
Analytical Aspect of Relation between BTS and Transcendentalism: Opinion Essay

The subculture of music has many wonders. I chose the topic of relating BTS and transcendentalism because I preferably transcend into a different realm when I listen to my favorite group of all time, BTS, or also known as Bulletproof Boy Scouts or Bangtan Sonyeondon. Their lyrics and music hits really close to my heart and it helps me cope in many situations. Their songs attack issues that I also face such as mental health, suicide, nihilism, the K-pop idol/music industry system, and female empowerment. I have been listening to them for many years, and didn't realize till now that they have helped me grow as a person and cope with my problems today. The main messages they use in their songs all relate back to the phrase, "Love Yourself."

In late 2017, BTS and their label, BigHit Entertainment, partnered with the Korean Committee for UNICEF to embark the Love Myself campaign and UNICEF's #ENDviolence campaign. With that being released, BTS also released their fifth extended album, Love Yourself: Her, which featured themes of love, loss, friendship, and death, that sparked the Love Myself campaign. With the growing support from their fans, known as ARMY, it has spread as a worldwide sensation of self-love. It has grown so much that in September 2018, BTS delivered a speech about the Love Myself campaign in front of the United Nations, where Namjoon (RM) spoke on behalf of the group. Their message to the United Nations took off and helped many people just like me.

Listening to their music and following them as a person to me is like transcending above the human experience. Their songs impact me a lot due to them relating to what I go through as a youth in this generation. "They call me a try-hard. Our generation has had it hard. Hurry, chase 'em, thanks to those that came before us I'm spread too thin. I've got a crow-tit's legs, and you have a stork's legs. They all say their legs are worth a million bucks." These are some of the lyrics from the song, "??(Baepsae)", which explains the difficulty the youth must face in this generation. The word "??(Baepsae)" is a Korean word for a "Crow-tit bird", and when translated into English, it has a different meaning such as "silver spoon" or "try-hard". This word implies to our youth today due to the adults in the society seeing the youth as "baepsae"; people who would do anything to climb up the ranks of society, no matter what it takes. (source: Amino (taken from my own personal blog))

Another song that hits close to me is called "Reflection" composed by Namjoon/RM, the leader of BTS. This song lets me escape from reality and really be my true self. "I want to pat myself on the back. But hey sometimes I really really hate myself. When I really hate myself, I come to Ttukseom. I just stand in the darkness I am used to with the people who are laughing, the beer that makes me laugh. The fear that secretly returns and grabs my hand. It's okay, it's all 2-3, I have friends, that's good. I wish I could love myself." These lyrics explain the struggles to accept oneself completely due to self hatred and not being true to yourself in front of other people. I go through this majority of my time when I am outside. I struggle to accept myself completely in front of others because I care so much about other people's opinions and thoughts about me, rather than loving myself for who I am, and people should respect that too. When I listen to this song and hear the lyrics, it helps me realize that I fear of society and it

stops me from truly loving myself.

Analytical Aspect:

Music Has No Language

A famous transcendentalist philosopher stated, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured, or far away." - Henry Thoreau (source: Amino). A transcendentalist follows what Henry Thoreau describes in his quotes, they "transcend" above the range of the normal human experience and move into the spiritual realm by following the three principals; being true to yourself, individualism, and being natural. They follow the ideology of transcendentalism which is a spiritual belief system, a philosophical and literary movement. One of the core principles is that we can go beyond the scene and sense, and spark the divine nature of going above the physical human experience.

"Love Yourself" is a well-renowned phrase that many people have heard about in the past decade. The phrase "loving yourself," means having the ability to love yourself and writing your own story without caring about other people's opinions. Loving yourself means accepting your true self and individualism. The mindset that is targeting the youth of our generation and our society as a whole, is trying to be favored and achieving to be a different person. Henry Thoreau, a well-known philosopher stated, "I want you to be yourself-not your idea of what you think is somebody's idea of yourself." In the society today, everyone is trying to be unique and carve their mark on this world, however they can't do that unless they love themselves and accept the fact that it is impossible to change who you are; "The only person you decide to become is the person you decide to be" - Henry Thoreau (source: Amino (from my personal blog)).

Transcendentalism and Love Yourself have the same concepts, where one can reach the divinity of going beyond the "normal" human experience. The ideology of transcendentalism is to be "one with nature", and loving yourself is to be in "your own nature"; your own self. Being true to yourself is to be your natural self in an everyday situation, no matter your location, your reputation, or who is eyeing you. The concept with transcendentalism is to be in a nature surrounding and learning the endless possibilities to transcend to the spiritual realm. With transcendentalism corresponding to loving yourself, this leads to learning more about yourself and how one should adapt and react to the society. With this concept of society affecting our generation, our youth should not be afraid of what society thinks or perceives of them. In reality, society is a huge mass of different individuals that have their own individual thoughts and opinions. However, the civilization we live today follows the same flow that has been set centuries ago. Our humanity today is a conformity; where everyone shares the same traits and personalities. Despite the idea of conformity, transcendentalism and loving yourself is pushing the philosophy of nonconformity, where everyone is unique and different in their own ways. The idea of nonconformity is always overseen because our generation has been looking at ourselves by the big picture. We can't reach the belief of transcendentalism due to the lack of not appreciating and looking at the small details. In the work, "Walden" by Henry David Thoreau, the section "Spring" gives the central idea appreciating the small details in life and change. The small details in your life can affect the change and your future, giving you a new opportunity to explore. "As every season seems best to us in its turn, so the coming in of spring

is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age.” This quote from the text implies how the season Spring is like the start of a new life and opportunity as all the chaos from the other seasons start to disintegrate. “The change from storm and winter to serene and mild weather, from dark and sluggish hours to bright and elastic ones, is memorable crisis which all things proclaim.” The change from breaking out of the normal, boring, and dark life of society into a more divine realm giving you new opportunities for a better change. These quotes from the text help us understand how appreciating the small details can help us break out of society’s boring cycle and transcend into the spiritual realm.

Transcendentalism and love yourself connects to the messages perceived in the South Korean idol group, BTS, known as Bulletproof Boy Scouts or Bangtan Sonyeondon. BTS’ music and lyrics tackles heavily on themes such the hidden emotions of the youth, issues of society, depression, pressure, and empowerment. In one of their earlier eras, around their debut, BTS released a single titled “N.O.” “Dreams disappeared, there was no time to rest. It’s a cycle of school, home or an Internet cafe. Everyone lives the same life. Students who are pressured to be number one live in between dreams and reality. Who is the one who made us into studying machines? They classify us to either being number one or dropping out.” These are several of the lyrics translated from the song. The lyrics in this song, and the visual aspects in the music video show the aspects of nonconformity. It showcases dislike for what someone else wishes them to be. The parents and their society have high standards that students are expected to meet and would be deemed a failure when they do not meet those harsh expectations.

Transcendentalism can be practiced by listening to the wonders of music composed by BTS. In the prompt Walden: “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” by Henry David Thoreau, he records, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” (Thoreau, pp 2). This quote from the text implies how Henry David Thoreau went to live in the woods and seclude himself from society with only his bare necessities. This can relate to the use of transcendentalism, because when listening to the power of what BTS’ music holds, it feels like you are floating away from society as you are listening to the soothing voices, beats, and the power their lyrics hold. When listening to music, you don’t need other unnecessary things in life to help you “understand” music. Music transcends beyond language. Music itself is its own language, which is why many people can relax, listen to it for hours, and go beyond the normal human experience.