

On the surface, "Two Tramps in Mud Time" seems to display Robert Frost's narrow individualism. The poem, upon first reading it, seems incongruent, with some of the stanzas having no apparent connection to the whole poem. The poem as a whole also does not appear to have a single definable theme. At one point, the narrator seems wholly narcissistic, and then turns to the power and beauty of nature. It is, however, in the final third of the poem where the narrator reveals his true thoughts to the reader, bringing resolution to the poem as a single entity, not merely a disharmonious collection of words.

At the outset of the poem, the narrator gives a very superficial view of himself, almost seeming angered when one of the tramps interferes with his wood chopping: "one of them put me off my aim". This statement, along with many others, seems to focus on "me" or "my", indicating the apparent selfishness and arrogance of the narrator: "The blows that a life of self-control/Spares to strike for the common good/That day, giving a loose to my soul,/I spent on the unimportant wood." The narrator refers to releasing his suppressed anger not upon evils that threaten "the common good", but upon the "unimportant wood". The apparent arrogance of the narrator is revealed as well by his reference to himself as a Herculean figure standing not alongside nature, but over it: "The grip on earth of outspread feet,/The life of muscles rocking soft/And smooth and moist in vernal heat."

Unexpectedly, the narrator then turns toward nature, apparently abandoning his initial train of thought. He reveals the unpredictability of nature, saying that even in the middle of spring, it can be "two months back in the middle of March." Even the fauna of the land is involved with this chicanery; the arrival of the bluebird would to most indicate the arrival of spring, yet "he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom." The narrator points to the conclusion that, while on the surface, things appear to be one thing, there is always something hidden below, much like "The lurking frost in the earth beneath..."

In the final three stanzas of the poem, the "frost" within the narrator comes to the surface. The humility of the narrator comes to light, with the narrator saying that the tramps' right to chop wood for a living "was the better right--agreed." The narrator also says, "Except as a fellow handled an ax,/They had no way of knowing a fool," insomuch as admitting to his foolishness.

On the surface, the poem seems to be two poems with diverging themes. However,

Robert Frost guides
there two apparently unrelated thoughts into one idea from the heart: "My object in
living is to
unite/My avocation and my vocation/As my two eyes make one in sight." Perhaps the
narrator is the
true Frost coming to the surface.