consequently, that is what ultimately motivates Thoreau’s behaviour in *Walden* as well.

At this point, an important terminological issue should be addressed. Campbell (1973) classifies sensory pleasure-seeking as *subhuman* and intellectual pleasure-seeking as *human*. Yet what Campbell terms *subhuman* behaviour plays – its pejorative name notwithstanding – a highly important role in the survival of the human species. In other words, this subhuman behaviour is homeostatic⁶ for humans. That is why it is questionable to call this behaviour *subhuman*, given the vital role that it has in ensuring the survival of the species.

As Campbell (1973: 82) rightly observes, even the mathematician or the philosopher eats, drinks and makes love, yet that behaviour would counterintuitively be categorised as subhuman. Campbell, it seems, uses this word intentionally, for it carries negative connotations with which he is able more pronouncedly to denounce sensory pleasure-seeking. Because of the value-laden nature of Campbell's nomenclature of subhuman/human behaviour, the more objective words *sensory* and *intellectual* are used in this thesis. They serve as one-to-one equivalents to Campbell's subhuman and human categories and do so without the connotations inherent in those terms.

To further clarify the Campbellian terminology used above, *sensory pleasure* is activation of the limbic areas of the brain produced by nerve impulses passing from *the peripheral sensory receptors* (Campbell 1973: 41). *Intellectual pleasure* is activation of the limbic areas of the brain produced by nerve impulses passing from *the cerebral cortex*. (Campbell 1973: 79.) Which of these two methods of pleasure-seeking is mainly utilised at a given time is easily inferred by analysing the behaviour in question. For instance, during food intake, the limbic areas become activated primarily by the stimuli registered by the sensory receptors in the mouth and the nose. Conversely, while philosophising, no such sensory stimulus is necessary, for the limbic areas are activated by impulses transmitted from the cerebral cortex.

⁶ Intending to maintain the organism's inner equilibrium.

The connotation of the word *intellectual* might imply high-level thinking exclusively, but that is misleading. It includes all forms of thinking pleasure (Campbell 1973: 209), regardless of whether that is the pleasure gained by a child who dreams of being able to fly, or the pleasure gained by a scientist who is absorbed in working on an abstract problem. *Intellectual pleasure* can, for that reason, be rephrased as *thinking pleasure*. Campbell (1973) uses these two terms interchangeably, but for reasons of clarity, in this thesis the term *intellectual pleasure* is solely adhered to.

The express purpose of the present thesis is *to employ H. J. Campbell's behavioural theory and his dichotomy of sensory and intellectual pleasure-seeking in a thematic analysis of human development in H. D. Thoreau's Walden*. It will be argued that the behaviour of a minor character in the book, Alek Therien, is predominantly sensory. His behaviour, in both Thoreau's and Campbell's opinion, is, furthermore, seen as the representative of the behaviour of the majority of human beings (Thoreau 1957: 74, 146; Campbell 1973: 185–205, 227–228). The behaviour of the main character of the book, Thoreau himself, is also placed under scrutiny and is deduced to be both sensory and intellectual. It is additionally noted that there is *an intimation in his writing which advocates intellectual in favour of sensory behaviour*.

To make a methodological clarification, the way to determine whether a particular activity is pleasurable to a character in a work of fiction is to assess its description. That the activity is engaged in in the first instance reveals either that it is pleasurable per se or that some external goal is pursued via that activity. It is often quite clear which of these two forms of motivation plays the leading role in a given activity. Moreover, the relative pleasure or displeasure of a given form of behaviour is usually easily inferred from the description itself (cf. Cafaro 2006: 38). In Thoreau's case, his enjoyment of nature is palpable in the passages of *Walden* dedicated to descriptions of the natural world. His preferred methods of intellectual pleasure-seeking become similarly evident in his descriptions of reading and thinking. Therefore, characters' preferred pleasure-seeking methods may simply be determined by analysing what activities they habitually like to engage in.

It should be made clear at this point that *Walden* is not analysed *in toto* in this thesis, but rather the most representative parts of it are chosen for evaluation. That is why the analysis might, to the casual reader of *Walden*, seem somewhat biased in the direction of intellectual pleasure-seeking, thus highlighting the developmental paradigm discussed. The intention all along is to emphasise the importance of intellectual pleasure-seeking for Thoreau, which is why the selection of passages of *Walden* is carried out in this way. Nevertheless, in so doing, a significant portion of *Walden* is left undiscussed. In addition to overlooking some parts of *Walden*, the analysis of the pleasures of social interaction will not be carried out either. There are instances in the book which could be analysed from that perspective, such as the chapters “Visitors” and “Brute Neighbors”, but due to spatial limitations and thematic unfeasibility, that analysis is omitted from the thesis. Determining the extent to which social interaction may be classified as intellectual and/or sensory pleasure-seeking is similarly left undone.

Since pleasure-seeking is – as many philosophers, psychologists and neurophysiologists quoted in this thesis have claimed – a fundamental driving force underlying human behaviour, it is hoped that the kind of analysis carried out in this thesis will give an alternative method for analysing literary texts, and an explanatory one at that. Although pleasure-seeking theories focus on the behaviour of real humans instead of fictional characters, it is not unjustified to apply this kind of theoretical framework to the analysis of literary texts and fictional characters too. For instance, if one is to subscribe to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s (2008: 174) notion of “willing suspension of disbelief”, fictional characters are, after all, thought of as persons possessing true feelings, authentic motives and real intentions. Consequently, if theories of human behaviour help to understand the behaviour of humans better, they ought to be similarly explanatory in relation to the analysis of fictional characters.

The study of sensory and intellectual ways of pleasure-seeking is relevant to the study of literature because, firstly, it aids in determining the mental development of a character. If a character’s methods of gaining pleasure are exclusively sensory, it can be said that their higher faculties remain dormant and that their “distance from the jungle”

(phylogeny⁷) and “progress from the cradle” (ontogeny⁸) has not been significant (Campbell 1973: 84). Thus, the pleasure-seeking methods that characters use determine their phylogenetic and ontogenetic progress on the developmental paradigm proposed by Campbell (1973), and corroborated, for example, by Aristotle (1955: 299, 305), Al-Razi (quoted in Haque 2004: 370–371), Emerson (1960c: 206), Thoreau (1957: 68–76, 146–147, 218–227) and Stein (1958).

Secondly, as writing literature per se is an activity which requires a protracted neglect of sensory pleasure-seeking, the mere fact that in the world there exists a significant body of literature proves that there have been people who have been able to elevate themselves above purely sensory experience and derive pleasure from abstract thought and the framing of this in written language. Moreover, the intellectual pleasure-seeking of these people enables subsequent generations to derive intellectual pleasure from the aesthetic and artistic exploits that form the literary canon, not to mention the different social and intellectual movements brought to bear by literature thus produced. These reasons should give enough justification for the pleasure-seeking theory to be not only applicable but also relevant to the analysis of literature.

The first chapter of this thesis continues with a more detailed introduction of the primary material (1.1). After giving an overview of the Transcendentalist movement which Thoreau was a part of (1.2), a link between the present-day financial crisis and sensory vs. intellectual pleasure-seeking is established (1.3). This will be followed by a consideration of the narrative of *Walden*, and the extent to which it should be read as an autobiographical work or as a product of the writer’s imagination (1.4). In the second chapter, an overview of relevant research on pleasure is given (2.1), after which the main theoretical framework of the thesis is introduced (2.2, 2.3, 2.4). Using that theoretical framework, complemented with the external references of section 2.1, a thematically structured analysis of *Walden* is presented in the third chapter. A summary

⁷ The evolutionary development of a species. Hence the metaphor of the jungle, referring to the supposed habitat of the race at an early phase of its development.

⁸ The development of an individual organism (from embryo to adult). Hence the metaphor of the cradle, referring to the supposed habitat of the individual at an early phase of its development.

of the findings is given in the fourth chapter, after which conclusions are drawn, the thesis' limitations and implications are discussed and suggestions for further research given.

1.1 Material

Herbert James Campbell (1925–) worked as a neurophysiologist at the Department of Neuroendocrinology at Maudsley Hospital, London. Between 1951 and 1969, Campbell wrote a number of science fiction stories, first under his own name but later under the pseudonym Roy Sheldon. In the 1950s, he was the editor of a British science fiction magazine called *Authentic Science Fiction*. In 1965, he published the book *Correlative Physiology of the Nervous System*, and in 1973 *The Pleasure Areas: A New Theory of Behavior*⁹, which is partly based on his article “Peripheral Self-stimulation as a Reward in Fish, Reptile and Mammal” (1971). *The Pleasure Areas* is the central theoretical work of this thesis. In addition to these two books, he published several articles in the field of neurophysiology. All in all, little information is to be found on Campbell. After *The Pleasure Areas*, his publishing has been non-existent, which is why the primary focus of this thesis will be laid on that book.

The Pleasure Areas, albeit solidly based on scientific study, is written for the general public. Dry, jargon-ridden language is avoided, accurate source referencing is scarce and a few illustrations have been included to make the text lighter. Neurophysiological terms are still rife, but as Campbell observes, these technical terms have to be used. However, despite their seeming technical detail, terms such as *amygdaloid nucleus* are no more frightening than *coconut*; they are only less familiar and similarly refer to objects in the universe, as Campbell puts it. (Campbell 1973: 94.) At times, the language with which Campbell criticises sensory pleasure-seekers is polemical, and the accumulation of such argumentation makes his book provocative. The lack of wider discussion about the book is therefore moderately surprising. Nevertheless, it has been

⁹ Henceforth referred to as *The Pleasure Areas*.

reviewed in *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (Pampiglione 1973) and cited sporadically, even in recent years (e.g. Miron 2005: 662–663).

In the first three chapters of the book, Campbell lays out the scientific basis for the study of pleasure. In the fourth chapter, he introduces his behavioural theory along with the subhuman/human dichotomy, continuing in the following chapters by giving examples of different behavioural patterns that fall into either one of the categories. The last chapter of *The Pleasure Areas* deals with human destiny and the kind of measures that need to be undertaken in order to create a more “psychocivilized” society.

The application of Campbell’s ideas in an extensive analysis of pleasure-seeking in literature is unfeasible within the scope of this thesis. That is why only one representative work of literature is placed under scrutiny: *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862). *Walden* is considered a seminal work of the American Transcendentalist movement. In addition to Thoreau, other notable representatives of Transcendentalism are Margaret Fuller, Amos Bronson Alcott, George Ripley, William Ellery Channing and, most importantly, Thoreau’s mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson. Transcendentalism is introduced in more detail in 1.2, and its connection with Campbell’s argument about the relative value of intellectual pleasures in relation to sensory pleasures is discussed in 1.3.

In *Walden*, Thoreau gives an account of the two years (July 1845 – September 1847) that he spent living next to Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, in a hut built by himself (the extent to which this account may be considered as factual is addressed in 1.4). It was considered preposterous by Thoreau’s friends and family that a Harvard graduate should thus distance himself from society and not seek respectable employment (Emerson 1960d: 379).¹⁰ For this reason, already on the first page of *Walden* Thoreau seeks to answer some of the enquiries made by his contemporaries concerning his mode of life. One of the main reasons why he went there was “to

¹⁰ Yet partly Thoreau’s experiment was better understood due to the examples already set by the two communal experiments of simple living carried out at Brook Farm (1841–1846) and Fruitlands (1843–1844), led by George Ripley and Bronson Alcott respectively (Shi 1985: 134–139).

transact some private business with the fewest obstacles” (Thoreau 1957: 13); that is, to write *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1985)¹¹ in the privacy provided by nature. It was not during his stay by the pond that he wrote *Walden*. While there, he recorded his experiences in his *Journal*, on the basis of which he later wrote the book. Moreover, he spent many years writing and revising it, and it was not until nine years and seven manuscript drafts after his move to Walden Pond that the book was published (Thoreau 2004: xv).¹²

Walden bears a thematic similarity to *A Week*. Where large parts of *Walden* are devoted to the depictions of Thoreau’s surrounding nature, some describe the senseless habits of his contemporaries, where others still concentrate on prescribing rules for simple living and high thinking in order for them to overcome those habits. Consequently, according to Walter Harding (1962), *Walden* may be approached in several ways: as a nature

¹¹ Henceforth referred to as *A Week*.

¹² For a study of the changes that *Walden* underwent during this period, see Shanley (1957). Thoreau included a parable in *Walden*’s “Conclusion” in which he indirectly speaks about his perfectionism regarding the writing of *Walden*, using a staff maker as a metaphor. The parable is quoted here verbatim due to its relevance to the contents of this thesis:

“There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life. He proceeded instantly to the forest for wood, being resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material; and as he searched for and rejected stick after stick, his friends gradually deserted him, for they grew old in their works and died, but he grew not older by a moment. His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him. Before he had found a stock in all respects suitable the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin, and he sat on one of its mounds to peel the stick. Before he had given it the proper shape the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end, and with the point of the stick he wrote the name of the last of that race in the sand, and then resumed his work. By the time he had smoothed and polished the staff Kalpa was no longer the pole-star; and ere he had put on the ferule and the head adorned with precious stones, Brahma had awoke [*sic*] and slumbered many times. But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions; in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful?” (Thoreau 1957: 222–223).

The similarity of this passage to the lengthy Emerson quotation with which section 2.4 is concluded is striking: both highlight the potential atemporalism of intellectual behaviour (that is, if the staff is read as a metaphor of *Walden*).

book, a guide to the simple life, a satirical criticism of modern life, an example of good writing, and a guidebook to a higher spiritual life (quoted in Gayet 1981: 10).

Ambiguities, puns and intertextuality are abundant in *Walden*, even more so than in *A Week*. As Michael T. Gilmore notes (2010: 47–51; cf. Stein 1958: 194), this can be seen as a conscious device by which Thoreau is able to limit his book’s audience to those who are willing and able to read it in the way he wants it to be read. “Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written”, Thoreau declares in “Reading” (1957: 70), and by making *Walden* a demanding text, he excludes from its proper range those readers who cannot produce the strenuous intellectual exertion which is required to comprehend it (Gilmore 2010: 47–51). Hence, Thoreau is able to avoid the contradiction that would follow if *Walden* were a commercial success: by making it difficult to read, he extricates it from the marketplace, which he starkly criticises in the text (Gilmore 2010: 48; cf. Thoreau 1957: 48).¹³ The viewpoint that intellectual exertion is required to understand *Walden* is taken up again in 3.4. In that section, exegeses of *Walden*’s famous animal parable (1957: 11) are provided by engaging in the necessary intellectual exertion needed to comprehend it.

The reason for *Walden*’s appropriateness as research material for the present thesis is that its “characters” exhibit different kinds of behavioural patterns which lend themselves readily to a Campbellian analysis. Where some characters’ behaviour is clearly sensory, that of others is intellectual. Furthermore, Thoreau’s own train of thought is similar to Campbell’s. He recognises that he is equally drawn to the “high” as well as the “wild” (Thoreau 1957: 144), which can be seen to correspond to Campbell’s subhuman/human binary. Like Campbell, he also asserts that most of his contemporaries do not share his high aspirations but are mainly concerned with things of mere “simple expediency” (Thoreau 1957: 103). This is a common elitist philosophical position, which connects Thoreau’s thinking with, for example, that of

¹³ *Walden* gained popularity only some time after its publication: it took five years to sell out the first edition of two thousand copies, yet afterwards it has become one of the all-time best sellers of American literature (Harding 1962: 149). One example of Thoreau’s criticism of the marketplace is to be found in “Economy”: “I have since learned that trade curses everything it handles; and though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business” (Thoreau 1957: 48).

Aristotle: “The utter vulgarity of *the herd of men* comes out in their preference for the sort of existence a cow leads” (Aristotle 1955: 30) vs. “I love to see *the herd of men* feeding heartily on coarse and succulent *pleasures*, as cattle on the husks and stalks of vegetables” (Thoreau 1985: 275) (emphases added). The juxtaposition of humans and animals made by Thoreau and Aristotle reminds one of Campbell’s usage of the term *subhuman*; and, indeed, the elitist attitude is shared by all three of them.

To further illustrate the connection between Thoreau and Campbell, it is noteworthy that Campbell uses the same word *expediency* that Thoreau (1957: 103) does:

We [*sic*] differ from the serious philosophers in that we take no great pains to remove incompatibilities in our thought systems and use no rigid tests to determine their relation to the truth. The yardstick for the serious philosopher is consistency with fact; for the common man the criterion is expediency, which is an abbreviation for “arranging things to activate the pleasure areas.” (Campbell 1973: 210.)

Both Campbell and Thoreau claim that the average person is concerned merely with things which enable the activation of their pleasure areas in the easiest way. This is also to say that for these people, the primary method of activating their pleasure areas is sensory. The similarity in Thoreau’s and Campbell’s thinking, as well as the suitability of the book’s characters for an analysis along the lines adumbrated above, is the main reason for selecting *Walden* as the material of this thesis.

1.2 Transcendentalism

A summary of Transcendentalism is necessary in order to clarify the background of Thoreau’s thinking. As David E. Shi explains, Transcendentalism is a part of a bigger movement of American simple living and high thinking, the roots of which lie mainly in Greek philosophy and Christianity. American Puritanism, with its doctrine of working hard, refraining from material indulgence and serving God, was particularly influenced by Christianity. The Puritan tradition in America dates back to the 17th century settlers, Transcendentalism having been its 1830s and 1840s modification. Where Puritanism was more theocentric, Transcendentalism’s core was natural philosophy, but what they

both shared was the goal to elevate American life above the mundane by holding material indulgence in check. (Shi 1985.)

The Transcendentalists were a group of New England poets and philosophers centred in Concord, who thought that pursuing material wealth was a waste of time. Instead, their goal was to reduce their needs so that they would not have to toil excessively to satisfy them. Thoreau exemplifies this in *Walden*: “a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone” (1957: 56). Having reduced their material needs, the Transcendentalists had more time left for their proper pursuits, seeking spiritual truths, moral ideals and an original relation to nature: “Instead of noblemen, let us have noble villages of men. If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there, and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us” (Thoreau 1957: 76). As demonstrated by this passage, while other Americans sought improvements in the form of things (for example, canals, railroads, harbours and bridges), the Transcendentalists advocated internal improvements in people themselves (Shi 1985: 126–127).

William Ellery Channing (2011: 34) summarises Transcendentalism’s core philosophy when he writes that “there is something greater within [a person] than in the whole material creation, than in all the worlds which press on the eye and ear; and that inward improvements have a worth and dignity in themselves.” Significantly, Campbell’s (1973) sentiment of renouncing sensory pleasures and favouring intellectual ones reverberates in Channing’s pronouncement (2011: 34). Channing thus in anticipation summarises also Campbell’s argument. In a way, therefore, Campbell’s thought can be seen as an extension of Transcendentalist thought.

1.3 Topicality: the Financial Crisis and a Paradigm Shift in Consumer Values

In order for this thesis, as such thematically bound to the mid-19th century New England, not to seem disconnected to the present-day reader, the relevance of its conceptual framework to the present financial crisis is established in this section. It is

thereby suggested that Thoreau's ideas bear meaning even in the 21st century, having escaped the corrosion of time and, in the words with which he describes Grecian literature, gathering "only a maturer golden and autumnal tint" in time (1957: 71).

