



Self-reliance through utilitarianism in the novel Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

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Abstract

This paper explores and analyzes how the relationship between humans and nature is misunderstood as solitude with solidarity with reference to the novel *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. This novel belongs to the genre of travel writing. Throughout the novel the author focusses on building the character of the protagonist, who ignores materialism, intimacy, society and lives as a transcendentalist. This work explores how an individual can't escape the structure of social communion, hence proving self-reliance at the ego of just proving it is not of pure human emotion because humans are designed to co-exist. As the novel discusses two intertwined plots, the personal characterization of the protagonist named Chris McCandless simultaneously along with the characters psychological developments. This paper dissects both the novel and the film adaptation to understand how the mediums have impacted the audience with the core themes of the plot.

Keywords: *idealism, transcendentalist, self-reliance, individuality, wilderness.*

Introduction

Into the wild is a 1996 nonfiction novel written by Krakauer on Chris McCandless titled *Death of an Innocent* which appeared in the January 1993 issue by *Outside*. This novel was adapted to a film of same name in 2007 directed by Sean Penn. The book employs a non-linear narrative that documents the travels of McCandless. The author Jon Krakauer is an American writer and mountaineer. Krakauer's popularity as a writer came from his work as a journalist for *Outside*.

Glimpse of the novel

The true account of Chris McCandless, a young Emory graduate who was discovered dead in the wilds of Alaska in September 1992 at the age of twenty-four, is told in the film *Into the Wild*. McCandless is an extremely talented athlete and student who exhibits profound intensity, enthusiasm, and a rigorous moral compass from an early age. He grows up in rich Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. McCandless spends the summer alone on a cross-country road trip after graduating from high school, when he learns that his father had a second family in secret while Chris was growing up. McCandless comes home and enrolls in Emory as a freshman, but his rage over this betrayal and his parents' failure to tell him about it only intensifies over time.

McCandless leads a monastic lifestyle by the time he is a senior at Emory, has lost the majority of his friends due to his zeal and moral certitude, and hardly speaks to his parents. He tells his parents that he is interested to pursue education in law, but after graduating with honours, he gives his savings to a charity in the dark, gets in his car, and drives away without letting anybody know where he is going. Along the way, he stops using his true name. He stops all communication with his sister Carine and his parents.

Soon after leaving Atlanta, McCandless abandons his car in the desert after a flash flood damages the engine. From that point on, he hitches around the Northwest, picking up jobs here and there but never settling down for very long. He frequently sleeps on the streets while keeping as little cash and as few possessions as he can. He spends this time getting to know a few individuals rather well, and everyone admires his ferocity and willingness to adhere to his convictions without compromise, but he shies away from actual connection.

The author questions why McCandless chose to starve to death inside the bus rather than try to cross the Teklanika again the following month, in August. After a long journey, Krakauer and his friends reach the Sushana River bus after having crossed the river. A bag of bird feathers, possibly for insulating McCandless' clothing, a kerosene lamp, Ronald Franz's machete sheath, books, a stove made out of an old oil drum, jeans padded with silver duct tape, hiking boots, toenail clippers, and a nylon tent spread across a gaping hole in the bus's window are among the items the author lists as being inside. After roughly two years of wandering, McCandless decides to head to Alaska and try to survive entirely on his own, with only a few supplies, to see if he can do it and to push himself to the absolute limits. He spends a few months getting ready, studying everything he can about hunting, edible plants, etc., and then he quits his job in South Dakota and hitchhikes to Fairbanks. Everyone he informs about the plan to cautions him to be more ready or to wait until later in the spring, but he is adamant and stubborn.

Following a few weeks, Franz takes McCandless to San Diego, where he lives on the streets before heading to Seattle and utilising trains as a means of transportation. Next, McCandless is back in California when Franz receives a collect call from his friend "Alex." After spending a day with Franz and having a supper at a nearby steakhouse, the elder guy drives McCandless to Grand Junction, Colorado. McCandless is informed by Franz that he wants to adopt him. (His own kid had been killed in a vehicle accident years before.) Franz asks McCandless to discuss it, but he refuses, saying they'll talk about it after he gets back from Alaska.

McCandless is dropped off close to Mount McKinley in April 1992, and he then walks into the wilderness. As weeks pass, he hasn't hunted for a while and he gathers food, reads, and lives in a disused bus converted into a hunting shelter. Despite losing a lot of weight, he is largely successful. However, in late July, McCandless most likely consumes some mouldy seeds, and the mould contains a poison that, no matter how much he consumes, effectively leads him to starve to death, and he is too weak to gather food anyhow. The toxin quickly renders McCandless helpless. He writes a farewell note after realising he will pass away, and a few weeks later, some hunters locate it. The Stampede Trail, a frequently unmarked path through the wilderness north of Mount McKinley, will be followed by McCandless. Gallien tries to persuade the young guy otherwise, but he is unmoved and insists that there is nothing he can't handle on his own. The Stampede Trail is where "Alex" (McCandless) vanishes on Tuesday, April 28, 1992.

Self-reliance

Self-reliance has a lot of theoretical implications because of how it affects happiness. You'll undoubtedly find some overlap, or at the very least, potential implications for resilience, self-acceptance, self-worth, self-expression, and self-knowledge(web). Walden, Henry David Thoreau pursued and tested the idea that life is more divine when experienced via spirit than when experienced through matter, and in nature rather than in civilization (web). The transcendentalist movement promoted simplicity and individualism. These basic beliefs lose their validity as society advances because they require us to depend on something other than ourselves. The novel *Into the Wild*, which follows a man's life and independent survival in the woods, disprove this notion. Through its depiction of a man's spiritual journey through his experiences with nature, independence, and rejection of the material world, *Into the Wild* exemplifies the principles of transcendentalism.

Christopher, like many transcendentalists, believes that owning luxury items undermines the purpose of life in general. He believes that instead of absorbing our natural surroundings and God's gifts, we seek insignificant material items. But this paper discusses how the self-reliance is mistook that not going alone oneself will give the meaning of the soul and the purpose of life. To find yourself at least once in the most ancient of human conditions. Even though the theory of utilitarianism is applicable, however the basic instincts are good but they are always led to wrong path.so there is a need of analyzation before we commit an action. Through this the self-reliance is said to be not a pilgrimage or the tour into the wild but analysing what is needed and acting according to the missing fragments.

Conclusion

This paper encompasses the journey of an urban kid renouncing the worldly life and turning into a nomadic journeying through the wilderness. In this paper we learn that no human can exist in solitude at the cost of egoistically proving humans can manage independently. This paper explores relationships between humans and between a human and the nature to prove that humans are designed with rich number of emotions to co-exist rather than live in solitude, hence proving in a grander way that living in a communion is the most natural way of connecting with the nature. This paper breaks the convention of the theme of sacrifice and pleasure and exemplifies the spirit of obtaining the present opportunity to celebrate the present moment in the most aesthetic way possible. This paper dissects and explains how the protagonist lives a life at the breeze of the moment but still manages to strictly renounce the world. Though the ending of the protagonist is not quite delightful, it makes the reader and the audience to examine the uncertainty of life.

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