

Lidia Nesci

Professor Ronan

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### Relation Between Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and "Friendship"

Many of Emerson's works relate to one another and revolve around the same concept of self-reliance. Emerson wrote an essay called "Self-Reliance" and another called "Friendship." Each essay focuses on something specific, but there is a large connection between the two that ties them together. In order to be self-reliant, a person must follow the rules associated with the ideology. A big rule of thumb is to have friends according to Emerson for a person to be considered self-reliant. The relationship between both works by Emerson helps explain his overall concept of what it means to be self-reliant and how a person can get to that point.

In order to understand the relationship between self-reliance and friendship, one must know what self-reliance is according to Emerson. Self-reliance is the idea of originality and finding one's own uniqueness. Emerson believed every one was put on this Earth to fulfill their destiny. Every person's goal was to find what made him or her unique, or what they were good at and fulfill their destiny. Destiny in Emerson's case was the concept of being successful. In his essay, "Self-Reliance" Emerson makes this point by saying, "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events." This quote tells people to trust themselves and accept their uniqueness or constitution to become successful. God gave everyone something unique to do and the people must trust what is within them.

Emerson never believed in imitation. He actually states, “imitation is suicide” in his essay, “Self-Reliance.” To be self-reliant, a person could not copy or follow in another person’s footsteps in order to be successful. In his essay, “Self-Reliance” Emerson says, “. . .no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till.” In other words, Emerson tried to explain that it is up to the person to find his or her own destiny. That person must do the work or “till the plot of land” to find self-reliance and become successful by “growing the corn.” Emerson thought every person had something unique about them that would make him or her successful, but without following another person or a model.

Another characteristic of self-reliance is the idea of God being within everything. According to Emerson in “Self-Reliance” he states, “The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure, that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things;” Here, Emerson is talking about how the relationship between the person (soul) and God (divine) is pure. When God speaks, he doesn’t just speak to one thing, but all things because God is within every living thing. Emerson had this thought that in order to be self-reliant a person must show that God is in them. By finding what one’s own uniqueness is and becoming successful from it shows other people God is in them, and that means they are self-reliant.

Emerson’s other essay; “Friendship” discusses the importance of having friends. In Emerson’s eyes, friendship can be tricky to accomplish because of human flaws. It is ideal to have a friendship with another individual, but ultimately it always fails. Emerson saw friendship as a way of expanding one’s own knowledge by learning from other individuals. Ultimately,

Emerson encouraged friendship for platonic reasons, but believed people should not get too close because there are downsides to having friends.

The importance of friendship comes from the idea that friends help one another. The reason for having friends is to better oneself. Nowadays people are friends because they enjoy other people's company and they may have things in common. In Emerson's time, he saw friendship as a business arrangement in a way. Friends were only there to talk to about intellectual matters, and help guide another person in the right direction. This relates to Emerson's idea of self-reliance because he believed in order to be friends, both people have to be self-reliant individuals. Emerson did value friendship, and saw it as the highest relationship between two people.

Emerson believed in order to have a true friend it would have to be someone as smart as oneself because then they can help each other equally. According to Emerson, friendships between two smart individuals could become tricky. It was ideal to think of having another person to share thoughts with and better each other in the world, but at the same time there runs the risk of competition. There are two ways of looking at competition amongst friends. Competitions can either be a good thing in a friendship, or bad. It really depends on how each person in the friendship handles competition.

Sometimes competition can be a good thing because it forces the other person to do better. Forcing someone to do better ties into self-reliance. If a person is bettering their self, they are one step closer to becoming self-reliant. Emerson states, "A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud. I am arrived at last in the presence of a man so real and equal, that I may drop even those undermost garments of dissimulation, courtesy, and second thought..." This quote from Emerson's essay, "Friendship" explains how true friendship

forces a person to be honest and compete to do better. Friends are honest with each other and Emerson is saying that he may be sincere with a friend and talk about their intellectual opinions. Naturally, discussing opinions forces people to learn and think about things from a different perspective. That can help a person to understand better and think in a better way.

According to Emerson in his essay, he says, "I do not wish to treat friendships daintily, but with roughest courage." This quote ties into the idea of competition being a good thing in friendships. It means Emerson thinks challenging your friends and getting challenged back is a good thing. If there is this constant challenge between two friends, they will eventually start competing against one another. Again, this goes back to Emerson's idea that competition is a way of bettering oneself.

The downside to having a friend as smart as oneself is a constant feeling of competition. Both friends may end up competing over who is smarter, resulting in a loss of what it means to be a friend. Competition is natural among people and can become the cause of so many problems. Friendships could be broken because of competition and human flaws. The concept of having a friendship with an equally smart individual is ideal, but doesn't always necessarily work.

In Emerson's opinion, friends help with expanding one's knowledge. Specifically, friends are meant to give knowledge to a person about their self. In order to get to know yourself, a friend would tell you about your personality and characteristics. Based on that information someone would know what kind of person they portray themselves as. In Emerson's essay, "Friendship" he says, "High thanks I owe you, excellent lovers, who carry out the world for me to new and noble depths, and enlarge the meaning of all my thoughts." By this he is trying to say

how grateful he is that his friends helped him find himself and told him what he is like.

Friendship according to Emerson is supposed to give you knowledge of yourself.

Friends are meant to help a person gather self-knowledge. It allows them to know if they are being self-reliant based on what their friend sees. Emerson states, “We doubt that we bestow on our hero the virtues in which he shines, and afterwards worship the form to which we have ascribed this divine inhabitation. In strictness, the soul does not respect men as it respects itself. In strict science all persons underlie the same condition of an infinite remoteness.” Here he is saying how friends can tell other friends if they are self-reliant. The ideology behind this is your character tells others if you are self-reliant. Not everyone can tell if another person has achieved self-reliance; only another self-reliant friend can tell you.

Friendship according to Emerson is supposed to give you self-knowledge about your constitution. In other words, friends are the only people that can tell you if you have achieved self-reliance. Self-reliance is shown to friends when a person has reached their true character, or found their uniqueness. The point of a friendship is to better oneself and allow them to get to the point of being self-reliant so they can become successful.