What Umair Haque, an economist and a writer for the *Harvard Business Review*, sees as the reason for the present-day financial crisis is what he calls *hedonic opulence* (2011b). According to him, there would have to be a paradigm shift in the values of consumers for the "non-recovering recovery" to become an actual one (Haque 2011d). Instead of hedonic opulence, consumers ought to pursue *eudaimonic prosperity* (Haque 2011b).¹⁴ To clarify these terms, Haque compares opulence with Donald Trump and eudaimonia with the Declaration of Independence (2011b). He argues that instead of "the furious, desperate, never-ending hyperconsumption of more, bigger, faster, cheaper, nastier", people should invest in human potential, the people they love and living a life that matters (Haque 2011d).

This criticism of hyperconsumption ties in with what Gerald Porter (2011) has recently written in *Pohjalainen* about consumer values and sustainable development. Discussing modern terms such as *degrowth* and *downshifting*, Porter juxtaposes the ideology of Puritanism with hyperconsumption, and thus reveals an innate contradiction in present-day American society (for a more detailed discussion of this disunion, see Shi 1985: 8–27, or Stein 1958: 200–201). Where the Puritan heritage and the relatively strong status of religion advocate abstinence from worldly pleasures, the media, the economy and the marketing industry all have unlimited consumption as their core values. In this respect, Transcendentalism shares some of the values of Puritanism, and the rhetoric of both Porter and Haque today are similar to that of Thoreau and other Transcendentalists more than a century and a half ago.

Discussing the ecological limits of consumption, Tim Jackson (2009) draws attention to the finite resources of the planet. In so doing, he points out the unsustainable outcome

¹⁴ Haque is here referring to Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, happiness (for a more detailed discussion on the term, see, for example, Kraut 2011).

which promoting continuous economic growth inevitably leads to. Since the present generation is mindlessly pursuing material happiness today, it systematically erodes the basis for future generations' well-being tomorrow (Jackson 2009: 2). To illustrate this dilemma, Freud's terminology about an individual person's psychology may be applied to society at large. The present generation is in the early developmental stage of following the pleasure principle merely because it heedlessly consumes the planet's resources in the quest for material happiness. It does not realise that in order to ensure long-term hedonic potential, it is necessary to limit pleasure-seeking in the present moment and perhaps undergo some displeasure so that future well-being may be secured (changing the forms of pleasure-seeking to more sophisticated ones would be another viable option). That is to say, the present generation has not yet developed enough to take the reality principle into account. (Freud 1973: 402–403.)¹⁵

Because there are multiple examples of Thoreau's aversion to materialism in *Walden*, their summary treatment is sufficient here. The main point that is made in the book's first chapter, "Economy", is that one ought to simplify one's life to the degree that work encumbrances can be kept to a minimum as well. By simplifying his own life, for example, Thoreau claims that six weeks of work is enough for him to live on for the rest of the year (1957: 47). Having spent those six weeks making his living for a year, the rest of the year he can spend as he pleases. For him this liberty is of the utmost value. Thoreau's point is that too high a standard of living will keep a person entrapped in their work. By lowering the standard of living, one would have to work much less and get to spend one's free time as one pleases. (Thoreau 1957.) In a similar fashion, Porter (2011) suggests cutting the working week into 20 hours of work and dividing the workload more equally among members of society.

As a clarifying point of comparison, Thoreau introduces his contemporaries' habit of working hard in order to earn the money with which they are able to sustain their standard of living:

¹⁵ Freud's terminology is discussed in greater detail in section 2.1.

I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops, and offices, and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways. What I have heard of Bramins¹⁶ sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; [...] even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolas¹⁷ to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydra's head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up. (Thoreau 1957: 2.)

Thoreau here refers to the self-defeating task of people who are caught up in a rat race, working hard so that their material desires may be momentarily satisfied. After a new object of desire is procured, these people start to desire another newer and better object, being thus forced to continue in the treadmill of work and consumption. Al-Razi similarly asserts that human needs and desires are endless and that their satisfaction is by definition impossible (quoted in Haque 2004: 371). Thoreau ironically juxtaposes this Sisyphean task with the Greek myth of the twelve labours of Hercules, noting that, unlike the treadmill of work and consumption, there were only twelve of them and they had an end, but the treadmill has no end and will keep people entrapped in it until they grow old and die (1957: 2–3).

Thoreau introduces John Field in *Walden*'s chapter "Baker Farm" as an exemplar of a person forever trapped in this treadmill (Thoreau 1957: 140–144). This Irish farmer, in Thoreau's description, is delighted that having come to America, he and his family may get tea, coffee and meat every day. Nonetheless, this forms a vicious cycle in Thoreau's view: in order to maintain their standard of living, they have to work hard, and to be able to work hard, they have to eat hard – in addition to which there is also the rent to pay. (Thoreau 1957: 141–142.) Thoreau suggests his own way of living to the Irish family as well, but because of their reluctance to budge from their own habits, he concludes that they and their posterity have inherited poverty and will not "rise in this

¹⁶ Brahmins, or Brahmans, are the highest of the four major Hindu castes: priest, warrior, merchant, and peasant (Thoreau 2004: 3).

¹⁷ Iolaus: in Greek mythology, king of Thessaly and a friend of Hercules with whom he slayed the multi-headed Lernaean hydra, thus completing one of the twelve labours of Hercules (Thoreau 2004: 3).

world [...] till their wading webbed bog-trotting feet get *talaria*¹⁸ to their heels” (1957: 144). John Field and his family are portrayed as mere cogs in the economic machine, and as such discontented and disconnected from life’s true liberty.

Thus, Thoreau skilfully questions some of the tenets of normal working life: “This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre” (Thoreau 1957: 7). Further on, his criticism is even sterner, as he writes that

men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man¹⁹ is soon ploughed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool’s life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. (Thoreau 1957: 2–3.)

The obsession with accumulating material wealth is, as mentioned above, what Haque calls hedonic opulence (2011b). And precisely in their repudiation of this material wealth lies the similarity between Thoreau’s thought in the 1840s and Porter’s and Haque’s thought in the present day.

In the terminology of this thesis, the material consumerism that Porter and Haque criticise can be seen to correspond roughly to sensory pleasures, where the eudaimonic prosperity that Haque (2011b) advocates can be viewed as the counterpart of intellectual pleasures: “The only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence isn’t denominated in dollars and cents — but as a brave few [such as the Transcendentalists] have always known, in the flourishing of infinitely vulnerable, endlessly powerful human potential” (Haque 2011a).²⁰ Haque thus suggests that

¹⁸ Winged sandals worn by Greek gods, giving them swift and unimpeded flight.

¹⁹ Alluding to St. Augustine’s (354–430) *The City of God*: “This, indeed, is true, that the soul is not the whole man, but the better part of man; the body not the whole, but the inferior part of man” (Thoreau 2004: 4).

²⁰ Echoing Erich Fromm’s *Art of Loving* (1956): “Our society is run by a managerial bureaucracy, by professional politicians; people are motivated by mass suggestion, their aim is producing more and consuming more, as purposes in themselves. All activities are subordinated to economic goals, means have become ends; man is an automaton—well fed, well clad, but without any ultimate concern for that which is his peculiarly human quality and function. If man is to be able to love, he must be put in his supreme place. The economic machine must serve him, rather than he serve it. He must be enabled to share experience, to share work, rather than, at best, share in profits. Society must be organized in such a way that man’s social, loving nature is not separated from his social existence, but becomes one with it. If

changing consumer values and habits could be the solution for the ongoing financial crisis (2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d; 2011e; 2011f). The core structure of his suggestion is aligned with that of Campbell (1973): to seek to reduce the amount of fleeting, consumer-related sensory pleasures and pursue intellectual ones in their stead.

1.4 The Narrative of *Walden*

It is problematic to read *Walden* as a truthful account of what happened during the two years that Thoreau spent by the pond. His seemingly realistic narrative, as well as the attention to detail that he pays, makes the unwary reader prone to take his word for “the truth of the matter”. The book is, furthermore, autobiographical.²¹ On its first page Thoreau equally demands of all other writers a similarly simple and sincere account of their own lives (1957: 1). This can be seen as a device with which he can claim a degree of authority and sincerity for his own writing. However, since *Walden* is a narrative by Thoreau, a world interpreted through his cognitive lens, it does not represent unaltered reality. A deeper epistemological discussion on the nature of truth is irrelevant at this point; the purpose is rather to point out, as Richard J. Schneider does, that “there might be as many truths as there are points of view” (1995: 105). Therefore, when Thoreau passes judgment on his fellow men – the Canadian wood-chopper Alek Therien, most notably, and others to a lesser degree – one should keep in mind that his judgment is merely his interpretation of them.

Despite the seeming authenticity and sincerity of *Walden*, it should still be read, according to William Bysshe Stein (1985: 194, 201), as a creative product of Thoreau rather than a factual account. Stein (1985: 194) emphasises that Thoreau recorded many

it is true, as I have tried to show, that love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence, then any society which excludes, relatively, the development of love, must in the long run perish of its own contradiction with the basic necessities of human nature” (2006: 122–123). Haque explicitly acknowledges his intellectual debt to Fromm (Haque 2011a).

²¹ “Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats” (Orwell 1970b: 20). Even though one would not wholly subscribe to George Orwell’s pessimism, it gives a welcome reminder of the potential unreliability of autobiographical writing.

of his daily experiences in his journals, and these are the materials from which one could get a “truer” picture of the daily events in Thoreau’s life during his Walden years. Yet to read *Walden* itself in this way would be, as Stein (1958: 194) notes, to disregard the changes that the journals underwent when Thoreau wrote *Walden* (for a general account of these changes, see Shanley [1957], and for those concerning Alek Therien, refer also to Bradford [1963: 501–503]). *Walden* is, therefore, a kind of imaginative re-creation of Thoreau’s time by the pond (Kuhn 2009: 129).

If this stance is taken, his initial appeal acquires an ironic tone as well: “I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life [...]; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me” (Thoreau 1957: 1). If *Walden* is seen as an imaginative re-creation of Thoreau’s life by the pond, then this passage is read in a new light too: a sincerely led life is distant for Thoreau *because* he himself has not lived sincerely, or at least given a sincere account of it in *Walden*.

This kind of hunt for irony can be taken too far: one may commit absurdities in questioning everything. The analysis of *Walden* in this thesis is therefore concerned more with the reality of the words on the page than with the reality which “actually” took place on Walden Pond. This verbal reality is recoverable, while the reality of the events as they actually underwent is not. Nor is it necessary to see Thoreau in Wayne Booth’s (1983: 339–374) terms as an “unreliable narrator” and to start questioning whatever statements he makes. Rather, *Walden* is read in this thesis in the manner of New Criticism, as words on the page forming a self-referential whole.

Furthermore, it is read in the present thesis keeping in mind that “[w]hat treasure Gandhi discovered in [*Walden*] does not belong to time or to history [...], it belongs to the lore of wise men down through the ages” (Stein 1958: 195).²² In that respect, it makes little difference to what extent “Thoreau the character of *Walden*” differs from “Thoreau the man”, or to what extent the narration of *Walden* differs from what took

²² Both Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were inspired by Thoreau (Gayet 1981: 10).

place in reality on Walden Pond from July 1845 to September 1847. This view is accentuated when one pays attention to the fact that some of the most relevant parts of *Walden* in relation to this thesis are those in which Thoreau transcends the here and now of Walden Pond and discusses matters of higher and more general import.

2 PLEASURE-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Having given an overview of the thesis in the first chapter, a more detailed discussion of the theoretical background is presented in this one. A general review of research on pleasure is given in 2.1, with the rest of the chapter dedicated to the explication of the main theoretical framework of the thesis (2.2, 2.3, 2.4). This is carried out by referring to laboratory experiments on intracranial self-stimulation in 2.2 and by introducing its natural counterpart, peripheral self-stimulation, in 2.3. Sensory deprivation and satiation effect are subsequently discussed in that section (2.3). Campbell's dichotomy of sensory vs. intellectual pleasures, as well as his yardstick for assessing the phylogenetic and ontogenetic development of an individual, is finally dealt with in 2.4.

2.1 The Concept of Pleasure: A Critical Introduction

This section opens with a literary critical approach to pleasure (Barthes 1990). Via a psychological (Freud 1973; Freud 2001; Miron 2005) and a philosophical (Aristotle 1955; Kant 2004) discussion on the subject, the focus will be shifted to more recent neurophysiological research on pleasure (Kringelbach 2008; Frijda 2010; Cabanac 2010; Brondel & Cabanac 2007; Cabanac and Bonniot-Cabanac 2007).

At the interface of pleasure and literary criticism, the most important text in recent years has been Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973). In Barthes' nomenclature, there exist two kinds of text: "text of pleasure" and "text of bliss". A text of pleasure is something that "comes from culture and does not break with it", that is, it conforms to what the reader considers appropriate. (Barthes 1990: 14.) Therefore, a text of pleasure is *comfortable*. A text of bliss, in contrast, "unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language." That is to say, a text of bliss *discomforts* the reader. (Barthes 1990: 14.) Further, in a paradoxical vein, Barthes notes that the reader of both texts of pleasure and those of bliss

is an anachronic subject, for he simultaneously and contradictorily participates in the profound hedonism of all culture [...] and in the destruction of that culture: he enjoys the consistency of his selfhood (that is his pleasure) and seeks its loss (that is his bliss). He is a subject split twice over, doubly perverse. (Barthes 1990: 14.)

Thus, Barthes proposes a split reader, the dissipating of whose self brings forth powerful, inexpressible *bliss*, and the substantiation of whose self brings forth mild, expressible *pleasure* (Barthes 1990: 14, 21). For Barthes, novelty in reading is blissful but conformism only pleasurable.

As such, this argumentation might seem slightly eccentric. How can something that conforms to societal norms be pleasurable whereas something that breaks away from them is blissful? A possible answer can be found in Freud, who argues that “[n]ovelty is always the condition of enjoyment” (2001: 35).²³ Hence, texts that break new ground are enjoyable precisely because of their novelty. According to Freud, texts without novelty are usually only enjoyable for children, who indeed often demand that texts be repeated to them multiple times in exactly the same form as previously: “if a child has been told a nice story, he will insist on hearing it over and over again rather than a new one; and he will remorselessly stipulate that the repetition shall be an identical one and will correct any alterations of which the narrator may be guilty” (2001: 35). The reason for this might be that children generally desire to live in an organised world (Maslow 1943). Repeating the same texts over and over again gives the world a skeletal structure, which would not emerge if new and contradicting texts were introduced. Another explanation is provided by Harvey and Goudvis (2007: 51), who claim that a child will not develop a holistic understanding of a story the first time it is heard, but that thorough understanding develops only through repeatedly hearing a story.

According to Freud (2001: 35), the hankering after familiarity prevalent in children will disappear in adulthood, when one will rarely be equally struck by a joke when heard for

²³ Cf. Thoreau’s similar statement in *A Week*: “All men are partially buried in the grave of custom, and of some we see only the crown of the head above ground. Better are the physically dead, for they more lively rot. Even virtue is no longer such if it be stagnant. A man’s life should be constantly as fresh as this river. It should be the same channel, but a new water every instant” (1985: 107).

the second time, or a theatrical production when seen twice. In line with this thinking, each repetition of a children's story might mean more understanding for the child and consequently some novelty as well, but an adult's intelligence can be thought of as being advanced enough to grasp the import of most narratives when encountered for the first time (excepting that of *Walden*: as discussed in 1.1, Thoreau deliberately made it a difficult text in order to limit his audience [Gilmore 2010: 47–51]). Thus, additional repetitions of a play or a story will bring no new understanding, no novelty and, hence, little pleasure for an adult.²⁴

Yet this still does not resolve the problematic of Barthes' argument. Barthes' text in its own right seems to discomfort the reader in that it breaks away from what would be intuitive. His text discomforts the reader – yet that might be the point of the exercise: perhaps Barthes thus tries to illustrate his argument. By writing a text that discomforts the reader, that seeks the loss of their selfhood, Barthes already writes a de facto text of bliss. Whether one is overcome by a feeling of bliss when reading Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* is a matter of subjective evaluation, one that introspection alone will reveal. The important point to note, however, is the potential bliss-creativity of Barthes' text. If his text succeeds in making its reader feel bliss, his theorising gains a degree of empirical validity. If not, then the reader will take it with a grain of salt, perhaps test its validity when engaged in reading other texts, and finally come upon a conclusion as regards its usefulness as a theory. If one does not subscribe to Barthes' theory, other theories might be of more practical use.

Freud's treatment of pleasure, albeit somewhat cursorily performed, assigns to it an exceedingly important role. According to him, “our total mental activity is directed towards achieving pleasure and avoiding unpleasure [*sic*]” (Freud 1973: 401). This

²⁴ This train of thought is not unassailable: some adults do enjoy countless repetitions of, for example, their favourite song or a film. The repetitions carry great pleasure but little novelty, which to some extent undermines the connection made by Freud between novelty and pleasure (2001: 35). Yet, certainly, successive readings of difficult texts such as *Walden* will reveal something that previously went unnoticed. Further, if a worker gets paid 2,500 euros for their work during the first 11 months, getting paid with a roasted turkey for the twelfth month's work will be, although novel, hardly satisfactory. Other factors than mere novelty enter the fray and these should be taken into consideration as well. Michel Cabanac's terms *milieu intérieur* and *alliesthesia*, discussed later on in this section, will be illuminating in this respect.

constitutes what Freud terms *the pleasure principle*, and as such accords with the theories of Bentham (2000) and Campbell (1973) discussed earlier. Yet Freud's main contribution to this theory is his introduction of *the reality principle*. Because attainment of immediate pleasure is often impossible, the *ego* will have to modify itself to postpone pleasure till a later moment in time, and possibly even put up with some displeasure in the meantime. The step from obeying the pleasure principle alone into adjusting one's behaviour by bearing the reality principle in mind – this constitutes an important step in the ego's development, for then the ego is educated to being "reasonable". *Id* in its purest form blindly obeys the pleasure principle, but under the influence of the "instructress Necessity", the pleasure principle is inevitably modified into the reality principle. (Freud 1973: 402–403.) So the degree to which one is able to postpone immediate pleasure in order to accomplish a more distant goal is in Freud's thinking one of the determining factors of an individual's development (and in section 1.3, this view was extended to explain the behavioural tendencies of society at large).

In addition to the reality principle, reference should at this point be made to Freud's discussion on libido and sublimation. According to Freud, instinctual sexual impulses are extraordinarily plastic. This means that if sexual fulfilment is thwarted, an individual can successfully seek non-sexual substitute stimulus from other, more easily attainable objects. Freud calls this *sublimation*. He likens the phenomenon of sublimation to a network of intercommunicating channels filled with a liquid. Were the passage of the liquid to some part of the network prevented (the sexual instincts), it naturally flows to its other parts (sublimation). (Freud 1973: 389–390.)

This applies roughly to pleasures in general as well. If an individual is, for reasons of, say, poverty or self-inhibition, unable to derive significant pleasure from eating, other ways of acquiring pleasure will be sought (supposing that adequate food is provided to stave off hunger, but inadequate to supply the individual with a significant source of pleasure). In that case, the liquid will flow in other directions in "the interconnected network of pleasures", since its flowing to the part of gustatory pleasures is prevented.

