

# Transcendentalism today

Business



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BUSTER**

Benjamin Anastas's essay was harshly worded and extreme, and I completely disagree with it. Anastas claims that " we've been misreading [Emerson], or at least misapplying him," interpreting his work to mean that we have a " right to love ourselves before any other.

" In other words, we apparently use Emerson's philosophy to rationalize our self-centeredness. But I highly doubt this is the case. Emerson's " Self-Reliance" endorses individuality and independence – questioning what is commonly accepted and breaking tradition. It does completely emphasize the role of the individual, but it doesn't justify or support selfishness, greed, or egocentrism. I think that Anastas overlooked the context in which " Self-Reliance" was written, and failed to remember that Emerson wrote it during a conformist age when differences were weaknesses and strict adherence to social norms was important for later success in life.

Individuals were suppressed at this time and often rejected because of their differing ideas. Change was slow. Emerson realizes this and accurately writes that " a foolish consistency is a hobgoblin of little minds." He goes on to say that " with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." Accordingly, he encourages the average person to take risks and act on their own ideals instead of forcefully committing to the expected.

He aims to instill self-confidence in individuals so that they have the courage to become independent, thinking beings who can create. Although society has changed greatly from the time Emerson wrote " Self-Reliance," his writing still applies even now. Today, diversity is appreciated and outliers are, not only welcome, but idolized. There is intense pressure to be unique

and above everyone else in order to be successful, and this is felt in every aspect of our social life – from what we see on the news, to what we are taught in school. And it makes sense. Without unusual thinking that deviates from familiarities, there would be no curiosity, no discovery, and no advancement.

The quality of life would be forever static, and the problems that accompany it would be eternal. As a result, groundbreakers like Alexander Bell, Martin Luther King, our modern Mark Zuckerberg, and our hero Tim Berners-Lee are highly regarded. After all, where would we be without racial equality and the internet? As an immigrant and someone heavily dependent on the World Wide Web, I shudder to think of such a nation. I've tried to reflect on how American self-reliance has bred trouble today, and I can think of only two things at the moment. First, as I said before, there is an extreme pressure to be unique and nonconformist now. Colleges and employers look for self-reliance and what's more is that this self-reliance has to be evident through the few sheets of paper submitted to them.

Frankly, this makes me feel like I'm running a marathon when I'm out of shape, but have no choice but to keep racing against others. There is a ridiculous amount of competition to prove who is the most exceptional of all, and consequently there is a ridiculous amount of stress and mental breakdowns. In fact, I feel like I have forfeited my childhood to math and I'm sure I'm not alone in this. Second, I see that as our innovative ideas come to fruition, we create new problems for ourselves. This might be a stretch, there is an indirect correlation.

For instance, after creating the internet, and continually expanding it, we meet unforeseen consequences. We are in the digital age - when pirates are no longer overseas, viruses are no longer confined to biology, and bullies are no longer on the playgrounds. The nature of our problems have changed - they're virtual, taking on an entirely different medium! However, problems have always existed and that is why we embrace our self-reliance. Our risk-taking and push for novelties enable us to become innovators who come up with out-of-the-box solutions.