

“Know Thyself”

“Know thyself” used to sound like a motivational quote people post without thinking. Now, as a college freshman, it feels like a command. It means understanding not only what I am good at, but also what drives me, what tempts me, and what kind of person I am becoming. At this stage of my life, knowing myself means recognizing that I am no longer just a student completing tasks. I am becoming an adult responsible for my decisions, values, and direction.

Socrates believed that self-knowledge is the foundation of a good and ethical life. Without examining ourselves, we live blindly. In college, I started to understand this more deeply. I realized that knowing myself is not about listing strengths. It is about examining my motivations and moral standards. For example, I play chess at a competitive level. I know I am strong in it, and I used that strength to aim for the varsity team. But self-reflection made me ask: Why do I compete? Is it for pride, recognition, or excellence? I discovered that competition pushes me not just to win, but to discipline myself. Chess exposed both my ego and my patience. It showed me that character matters more than rating.

Entering college challenged my view of myself in ways high school never did. I used to think I was already disciplined and resilient. Then I encountered difficult subjects in Electronics Engineering, fast-paced lectures, and moments of academic failure. There were times when I wanted immediate results and felt frustrated when I did not get them. This forced me to confront my weakness: I sometimes measure my worth by performance.

From an ethical perspective, this connects to the difference between moral and non-moral standards. Academic success and ratings are non-moral standards. They measure skill. But patience, honesty, perseverance, and humility are moral standards because they shape who I am as a person. College made me realize that failing a quiz does not define my moral character, but how I respond to it does. When our class performed poorly in a major quiz, I had two choices: complain or improve. Choosing to review harder and help classmates instead of blaming the difficulty of the test was a moral decision. It reflected growth.

Another important realization came from my faith. As a religious person, I believe faith in God strengthens me under pressure. However, self-reflection helped me see that faith is not an excuse to be passive. It is a call to responsibility. I cannot pray for success and avoid effort. True faith, in my experience, requires action, discipline, and trust at the same time. That understanding changed how I approach challenges.

Through reflection, I discovered several strengths: adaptability, fast learning, and leadership. When I was hired as a chess coach in Grade 12, I had to guide players older than me. That experience forced me to practice patience and clarity. Teaching others made me realize that knowledge is not enough; integrity and empathy matter. Leadership is not about authority but responsibility. At the same time, I recognized weaknesses: impatience, pride in achievement, and self-pressure. Acknowledging these does not weaken me. It strengthens my awareness.

Ultimately, "Know thyself" means continuous examination. I am still developing. College is not only shaping my technical skills as an engineering student but also forming my character. Through ethical reflection, personal experience, and challenges, I am learning that success is not just about intelligence or talent. It is about moral discipline, resilience, and understanding who I am becoming.

Self-knowledge is not a one-time discovery. It is a lifelong responsibility. And as a freshman, I am only at the beginning.