Conversely, if an individual *is* able to derive significant pleasure from a sensory source such as eating, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to derive substantial pleasure from intellectual sources, for the interconnected network of pleasures is heavily tilted in the direction of gustatory pleasures. Thus, finding a significant source of pleasure somewhere will to some extent dwarf the individual's efforts to seek pleasure elsewhere. Likewise, the cessation of pleasure from an accustomed source will urge the individual to seek pleasure from other sources.²⁵

Immanuel Kant gives a rather illustrative example of the relative equivalence of the values of pleasures in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). According to him, it makes no practical difference to people where their pleasures are derived from, just as it makes no difference to a greedy person if their gold was dug from a mountain or washed out of the sand. All that matters is that the gold is accepted at the same value everywhere. (Kant 2004: 22.) Following this logic, if the relative strengths of pleasures are the same, their sources are irrelevant. To combine this with Freud's metaphor, it makes no difference to which part of the interconnected network of pleasures the liquid flows, as long as it flows *somewhere* (Freud 1973: 389–390). This line of thought is, however, contested by Aristotle (1955: 299, 305), Al-Razi (quoted in Haque 2004: 370–371), Emerson (1960c: 206), Thoreau (1957: 68–76, 146–147, 218–227), Stein (1958) and Campbell (1973), who, for different reasons, see intellectual pleasures as worthier pursuits than sensory ones.

Freud's concept of the plasticity of the libido reveals the extraordinary quality of the free mobility of sources of pleasure (excepting, of course, the basic necessities of life. Nonetheless, when one is fully immersed in some absorbing errand, these may be temporarily waived as well). As a result, people can choose to educate their minds so as to receive pleasure from the sources most profitable to them. In addition, activities which initially cause displeasure can potentially metamorphose into sources of pleasure

²⁵ Jane Austen articulates this thought in *Mansfield Park*: "There will be little rubs and disappointments every where, and we are all apt to expect too much; but then, if one scheme of happiness fails, human nature turns to another; if the first calculation is wrong, we make a second better; we find comfort somewhere" (1992: 44–45).

if one habitually engages with them (Miron 2005: 664). This point is robustly driven home by Joseph Addison (Steele & Addison 1832: 185–186), and more playfully by Oscar Wilde: “Oh! anything becomes a pleasure if one does it too often. That is one of the most important secrets of life” (2000: 203). Therefore, a shrewd person will follow Pythagoras’ suggestion: “*Optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam consuetudo faciet jucundissimum*. Pitch upon that course of life which is the most excellent, and custom will render it the most delightful” (quoted in Steele & Addison 1832: 186).²⁶

In this context, it is pertinent to refer back to Aristotle’s dichotomy of *praxis* and *poiesis*. Although the dichotomy makes little reference to pleasure as such, its basic idea will be useful later on when analysing pleasure-seeking behaviour in *Walden*. To borrow Aristotle’s distinction in *Nicomachean Ethics*, *praxis* (doing) is behaviour whose goal is included in itself, whereas *poiesis* (making) is behaviour whose goal is external from the behaviour itself, some end desirable beyond that specific activity (1955: 175, 301).²⁷ For example, when Thoreau writes in *A Week* that “[i]t is not easy to write in a journal what interests us at any time, because to write it is not what interests us” (1985: 270), his writing the journal is *poiesis*. This is because he does not do it for the pleasure to be gained *from* it, but rather from its outcome: the finished journal that one day ends up as a book that he publishes.²⁸ In contrast, his travelling down the rivers and surveying nature is his *praxis*, for he engages in it for the pleasure to be acquired *precisely from* it. As can be seen, Aristotle’s concepts of *praxis* and *poiesis* correspond roughly to Freud’s concepts of the pleasure principle and the reality principle.²⁹

All forms of behaviour represent *praxis* and *poiesis* in varying degrees. Analysing their interrelations gives a good basis for determining the underlying reasons for engaging in those forms of behaviour and discovering what it is that an individual ultimately desires.

²⁶ This view has been confirmed *vis-à-vis* thesis writing. What was initially a daunting task has by way of perseverance and habituation become a pleasant exercise.

²⁷ See also Skirbegg & Gilje (2001: 82) for a general account of the dichotomy and Whiting (2002: 272) for some of its complications.

²⁸ In *Walden*, however, he does concede that the pains that he took to write his journal were in themselves rewarding enough (Thoreau 1957: 12).

²⁹ Furthermore, for a deeper discussion on how instant and deferred pleasures tie in with *happiness*, which is a different subject altogether, see, for example, O’Keefe (2002) or Feldman (2002).

Yet the relative proportions of praxis and poiesis are not carved in stone. According to the above discussion on displeasurable activities turning into pleasurable ones, poiesis can gradually ripen into praxis if a given form of behaviour is engaged in habitually (Miron 2005: 664; Steele & Addison 1832: 185–186; Wilde 2000: 203).

In more recent research, pleasure has, on the one hand, been given more precise definitions but, on the other, these definitions contradict one other. Kent C. Berridge, Morten L. Kringelbach (2008: 459) and Nico H. Frijda (2010: 99) see pleasure as a kind of “hedonic gloss” that is painted onto a sensation to make it feel pleasurable. That is to say, a sensation never creates pleasure in isolation, but the brain’s participation is required to create pleasure successfully. However, noting that the concept *pleasure* does not exist in all languages, Frijda (2010: 101, quoting Wierzbicka 1999) suggests that *feeling good* would be a more proper term to use. *Pleasure* is not a lexical universal but *feeling good* is, which makes its terminological use more justified (Frijda 2010: 101). Nevertheless, Frijda himself does not adopt the usage of *feeling good* as a term, but continues to use *pleasure* in its stead. Of pleasure he concludes that it is a stable state, that it is “the state that brings the individual to accept the state, situation, or action he or she is in, and to persist in that state to prolong it or to return to it” (Frijda 2010: 109). Frijda’s notion about pleasure is similar to Barthes’ notion of the text of pleasure, which conforms to what the reader considers culturally appropriate (1990: 14). As such, Frijda’s and Barthes’ notions are still at odds with Freud’s assertion that novelty is a prerequisite for pleasure (2001: 35).

Pace Frijda’s (2010) view of pleasure as a stable state, Michel Cabanac (2010) argues that pleasure is transient. According to Cabanac, this is because the pleasure that one receives from a certain stimulus is a variable which depends to a great extent on preceding stimuli and one’s internal state. For example, the first candy that is eaten will have a pleasant taste, but when multiple candies are consumed, the pleasurable taste will at some point turn closer to indifference, and yet again, if eating is continued to an excess, to repulsion. To explain this phenomenon, Cabanac uses two terms: *milieu intérieur* and *alliesthesia*. *Milieu intérieur* refers to a subject’s interior physiological state at any given moment. It dictates the overall needs of the subject, and guides the

subject's behaviour by signalling whether a stimulus is pleasurable or not. *Alliesthesia* means that a given sensory stimulus can cause either pleasant or unpleasant sensations according to the present milieu intérieur. Therefore, an incoming stimulus will shape the milieu intérieur, which in turn will make the following stimulus display alliesthesia. (Cabanac 2010: 116–117.)

Cabanac does concede that not all sensory stimulus is able to modify the milieu intérieur, yet all sensations are likely to display alliesthesia (Brondel & Cabanac 2007: 200; Cabanac 2010: 117). That would indicate that in causing alliesthesia there are other factors at play than merely the milieu intérieur. What these factors are will be further analysed in the discussion on satiation (section 2.3). At this point, it is sufficient to point out that the inevitable alliesthesia/satiation of pleasure will ensure that no behaviour can be continued *ad infinitum*, thus refuting Frijda's claim about pleasure being a stable state (2010: 109).³⁰

In another study, Cabanac and Bonniot-Cabanac review the extent to which decision-making is based on rationalisation or on maximisation of pleasure. They establish that weighing between different courses of action and subsequently making a decision correlates with the amount of subjective pleasure which follows for the decision maker. Their conclusion is, therefore, that in making a decision, the main concern of people is the maximisation of pleasure rather than rationality. (Cabanac and Bonniot-Cabanac 2007.) This ties in with the view that pleasure is the “common currency” with which an organism ranks their priorities when choosing which of their many needs should be satisfied first (Cabanac 1992). It also provides support for the overall view presented in this thesis that the search of pleasure is the main motivator of human behaviour.

Barthes' notions of pleasure (for there seem to be several, cf. Barthes 1990: 14, 21, 64, 65) are deemed irrelevant in the context of this thesis for the reason that they focus

³⁰ Ann Whitefield gives a lucid example of visual alliesthesia in George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*: “Beauty is all very well at first sight; but who ever looks at it when it has been in the house three days? I thought our pictures very lovely when papa bought them; but I havnt [*sic*] looked at them for years. You never bother about my looks: you are too well used to me. I might be the umbrella stand” (Shaw 1969: 203).

exclusively on the pleasure of reading. If mere pleasure of reading were analysed in this thesis, using Barthes' theory would be more relevant than it is now. Yet as the variety of behaviour analysed is broader, the use of Campbell's theory is more feasible. What is more, Campbell's theory (which will be presented in detail in the following chapters) is more comprehensible, comprehensive and scientifically better vindicated than that of Barthes, which makes its use as a significant theoretical basis more justifiable.

To sum up Campbell's theory briefly, he establishes via numerous neurophysiological laboratory experiments that the limbic parts of the brain need to be kept stimulated at all times. Noting that animals do this by engaging in activities in which their senses are stimulated in various ways, he makes the juxtaposition between animals' pleasure-seeking methods and those of humans. Humans, however, are also able to derive pleasure even in the absence of sensory stimuli, in which case they derive intellectual pleasure from thinking. The extent to which one is able to derive pleasure independent of the senses, according to Campbell, determines the phylogenetic and ontogenetic development of an individual. He advocates the use of intellectual pleasure-seeking methods in order to lead a life which is more characteristic of the human than the animal way of living. (Campbell 1973.)

Occasional references will henceforth be made to Freud's concepts, for they elucidate an aspect of pleasure seeking that other theorists have more or less neglected, that is, the reality principle (Freud 1973: 402–403). The concept of "the interconnected network of pleasures", derived from Freud's (1973: 389–390) notion of the plasticity of the libido, will also prove useful in the analysis of *Walden*. Aristotle's (1955) terms *praxis* and *poiesis* will be used due to their ability to locate the motives for engaging in any given behaviour.

2.2 Intracranial Self-Stimulation

In order to give a proper outline of Campbell's theory about pleasure-seeking, it is necessary to refer briefly back to laboratory tests carried out with animals. Although as

such they are not directly connected to the present enquiry, they elucidate the origins of Campbell's thought. Hence, in this section, the focus is laid on those laboratory experiments, and more conventional patterns of behaviour will be discussed in section 2.3.

The roots of the scientific study of the so-called pleasure areas go back to 1954, to an experiment carried out by James Olds and Peter Milner. In the experiment, an electrode was implanted in a specific part of a rat's brain, and a current was dispatched into the brain if a lever was pressed. The lever was situated in the rat's cage, and it was for the rat to choose when to press it or not to press it at all. The subject with the highest rate of pressing the lever did so 1,920 times per hour: once every two seconds. (Olds & Milner 1954.) With these results, it was obvious that the current dispatched into the brain was somehow desirable for the animal. This type of behaviour was later coined "intracranial self-stimulation", that is, stimulation controlled by the test subject and happening exclusively inside the skull (the cranium) (cf. Campbell 1973: 20). Tests were later carried out with human subjects as well, with similar kinds of results (Campbell 1973: 26–27).

Campbell gives an account of human experiments carried out in Sweden and America in which mental patients were given this kind of electric treatment to make them able to experience pleasure, if only artificially. Intracranial self-stimulation produced varied responses in the human subjects, according to the specific placement of the electrodes in the limbic system. (Campbell 1973: 26–27.) Stimulating one area was described by the subject as

"about to produce a memory"; another as causing sexual thoughts and the feeling of imminent orgasm; yet another limbic region gave a "drunk" feeling and the elimination of bad thoughts; while another simply made the patient "feel good" as compared with the "feel great" effect of another site. (Campbell 1973: 27.)

Significantly, the human subjects, too, had astounding response rates, utilising intracranial self-stimulation up to 1,100 times per hour. They did this for as long as six hours, which was the maximum amount of time allowed for them to carry on doing so.

(Campbell 1973: 27.) This testifies to the powerful effect that intracranial self-stimulation can have on its subjects.

A more radical result of a human experiment casts a different light on the phenomenon. Alan E. Fuchs (1976: 502), quoting Moan and Heath (1972), describes a case in which “a lifelong homosexual was stimulated in the septal region and he immediately had intense sexual desires. He was later stimulated prior to meeting a woman, and he experienced an extremely enjoyable heterosexual intercourse.” The ethics of this experiment seem dubious, but it does provide an example of how powerful an impact pleasure-seeking can have on a person’s behaviour. What is more, this experiment substantiates the view that what intracranial self-stimulation provides the subjects with is not so much pleasure, but *desire* (Phillips 2003: 38; Berridge & Kringelbach 2008: 471–472). If the homosexual had experienced pleasure having had his septal region of the brain stimulated, this would hardly have had the impetus for him to change his sexual orientation in one instant. However, if the stimulation gave him intense desire, that might have acted as a sufficiently strong catalyst for him to seek temporary pleasure in ways other than his established routines dictated.

2.3 Peripheral Self-Stimulation

As Campbell (1973: 39) notes, the kind of situation in which test subjects keep pressing a lever in a test space with electrodes implanted in their brain is highly abnormal. Therefore, Campbell is interested in finding out how this curious phenomenon corresponds with natural phenomena. He establishes that the “pleasure areas” in the limbic system come under stimulation in normal circumstances as well. Input through the senses activates either the pleasure areas or the displeasure areas in one’s brain which is why the stimulus is perceived as either desirable or undesirable. This input does not occur purely inside the skull, but senses are used to register external stimuli. The impulses passing from the peripheral sensory receptors consequently activate either the pleasure or the displeasure areas in the brain. (Campbell 1973: 39–41.) Campbell coins this phenomenon “peripheral self-stimulation”. By way of various experiments, he

establishes that peripheral self-stimulation activates the limbic pleasure areas in a similar fashion to intracranial self-stimulation. That is why it is perceived as the natural counterpart of the highly artificial intracranial self-stimulation. (Campbell 1971; 1973: 39–61.)

Peripheral self-stimulation, then, is one of the ways in which humans are able to activate the pleasure areas in their brains. Peripheral self-stimulation in this context means nothing more extraordinary than the everyday methods of gaining sensory stimuli. As noted earlier, animals share these methods of activating the pleasure areas through their senses, albeit for them the sources of pleasure differ somewhat from those of humans. After this recognition, however, Campbell's argumentation takes a new turn and he establishes the one differentiating factor between humans and animals: humans have yet another method to keep their pleasure areas activated (1973: 77). This method will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4, but before shifting the focus further, attention should be paid to the important role of peripheral self-stimulation in behaviour.

To provide evidence for his initial claim, “[i]f the reader is not a plant, he is a pleasure seeker” (Campbell 1973: 1), Campbell maintains that the pleasure areas *must* be kept active at all times. In corroboration, he cites “sensory deprivation” experiments, in which test subjects have been kept in various degrees of sensory isolation. In a thorough sensory deprivation experiment, the subjects were temporarily blinded, deafened, immobilised and submerged in water in a vessel in which their bodies were encased in yielding material. In such well-nigh absolute sensory deprivation, the subjects started behaving like insane people within a few minutes and, due to their inability to communicate coherently, the test had to be terminated. When the subjects were allowed to receive stimuli again, these symptoms rapidly disappeared. However, experiments with other species have showed that prolonged sensory deprivation may lead to brain

dysfunction. (Campbell 1973: 127–128.) This proves that stimulation of the pleasure areas is a *sine qua non* of mammalian life (although it does not explain why).³¹

As Campbell notes, partial sensory deprivation occurs in the lives of normal people as well. We are all alone occasionally, and when bereft of the company of other people, some of us resort to surrogate stimuli: singing, whistling, listening to the radio or even talking to oneself. (Campbell 1973: 128.) Talking to pets and plants is of course an option for those in possession of them. Turning on the TV is similarly an important source of passive visual and auditory stimuli for many (intellectual pleasure can also be derived from watching it). Some students report that they have to have the TV on when they study in order to cope sufficiently with the tedium of study (personal communication, non-identifiable, females, 23–24 years old).

For them, the intellectual stimulus of studying is not capable of activating their pleasure areas, but they need alternative sensory stimulation in order to keep the pleasure areas activated. At worst, these students might show

all the signs of irritation, frustration, boredom, and tiredness characteristic of a child when confronted with a situation that demands the protracted use of their thinking capacities. Their happiest times, like the child's, are when they are indulging in some form of peripheral self-stimulation. (Campbell 1973: 85.)

³¹ In his essay *The Spike*, Orwell (1970a: 62–63) writes that “I have come to think that boredom is the worst of all a tramp’s evils, worse than hunger and discomfort, worse even than the constant feeling of being socially disgraced. It is a silly piece of cruelty to confine an ignorant man all day with nothing to do; it is like chaining a dog in a barrel. Only an educated man, who has consolations within himself, can endure confinement.” Thus, Orwell makes the point that confinement from varying sensory stimuli is torturous for people who are unaccustomed to deriving pleasure from abstract thought alone. This testifies to the fact that the pleasure areas must be kept active – if not by sensory then by intellectual stimulus.

This view gains additional support in *Walden*: “The farmer can work alone in the field or the woods all day, hoeing or chopping, and not feel lonesome, because he is employed; but when he comes home at night he cannot sit down in a room alone, at the mercy of his thoughts, but must be where he can ‘see the folks,’ and recreate, and, as he thinks, remunerate himself for his day’s solitude; and hence he wonders how the student can sit alone in the house all night and most of the day without ennui and ‘the blues’; but he does not realize that the student, though in the house, is still at work in *his* field, and chopping in *his* woods, as the farmer in his, and in turn seeks the same recreation and society that the latter does, though it may be a more condensed form of it” (Thoreau 1957: 94) (emphasis original). This “recreation and society” may be simply rephrased as the activation of the limbic areas of the brain.

That is why they are poorly suited to the role of being a student. Perhaps they are only yet to face the transitional phase of being able to acquire pleasure intellectually rather than sensorily; or perhaps they are never able to undergo this change at all. Whether they are or are not able to undergo this change will, to some extent, define their future paths in life.

To return to the discussion on sensory deprivation and the necessity to keep the pleasure areas activated, the most thorough form of sensory deprivation in normal life occurs, naturally, during sleep. Dreaming, therefore, may be perceived as the brain's escape valve with which to provide the sleeping person with stimulus even when normal visual stimuli are unavailable (Campbell 1973: 129). Of course, rolling in the bed, self-touching while asleep, nocturnal eating, somniloquy and even somnambulism can all be attributed to the effects of the same cause: the need to keep the pleasure areas constantly activated, even though an individual is bereft of regular forms of sensory stimulation.

Where Cabanac and Brondel (Cabanac 2010: 117; Brondel & Cabanac 2007) use the terms *milieu intérieur* and *alliesthesia* to describe the fact that a stimulus can at one time be pleasant and at another unpleasant, Campbell (1973: 54) uses the term *satiation effect*. As noted earlier, in experiments on intracranial self-stimulation, the human subjects went on pressing the lever for extended periods of time, and would sometimes not discontinue the activity until the experiment was terminated by the investigator (Campbell 1973: 27). When an animal test subject was given *carte blanche* to press the intracranial self-stimulation lever, it similarly did not do anything else except push the lever: "It falls to the floor exhausted, sleeps, awakens, and immediately begins to press the lever again. So it goes on, cycle after cycle, so acutely and persistently that the investigator removes the lever in order to save the animal's life" (Campbell 1973: 24–25). Clearly, then, the satiation effect is not a part of intracranial self-stimulation. Due to this absence of the satiation effect, Campbell sees intracranial self-stimulation as "ultimate pleasure, the font of all behavior" (Campbell 1973: 24). In Campbell's experiments in peripheral self-stimulation, however, the satiation effect is clearly present (Campbell 1973: 54).

