

Know Thy Self: My Journey of Self-Discovery as a College College Freshman

As a freshman, the phrase “Know thyself” has taken on a deeper meaning than I ever expected. Originally inscribed at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi and later emphasized by Socrates, this phrase encourages individuals to examine their inner lives. For me, at this stage of my life, “Know thyself” means being honest about who I am beyond expectations. It means understanding my lifestyle, philosophical doctrines and moral values I follow and recognizing my identity by identifying what truly matters to me—not what society or others expect of me.

Through self-reflection, I discovered several strengths. Looking back at my life, I realized that I am resilient. Although I experienced burnout and failure, I did not give up. Instead, I learnt how to cope with the challenges I faced. I sought what truly mattered to me, and learned how to manage my emotions. I also discovered factors which I consider as something I could use to survive. I was able to build my individuality. However, college life required me to step out of my comfort zone, whether by participating in group discussions or collaborating with unfamiliar peers.

Entering college significantly challenged my perception of myself. As far as I know, I have been a person that practices hedonism. I preferred choices that would not bring negative repercussions and often prioritized personal comfort. However, during my first semester in college, I met people who view certain things differently; their principles, morals, and values differed from mine. Since they were my classmates, I am often prompted to engage with them. Over time, I was influenced as to how they think and how they act. Personally, I find their opinions ethical.

For this reason, I realized that I think my sense of self is being altered and my individuality is slowly fading. This became a conflicting experience for me. On one hand, I admired their moral discipline and sense of responsibility. On the other hand, I worried that adapting to their perspectives meant abandoning my own. I feared that I would lose the things—the values and philosophical doctrines that were of utmost importance to me—that prevented me from becoming the person I disliked.

This internal conflict can be understood through Sigmund Freud’s theory of the id, ego, and superego. My previous inclination toward hedonism reflects the influence of the id—the part of the personality that seeks pleasure and avoids discomfort. Meanwhile, the perspectives of my peers, which emphasized responsibility and ethical reasoning, resonated with the superego, the internalized moral standards shaped by society. Caught between these forces was my ego, attempting to find balance. Rather than completely rejecting my past beliefs or blindly adopting new ones, my ego struggled to reconcile pleasure with principle.

Despite these struggle, I came up to the conclusion that although my perception was being challenged, nothing should remain static. Instead, it involves consciously evaluating which influences to accept and which to question. Growth does not necessarily erase individuality; it refines it. My values were not disappearing—they were being tested. I learned that true self-knowledge requires critical reflection, not passive conformity. It demands the courage to examine one’s beliefs while remaining anchored to one’s core principles.

Ultimately, my freshman year taught me that identity is not fixed but continuously shaped by experience. “Know thyself” now means understanding the internal conflicts within me and deliberately choosing who I want to become. Rather than fearing change, I have begun to see it as an essential part of self-discovery.