Journal 4

Original unit: Greatness

Prompt: Reflection on Self-Reliance by Emerson

10/23/2011

“Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members”. Like Emerson said, there were always conflicts between individual and groups or society. Society wants to achieve “individual good”, while individuals want to achieve “good individual”.

I partly agree with Emerson’s opinion, which states that society is a place to make all the people same while killing their creativities. We humans prefer to follow the behaviors of the people we love or admire. We tend to believe the words and attitude claimed by famous people. We most likely have the same political beliefs or religious belief as our family do. So, in many ways, we say that we are shaped to be like the person around us, therefore shaped by general society, like what Emerson said: “People must seek solitude to heat their own thoughts, because society by its nature coerces men to confirm”.

However, if we consider Emerson’s claim in a different way, the conclusion will be different. When we are born, we know nothing about this world and we have no personality. How can we finally become so different and so unique? The answer is society. Different circumstances in society make everyone different. In other words, individual and personality are just exactly from society. Emerson said: “To be great is to be misunderstood”. But why they are misunderstood? Their thoughts are ahead of time. How can their thoughts be ahead of time if society makes everyone the same? So, society also helps create new personalities.