As noted by Campbell, the satiation effect is vital in ensuring the survival of an animal. If an animal concentrated solely on one form of behaviour, it would inevitably die. In a normal situation, an animal engages in multiple types of behaviour, such as mating, eating, exploration and aggression, simply because all of them are pleasurable. When an activity ceases to be pleasurable, it is discontinued. Campbell argues that this is an absolutely vital part of pleasure-seeking (Campbell 1973: 75). If an animal does nothing but eat, it will contract visceral illnesses or die of obesity. If an animal's sole behaviour is mating, it will soon die of thirst, hunger or get eaten by a predator. Satiation occurs in order to force an animal to do multiple things, thus ensuring its survival. As a result, multiple, varied stimuli will be sought under natural circumstances (as opposed to, for example, the artificial intracranial self-stimulation experiments described in the previous section, in which electrical stimulus alone is sufficient to activate the pleasure areas for an extended period of time).

The cessation of pleasure, however, is not the only explanation for an animal (or a human) to change its behaviour. The feelings of displeasure that arise from, say, hunger will also dictate the behaviour of an animal or a human, reminding one of Bentham's statement: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*" (2000: 14) (emphasis original). The awareness of a duty that one must perform similarly causes feelings of displeasure, thereby urging one to perform that duty, even though little pleasure is to be derived from performing the duty itself. The longer the duty is postponed, the greater the displeasure it causes generally becomes. Thus, pleasure-seeking is not the only motivator of human behaviour, but it works together with pain-avoidance to determine the final behavioural outcome of an individual. For example, if a person's aversion to spending money is greater than their desire to buy delicious foods, the algebraic sum of pain/pleasure dictates that they will buy cheap foods and live frugally (Phillips 2003: 40). Conversely, gourmets who do not hate spending money will seek pleasure by lavishly spending on food products.

2.4 Sensory vs. Intellectual Pleasures

Peripheral self-stimulation is a pleasure-seeking method shared by animals and humans. Yet as Campbell points out, humans, unlike animals, have another method for activating their pleasure areas. This is because humans have a more developed part of the brain called the cerebral cortex, which is utilised when abstract thinking is engaged in. The use of the human cerebral cortex can send nerve impulses to the limbic regions of the brain, thus activating the pleasure areas. (Campbell 1973: 77–79.) According to Campbell, activating the limbic areas of the brain by means of impulses streaming down from the higher regions of the brain is the unequivocal dividing line with which it is possible to differentiate between lower animals and humans. In this kind of stimulation of the pleasure areas, sensory input is unnecessary. (Campbell 1973: 77–79.)

At this point, it should be noted that this view is not totally unproblematic. After all, “[r]easoning, says Schopenhauer, is of feminine nature: it can give only after it has received” (Arnheim 1969: 1), which is to say that intellectual behaviour cannot develop without some sensory input (that is why sensory pleasures precede intellectual ones in the developmental paradigm). In David Frank Benson’s terms, thinking requires *thought content*, and input through the senses provides an individual with it (1994: 5). Having received *thought content* through sensory pleasure-seeking, an individual may start *thought processing* (intellectual pleasure-seeking): comprehending, storing, manipulating, monitoring, controlling and responding to the data provided by the senses (Benson 1994: 5). An individual’s thought contents are idiosyncratic, although large bodies of standardised teaching and common experience of the world are shared with other individuals (Benson 1994: 5). Once recorded in the brain, thought content may be recalled later in time. That is why an individual may evoke sensory data even though its source is absent. Recalling familiar faces or playing favourite tunes in one’s head are examples of retrospective visual and auditory thinking. A more thoroughgoing discussion of the extent to which intellectual behaviour relies on sensory thought content is unfeasible in the present study. It was merely touched upon here in order to problematise the stark division of pleasures into intellectual and sensory ones.

The division of pleasures into sensory and intellectual ones is also made by Aristotle. He postulates that every species of animal has a pleasure peculiar to it, and the greatest pleasure to be derived by the animal is to be found from exactly the pleasure which intimately belongs to it. (Aristotle 1955: 299.) Applying this rule, and noting that “the intellect more than anything *is* the man”, Aristotle deduces that the happiest life for humans is that in which pleasure-seeking is carried out intellectually (1955: 305) (emphasis original). He further notes that it would be strange if humans were to live not their own lives, but that of another (1955: 305). That is to say, it would be odd if humans were to use similar pleasure-seeking methods that animals use. That explains Aristotle’s disdain for sensory pleasure-seeking: “The utter vulgarity of the herd of men comes out in their preference for the sort of existence a cow leads” (1955: 30).

To this effect, William Bysshe Stein evokes the image of the centaur to explain Thoreau’s internal contradictions (1958: 197). As the centaur’s human half physically rests and is therefore dependent upon the animal half, so sensory pleasure-seeking is a prerequisite for intellectual pleasure-seeking. Since sensory pleasures precede intellectual ones ontogenetically as well, a person’s development may be determined by the amount of intellectual pleasure they seek. This corresponds to their full realisation of the centaur symbol, which is also acknowledged by Thoreau in *Walden*’s “Higher Laws”:

By turns our purity inspires and our impurity casts us down. He is blessed who is assured that the animal is dying out in him day by day, and the divine being established. Perhaps there is none but has cause for shame on account of the inferior and brutish nature to which he is allied. I fear that we are such gods or demigods only as fauns and satyrs, the divine allied to beasts, the creatures of appetite, and that, to some extent, our very life is our disgrace. (1957: 151.)

As becomes clear from the above passage, Thoreau recognises this centauric division of humans, and exhorts his readers to inhibit the dominance of the animal half in order for the human one to prevail.

In line with this dichotomy, Campbell forms the gist of his argument by categorising all behaviour into two separate groups: subhuman and human. He constructs a yardstick

against which each person's behaviour can be measured and thus their level of "humanness" determined. At the bottom of this yardstick is behaviour that is completely sensory – at the top, behaviour in which only the thinking regions of the brain are in operation. The middle ground between these two extremes consists of forms of behaviour in which senses and thought are used jointly, each in a varied degree depending on the behaviour in question. (Campbell 1973: 80–82.) Examples of activities that form the two extremes of this yardstick are eating (sensory: bottom) and the abstract thinking practised in mathematics or logic (intellectual: top).

Rarely is any given behaviour either purely sensory or purely thought-centred. Even in reading a book, the eyesight is used as an ancillary means with which to grapple with the abstract thoughts brought to bear by the book. Similarly, in a mainly sensory activity, some degree of thinking is usually necessary. For example, a game of American football consists of physical exertion as well as strategic planning. What Campbell emphasises, however, is the main method of activating the pleasure areas: whether this is done mainly by means of the senses or whether abstract thought is what primarily activates the pleasure areas. Ultimately, the behavioural patterns of an individual form "a hover point" on the scale, which represents their essential "self" as a reflection of the neural mechanisms which are predominantly utilised in their pleasure-seeking. (Campbell 1973: 80–82.)

The yardstick that Campbell (1973: 82) designs is useful for two reasons. Firstly, because the use of the higher regions of the brain has only come to humans as a *species* through a long evolutionary process, and because in a human as an *individual* the use of the higher regions only develops through age, upbringing and experience – for these reasons, one can determine the phylogenetic as well as the ontogenetic development of human beings *vis-à-vis* their position on Campbell's yardstick (1973: 83–85). Secondly, according to Campbell, there is a rough correlation between how an activity is located on the yardstick and what kind of contribution it makes to society. In short, sensory behaviour is often quite ephemeral and has little lasting value, whereas the results of thinking behaviour can last for many generations and have a profound effect on the progress that the human race makes. (Campbell 1973: 220–224.)

This becomes readily apparent when one thinks, for example, of major sports events. In the case of the Olympic Games, enormous amounts of money are spent on the event. The athletes who participate have a rigorous training program, which requires a substantial investment of time and money. Millions of people gather around their television sets all over the world to follow this major event. This has been going on for more than a hundred years. Yet the kind of impact that the event has had on the *progress* of the human race is quite minimal. Sports merely perpetuate themselves in the sense that they transfer the pleasure-seeking methods utilised in them onto the next generation. In the 23rd century, humankind will not look back on the accomplishments of those athletes who competed in the Olympics in the 20th century. This kind of activity is a rat race that contributes little to humankind as a whole (Campbell 1973: 181). According to Campbell, this is because the method with which the involved parties activate their pleasure areas is mainly sensory.³²

Conversely, activities which require abstract thinking potentially create something lasting (Campbell 1973: 207–245). Science is a case in point. Because scientists down the ages have not found it displeasing to engage in prolonged research on various abstract subjects, inventions such as electricity, computers, telephones and televisions were made – without which, ironically, many intellectual nor sensory pleasure-seekers could not imagine living. Of course, not all thinking behaviour necessarily creates something lasting, but what Campbell emphasises is that sensory behaviour can produce nothing that is of enduring value (1973: 210). That is one of the reasons why Campbell denounces sensory pleasure-seeking.

This is an inherently problematic argument, since sensory behaviour creates and sustains the human race itself, which could not be created or sustained by mere abstract thought. The human race, because created and sustained by sensory behaviour, can then go on to create something enduring by way of abstract thought. That is what Campbell

³² As a point of contrast, the game of chess consists almost completely of intellectual pleasure-seeking, yet it leaves no tangible legacy either.

(1973) refers to when he argues that sensory pleasures precede intellectual ones in human evolution. Yet to claim that sensory pleasure-seeking creates nothing that endures is a point in Campbell's argument which should be criticised.

To rephrase Campbell's argument in neurophysiological terms, sensory pleasure-seeking activates the pleasure areas of the person who engages in it. Intellectual pleasure-seeking has the same effect, but in addition, it has the added benefit of potentially activating other people's pleasure areas in the future.³³ This can be accomplished via the direct appreciation of some other person's intellectual pleasure-seeking, as recorded, for example, in books. Alternatively, if the original intellectual pleasure has in some ways created new scientific knowledge, the successive activation of other people's pleasure areas can be accomplished through its various applications, such as technical innovations, which bring different forms of pleasure directly to their users. Thus, intellectual pleasure-seeking can result in either sensory or intellectual (dis)pleasure for subsequent generations.

The ephemerality of the results of sensory pleasure-seeking in relation to the potential continuity of intellectual pleasure-seeking is eloquently expressed by Thoreau's mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson in the words with which he rounds off his essay "The Transcendentalist". It is therefore fitting to conclude this chapter by quoting them:

Amidst the downward tendency and proneness of things, when every voice is raised for a new road or another statute, or a subscription of stock; for an improvement in dress, or in dentistry; for a new house or a larger business; for a political party, or the division of an estate; — will you not tolerate one or two solitary voices in the land, speaking for thoughts and principles not marketable or perishable? Soon these improvements and mechanical inventions will be superseded; these modes of living lost out of memory; these cities rotted, ruined by war, by new inventions, by new seats of trade, or the geologic changes: — all gone, like the shells which sprinkle the sea-beach with a white colony today, forever renewed to be

³³ In a diverging train of thought, sensory behaviour that is *recorded* may similarly activate other people's pleasure areas. For example, pornography provides the involved actors mainly with sensory pleasure in the form of sex (that is, if the behaviour is seen as praxis for them; if it is seen as poiesis, it provides them mainly with money), but since recorded and subsequently viewed by other people, it gives these viewers both visual and intellectual (dis)pleasure (given that it makes them *think* about something). Therefore, it is not unproblematic to claim that only intellectual pleasures may create something enduring.

forever destroyed. But the thoughts which these few hermits strove to proclaim by silence as well as by speech, not only by what they did, but by what they forbore to do, shall abide in beauty and strength, to reorganize themselves in nature, to invest themselves anew in other, perhaps higher endowed and happier mixed clay than ours, in fuller union with the surrounding system. (Emerson 1960c: 206.)³⁴

In this passage, Emerson provocatively juxtaposes the transitory nature of the material world with the potential agelessness of the intellectual. The passage affirms its own truthfulness by its very existence.³⁵ Simultaneously, as it materially consists of ink printed on paper, it highlights the fact that without the material, the intellectual would not exist. Likewise, in absence of a physical brain, mental activity would not occur either (Campbell 1973: 109–115, 278–288; Benson 1994: 3–4).

³⁴ Cf. Thoreau's lengthy metaphor of the staff maker, quoted in section 1.1, with which he elaborates on the way in which he wrote *Walden*. A further point of comparison is found in "Reading": "A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips [...]. Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations. [...] Their authors are a natural and irresistible aristocracy in every society, and, more than kings or emperors, exert an influence on mankind" (Thoreau 1957: 71).

³⁵ Cf. Shakespeare's sonnet 65, in which this same thought is pursued in relation to the perpetuation of love via poetry: "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea, / But sad mortality o'er-sways their power, / How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea, / Whose action is no stronger than a flower? / O how shall summer's honey breath hold out / Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days / When rocks impregnable are not so stout, / Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays? / O fearful meditation! Where, alack, / Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid? / Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back, / Or who his spoil o'er beauty can forbid? / O none, unless this miracle have might: / That in black ink my love may still shine bright" (Shakespeare 1997: 241).

3 SENSORY AND INTELLECTUAL PLEASURE-SEEKING IN *WALDEN*

“What I have observed of the pond is no less true in ethics. [...] Such a rule of the two diameters not only guides us toward the sun in the system and the heart in man, but draw lines through the length and breadth of the aggregate of a man’s particular daily behaviors and waves of life³⁶ into his coves and inlets, and where they intersect will be the height or depth of his character.” (Thoreau 1957: 198.)

This chapter opens with the introduction of the extended metaphor where Thoreau juxtaposes human life with a body of water. After a brief discussion about Thoreau’s epistemological development, focus shifts to Thoreau’s description of Alek Therien as a sensory pleasure-seeker (3.1). Thoreau’s preferred pleasure-seeking methods are then analysed in 3.2 (sensory-intellectual pleasures) and 3.3 (intellectual pleasures). The chapter concludes with an analysis of Thoreau’s famous animal parable as it pertains to the subject matter of this thesis (3.4).

In *Walden*’s chapter “The Pond in Winter”, Thoreau gives an elaborate explanation of how he measures the depth of Walden Pond. Different kinds of belief existed of the pond’s depth (some people thought that the pond had no bottom at all), which makes Thoreau curious to find out the truth about it. Therefore, he uses a cod-line and a stone to sound it. He makes precise notes of the depth of more than a hundred points around the pond, and is thus able to determine the bottom’s depth and form exactly. (Thoreau 1957: 195–199.)³⁷ He finds out that the point of the greatest depth is apparently at the centre of the ad hoc map that he draws of the pond while measuring its depth. Then, measuring the

map lengthwise, and then breadthwise, [I] found, to my surprise, that the line of greatest length intersected the line of greatest breadth *exactly* at the point of greatest depth, [...] and I said to myself, Who knows but this hint would conduct to the deepest part of the ocean as well as of a pond or

³⁶ A pun on *ways of life*, leading into the extended metaphor of human life as a body of water, which continues all the way to the last page of *Walden*: “The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it” (Thoreau 1957: 227). The analysis of this passage will be carried out later in the thesis.

³⁷ These measurements are not to be dismissed as a mere pastime of a forest-dweller and therefore unreliable. Thoreau had worked as a land-surveyor and his accuracy and skill in the profession were well-known (Emerson 1960d: 380).

puddle? Is not this the rule also for the height of mountains, regarded as the opposite of valleys? (Thoreau 1957: 197.) (Emphasis original.)

His propensity to infer universal laws of nature inductively from one particular phenomenon that is presently under his eye (Emerson 1960d: 392) leads Thoreau to deduce a tentative geographical law that would hold true not only with Walden Pond, but with all oceans, puddles and mountains alike (1957: 197).

Furthermore, he infers yet another law – one which is more relevant to the present thesis than the geographical inference of the previous passage. Having noted that the deepest point of a pond can possibly be determined through an inspection of its two intersecting diameters, Thoreau speculates that the depth of a person’s character can be assessed accordingly by studying their daily behaviour. According to him, by drawing “lines through the length and breadth of the aggregate of a man’s particular daily behaviors”, one finds the “height or depth” of their character in the point where the lines intersect. (Thoreau 1957: 198.) Thus, if a person is surrounded with “mountainous circumstances” and an “Achillean shore”,³⁸ a corresponding height is suggested in the person’s character (Thoreau 1957: 199).

Thoreau speaks in metaphors, of course, but the similarity of his metaphors to Campbell’s behavioural yardstick is obvious (Campbell 1973: 82). Where Thoreau is concerned with sounding the depth of Walden Pond by using a cod-line and a stone, Campbell is correspondingly concerned with sounding the depth of human character by analysing a person’s behaviour on the sensory/intellectual continuum. Thoreau notes the similarity of these exercises, makes the juxtaposition between pond depth and depth of character, and engages in measuring the depth of character of his contemporaries (1957: 198–199). Since pleasure-seeking is the underlying motive for engaging in these forms of behaviour, whether it is mainly executed through sensory or intellectual forms of behaviour also determines a person’s depth of character. Therefore, a person whose pleasure-seeking is mainly sensory can be said to be shallow in character, to borrow

³⁸ Achilles was born in Thessaly, a mountainous region of northeastern Greece (Thoreau 2004: 281).

Thoreau's metaphors, and one whose pleasure-seeking is intellectual correspondingly deep in character.

However, Campbell's dualistic thought of sensory pleasures as undesirable and intellectual ones as desirable is to some extent undermined by Thoreau. As Schneider (1995: 100) points out, "for Thoreau spirit is found *in* nature, not *through* it" (emphasis original) and all the natural objects that he describes have a double meaning, one physical and one symbolic. Thoreau derives intellectual pleasure from what he observes in nature, with sensory pleasures inextricably interwoven with intellectual ones, thus suggesting a kind of *neutral monism* (Stubenberg 2010). Thoreau's attitude is reminiscent of Spinoza's phrase *Deus, sive Natura*, "God, or Nature", which in a unifying vein identifies the pantheistic nature of God and the divine essence of nature (Nadler 2011). Yet elsewhere Thoreau's dualistic thinking is obvious when he writes that "I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both. I love the wild not less than the good" (Thoreau 1957: 144).

