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Course Number

Date

Final Essay Exam

What I must do, is all that concerns me, not what the people think.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance.

The above-mentioned quote is from ‘Self-Reliance’, an essay in the book titled ‘Essays’ written by American Philosopher and Writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The essay is considered the most influential piece of Emerson to date. In his essay, he emphasizes the importance of Individualism and refrainment from conformism (Ii and A). The essay, ‘History’ precedes ‘Self-Reliance’ in the book. The rationale behind this sequence is that a stable and self-sufficient entity is achieved from these two essays.

           A man should be only concerned by his goals and his duties. The opinions of other people in the society should not stop him from what he must do (Emerson).

# **Explanation**

I strongly believe that book relates to all those who wish to become an admirable person and thinker, even though it seems to be written for the male audience. One can apply many useful things to their lives, which can help to build a strong character and improve their thinking.

The quote is the central idea of the essay. The basic idea of the essay is to lose the conformity and adopt a path which is aligned with true passion. This essay can be divided into three major parts. Firstly, the essence of self-reliance is defined so that the reader will be aware of reading purpose. Next, the relation of self-reliance and the individual is described. Lastly, the association between self-reliance and society is portrayed.

Emerson suggests imitating the children and also animals who are instinctively aware of the essence of independence or nonconformity. Their behavior is considerably contrasted with maturity in humans. Unreserved belief in one’s emotions can give rise to contradictions as emotions vary with time. However, Emerson justifies it by stating that it is natural to have contradictions. The concept presented by Emerson endorses the idea of living in and for the present-day. One should be liberated from all the worries of the past or future (Kateb).

Emerson cited examples of Plato, Milton, and Moses who are admired for following their own hearts. He claims that people follow their instinct rarely because it originates from their own mind. At times when it seems improbable to seek one’s own desires, one can look back to the days of youth, where one is carefree of opinions and judgment of society. From Emerson’s perspective, the process of conformity begins when an individual grows and begins to act similar to others. One does so to get approval for the society and avoid negative judgment.

Emerson encourages to live and think about present only. He considers Jesus, Copernicus, Luther, Newton, Galileo, and Pythagoras as misunderstood people. One of the key factors that leads to the self-reliance is being misunderstood.

For Emerson, the realization of the ultimate goal of a person is significant. He is of the opinion that religion should be mean to think deeply about life and connecting with God, rather than a source of asking for fulfillment of needs.

           Emerson inspires the readers to follow their intuition even if it is evil. He describes that it is better to be evil instead of being 'virtuous’ based on the conventions and norms of society. Based on facts, he states that intrinsic moral emotions, that lead to self-reliance, cannot originate from evil.

To summarize, the essay endorses self-reliance as a standard for personal development. It compares it with numerous approaches to conformism.

**My Opinion**

The essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘Self-Reliance’ introduced a concept which is essential to living a meaningful life. I agree with the belief of Emerson that one should act according to one’s will and dreams. It should not relay on what other direct one to do.

           Self-Reliance is of great significance in positive psychology as it leads to pleasure and contentment. Self-reliance is associated often with self-knowledge, self-expression, self-worth, self-acceptance, and resilience.

           I believe that self-reliance is not about not getting help from others or being financially independent. Self-Reliance basically comprises of beliefs and theories of Emerson. He was of opinion that the opinions, suggestions, and norms of society destructively influence our growth. His strong belief that self -Reliance and individualism are essential to our growth, is widely accepted in today’s world.

The only way to be free of the societal pressure and obligations is to trust one’s own self when it comes to making a life decision. The writing pieces of Emerson are centered around the idea that people follow others and what try to do what they have done or said. According to him, this is only imitating others, and this is a result of a lack of confidence in one’s own insight and reasonable proficiencies (Whelan).

Emerson encourages people to be able to build one’s own mindset and have the confidence to follow it without being pressured from others’ judgments. However, it does not mean to isolate oneself from society but to grow independently.

The reason I personally agree with the concept proposed by Emerson because this has helped me to improve myself. It made me realize that my happiness and stability do not depend on others’ will, rather it originates from own determination to grow, regardless of what others say.

**Personal experience**

I have a learning problem which does not mean that I cannot learn, rather I need extra effort and help to learn. This condition is known worldwide as Dyslexia. This condition means that my brain perceives the information differently.

Dyslexia is referred to as a learning disability which means that a person has difficulty while reading and writing. The term for learning disability where a person faces trouble while learning mathematics is dyscalculia. Some find it difficult to form the shape of the letter while they try to write, this condition is called dysgraphia. There are also cases where people find it difficult to learn a language (Learning Problems (for Kids) - Nemours KidsHealth).

These problems can be overcome by finding out the best way to learn to speed up the process. It is commonly believed that people suffering from dyslexia are either slow or dumb, which is not true. Initially, it is difficult for a child to know that he or she suffers from this condition. With help from parents and school psychologist, I discovered ways to improve my learning ability.

Personal Experience in light of ‘Self-Reliance’

With my personal experience, Self-Reliance played a significant role. It was important to me for several reasons. Being Dyslexic, I obviously needed more help from others and effort from my side. And at times when I needed help, it was not available. There were moments, I lacked because of my disability to learn. It was not even possible for me to compete with other smart kids. But my will to do better and compete with own self let me overcome my weakness.

My parents were told that educating me was of no use. I will not be able to bring good grades or even pass exams. I was told by people to find something better to do. Some advised me to start working where smartness was not a requirement, and some suggested me to join the church.

Discovering that one suffers from a learning disability can be discouraging and upsetting. The child naturally feels different from others at school and in the community. There was a time when even I began to doubt myself. My parents did not give up on me and told me to follow my dreams. I started to understand the need of Self-reliance and how it can revolutionize the lives. I decided not to listen to what people what to say about my condition or my future. I was determined to build my future according to my will.

**Conclusion**

The essay ‘Self-Reliance’ urges the readers to pursue their own will, rather than accepting social expectations as the ultimate goal. He highlights the importance of developing an approach which is to follow one’s own voice rather than an intercessor's, like a church. He encourages his readers to be truthful with others. Emerson postulates to alter religious practices and instead develop one’s own culture. The purpose is that Americans focus on personal growth before societal advancement (Sacks and Sacks). An individual should not be influenced by the opinions and suggestions of other people. Instead, one should adopt a path which one wills, and which is aligned with his aims.

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