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Henry David Thoreau and Health in Nature (Flyer)

James Engell
Harvard University



Thomas Cole (1801-1848). View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm - The Oxbow. 1836. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76 in. (130.8 x 193 cm). Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1908 (08.228). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Photo Credit: Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY



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The Idea of Nature

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Henry David Thoreau and Health in Nature

James Engell

Gurney Professor of English, Harvard University

As if he had always been looking to the future, Thoreau's idea of health remains astonishingly relevant. He senses the danger of environmentally-linked and environmentally-caused illness. He promotes wellness of body, mind, and spirit together, which achieves harmony with nature through diet, exercise, sensory contact, and ethical self-reflection. The idea of human health in relation to nature informs all that he wrote and appears repeatedly for two decades throughout his Journal. Yet, he doesn't devote a whole book, single chapter, or complete essay to it exclusively, perhaps because health and nature connect to so many other concerns. Instead, health linked to nature permeates his entire experience as a form of personal ecology.

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