Nor is this dualism his final epistemological view, for elsewhere still he seems to advocate a kind of pluralism. When criticising the lives led by his countrymen, he reminds them of the immense array of possibilities that they can choose from: "This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre" (Thoreau 1957: 7). The reason for him leaving Walden was, as he surmises, that he perhaps had "*several more lives to live*, and could not spare any more time for that one" (Thoreau 1957: 220) (emphasis added). On the one hand, therefore, there exists a kind of monism in Thoreau's thinking, on the other, dualism, and yet at times he hints at a pluralistic worldview. Perhaps Thoreau's epistemological views are never reconciled. Or, as Schneider suggests, perhaps *Walden* is for Thoreau a transitional phase whose starting point is monistic or dualistic thinking and destination a pluralistic one (1995: 104–105).³⁹

³⁹ Schneider (1995: 104) quotes William G. Perry (1970) and Robert F. Rodgers (1992) when making the general point that students in higher education go through a similar epistemological development, with only a fraction of the students stepping beyond dualistic to multiplistic thinking. More recently, Jennifer

Since the theoretical basis for this thesis is Campbell's dualistic model, the analysis may seem rather dualistic as well. However, it should be borne in mind that Campbell, too, emphasises that a person's behaviour cannot be purely sensory or purely intellectual, but that there are variations of degrees in which these forms of behaviour are engaged in, resulting in a pluralistic system of analysis. Therefore, as noted earlier, the most significant determinant of a person's behaviour is the overall "hover point" of a person's dots on Campbell's behavioural yardstick (1973: 82). This hover point also determines to what extent a person has reached the maturity of the centaur symbol.

3.1 Sensory Pleasures: Alek Therien

Thoreau introduces Alek Therien (1812–1885) as an example of a person who has not reached the full centauric maturity. Thoreau clearly emphasises Therien's importance, for no other character in *Walden* receives as lengthy a treatment as he does, if Thoreau or Walden Pond⁴⁰ themselves are not taken into account. Therien's pleasure-seeking methods are mainly sensory, which makes Thoreau perceive (and portray) him as a person whose higher faculties are left undeveloped and who has only reached the animal level of the centaur symbol.

In the "Visitors" chapter of *Walden*, Thoreau (1957: 99–104) devotes some five pages to the description of Therien, whom he first met on July 14th 1845, ten days into his Walden experience (Bradford 1963: 499). His description of him begins: "Who should come to my lodge this morning but a true Homeric or Paphlagonian⁴¹ man, — he had so suitable and poetic a name that I am sorry I cannot print it here, — A Canadian, a wood-chopper and post-maker, who can hole fifty posts in a day" (Thoreau 1957: 99). Alek

A. Moon (2008) has made the same observation. For a more detailed study on the intellectual development of Thoreau, see Gayet (1981).

⁴⁰ Due to its thematic importance, the pond itself may be regarded as a character of *Walden* (cf. Cafaro 2006: 36).

⁴¹ Of Paphlagonia, an ancient rugged and mountainous country with dense forests on the Black Sea coast (Thoreau 2004: 139).

Therien is never named in *Walden*, but in his *Journal* Thoreau does reveal his name (quoted in Bradford 1963: 500).

In Thoreau's (1957: 99–104) description, Therien is a simple man with no aspiration to and indeed little capability of elevated thought. He spends the greater part of his days felling trees in the forest. When he gets hungry, he eats cold meat that he has brought along with him in a tin pail. When he gets thirsty, he drinks his coffee out of the stone bottle which he carries attached to his belt. This sensory mode of life is perfectly sufficient for him: "By George! I can enjoy myself well enough here chopping; I want no better sport" (Thoreau 1957: 101). Therien sometimes spends his free time, as Thoreau (1957: 101) remarks, walking in the woods all day and firing salutes to himself with a pocket pistol. This form of behaviour is also sensory, for firing the pocket pistol gives him auditory as well as minor olfactory stimuli. Possibly, firing the pistol repeatedly also excites Therien's naïve mind.

Further, Thoreau (1957: 101) describes Therien's behaviour in another way, the equivalent analysis of which is also provided by Campbell (1973: 177–181). Thoreau writes of Therien that "[s]uch an exuberance of animal spirits had he that he sometimes tumbled down and rolled on the ground with laughter at anything which made him think and tickled him" (1957: 101). In terms of the sensory/intellectual dichotomy, this behaviour is ambivalent, for there is apparently something comical that Therien *thought* of, which then made him tumble down and roll on the ground. In other words, Therien received intellectual pleasure from thinking about something comical, which then made him express this pleasure by rolling on the ground, thus gaining what Campbell terms "kinesthetic pleasure" (1973: 178). This kind of kinesthetic pleasure is something that Campbell sees as a vital part of the behaviour of children, whose higher brain regions have not developed enough to provide the child with intellectual pleasure (1973: 178).

Sports, Campbell's (1973: 178–179) argument runs, are a socially accepted means of continuing to derive kinesthetic pleasure even though one has reached adulthood:

When an adult indulges in simple play behavior—*rolling on the floor, kicking his legs in the air*—we immediately suspect mental abnormality.

But in many people this particular aspect of maturation is delayed and society allows for it by establishing a varied choice of play behaviors—sports and athletics—each of which has a superficial complexity of organization that renders it recognizably distinct from romping. Mentally normal people accept these forms of play and reject simple play behavior because the organized forms allow the pretense that something adult is being done. (Emphasis added.)

Therien's behaviour (rolling on the ground with laughter) exactly fits Campbell's above description of mental abnormality. Nevertheless, in the woods of New England in the 1840s one understandably expects to find few forms of organised sports. Thus, this kind of behaviour, along with Therien's daily labour of felling trees, is perhaps the way in which kinesthetic pleasure can be most readily acquired in such a milieu. Campbell (1973: 178), however, sees this kind of activation of the pleasure areas as immature. Thoreau shares this view as he remarks of Therien that in his case "a child is not made a man, but kept a child", and that "[w]hen Nature made him, she gave him a strong body and contentment for his portion, and propped him on every side with reverence and reliance, that he might live out his threescore years and ten a child" (1957: 101). Both Campbell (1973: 177–183) and Thoreau (1957: 100–104) recognise the inherent immaturity of kinesthetic and sensory pleasure-seeking, an apt example of which is provided by Alek Therien.

However, Therien's mode of pleasure-seeking is not entirely sensory. He reportedly reads literature, and the likes of Homer are not unfamiliar to him. Reading is an activity that he has reserved for rainy days, during which there is indeed little else to do (Thoreau 1957: 99). Yet despite Therien's seeming penchant for literature, Thoreau (1957: 99) doubts that he has even read a book wholly through. Similarly, Thoreau doubts whether Therien has ever understood what he has read: "To him Homer was a great writer, though what his writing was about he did not know" (1957: 100). In general, Thoreau also entertains great suspicion as to the mental development of his sylvan friend: "In him *the animal man* chiefly was developed [...] But the intellectual

and what is called spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant” (1957: 101) (emphasis added).⁴²

This kind of analysis of Therien as an animal man is what readily reminds one of Campbellian terminology of subhuman/human behaviour. Indeed, Thoreau’s thinking is to a large extent similar to that of Campbell (1973: 82). Furthermore, Thoreau recognises, as Campbell does (1973: 82, 228), that the kind of animal behaviour that Therien exhibits is largely true of most men: “Yet I never, by any manoeuvring, could get him to take the spiritual view of things; the highest that he appeared to conceive of was a simple expediency, such as you might expect *an animal* to appreciate; and this, practically, is true of most men” (Thoreau 1957: 103) (emphasis added). Having paid attention to this unfortunate fact of the prevalence of animal behaviour amongst the majority of humans, one of the important points of Thoreau in *Walden* and of Transcendentalism in general is to elevate people beyond the purely sensory and enable them to grow intellectually – which is also one of the main points that Campbell is making. Thoreau introduces Therien as a foil for the kind of phylogenetic and ontogenetic ideal person that he wishes would eventually develop (this notion will be further pursued in sections 3.3 and 3.4). Therien is the animal part of the centaur; his intellectual part, in Thoreau’s opinion, is forever left undeveloped.

3.2 Thoreau’s Sensory-Intellectual Pleasures

Thoreau’s own behaviour, however, is also markedly ambivalent when it comes to the sensory/intellectual dichotomy. In this section, some of the sensory activities which give Thoreau immense pleasure are analysed, paying due attention to the fact that rarely are these pleasures purely sensory, but that they characteristically resonate with some part

⁴² In *Walden*’s final chapter, “Conclusion”, Thoreau concedes the limitations of thus judging other people: “Sometimes we are inclined to class those who are once-and-a-half-witted with the half-witted, because we appreciate only a third part of their wit” (1957: 221). Moreover, on the first page of *Walden* he seems curiously committed to answer the enquiries made by the people of Concord concerning his mode of life. Perhaps he himself did not want to be seen as a half-witted hermit secluding into the woods; and, in part, *Walden* can be seen as an explanation to his fellow citizens of his choice to live there.

of Thoreau's intellect as well. That is why they are located not at the bottom of Campbell's behavioural yardstick, but establish a hover point somewhere in the middle of it. It is not the intention to give an exhaustive list of Thoreau's sensory-intellectual pleasures here (for they are abundant in *Walden*); rather, some illustrative examples are raised from the bulk of them and given a more detailed analysis.

The most salient example of Thoreau's sensory pleasure-seeking is his enjoyment of sounds. There is one whole chapter titled "Sounds" in *Walden* dedicated to the sounds of nature that Thoreau so relishes.⁴³ At the beginning of the chapter, he confesses that he spent long days not working nor accomplishing anything but merely sitting in the woods, idling away the hours of the day in reverie: "This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting. A man must find his occasions in himself, it is true" (Thoreau 1957: 77–78). It does not bother Thoreau that this behaviour does not *lead* to anything, does not *produce* anything. For him, this is the kind of behaviour for which it is worthwhile to simplify his life and abandon most of the material superfluities which his countrymen cannot imagine living without.

This mode of being is Thoreau's praxis.⁴⁴ These moments indubitably allow Thoreau the contemplative time in which to ripen his thoughts. He remarks that he "grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been" – even though "nothing memorable [was] accomplished" (1957: 77–78). Immersed in contemplation, these moments are for Thoreau a source of intellectual pleasure. In this intellectual pleasure are interwoven the sensory pleasures which he simultaneously gains by the influx of the sights and sounds of nature around him. The sensory pleasures, no doubt, inspire his intellectual pleasures (as will be demonstrated in the next paragraph) and vice versa. Thus, the sensory pleasures provide Thoreau with

⁴³ A significant portion of the chapter (pp. 79–85) is, however, dedicated to his denunciation of the railway system, as well as the system of commerce which its advent enabled.

⁴⁴ Cf. Emerson's (1960b: 161) remark in "Self-Reliance" (although refraining to state it explicitly, Emerson probably had Thoreau in his mind when he wrote this): "He walks abreast with his days and feels no shame in not 'studying a profession', for he does not postpone his life [poiesis], but lives already [praxis]." For the discussion on praxis/poiesis, refer back to section 2.1.

the necessary *thought contents*, to use Benson's (1994: 5) terms, with which to engage in the *thought processing*, which in turn gives Thoreau the intellectual pleasures as recorded in *Walden*.

Thoreau dedicates the remainder of the chapter to the analysis of the sounds that he hears after the restless world of train cars and commercial striving has left him alone with nature. He derives obvious pleasure from faintly hearing the town bells, the distant lowing of cows, or the differing songs of various birds. (Thoreau 1957: 85–89.) For Thoreau, there was “a ratio between extensiveness in space and intensiveness of feeling” so that what is farthest away from his senses evokes the intensest feelings in him (McSweeney 1998: 101). These sounds are certainly intensely felt by him, for they signal to him his unity with nature and the universe. It is not uncommon that he conjures up a far-fetched comparison when hearing sounds around him.⁴⁵ The distant lowing of the cows, for example, reminds him of “certain minstrels by whom [he] was sometimes serenaded”; and a little later he makes the association that the owls’ “dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian” (Thoreau 1957: 85–86). It is clear that Thoreau receives *de facto* sensory pleasure from the sounds with which he is surrounded and intellectual pleasure from analysing and making links inside his cognitive world of sounds.⁴⁶

Further, Thoreau spends a great portion of his summer days working in his bean-field. He does this partly to provide himself with food and money (Thoreau 1957: 37), partly to give him material for tropes and parables as a writer (1957: 111–112),⁴⁷ but partly he is unaware why he does it: “But why should I raise [beans]? Only Heaven knows. This was my curious labor all summer” (Thoreau 1957: 107). Hoeing beans is clearly what Campbell would term sensory behaviour, for little use of the higher regions of the brain is required in the activity. Yet perhaps hoeing beans is for Thoreau his way of achieving the transcendental goal, to establish an “original relation to the universe” (Emerson

⁴⁵ Cf. “One cannot fix one’s eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy” (Austen 1992: 206).

⁴⁶ The sounds that he hears by Walden Pond are pleasurable to him, excepting that of the train. Its sound reminds him of materialism, which in turn gives Thoreau intellectual displeasure.

⁴⁷ Cf. the trope in which he sees weeding the bean-field as a parallel of the Trojan War (1957: 111).

1960a: 21) and to elevate himself intellectually onto the plane of *philosophia perennis*, as Stein argues (1985: 195, 202–203).⁴⁸

This ties in with Thoreau's attitude of neutral monism, as discussed above: "for Thoreau spirit is found *in* nature, not *through* it" (Schneider 1995: 100; see Stubenberg 2010 for a discussion on neutral monism) (emphasis original). If there ever was any poiesis in his work, at this point it has dissolved and hoeing beans has become pure praxis for him: "When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop" (Thoreau 1957: 109). His sudden epiphany, "[i]t was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans", testifies to the unity with nature which he accomplishes through his agricultural task (Thoreau 1957: 109).⁴⁹

At this transcendental moment, solitude is not solitude for Thoreau, "nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness" (1957: 221): the pleasures to be got from the company of others, or from money, or from perceived strength mean nothing to him, for he has replaced them with the more primordial pleasures that he is able to derive from nature. This sentiment is particularly well articulated in the chapter "Solitude":

I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour, I doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something *unpleasant*. But I was

⁴⁸ The concept of *philosophia perennis* will be introduced as an integral part of the analysis in section 3.3.2. In a Puritan vein, Thoreau sees hard work as a necessary condition for purity: "If you would avoid uncleanness, and all the sins, work earnestly, though it be at cleaning a stable" (1957: 151). Here Thoreau again contradicts himself, for elsewhere he argues that one ought to reduce one's wants so that less work is required to sustain oneself. Work is seen as a necessary evil to satisfy one's needs, and true integrity is to be found from higher pursuits (1957: 2–3, 47, 68–76). Furthermore, at the end of "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For", he states that "I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet" (1957: 68).

⁴⁹ This unity is further affirmed in "Solitude": "I am no more lonely than the loon in the pond that laughs so loud, or than Walden Pond itself. What company has that lonely lake, I pray? And yet it has not the blue devils, but the blue angels in it, in the azure tint of its waters. The sun is alone, except in thick weather, when there sometimes appear to be two, but one is a mock sun. God is alone, — but the devil, he is far from being alone; he sees a great deal of company; he is legion. I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a humble-bee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weathercock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house" (Thoreau 1957: 95). The negations which Thoreau uses in these two passages makes them exude images of apophatic theology.

at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. (Thoreau 1957: 91.) (Emphasis added.)

This passage confirms what was earlier referred to as the free mobility of liquid in the “interconnected network of pleasures”, and the irrelevance of *where* pleasure is acquired from, as long as it is acquired from somewhere. Since Thoreau is able to derive pleasure from nature, his network is tilted in that direction, and need not be tilted in another. This is why the company of others has become insignificant for him.

It is during moments like these that Thoreau succeeds in what he sets up – in one of the most famous passages of *Walden* – as the goal for his two-year experiment in the woods: “I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, [...] to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms” (1957: 62). Sensory pleasures that are derived from nature and are inextricably linked with intellectual ones create for Thoreau Transcendentalism proper.

3.3 Thoreau’s Intellectual Pleasures

Ideally, Thoreau wishes that people would seek to find improvement in themselves rather than pursue material goals. He sets himself partially up as an example of the kind of direction that people should take. However, Thoreau is also saying (usually implicitly in *Walden* and explicitly in *A Week*) that “[i]f you would not stop to look at me, but look whither I am looking, and farther, then my education could not dispense with your company” (1985: 227). Thus, he is saying that he himself is *not the ideal* which people should seek to achieve. Rather, in his writings and in his thoughts he points the way to the phylogenetic and ontogenetic ideal that he wishes would at some point emerge from the race of intellectual pygmies with whom he presently exists, and among whose number he includes himself as well. Therefore, some of the following analysis does not

deal with Thoreau's behaviour per se, but what he prescribes as desirable behaviour for other people.

3.3.1 Thoreau's Recognition of the Developmental Paradigm

In *Walden*, Thoreau clearly acknowledges the same sensory/intellectual dichotomy that Campbell (1973) does. For example, at the beginning of the chapter "Higher Laws", he writes: "I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both. I love the wild not less than the good" (Thoreau 1957: 144). Yet further on he does elaborate on a kind of hierarchy between these two, using hunting and fishing as an example (Thoreau 1957: 146). He recognises that these are a necessary phase in a person's life: "even in civilized communities, the embryo man passes through the hunter stage of development" (Thoreau 1957: 146). However, if this hunter or fisher "has the seeds of a better life in him, he distinguishes his proper objects, as a poet or naturalist it may be, and leaves the gun and fish-pole behind. The mass of men are still and always young in this respect" (Thoreau 1957: 146).

In Campbellian nomenclature this would read: the phase of sensory behaviour is necessary in each individual's development, for no child is born with the capability to use their higher faculties right from birth. Through age, experience and education, the use of these higher faculties develops and the individual is equipped with the means with which to acquire intellectual pleasure from various forms of abstract thinking. That is to say, via sensory pleasure-seeking, the individual acquires the necessary raw material (thought content) required for intellectual behaviour (Benson 1994: 5; Arnheim 1969: 2). Unfortunately, according to Campbell, the behaviour of the masses in this respect is still hopelessly sensory and thus their phylogenetic development ("distance

from the jungle”) and ontogenetic development (“progress from the cradle”) has not been significant (Campbell 1973: 84).⁵⁰

In relation to the sensory pleasures to be derived from eating, Thoreau evokes the image of a butterfly in order to elaborate on human development:

It is a significant fact, stated by entomologists, I find it in Kirby and Spence,⁵¹ that “some insects in their perfect state, though furnished with organs of feeding, make no use of them”; and they lay it down as “a general rule, that almost all insects in this state eat much less than in that of larvae. The voracious caterpillar when transformed into a butterfly,” ... “and the gluttonous maggot when become a fly,” content themselves with a drop or two of honey or some other sweet liquid. The abdomen under the wings of the butterfly still represents the larva. This is the tidbit which tempts his insectivorous fate. The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them. (Thoreau 1957: 147.)

Those people who are on the “gross feeder” stage of human development are correspondingly at the bottom of Campbell’s yardstick, getting sensory pleasure primarily from eating. “The wonder is how they,” Thoreau deplores in a Puritan vein, “how you and I, can live this slimy beastly life, eating and drinking” (1957: 150).

Thoreau, as well as Campbell, sees abstinence from sensory pleasures (in this case gluttony) as a necessary condition for intellectual elevation: “I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, and from much food of any kind” (Thoreau 1957: 147). Therefore, Thoreau advises that in order to progress from the larva state of development, one ought to adopt a plain, minimal diet. In a proverbial saying attributed to Socrates, eating is likewise seen as poiesis, not praxis: “The wicked live to eat; the good eat to live” (quoted in Shi 1985: 4). Eating should, according to this line of thought, be engaged in not for its own sake, but because it enables one to concentrate on worthier pursuits.

⁵⁰ Campbell’s elitist attitude is clear here. However, elsewhere he mitigates this view by remarking that, one way or another, intellectual pleasures are a part of everyone’s life (Campbell 1973: 209).

