

Christopher mccandless: a transcendental philosopher

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A Transcendental Philosopher: Christopher McCandless The novel *Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer, is a story about a transcendental philosopher by the name of Christopher Johnson McCandless. The story follows the journey of McCandless across America; relying only on what he can carry on his back. McCandless shows self-reliance, a love of nature, and has withdrawn from society in many ways throughout the book. A very important characteristic of any transcendentalist is self-reliance. In the excerpt from “Blink” by Malcolm Gladwell on the second mind, Gladwell describes how, “We have experiences.

We think them through. We develop a theory, and then finally we put two and two together” (Gladwell 1). Humans are fully capable of thinking things through themselves and acting on it, which is what McCandless did numerous times in *Into the Wild*. One example is when Chris, (Alex at the time), was offered gear by Jim Gallien before his journey into the Alaskan Wild (Krakauer 6). McCandless thought about it and decided he wanted to do everything himself so he turned down the offer (Krakauer 6).

At this point, McCandless could have accepted the charity of someone else and made his adventure much easier but instead decided to rely only on himself, a true transcendental philosopher. A philosopher is “a person who regulates his or her life, actions, judgments, utterances, etc. , by the light of philosophy or reason” (“philosopher”). If he were to accept the offer, burning his cash, donating all of his college funds to charity, and ditching his old Datsun in the desert, all examples of self-reliance, would have meant nothing if McCandless is considered to be a transcendental philosopher.

Many transcendentalists believe strongly in the pure joy that comes from nature and love being close to nature for that reason. They believe that nature provides serenity and a place to think that is hard to find in the presence of the distractions caused by society. Eddie Vedder sings about this in his song “ Society”: “ I think I need to find a bigger place| cause when you have more than you think| you need more space” (Vedder). The bigger place Vedder is referring to is, in McCandless’ case, the Alaskan Wild (Krakauer 157).

McCandless goes out alone into the wild and contemplates life (Krakauer 168-171). Nature seems to help McCandless find peace on many issues of the world, which is at the core of the transcendental beliefs. McCandless also records notes in various books and keeps a journal, both in which he shares many transcendentalist views (Krakauer 168). McCandless isolated himself in nature to think on life and record his ideas. This fits perfectly with the definition of a transcendentalist and a philosopher, and that is not all McCandless did, he also withdrew from and civilly disobeyed society.

McCandless consistently withdrew and disobeyed society in many of his actions in Into the Wild. The first example is his old Datsun. When McCandless’ only chance to get the car running was to contact the officials, he thinks, “ Was he aware that the vehicle’s registration had expired two years before and had not been renewed? Did he know that his driver’s license had also expired, and the vehicle was uninsured as well? ” (Krakauer 28).

It is known that McCandless' parents were well off and would have willingly paid for the vehicle's registration but it seemed to be McCandless' way of getting back at society. Also, having the vehicle unregistered did not allow the government to trace the car back to McCandless, allowing him to not be a part of society in at least one factor of his life. Looking back at the definition of a philosopher which defines a philosopher as someone that, "regulates his or her life... according to the light of philosophy"; McCandless was a transcendental philosopher ("philosopher").

Considering that a philosopher is someone who lives their life by their philosophy, Christopher Johnson McCandless is a transcendental philosopher. Throughout *Into the Wild*, McCandless decides to rely on himself only. He displayed a love of nature numerous times and even went alone into the Alaskan Wild for the serenity it provides. McCandless also separated himself from society and civilly disobeyed the government through many of his actions. There is nothing McCandless could have done to make himself more of a transcendental philosopher besides survive.