

The theme of self reliance



The Theme of Self-Reliance Throughout Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance", he vigorously encourages people to start living through his theory of self-reliance. What he means by this is that people need to start living their lives through their true personalities and not through others. He believes that much of our society has become consistent in its ideas and that this consistency has destroyed the individualism of many people. At the idea of conformity, Emerson exclaims, "that imitation is suicide."

... (2). He hates that most of society lives their lives through ideas and sayings that are not true to their selves or the way that they really think, and he views these kinds of lives as wasted ones. Ideally, he wants people to stop putting so much weight into ideas that are not theirs and for those same people to start living their own life and formulate their own opinions.

In order for our world to start being "self-reliant", Emerson believes that we first need to begin trusting ourselves. He explains that we should "Accept the place the divine providence has found for you. . .

... (2) and then do something with it. He believes that we should carry out our everyday lives the same way that we did when we were children. For example, when children are very young, they live their life through spontaneity and impulse. They are not trying to conform to any group or trying to gain anyone's approval, they are just trusting their selves and being their true soul.

The main thing that keeps our society from acting spontaneously and truthfully like an infant does, is the fact that we are scared to be different. Emerson says, "Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he

dares not say "I think, I am," but quotes some saint or sage (9). What he means by this is that as we grow up, we become too scared to stray away from conformity. So instead of actually being original and revealing our true selves, we quote some old saying that we feel the rest of society would agree with. This is something that mankind has to stray away from if we wish to shed the skin of consistency and start being self-reliant. To become self-reliant we also have to become excessively honest with ourselves.

For example, if someone says something that you do not agree with, do not trick yourself into believing it. You have to be excessively honest with yourself and tell them your honest opinion of the situation. Emerson says that in order to get in touch with your true self and be deeply honest with yourself you have to isolate yourself from everyone. This will keep foreign ideas out of your head and enable you to formulate your own ideas on things. Many artists and songwriters also use the technique of isolating themselves because it truly lets your own creative thoughts flow. This allows for you to be truly unique as a person, which is what Emerson steadily insists people to do in this essay. In Emerson's ideal society, everyone in the world would be self-reliant.

He wants everyone to be truly unique and to have no conformity throughout our race. He tells us that in order for this to occur we have to stop agreeing with everything little thing that is said, and to think for ourselves. We also have to stop trying to fit into groups that we really do not belong to because all this does is increase the consistency of our population. While Emerson

encourages these changes, he warns that it is impossible to improve our society.

This is because when one thing gets better, another thing will get worse as a result of it. However if we were to carry out his theory and become ??? self-reliant???, it would truly bring about a drastically different and unique population.