⁵¹ Kirby, William & William Spence, 4 vols. (1815–1826). *Introduction to Entomology*.

This developmental paradigm – from a fisher and a hunter into a poet or a naturalist; from sensory to intellectual behaviour – Thoreau detects in himself via introspection (1957: 146–147). Having become older, he finds in himself a growing aversion to fishing, which he never had when he was younger.

I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect. [...] [A]lways when I have done [it] I feel that it would have been better if I had not fished. [...] There is unquestionably this instinct in me which belongs to the lower orders of creation; yet with every year I am less a fisherman. (Thoreau 1957: 146–147.)

Walden's Thoreau is in the transitional phase between sensory and intellectual pleasures. Every time when he tries to go back to the sensory pleasures of fishing, he gets a “faint intimation” that it would have been better if he had not fished (Thoreau 1957: 147). This intimation is what naturally directs him away from that behaviour. Consequently, he will do it less and less and eventually find himself unwilling to engage in it at all.

The way in which Thoreau juxtaposes this faint intimation with the first streaks of morning (1957: 147) links it up with the ending of *Walden*. In “Conclusion”, he speculates that the human race is in its spring months (1957: 226). However, he simultaneously sees hope for its development (1957: 227). In that context, the morning symbolises the phylogenetic awakening of the human race into a nobler, more intellectually-inclined existence (1957: 227), in the same way as his faint intimation (explicitly compared with the first streaks of morning in “Higher Laws”) ontogenetically urges Thoreau to minimise his own sensory pleasures (1957: 147). This is a part of his development away from the centaur’s animal half and, obviously, his becoming a writer is proof of his shift in the direction of the human/intellectual half.

Thoreau’s behaviour in this case can be seen to display the phenomenon of satiation, as discussed by Campbell (1973: 54). Because fishing as an activity is so familiar to Thoreau, and he has engaged in it countless times, the stimuli provided by it have become insufficient to activate the limbic pleasure areas in Thoreau’s brain. That is to say, it does not provide Thoreau with the pleasure with which it used to provide him.

This makes him grow averse to it. It is partly the phenomenon of satiation which makes Thoreau avoid fishing, but partly it is also his finding ways to activate his pleasure areas in more efficient ways. These new ways have the advantage of being, firstly, novel, and, secondly, higher up on Campbell's behavioural yardstick than fishing. Thus, engaging in these forms of behaviour, Thoreau is able to lead a life in which his human potential is realised more fully than with the sensory behaviour of fishing.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that Thoreau also has ethical reasons for leaving fishing and hunting behind. Thoreau the animal rights proponent asserts that

[n]o humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature which holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child. I warn you, mothers, that my sympathies do not always make the usual *phil-anthropic* distinctions. (1957: 146.) (Emphasis original.)

Acknowledging the same right of animals for life as humans have, Thoreau sees killing them as unethical. Further, in *A Week*, Thoreau (1985: 182) quotes the ancient Sanskrit fable *The Hitopadesha* to make the same point: "Behold the difference between the one who eateth flesh, and him to whom it belonged! The first hath a momentary enjoyment, whilst the latter is deprived of existence!" (Nyálankár 1830). Advocating resignation from speciesism, this utilitarian statement has clearly influenced Thoreau, for it is one of the factors which make him abandon fishing and hunting.

Although Thoreau himself leaves fishing and hunting behind, he recommends them as a recreational pastime for the sons of some of his friends, who consult him in the matter. He gives this advice so that the boys are able to experience these activities themselves. Thoreau hopes that in so doing, they will undergo the necessary phase that these activities form in the phylogenetic and ontogenetic development of humans; yet, he is simultaneously hoping that the boys will eventually outgrow these pursuits and become intellectual pleasure-seekers instead. (Thoreau 1957: 145–146.)

Having given up fishing and hunting, Thoreau also sees luxuries and the so-called comforts of life as a hindrance to the elevation of humankind (1957: 9, 147, 224). This

is because, in general, superfluous money is a gateway mainly to sensory pleasures. Superfluous money in this context refers to the money that is left over, one having satisfied the basic necessities of life. These are identified by Thoreau as food, shelter, clothing and fuel (1957: 7). To derive intellectual pleasure does not usually require money: thinking is free. As Thoreau remarks, “[s]uperfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul” (1957: 224).⁵² Superfluous wealth is mainly a gateway to sensory pleasures, and to dedicate one’s life to the pursuit of the former is to make one’s life abound with the latter. “Money is like a sixth sense without which you cannot make a complete use of the other five” as W. Somerset Maugham (1963: 248) poignantly remarks; but pleasure-seeking carried out via these six senses, money included, disturbs intellectual behaviour. “The ancient philosophers”, Thoreau (1957: 9) exemplifies, “were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward”, which is to say that concentration on sensory pleasures inevitably intrudes on intellectual pleasure-seeking.

In order to grasp this more fully, it is worthwhile to think of “the interconnected network of pleasures”, derived from Freud’s concept of the plasticity of the libido (1973: 389–390). If a person’s interconnected network of pleasures is heavily tilted in the direction of sensory pleasures, it is both irrelevant and extremely difficult for the individual to seek intellectual pleasures in their stead. To enable as unobstructed a way of seeking intellectual pleasures as possible, sensory pleasures should be kept to a minimum. They should serve the role of subsistence and relaxation merely, and not be an individual’s *raison d’être* (Campbell 1973: 291, 299).⁵³

However, in spite of his sensory-intellectual enjoyment of sights, sounds and labour in nature, Thoreau does exhibit purely intellectual behaviour as well. Of course the writing

⁵² Some forms of intellectual behaviour *do* require monetary input, such as buying newspapers, books, research tools or getting a university education. Thoreau, however, does not see this as a significant impediment to successful intellectual behaviour: “if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest” (1957: 224).

⁵³ The point made in this paragraph is also clearly expressed by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1955: 298, 303–305).

of *Walden* itself is proof of this: as noted earlier, the writing of a book demands the use of the higher thinking regions of the brain and a protracted neglect of sensory pleasure-seeking. Thoreau's instinct for intellectual pleasure-seeking is also clearly evident in the chapter "Reading" (1957: 68–76), in which he advocates in no weak terms the reading of classic literature and laments his contemporaries' ignorance of these classics. The manifestation of Thoreau's preferred intellectual pleasure-seeking in "Reading" is the subject matter of the following section.

3.3.2 Thoreau's Intellectual Pleasure-Seeking in "Reading": Advocating *Philosophia Perennis*

Thoreau begins the prelude to "Reading" already at the end of the preceding chapter, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For". In it, he expresses his wish to deconstruct whatever dogmas are created by church, state, poetry, philosophy and religion, and arrive at a solid bottom of reality (Thoreau 1957: 67). In a consummation of nominative determinism, *nomen est omen*, Thoreau the perfectionist lives up to the expectation of the pun in his name, *thorough*: he wants to build on solid ground, nothing less will suffice.⁵⁴ Metaphorically, to get to this hard bottom, he feels that the best way is to use his head:

⁵⁴ Thoreau expresses this sentiment not only in the chapter "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For", but also in "Conclusion", in which he gives an even more elaborate description of it: "It affords me no satisfaction to commence to spring an arch before I have got a solid foundation. Let us not play at kittlybenders [the sport of running on thin ice]. There is a solid bottom everywhere. We read that the traveller asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy replied that it had. But presently the traveller's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, 'I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom.' 'So it has,' answered the latter, 'but you have not got half way to it yet.' So it is with the bogs and quicksands of society; but he is an old boy that knows it. Only what is thought, said, or done at a certain rare coincidence is good. I would not be one of those who will foolishly drive a nail into mere lath and plastering; such a deed would keep me awake nights. Give me a hammer, and let me feel for the furring. Do not depend on the putty. Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction — a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse. So will help you God, and so only. Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work" (Thoreau 1957: 225). The connection of this train of thought with the chapter "Reading" is obvious, for Thoreau continues the work that the philosophers and writers of the past have started, standing on the hard bottom that they have created. Cf. Thoreau's similar attitude in his abolitionist declaration in "Civil Disobedience": "what is once well done is done forever" (1993: 9).

I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining-rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine. (Thoreau 1957: 68.)

It is a rare occasion for Thoreau to thus abandon an empiricist attitude and incline towards rationalistic methods for acquiring knowledge. Elsewhere he quite clearly advocates the importance of empiricism (Thoreau 1957: 34–35; 1985: 152, 296).⁵⁵ However, since it is reading and intellectual pleasure which he starts dealing with in the following chapter, this concentration on rationalism is justified.

Where he begins “to mine with his head” is in his notion of *philosophia perennis* – the idea that universal truths exist and have been recorded by wise men through the ages (Stein 1958: 195).⁵⁶ Thoreau transcends the limits of the individual and in his quest for truth sees himself as the successor of the wisdom passed on by ancient philosophers:

The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil from the statue of the divinity; and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did, since it was I in him that was then so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision. No dust has settled on that robe; no time has elapsed since that divinity was revealed. (Thoreau 1957: 68–69.)

Thoreau suggests via this metaphor that ancient philosophers have partially revealed universal truth through their work. In *his* work, Thoreau further raises that veil which is covering *philosophia perennis* and encourages others to behold it as well.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to Thoreau’s explication of how to approach *philosophia perennis* in the best way. His answer is the reading of the best books that humankind has hitherto produced, and reading them in a very specific manner. According to him, each of the wise men of the past has been perplexed by the same

⁵⁵ Cf. “[K]nowledge is to be acquired only by a corresponding experience. How can we *know* what we are *told* merely? Each man can interpret another’s experience only by his own” (1985: 296) (emphasis original).

⁵⁶ This Thoreau is in the stage of epistemological absolutism and has not arrived at the epistemological terminus in which knowledge is seen as constructed and relative (Moon 2008: 101–112).

questions that confound us, and in their books they have answered these questions according to their best ability, their words, and their lives. (Thoreau 1957: 70–75.) That is why “[t]he book exists for us, perchance, which will explain our miracles and reveal new ones. The at present unutterable things we may find somewhere uttered” (Thoreau 1957: 74). The reading of a book can be “more salutary than the morning⁵⁷ or the spring to our lives”, according to him, “and possibly put a new aspect on the face of things for us. How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book” (Thoreau 1957: 74). This can be interpreted in the way that one potentially realises that profound intellectual pleasure may be derived from the reading of a book. Consequently, a whole new world of intellectual pleasures is opened, and one takes a step forward in the ontogenetic development towards more intellectually-inclined pleasure-seeking methods.

Irrespective of time and place, Thoreau sees the lives of people as essentially similar, following the same formula over and over again. That is why he writes that “[t]ime is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains” (Thoreau 1957: 68).⁵⁸ Because people’s lives are essentially similar, it is unwise to reinvent the wheel. Instead, one ought to familiarise oneself with the “noblest recorded thoughts of man” (Thoreau 1957: 70), seek advice from them and perhaps build on them by one’s own intellectual behaviour: “Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work” (Thoreau 1957: 225). In this sense, Thoreau shares Campbell’s view that noble human behaviour should be something that has lasting value and adds to the collective human experience, rather than something which is merely ephemeral (Campbell 1973: 181, 220, 224).

⁵⁷ This is a powerful statement from Thoreau, for elsewhere he is effusive in his praise for the morning (1957: 61–62).

⁵⁸ Cf. *A Week* (1985: 100–101): “There is, indeed, a tide in the affairs of men, as the poet [Shakespeare] says, and yet as things flow they circulate, and the ebb always balances the flow. All streams are but tributary to the ocean, which itself does not stream, and the shores are unchanged, but in longer periods than man can measure. [...] But as men lived in Thebes, so do they live in Dunstable to-day”; and *Walden* (1957: 7): “the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man’s existence: as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.” These passages verify Thoreau’s view of the constancy of people’s lives, irrespective of when they lived.

Thoreau encourages his readers to seek *philosophia perennis* by reading Homer or Aeschylus, among others. According to him, the best way to read them is to learn the language that they were written in and then engage with them as thoroughly as possible. (Thoreau 1957: 69–70.) “To read true books in true spirit” is seen by Thoreau as a noble task, one which “requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object” (1957: 70). Thoreau therefore advocates close, critical reading. He is, of course, aware of how rich in meaning a book can be, for he himself has written one.⁵⁹ Revealing *philosophia perennis* by the reading of “true books in a true spirit”, and encouraging others to do so as well, are Thoreau’s noblest intellectual pleasures (1957: 70).⁶⁰

3.3.3 The Intellectual Rift Between Thoreau and His Contemporaries

Thoreau’s plight of being surrounded mainly by sensory pleasure-seekers (or seekers of feeble intellectual pleasure) manifests itself clearly in “Reading”. He laments the fact that his contemporaries do not read high literature: “One who has just come from reading perhaps one of the best English books will find how many with whom he can converse about it? Or suppose he comes from reading a Greek or Latin classic in the original, [...] he will find nobody at all to speak to, but must keep silence about it” (Thoreau 1957: 72–73). He unhesitatingly states that he aspires “to be acquainted with

⁵⁹ A significant amount of scholarship has concentrated on wordplay and ambiguity in *Walden*, which will be reviewed to some extent in section 3.4. For more detailed studies on this theme, see, for example, West (1974), Golemba (1988), and Otterberg (2005).

⁶⁰ Despite what is said above, there are at least two instances in *Walden* where Thoreau contradicts his praise of reading. In both of them, he rates the philosophy of nature above the *philosophia perennis* of classic literature. The first of these occurs at the beginning of the thematically opposite pair of the chapter “Reading” which immediately follows it, namely “Sounds”: “But while we are confined to books, though the most select and classic, and read only particular written languages, which are themselves but dialects and provincial, we are in danger of forgetting the language which all things and events speak without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard. [...] What is a course of history or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and walk on into futurity” (Thoreau 1957: 77). The second instance is located in the book’s penultimate chapter, “Spring”: “The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the blue-bird, the song-sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations?” (Thoreau 1957: 211–212). The importance of this contradiction, among that of the others, is discussed in section 3.4.

wiser men than this our Concord soil has produced” (1957: 74), but perhaps he is wrong in seeking high-level intellectual pleasure-seekers from his physical and temporal vicinity (of course he *was* surrounded with high-level intellectual pleasure-seekers – the Transcendentalists – but his lament here is rather aimed at expressing a general point). After all, he should realise that it is the wise men down through the ages with whom he should converse about the books that he has read. It is the transcendental quality of writing that enables the furthering of this conversation regardless of the passage of time.⁶¹ Instead of the John Fields or the Alek Theriens of this world (introduced in sections 1.3 and 3.1, respectively), literary critics and other authors are the ones to whom Thoreau should turn when he wishes to discuss the nature and characteristics of *philosophia perennis* as brought to bear by classic literature.

Indeed, it is these authorities to whom he *does* turn when he is writing *Walden*, and the conversation consists of all those preceding texts by which it was inspired, as well as the subsequent texts inspired by it. As became apparent from the passage quoted above (p. 70), Thoreau feels that it was partly him in the ancient philosophers who revealed *philosophia perennis*, and it is partly them who now continue the work in his philosophising (1957: 68–69). Through the intellectual pleasure-seeking of philosophy and writing, Thoreau is bound to other wise men through the ages, defying laws of temporality.

The intellectual insufficiency of Thoreau’s contemporaries to converse with Thoreau on his plane becomes palpable already in the first chapter of *Walden*:

I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have any experience which I think

⁶¹ Cf. Thomas Hardy’s poem “Heredity”, quoted in full as the epigraph of the thesis (p. 7). The “I” of this poem can be seen to refer to the poem itself, so that the speaker of the poem *is the poem itself*. This emphasises the fact of how works of an author outlive the author, living, as it were, their own lives.

valuable, I am sure to reflect that this my Mentors said nothing about. (Thoreau 1957: 5.)⁶²

This is the self-reliant Thoreau speaking here who, on the one hand, relies on his own incorruptible experience and, on the other, realises how far his seniors are from *philosophia perennis*. By his seniors, he of course refers to the living people who have been around him – not to the even older seniors, the ancient philosophers, from whom he *has* received valuable advice, *philosophia perennis*, as explained above (Thoreau 1957: 74). This quotation further explains the intellectual rift between him and his contemporaries and reveals him as someone who thinks that people in his temporal and physical vicinity have not been intelligent enough to provide him with truly valuable advice.

3.3.4 Denigration of Popular Literature and Newspapers

Thoreau mockingly introduces contemporary popular literature as a foil for *philosophia perennis*. It was mentioned above that he felt he was surrounded by sensory pleasure-seekers or seekers of feeble intellectual pleasure. It is the readers of contemporary popular literature who were referred to with the latter epithet. Thoreau has no great respect for these people, as he confesses that “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” (1957: 74). As an example of this kind of reading, he mentions a work published in several volumes called *Little Reading*, to be found from the library that he uses (Thoreau 1957: 72). Thoreau devotes a page to fulminating against this publication, concluding that reading it results in “dulness of sight, a stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties” (1957: 73). Hence, “[w]e

⁶² One would imagine that Thoreau’s mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, was not pleased to read this passage in *Walden*. On the other hand, by capitalising “Mentors”, Thoreau makes a reference to Mentor, Telemachus’ protector and teacher in *The Odyssey* (Homer 2003). By making this reference in a context in which he is denigrating the old, Thoreau can be seen to answer Mentor’s critique of the young (or, more precisely, Pallas Athene’s critique, for she has assumed Mentor’s form and voice in disguise): “Few sons, indeed, are like their fathers. Generally they are worse; but just a few are better” (Homer 2003: 2.275–2.276). Perhaps Thoreau sees himself as one of those few sons who are “better” than their fathers.

are a race of tit-men, and soar but little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper” (Thoreau 1957: 74).⁶³ In his denunciation of “Little Reading”, Thoreau creates a hierarchy between intellectual pleasures, rating classic literature above popular literature, and categorising newspapers in the same unimportant category with it.

In Thoreau’s opinion, newspapers are mere gossip, a far cry from *philosophia perennis*. Mocking the insignificance of the news, he claims that anyone could write an accurate enough piece of news about Spain, for example, even without any actual knowledge of what goes on in there. If one knew how to throw in the names of important people in the right proportions, add the names of relevant cities here and there and serve up a bull-fight when other entertainments fail, “it will be true to the letter”, according to Thoreau, “and give us as good an idea of the exact state or ruin of things in Spain as the most succinct and lucid reports under this head in the newspapers” (1957: 65).

Gathering momentum, he asserts that

I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter, — we never need read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a myriad instances and applications? To a philosopher all *news*, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea. (Thoreau 1957: 65.) (Emphasis original.)

