

Writing and Living: My 'Reading' of *Walden*

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1. Whom do I write to?

In the beginning of *Walden* Thoreau says 'I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life' (p. 1). It means that he requires to write something more than the life we call it as matter-of-fact. This is because 'a life' that Thoreau is writing is different from the life that we already know. Would my life be really 'my' life? Thoreau makes some of us to confront such a question.

If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Night's Entertainments. (p. 65)

The life which is accounted simply and sincerely would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Night's Entertainments. What does this mean? Before we think about this question let us make sure to whom Thoreau wrote *Walden*. His reader is certainly no one but people who live in New England. And Thoreau really wanted to tell about the life of New England too.

I would fain say something, ... something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. (p. 2)

In this way the reason that makes him to go to a life in the woods is that he thinks the life of that era as 'a problem'. But he says that he wants nobody to imitate a life in the woods. Because a life in the woods is not a solution for a problem. *Walden* is 'my way of living' of an era, a country, and for Thoreau living at that

time. It is not the generalized life that it can apply to everyone. Therefore what is accounted on Walden is 'a life'.

Thoreau does not regard general life as a problem. He thinks it as a problem that the matter that each one could not 'step to the music which he hears' (p. 217). (This music is the song of blowing wind; the poem of creation.) Thoreau is never willing to write reasonably to readers. His writing is been able to hear only by those who have the ears that hear it (p. 57). Because a life he is going to write have never been recorded before.

There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God. (p. 53)

Thoreau would be writing, to his neighbor, 'a life' that never had been recorded. If we could read Walden in such way, 'a life' that he is writing could be a very life itself, a life which we spend unconsciously. This relates the notion of where I find 'a hard bottom which we can call reality' (p. 66). At the moment, finding a hard bottom, irresistibly relates 'a life' to 'mover' that moves I namely not I. 'Mover' means something that out of control of my consciousness. It is like a music that could reach our ears.

2. I and Mover that moves I

As we have referred, 'a problem' for Thoreau was 'the matter' that each one could not step to the music that he hears. The music that reaches Thoreau's ears is 'an irresistible voice' (p. 7) that tells him to doubt the ready-made values; 'the influence of the spring of springs' (p. 28) that let him rises to an ethereal life. We cannot hear such music if we would make it up under our own power. When the music reaches us perchance, it would start to be plaid vividly. However, the ears hearing it are 'my' ears indeed. However, such music that should continue playing without a break is apt to be lost by large volume of a standard orchestra recognized widely in the world. In addition, people who are robbed of a heart by magnificent harmony of a standard orchestra feel uncomfortable with such music that they have never heard, and they feel it just a noise.

Thoreau is going to catch, with his ears, the music that might be missed as a mere noise. Catching this music, I find laws of my life. Laws that Thoreau find steer for 'the direction of his dreams'.

if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. (p. 216)

'The direction of his dreams' is such direction as I could find unexpected meaning of words one after another. It is like words of poem. While it is the direction, it cannot have fixed course. It's not definite. It's not bound. I find it at each moment. 'The truth of which I have been convinced' (p. 216) has no ideal vision. This direction is 'what extremes' (p. 145) that could lead us even to insanity. Here, even a meaning and a value of 'success' have been transformed. Nevertheless, it is not completely far apart from I who live, because it is my ear that catches the music leading us to a direction of dream.

When each ear catch it, a melody is becoming clear. Each ear hears each music. I cannot make my next step until I catch the music. Thoreau is writing this music as a fragrance.

If the day and the night are such that you greet them with joy, and life emits a fragrance like a flowers and sweet-scented herbs, is more elastic, more starry, more immortal, — that is your success. (p. 145)

Finding something in trivialness is to get away from the ready-made-value. At the moment 'solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness.' (p. 216)

I need the direction of my dreams to write 'a life'. This is why 'a life' be accounted simply and sincerely would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Night's Entertainments. When I am going to write 'a life' which be provoked by mover that moves I as not I, I need 'obscurity' (p. 217) to find a hard bottom. Then, I could not find the difference between 'the works of the great poets' (p. 70) and 'the language which all things and events speaks' (p. 75) in the point which is nobler. In this way, Thoreau gets over the ready-made-borderline easily, and he is willing to draw a new borderline in where there is no borderline. Doing so, he finds the place where is hanged in the air. I could not sit down comfortably in this place. All I can do is 'standing on tiptoe' (p. 59) in this place; at the moment.

3. Standing on tiptoe at the moment

Thoreau said 'if I should attempt to tell how I have desired to spend my life in years past, it would be probably surprise those of my readers who are somewhat acquainted with its actual history: it would be certainly astonish those who know nothing about it.' The life by which people would be astonished is that I live as if 'standing on tiptoe at the moment'.

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. (p. 11)

If we were standing on tiptoe the scenery that we could see would be changed (cf. p. 59). And standing on tiptoe is, for Thoreau, a posture of reading too.

we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to [reading]. (p. 71)

Thoreau says if we do not stand on tiptop to read we cannot read the works of the great poets.

Standing on tiptoe at the moment is to keep myself in an unsteady condition. I need a wakeful consciousness to keep standing in a condition that I may fall down. But I could not resolve that which way I should go with this wakeful consciousness. I need this consciousness because I do not have ready-made values. I do not know what will come. Let us translate this consciousness as the ears that hear the music. Then we can see that 'standing on tiptoe at the moment' is as stepping to the music that I hear. In a ward, Thoreau is trying to write 'a life' that he has not seen yet, and 'a life' that is becoming his life. Therefore people who live comfortably and stably would be astonished when saw 'a life' of Thoreau. In addition 'a life' that Thoreau is writing is not a life that have nothing to do with them. It can be 'a life' that he is writing to become our life. It can be so. This makes people feel nearness and irritation. People cannot help being attracted. At the same time, people want to turn their eyes away from 'a life' and run away from it. In this way Thoreau makes a noise as his writing so that people could catch it. The noise may become music for

someone who has ears that can hear it, perchance.

4. Who is writing?

This presentation started with the question that 'whom do I write to'. The answer was to people who live in New England same as Thoreau. However, it is very a question that 'who is writing?' for someone who have ears which can hear the music from Walden.

Why do we read Walden? We could not take some saying out of Walden where he finds the place where is hanged in the air. Moreover 'a life' that Thoreau is writing cannot also be confined in one lesson. It is thoroughly refused to copy the music that flows from Walden onto the score. Thoreau tries to read the constellation in the ground, and tries to find 'a hard bottom which we can call reality' to the sky not delimited. Hardness will not be hardness. I who be moved by not I have to keep standing on tiptoe at the moment in 'obscurity'. A hard bottom, in the place where is hanged in the air, is a value that be caught at each moment.

The greatest gains and values are farthest from being appreciated. We easily come to doubt if they exist. We soon forget them. They are the highest reality. Perhaps the facts most astounding and most real are never communicated by man to man. The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning or evening. It is little stardust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched. (p. 145)

Thoreau opens Walden as the place where is hanged in the air through writing. We cannot catch Thoreau because he keeps standing on tiptoe at the moment. Reading Walden is that we stand on tiptoe at a moment to writing. If we stop writing, the music flows from Walden could falls into a noise. The music keeps flowing without a break from Walden.