This hyperbolic critique of news guides the reader back to the hard bottom of *philosophia perennis* – the principle behind these myriad instances and applications. Grounded on that hard bottom of truth, what debris gathers above it is irrelevant to the

⁶³ *Tit-men*, the smallest pigs in a litter; that is, dwarfs, pygmies. Once more Thoreau contradicts himself, for in the chapter “Conclusion” he writes that “[s]ome [in this case Thoreau himself] are dinning in our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even the Elizabethan men. But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion. Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy that he can? Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made. Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away” (1957: 222).

perceptive observer. As Emerson (1960c: 202) remarks in his essay “The Transcendentalist”: “A great man will be content to have indicated in any the slightest manner his perception of the reigning Idea of his time, and will leave to those who like it the multiplication of instances.” Thoreau continues in a similar vein in *A Week* (1985: 100): “Go where we will, we discover infinite change in particulars only, not in generals.” Therefore, mocking daily papers and praising classic literature, Thoreau would have agreed with Ezra Pound (1960: 29) that because classic literature acquaints one with the generals, it is “news that stays news”. Furthermore, what is called news in the common sense is only ephemeral, irrelevant information for a true seeker of intellectual pleasure.⁶⁴

A passage from “Civil Disobedience” is enlightening in order to clarify Thoreau’s hierarchy of intellectual pleasures:

They who know of no purer sources of truth, who have traced up its stream no higher, stand, and wisely stand, by the Bible and the Constitution, and drink at it there with reverence and humility; but they who behold where it comes trickling into this lake or that pool, gird up their loins once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountain-head. (1993: 17.)

The reason why Thoreau rates classic literature above newspapers is that he perceives it to be closer to the fountainhead of truth. A piece of news is a mere drop of water in the mighty ocean – as such originating from the fountainhead of truth, yes, but insignificant to the one who perceives its original, higher source. Therefore, it is useless to concentrate on reading news reports on what happens in the world. Rather – and it is Plato’s theory of Ideas which is echoing here – reading classic literature will provide one with the principle, of which worldly events are only myriad repetitions. Reading newspapers is theoretically classified as intellectual pleasure, but in Thoreau’s opinion, forms of intellectual pleasure closer to *philosophia perennis* are worthier pursuits.

⁶⁴ Thoreau makes exactly the same point about newspapers in *A Week* (1985: 150–151).

3.3.5 The Optimistic “Conclusion”

If one recalls Thoreau’s association of pond depth with depth of character, and keeps in mind his extended metaphor of water resembling human behaviour, the above analysis readily leads one into the symbolic conclusion of *Walden*. Analysing his contemporaries as mainly sensory pleasure-seekers or seekers of irrelevant intellectual pleasure – and therefore far removed from *philosophia perennis* – it follows that the bodies of water that such people metaphorically form are hopelessly shallow. However, “[t]he life in us is like the water in the river”, as Thoreau writes in “Conclusion”: “It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it” (1957: 227). Although Thoreau concedes that his contemporaries’ pleasure-seeking methods are unworthy, he is not without hope in regard to the future of humankind. Indeed, it is this hope which characterises the chapter “Conclusion” in general.

To illustrate this hope, on the last page of *Walden* Thoreau relates an anecdote of “a strong and beautiful bug”, which surprisingly gnawed its way out of a table made of apple-tree wood (1957: 227). According to Thoreau, the table had been in a farmer’s kitchen for sixty years. The egg of the bug had been laid in the living tree many years earlier still, as revealed by the annual layers of the wood. In a hopeful vein, Thoreau associates this anecdote with the development of humankind, conjecturing that a similarly beautiful and winged life may unexpectedly hatch out from society too. (Thoreau 1957: 227.)

He sees his contemporaries as not yet fully developed, neither phylogenetically nor ontogenetically: “What youthful philosophers and experimentalists we are! There is not one of my readers who has yet lived a whole human life [ontogeny]. These may be but the spring months in the life of the race [phylogeny]” (1957: 226). With the anecdote of the bug, however, Thoreau creates hope for a more fully-developed human race, waiting to hatch out from the still earlier stage of development which it is currently undergoing. The link of this metaphor with the larva/butterfly metaphor discussed earlier is obvious. The important parts of both of the metaphors interposed are as follows: “The gross feeder is a man in the larva state” (1957: 147), but “if he has the seeds of a better life in

him” (1957: 146), “[w]ho knows what beautiful and winged life [...] may unexpectedly come forth [...] to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!” (1957: 227). These examples underline Thoreau’s awareness of the same developmental paradigm that Campbell proposes (1973). Moreover, Thoreau (1957: 226–227) shares Campbell’s (1973: 299) optimism about more refined pleasure-seeking methods of humans to which phylogeny will eventually bear witness.

Campbell (1973: 291) concedes that were the majority of people to become intellectual pleasure-seekers, there would still be the problem of finding the most suitable kind of thinking pleasure. Thoreau is similarly sceptical of the benefits of a nation consisting only of philosophers (1957: 38), but this does not prevent him from auguring well for the human race in regard to procuring more sophisticated pleasure-seeking methods in the future. To evaluate the relative values of sensory vs. intellectual pleasure-seeking, an axiological study of the prerequisites, costs and repercussions of both of them would be necessary. However, by now it should be obvious what kind of guidance some of the thinkers (Aristotle, Thoreau, Campbell and Haque) cited in this thesis have given in order to lead a more accomplished life.

3.4 Intellectual Pleasures: the Hound, the Bay Horse, and the Turtle-Dove

“I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves.” (Thoreau 1957: 11.)

Anyone familiarised with Thoreau scholarship regards it as commonplace information that this passage in *Walden* has been interpreted in multiple ways. Some critics have tried to trace the textual source of the three animals (Confucius and Voltaire, among others, have been suggested), while some have tried to fix the referents of these symbols (Otterberg 2005). Michael A. Burr has suggested that it forms an anagram: *HENRY D THOREAU*, either *DOUBTS LOVE* or *LOVES DOUBT* (1974, quoted in Otterberg

2005: 15). Other critics still have pointed out the open-endedness of the passage, thus exposing its mirror-like quality which, in the end, reveals more about its explicator than about its writer (Otterberg 2005). Due to the inability of critics to reach an agreement or find a Cinderella fit concerning the meaning of this aporia, it can be classified as “successful *obscuritas*”: “it skillfully constructs a text open to a wide array of interpretative possibilities” (Otterberg 2005: 60).

Precisely because of its open-endedness, it can be relatively freely interpreted to support myriad analyses. Significantly, Stein (1958) has interpreted it in a way which verifies the present overall analysis of *Walden*. He sees the animal triad as representing the myth of the centaur in *Walden* (Stein 1958: 205–206). In his exposition, *the hound* represents the instinctive wisdom and awareness which Thoreau has lost due to his being a part of civilisation (prior to his Walden experiment). Instinctively, the hound can scent “the way” of nature (Stein 1958: 206), and help its owner to live “simply and wisely”, to “suck out all the marrow of life, [...] to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms” (Thoreau 1957: 49, 62). To use the terminology of this thesis, the hound symbolises the instinct to discern the hard bottom of truth in nature, avoiding the misleading “false scents” of social organisations.

The bay horse is seen by Stein to represent the animal half of the centaur. If the horse is permitted to wander at will, it will become the rider and not the mount. (Stein 1958: 206.) In the terminology of this thesis, the horse represents the impulse of humans to seek sensory pleasure. It is the role of the intellect to keep these impulses in check in order to elevate the individual above the merely sensory experiences and enable intellectual pleasure-seeking. If Thoreau at the beginning of *Walden* laments that he has lost his bay horse long ago (1957: 11), he thereby acknowledges that he has led a sensory existence, unable to limit his indulgence in sensory pleasures. The progress which he undergoes in *Walden*, limiting his material desires and focusing on intellectual pleasures in their stead, sees him regain control of the horse once more, with his intellect becoming the rider and his material desires the mount.

Having restrained these desires, Thoreau is “ready to listen to the oracular voice” of *the turtle-dove* (Stein 1958: 206). If the hound led Thoreau onto the trail of the hard bottom of truth in nature (“the way”), the turtle-dove with its cooing song further invites him to share the secret of its dwelling place, the forest (Stein 1958: 206). In its flight into the clouds, it prophesies that the philosophy of nature is “the Way” to divine knowledge, to *philosophia perennis* (Stein 1958: 206–207). Thus, the three animals form, as interpreted by Stein, the cornerstones of Transcendentalism: refraining from material indulgence (the horse), and through an original relation with the universe (the hound), finding one’s own way which transcends the corporeal and temporal limitations of human existence (the turtle-dove).

Stein’s exegesis serves the purposes of this thesis well enough, but due to the elusiveness and critical importance of the passage, further discussion is both merited and explanatory. Henrik Otterberg concludes his treatment of the meaning of *Walden*’s animal passage by quoting a discussion which took place among the participants of an English class at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2002, involving two undergraduate students, Jan and Dana, and their teacher, Ann:

Jan commences by quoting Thoreau’s paragraph in full, then asks: “I would like to know what [Thoreau’s narrator] is talking about. I cannot think what these things symbolize. Any ideas?” Dana replies: “Well, I’m not sure [...]. I basically took it to mean that he, like everyone else, has had losses that he needed to recover from and his work and life in the woods are an attempt at that. What specifically those losses are, I wish I knew.” Ann then gives her opinion: “I don’t know, of course [*sic*]. They must be private symbols of loss – the hound as companion? the horse as partner in travel? the dove as spirit? Are these representations of lost youth and early dreams?” Upon which Jan comments: “Obviously whatever they represent, other people are looking for the same things. I wonder if Thoreau intended to confuse his audience.” Ann then caps the discussion: “Most likely he wants to make them think! And see, it worked for you.” (Otterberg 2005: 61–62.)

Without trying to fix the meaning of the symbolic animal triad, Ann sees meta-meaning in the passage: its function is to make its audience *think*. Its function is to make its readers derive intellectual pleasure from interpreting the passage in various ways, from seeing connections between this passage and Thoreau’s biography, between this passage

and other passages in Thoreau's works, between this passage and other literary works (Confucius and Voltaire, for example) and finally between this passage and one's own life experiences.

Certainly, to find some plausible explanation(s) for this elusive passage, to see its puzzle parts suddenly fall into place, gives the reader/critic intellectual pleasure denied to them by self-explanatory, one-dimensional literary texts. *That* is what Thoreau meant when he wrote that

[t]o read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. (1957: 70.)

In this light, Thoreau is confirmed (as mentioned earlier) as an advocate of intellectual pleasure derived from close reading and its subsequent processing with literary peers, whether done in person (with physical and temporal limitations) or in writing (without them). Insofar as the literary criticism and discussion that has ensued from this passage can be interpreted as an extension of the intellectual pleasure that is promoted by him, Thoreau can be seen to have succeeded with his book. People *have* read a true book in a true way, continuing to keep the veil that is covering *philosophia perennis* raised, and in so doing eschewing the seeking of pleasure via sensory routes.

However, perhaps it should be also borne in mind that the plethora of criticism that has sprung from this ambiguous passage in *Walden* undermines Thoreau's view of *philosophia perennis*. Since so many opinions exist, all of them cannot possibly be correct. "*Omne verum vero consonant*" – all truth accords with truth – writes Emerson in "Nature" (1960a: 40), yet certainly "the truths" of these critics are mutually exclusive. The "ultimate truth" that one should derive from this self-contradicting thought experiment is rather the one which Thoreau recognises in *Journal*: "The snow falls on no two trees alike, but the forms it assumes are as various as those of the twigs and leaves which receive it. They are, as it were, predetermined by the genius of the tree. So one divine spirit descends alike on all, but bears a peculiar fruit in each"

(Thoreau 1962: 64). The peculiar fruits borne by the animal passage in *Walden* are the varied critical responses that it has sparked. Hence, the “ultimate truth” is the relativism of human experience when confronted with metaphysical monism – how each person mirrors their own personalities and life experiences in the interpretation of external phenomena.

This, in turn, again contradicts most of Thoreau’s didactic writing in *Walden*. If everyone is to pursue their own way in life, it makes little sense for Thoreau to prescribe rigid instructions on noble living. He himself notes that “[t]he life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?” (Thoreau 1957: 13). This circularity and self-contradiction in Thoreau’s writing emphasises critical thinking and the ability to assess for oneself the relative drawbacks and benefits of each mode of thinking – of each mode of living. In that respect, it becomes clear that

Walden proves finally to be about the potential passage – both Thoreau’s and ours – from one kind of vision, and thus one kind of life, to another. As a challenge to move beyond dual certainties to an exploration of multiple possibilities, *Walden* is as fine a companion for a lifelong journey as one is likely to find. It reminds us that we too have “several more lives to live”. (Schneider 1995: 105; Thoreau 1957: 220.)

Thoreau’s thinking is, therefore, at once subversive and pluralistic. Pointing out both internal and external contradictions, *Walden* invites its readers to engage critically with the world – and itself.⁶⁵

To clarify that last point, and round off this section about Thoreau’s animal parable, it is illuminating to take a step back and consider the nature of parables in general. John Drury recognises that

⁶⁵ *Walden*’s internal contradictions have been to some extent traced in the footnotes of this thesis, while some have been pointed out in the corpus text as well. The external contradictions that Thoreau reveals in *Walden* are numerous. For example, in “Economy” he writes about the contradiction of people trapped in the treadmill of work in order to gain economic freedom but losing their authentic freedom into the bargain: “The farmer is endeavoring to solve the problem of a livelihood by a formula more complicated than the problem itself. To get his shoestrings he speculates in herds of cattle. With consummate skill he has set his trap with a hair springe to catch comfort and independence, and then, as he turned away, got his own leg into it. This is the reason he is poor; and for a similar reason we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by luxuries” (Thoreau 1957: 22).

[t]he space occupied by a parable is a temporary halt in the narration which is used to explore the depth and ground of what is past and impending. As we take time off from the obvious business of living to read stories which make some sense of it, so a story takes time off from *its* obvious business (saying what happens next) to tell another little story which makes some sense of the tale at large. (quoted in Otterberg 2005: 52–53.) (Emphasis original.)

Due to its inherent caesural nature, Thoreau's animal parable constitutes a break from the immediate narrative context in which it appears in order to assist in making sense of *Walden* as a whole (Otterberg 2005: 53).

As explained by Stein (1958: 206–207), the animal parable clarifies Thoreau's desire for an ontogenetic shift from a sensory pleasure-seeker who is not in touch with nature, to an intellectual one who is in touch with it. It can, furthermore, represent the supposed desire of Thoreau's contemporaries to do the exact same thing (“they seemed as anxious to recover [the three animals] as if they had lost them themselves” [Thoreau 1957: 11]). In general, if Stein's reading of it is followed, it can be seen to summarise the core ideas of Transcendentalism.

Moreover, as interpreted above, what the animal parable reveals about *Walden* as a whole is that it is dedicated to making its readers seek intellectual pleasure by questioning the status quo and by considering the abundance of alternative ways of life. Via a critical engagement – both empiricist and rationalist – with the alternative ways of life, with the world and with *Walden*, one is able to determine their relative drawbacks and benefits, thus reaching the transcendental wisdom of the centaur.

4 CONCLUSIONS

H. J. Campbell's division of pleasure-seeking into two distinct categories, *sensory* and *intellectual*, has led the way in this thematic analysis of human development in H. D. Thoreau's *Walden*. As depicted by Thoreau, the behaviour of Alek Therien was seen to be primarily sensory. Thoreau paid attention to the dormant state of Therien's intellect by remarking that he is a man who is forever left a child (1957: 101). His behaviour is located almost at the bottom of Campbell's behavioural yardstick, and it can be concluded that he has not made much ontogenetic progress from the state of infancy, during which pleasure-seeking is also purely sensory. Thoreau (1957: 74, 146) passes a similar phylogenetic judgement on the majority of people, which is exactly what Campbell (1973: 185–205, 227–228) and Aristotle (1955: 30) do as well.

Thoreau's own behaviour is ambivalent, for he exhibits both sensory-intellectual and intellectual behaviour. This fact can be seen to resonate with the very structure of *Walden*: where some chapters are wholly devoted to the depictions of Thoreau's surrounding nature (sensory-intellectual pleasure-seeking), some describe what are in Thoreau's opinion the inane habits of his contemporaries, while others still concentrate on prescribing rules for simple living and high thinking in order to overcome those habits (intellectual pleasure-seeking).

In the chapters of *Walden* which are devoted to descriptions of nature, Thoreau makes comparisons between what he perceives in his immediate surroundings and what images it evokes in his cognition. Thus, the external sensory stimuli inspire the intellectual pleasures within him, "thereby affirming that spirit is to be found by experiencing nature, not by retreating into the mind" (Schneider 1995: 100). At these transcendental moments, the pleasures to be derived from society are meaningless for Thoreau. This is because his "interconnected network of pleasures", as discussed in section 2.1, is heavily tilted in one direction, and need not be tilted in another. In other words, Thoreau no longer needs the company of other people to enjoy himself, because he is able to derive significant pleasure from nature. Finally, through his labour in the bean-fields, Thoreau penetrates to the hard bottom of reality and, *sub specie aeternitatis*, elevates

himself onto the level of *philosophia perennis* (Stein 1958: 203). This is the empiricist part of that elevation, creating for Thoreau Transcendentalism proper.

The rationalist part of the elevation follows in “Reading”. The behaviour that Thoreau advocates in this chapter is less a record of his own activities and more a prescription for others concerning how to approach *philosophia perennis* intellectually. This is achieved by reading classic works of literature, in which the noblest thoughts of humankind are recorded (Thoreau 1957: 70). These are the precedents for the myriad similar occurrences of the same phenomena in human history. It is a sign of critical acumen, according to Emerson (1960c: 202) and Thoreau (1957: 65), to learn the underlying principles of human behaviour, and to leave for others the multiplication of examples. To illustrate this point, Thoreau mocks popular literature and newspapers. They are respectively written, in his opinion, for feeble intellects and old women who gossip over their tea (1957: 65, 74).

Thus it is that Thoreau ranks forms of pleasure-seeking that are closer to *philosophia perennis* above those that are farther from it. In so doing, he creates his own hierarchy of intellectual pleasures within the general framework set by Campbell (1973). Furthermore, since Thoreau (1957: 73–74) laments the fact that he is unable to converse with his contemporaries about *philosophia perennis*, it was suggested that he should concentrate on conversing with other intellectual pleasure-seekers instead, unbound by temporal and physical limitations. The tripartite conversational continuum – formed by *Walden*, the books it was inspired by, and the books and literary criticism inspired by it – was interpreted as accomplishing precisely that.

Indulgence in sensory pleasures was seen as a hindrance to successful intellectual pleasure-seeking. This is due to the difficulty of inclining the interconnected network of pleasures in one direction if heavily tilted in another. Therefore, Thoreau recognises that abstinence from (or at least moderation in) sensory pleasures is a prerequisite for intellectual elevation. According to him, however, there are whole nations in the low developmental stage of pure sensory pleasure-seeking. (Thoreau 1957: 147.) In spite (or because) of this, Thoreau notes in himself an intimation to abandon sensory pleasures

(1957: 147). Speaking “like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments” (1957: 221), he heralds the phylogenetic awakening of humans to a more intellectually-inclined existence (1957: 227). Campbell makes the same prediction at the end of *The Pleasure Areas* (1973: 299).

Via a critical engagement with Thoreau’s elusive animal parable in *Walden* (1957: 11), this view was corroborated. By noting the abundance of critical responses to this passage, both the fact that its open-endedness has made people seek pleasure intellectually by trying to interpret it, and the veracity of Thoreau’s epistemological assertion that “[t]he snow falls on no two trees alike” was affirmed (1962: 64). This proves how each person mirrors their own personalities and life experiences in the interpretation of external phenomena (because of their idiosyncratic thought contents, as explained by Benson [1994: 5]). The passage at once undermines Thoreau’s didactic writing in *Walden and* invites its audience to engage critically with itself and the world. Thus, the epistemological terminus of seeing knowledge as constructed, relative and pluralistic was reached (Moon 2008: 101–112).

That is why it was concluded that by creating internal contradictions and pointing out external ones, Thoreau *ipso facto* invites his readers to engage critically with the world and his contradictory yet dogmatic writing. Following Drury’s notion about how parables work in general (quoted in Otterberg 2005: 52–53), the animal parable was interpreted as a microcosmic representation of *Walden*. Not only does it make its readers seek intellectual pleasure by appealing to both empiricist and rationalist epistemological methods – thus eliciting a critical response to the ideas presented in it – but it also summarises Thoreau’s overarching desire to make the phylogenetic and ontogenetic shift from a sensory pleasure-seeker who is not in touch with nature to an intellectual one who is in touch with it (Stein 1958: 206–207).

As Campbell points out (1973: 82–84), the important thing in determining an individual’s progress on his developmental paradigm is the overall hover point of their “dots” on his behavioural yardstick. These dots correspond to instances of sensory and intellectual behaviour, and their overall hover point reveals the average behavioural

tendencies of an individual. In Thoreau's representation of him, Therien's hover point is clearly at the lowest end of the scale, whereas Thoreau's, although not at the very top, is situated somewhere above the middle. Thoreau acknowledges his inner dilemma when he says that he is equally drawn by the high as well as the wild (1957: 144). Overall, however, his writing has an intimation toward the high. He is thereby ushering his readers into the same direction as Campbell is – towards intellectual pleasure-seeking.

4.1 Limitations

Pleasure-seeking has been given primary emphasis in this thesis, and it has been seen as the main motivator of human behaviour. Nonetheless, in some circumstances, *pain-avoidance* is the more pre-eminent factor for determining human behaviour. This might be the case, for example, in some developing countries, in which the supply of the basic necessities of life is restricted. Analysing the behaviour of people living in a welfare state, then, makes the discussion biased towards pleasure-seeking rather than pain-avoidance.

Another limitation of this thesis is that the analysis of Therien's behaviour is made on the basis of Thoreau's judgement of him. Therefore, his assessment may not be accurate, or give a faithful representation of what actually went on in Therien's mind. However, since *Walden* is the record in which the most detailed account of Therien's behaviour has been given, it is justified to use that as a basis for assessing his de facto behavioural tendencies. Moreover, as was established in section 1.4, it makes little difference in the context of this thesis to what extent the narration of *Walden* differs from what took place in reality on Walden Pond. *Walden's* analysis in this thesis was therefore concerned more with the book's internal reality than with what actually might have taken place on Walden Pond. Yet, what is more, the fact that there exist no written records of Therien *written by himself* itself proves that he was not an intellectual pleasure-seeker in the sense that Thoreau was, which supports Thoreau's assessment of him.

More importantly, the selection of a text such as *Walden* for analysis in a thesis which is dealing with sensory and intellectual pleasure-seeking necessarily renders the outcome biased. Thoreau's abstinence from the "coarse and succulent pleasures" of the senses (1985: 275), his derisive attitude towards them, and praise for transcendental intellectual pleasures fleshes out results altogether different from the analysis of a text in which the pleasures of the senses, *carpe diem* mentality and obedience to instinctual impulses are promoted. In the present thesis, no such text has been analysed.

The analysis of the developmental paradigm from sensory pleasure-seeking to intellectual pleasure-seeking was the overall import of this study. This direction of development is natural according to Campbell (1973), for sensory pleasure-seeking is a prerequisite for intellectual pleasure-seeking. However, it would be an interesting discovery if one were to detect a trend to return from intellectual pleasure-seeking to sensory pleasure-seeking, and subsequently write a text in praise of the latter. The person to do so would have to have extensive experience of both sensory and intellectual pleasure-seeking, but would still advocate the former using a method which requires protracted indulgence in the latter (that is, writing). This would be indicative of the relative appeal of sensory pleasures. Yet, conversely, praising it via a method which demands its opposite can be seen to undermine its supposed power. Why would someone who cherishes sensory pleasures write about them instead of indulging in them? That is one of the reasons why an analysis of literature tends to be biased towards intellectual pleasure-seeking.

4.2 Implications

That Thoreau wrote *Walden* can as such be seen as a record of his preference for intellectual pleasure-seeking, for little sensory pleasure is to be derived from the writing of a book. Furthermore, having written the book, he has created something perennial. Had he been inclined to seek pleasure sensorily, there would have been little chance that he could have created something lasting. This supports Campbell's (1973: 210) and Emerson's (1960c: 206) message that sensory behaviour creates nothing lasting but

intellectual behaviour potentially does. However, the human race is sustained by sensory pleasure-seeking, which makes it a prerequisite for intellectual pleasure-seeking and therefore renders its stark criticism irrational.

In relation to this, a brief discussion about Thoreau's lack of progeny is merited. Presumably, pleasure-seeking in the form of sexual behaviour was scarce in Thoreau's life – at least his writings make little reference to it. Louisa May Alcott notes of Thoreau's lush neck beard that it “will most assuredly deflect amorous advances and preserve the man's virtue in perpetuity” (Thoreau 2008). Nathaniel Hawthorne's assessment is blunter: “[Thoreau] is as ugly as sin” (Thoreau 2008). An unkempt outer appearance is of course what one would readily expect from a hermit, yet as Alcott observes, Thoreau was hardly appealing to women due to his appearance. Nor was pleasing women ever palatable for Thoreau; for him, being “the bachelor of thought and Nature” was the more suitable mode of life (Emerson 1960d: 380). Consequently, Thoreau never had any children.

However, via his intellectual pleasure-seeking, of which *Walden* is a substantiation, Thoreau has influenced countless people. As Emerson wrote of him: “His soul was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world; wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home” (1960d: 395). Hence, Thoreau's “intellectual progeny” – the people he has influenced intellectually rather than sensorily – is more numerous than the actual progeny he could ever have brought up and sustained. He is able to influence a greater number of people via intellectual pleasure-seeking than he would have been able to influence via sensory pleasure-seeking; and in so doing, he is a progenitor “of a nobler race of men”, as he oracularly puts it in *Walden* (Thoreau 1957: 9). This testifies to the power that intellectual pleasure-seeking potentially has. Furthermore, Thoreau wishes to make his intellectual progeny more virtuous than himself: “He who eats the fruit, should at least plant the seed; aye, if possible, a better seed than that whose fruit

he has enjoyed” (1985: 101).⁶⁶ This sentiment is repeated in *Walden*’s “Conclusion”, in which Thoreau anticipates the eventual phylogenetic development of humankind (1957: 227).

In this sense, the pleasure-seeking methods of one’s parents and of one’s ancestors affect those of one’s own.⁶⁷ Sensory pleasure-seekers’ offspring will probably be primarily sensorily oriented as well, and those of intellectual pleasure-seekers similarly inclined to engage in intellectual behaviour. More generally, civilisation is a transcript of the pleasure-seeking methods of its forefathers.⁶⁸ Pleasure-seeking methods are all learnt and acquired in the course of one’s life, and as such are mainly determined by environmental influences (Campbell 1973: 286–289). At birth, none of these pleasure-seeking methods are yet established. From this premise follows that there might exist activities which one is yet to discover, but which potentially yield significant amounts of pleasure if chanced upon. That is why experimenting with new activities potentially enlarges one’s array of pleasure-seeking methods, and gives a more holistic and critical view of their existence, availability and relative benefits.

Due to Thoreau’s failure to find people from his physical vicinity with whom he would be able to discuss *philosophia perennis*, it was suggested that he seek these conversational companions atemporally, among other seekers of high-level intellectual pleasure down the ages. The same thing may be seen to apply to the lives of researchers. The degree of specialisation that one undergoes during one’s studies proportionately severs one’s ties from the people with whom one is physically and temporally surrounded: “Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a

⁶⁶ The same idea is expressed by him in *Walden* (1957: 113) and pithily by Emerson as well: “Let us shame the fathers by superior virtue in the sons” (2004: 110).

⁶⁷ To confirm this point, it is relevant to bring to mind what was already mentioned in the first chapter: the inspiration to choose this topic for the thesis was in large part due to the fact that the reading of *The Pleasure Areas* was recommended by my father (significantly, *before* I commence my studies in philosophy). Thus, my pleasure-seeking methods were influenced by my father, resulting in a completely different kind of thesis than would have been written without the reading of Campbell’s book (1973).

⁶⁸ Cf. “Those who have not learned to read the ancient classics in the language in which they were written must have a very imperfect knowledge of the history of the human race; for it is remarkable that no transcript of them has ever been made into any modern tongue, unless our civilization itself may be regarded as such a transcript” (Thoreau 1957: 71).

man and his fellows”, as Thoreau writes in *Walden*; “[t]he really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert” (1957: 94). In order to find suitable conversational company, and thus derive intellectual pleasure from “interaction”, a researcher’s most fertile conversational sources might be written texts. This frees the researcher from temporal and physical limitations to some extent (but simultaneously prevents the usage of normal aspects of interaction, such as non-verbal communication). Nonetheless, conversational continua thus formed can be seen to establish another conversational dimension altogether, inaccessible to those who seek pleasure only sensorily, but accessible to intellectual pleasure-seekers irrespective of time and place. The work of a researcher can, to some extent, be seen to consist of accessing and contributing to such conversational continua, and thereby deriving intellectual pleasure.

To take a step back from *Walden* and tackle pleasure-seeking from another perspective, the suitability of a person to a given position and their consequent success in it can be seen to be an index of how much pleasure they are able to gain from it. If the person is unable to derive pleasurable feelings, say, from their work, they will have to force themselves into doing the work and will not, so to speak, put their heart into it. If, however, the person is able to derive pleasure from their work, their suitability, productivity and success in the position will be much greater.

This is to a large extent evident in the student world as well. Some students are quite incapable of getting enjoyment out of their line of study, whereas others drown themselves in their course literature with great enthusiasm in order to know more about their subject. The students who get no enjoyment of their work have to force themselves to do the job, but readily have to discontinue studying inasmuch as their pleasure areas are not activated by the process.⁶⁹ The inner thoughts of such students might be along the lines of being forced to finish a project on time, displeasing though it is, in order to

⁶⁹ Cf. Aristotle’s remark (already quoted on p. 10) about how people change from one form of behaviour to another if the first is found only faintly amusing (1955: 298).

be able to graduate on time. The only incentive for such students is finishing their studies.

In Aristotelian terms, their pleasure-seeking falls in the *poiesis* category: it is behaviour whose goal is external to the behaviour itself. The behaviour of students who *are* able to derive pleasure from their studies, on the other hand, exhibits behaviour of the *praxis* category.⁷⁰ The goal of their behaviour is the behaviour itself. Because these students do not need to engage in their work merely in pursuit of another goal, they are able to commit themselves more fully to the work at hand. Because their pleasure areas become activated by the work itself, they need not constantly seek alternative stimuli with which to keep their pleasure areas activated. The ability of students to keep their pleasure areas activated for extended periods of time by the intellectual stimuli provided by their studies is one of the many factors in determining their suitability for and success in the studies they have undertaken.

In this respect, it has been illuminating to notice how the phenomena discussed in this thesis have been applicable to the writing process itself. For example, it has been found that the conscious cutting down of sources of sensory pleasures has made it easier to derive intellectual pleasure from writing the thesis. In addition, as pointed out by Miron (2005: 664), Addison (Steele & Addison 1832: 185–186) and Wilde (2000: 203), activities which initially cause displeasure can potentially metamorphose into sources of pleasure if one habitually engages in them. In the course of writing this thesis, the veracity of this theory has been affirmed. In that sense, the actual writing process has been corroborative of the theory written about, verifying Thoreau's epistemological statement that "knowledge is to be acquired only by a corresponding experience. How can we *know* what we are *told* merely? Each man can interpret another's experience only by his own" (1985: 296) (emphasis original).

In this section, a step has been taken back from the immediate contents of this thesis to reflect on various aspects of pleasure-seeking in relation to Thoreau's "intellectual

⁷⁰ For a discussion on the *praxis/poiesis* dichotomy, refer to section 2.1.

progeny”, the work of a researcher, the student world and thesis writing. The purpose of the discussion was to make connections which would have been out of place in the analysis, but which deepen the overall horizon of the thesis and propose other viable topics for consideration. Suggestions for further research as such will be outlined in the following section.

4.3 Further Research

The linkage made in this thesis between neurophysiological, psychological and philosophical research with literary criticism has pointed to a viable method for approaching literary texts. In the present thesis, a developmental paradigm taken from neurophysiology was used to interpret a literary classic. On the basis of the division of pleasures into sensory and intellectual ones, further research may elucidate new aspects of the dichotomy.

Having already speculated in section 4.1 about the trend to return from intellectual to sensory pleasure-seeking, it would be a thought-provoking research subject to search for a developmental paradigm opposite to the one proposed in this thesis. Is someone who is predominantly an intellectual pleasure-seeker able or even willing to regress to being a predominantly sensory one? How does senescence affect this regressive paradigm? Can one determine an apex in the developmental paradigm and establish the approximate point in which regression occurs, if it does occur in the first instance? If the satiation effect is a necessary part of peripheral self-stimulation, does it play a similar role in intellectual pleasure-seeking as well, possibly effecting the regressive paradigm?

Furthermore, a more detailed study could be carried out on the justifications for advocating intellectual in favour of sensory pleasure-seeking, and using subjective terms such as *developmental* and *regressive paradigm* in that context. Is it truly enough to note, as Aristotle (1955: 30, 305) and Campbell (1973: 77) do, that since intellectual pleasure-seeking is what differentiates humans from animals, it should by that very fact

be placed higher in the hierarchy of pleasures? And because intellectual pleasure-seeking develops ontogenetically after sensory pleasure-seeking, should one therefore rate the former higher than the latter? Is it not an equally valid claim to place sensory pleasure-seeking above intellectual, because the former is necessary to sustain life, whereas the latter is not? Or should the “progress” that humankind makes be used as the standard against which the relative values of differing pleasure-seeking methods are evaluated? An axiological study dealing with these questions is a necessary extension of the argumentation presented in this thesis.

Campbell’s pleasure-seeking theory – that all human behaviour is reducible to the activation of the limbic pleasure areas in one’s brain (1973: 68) – implicitly suggests that the value of other people is directly in proportion to the pleasure, whether sensory or intellectual, direct or indirect, that one can derive from associating with them. Since the analysis of interpersonal pleasures was completely omitted from this thesis, further research could be carried out into the kinds of pleasure that are to be acquired from conversation and social interaction.

Another illuminating research area would be the study of sensory and intellectual forms of *love*.⁷¹ Barry R. Komisaruk and Beverly Whipple (1998: 927) define *love* as “getting the stimulus that one desires”. Similarly as in pleasure-seeking in general, this stimulus can range from the most abstract cognitive to the most direct sensory forms of stimuli (Komisaruk & Whipple 1998: 927). Therefore, love can be seen to exist in different spheres. This depends on whether the pleasures acquired from associating with another person are mainly sensory or emotional. This would explain why people sometimes report that they connect with their mate mainly physically, but not mentally, or vice versa. In a different set of terminology, Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li and Brown recognise three distinct but interrelated mechanisms of love, which separately bear different functions but together ensure human reproduction. The function of the *sex drive* is to motivate individuals to seek a range of mating partners; *attraction* ensures that a specific partner is pursued; and *attachment* guarantees that individuals remain together

⁷¹ Perhaps *emotional* rather than *intellectual* would be a more suitable term to use in the context of love.

long enough to complete species-specific parenting duties. (Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li & Brown 2002; Fisher, Aron & Brown 2006). Sensory and emotional forms of love are included in varying degrees in all of these three mechanisms of love.

The different implications of these forms of love as they manifest themselves in literature would be a viable research subject. The relative ease with which sensory forms of love may be established *vis-à-vis* the time and effort it takes to establish a mental bond with someone could be one possible approach to take. Likewise, severing ties with a mate with whom love is mainly sensory – one might hypothesise – is easy, for the establishing of that kind of a bond is relatively effortless. However, severing ties with a mate with whom a strong emotional bond exists can be seen to have deeper repercussions due to the relative difficulty it takes to establish such a bond, not to mention the improbability of finding a person with whom one feels such a bond may be established at all. A variation of the developmental paradigm discussed in this thesis may, therefore, also be seen to exist in love.

Further, the hypothesis could be made that the compatibility of two people for a romantic relationship is dependent on the relative similarity of their pleasure-seeking strategies.⁷² A predominantly sensory pleasure-seeker and a predominantly intellectual pleasure-seeker might in the long run realise that their incompatibility is too great an obstacle to overcome. They might find it impossible to accommodate to the other's pleasure-seeking methods and value structures produced by them, thus making time spent together seem unrewarding. Similar pleasure-seeking methods can therefore be seen as a constituent of successful long-term coupling – although adaptation may smooth out the rough edges to some extent. In this respect, a viable research subject could be proposed by linking up recent neurophysiological research on love (e.g. Bartels & Zeki 2000; Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li & Brown 2002; Fisher, Aron & Brown 2006) with evolutionary psychological approaches to mate selection (e.g. Buss 2006), and use the theoretical concoction thus formed to interpret literature in which love is the

⁷² See Buss (2006: 65–68) for a general discussion about the importance of compatibility in a long-term relationship.

overarching theme. This kind of approach might be able to shed new light on these works of literature, as well as provide representative research material with which to support and refine the theories used.

Although the treatment of interpersonal love is absent from *Walden*, it is not absent from Thoreau's thinking. He discusses love extensively in *A Week*, especially through the theme of friendship (Thoreau 1985: 211–236). This un-Thoreauvian theme is evoked due to the fact that Thoreau wrote the book in memory of John Thoreau Jr. (1814–1842), his older brother with whom he made the boat trip on the Concord and Merrimack rivers. Callous though he might have turned in his later years, in *A Week* he writes that “[i]gnorance and bungling with love are better than wisdom and skill without. [...] Our life without love is like coke and ashes” (Thoreau 1985: 231). Consequently, in this context, Thoreau ranks the pleasures of love higher than the pleasures of philosophy. Highlighting the importance of interpersonal love as one of the constituents of a well-led life, he creates yet another contradiction with which the reader is invited to make their own assessments of the relative values of differing pleasure-seeking methods. “If it is true,” as Fromm (2006: 123) speculates, “that love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence”, then the emphasis laid in this study on pleasure-seeking is undermined. If, however, it is true that the basis of love lies in sensory and intellectual forms of pleasure, then research that explicates the interrelationship between the two will be able to demonstrate the validity and extend the scope of the argumentation presented in this thesis.

“Life is a selection, no more”, writes Emerson in his *Journal*, and that serves as an appropriate concluding remark to the present argumentation (quoted in Shi 1985: 128). Following this line of thought, a shrewd person will heed Pythagoras' suggestion to select the most excellent course of life which, by way of habituation, will also be rendered the most delightful (quoted in Steele & Addison 1832: 186). Aiding to determine which course of life is the most excellent, George Bernard Shaw summarises the supposed supremacy of intellectual over sensory pleasure-seeking in this deceptively simple adage: “If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I

have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas” (quoted in Baum & Singh 1994: 3). Shaw thereby exposes the transitory nature of the material world in relation to the potential durability of the intellectual. The most excellent course of life, as suggested by the findings of this thesis, is intellectual pleasure-seeking, which in Aristotle’s words means “to put on immortality and to leave nothing unattempted in the effort to live in conformity with the highest thing within us” (1955: 305).

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Appendix 1. Table of Contents of the 1957 Mifflin Edition of *Walden**WALDEN*

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