**NAME: PRATIK MISHRA  
ROLL NUMBER: 14493  
SERIAL NUMBER: 24  
MATHEMATICS AND SCIENTIFIC COMPUTING**

**ENG445 ASSIGNMENT 1**

1. **How far do you think that people in peak-experiences are close to their real selves, real identities?**

ANSWER:

To answer this question in any capacity requires, as a bare minimum, an introspection on the meaning of the word ‘Identity’. Most of us feel like we have an idea of what identity means but everybody’s understanding varies. As Maslow rightly pointed out, the word Identity has a different meaning attached to it by different people under different circumstances. Therefore I do not attempt to define Identity here. Rather I look upon identity from different angles, like Maslow did, and try to understand its behavior in peak-experiences. Peak-experiences and people’s identities are related in the same way that rays emanating from the sun are related to the dust particles in a dark room. **It sheds light on something that has always been there but is truly visible only in the former’s presence.** The dark room in this analogy is the human mind which is illuminated upon interaction with peak-experiences. **When we speak of real selves or real identities, we are in fact referring to the core structure of our existence, kind of like our soul’s address in this spiritual universe**. Peak-experiences allow humans to be integrated with the universe in a sense that they are capable of looking past the material aspect of the universe and having a glimpse of what constitutes the soul of the universe and as a result, what constitutes their own soul because in that moment, both are one and the same. But that is not all. The inner-peace and tranquility that accompanies these peak-experiences allow our minds to concentrate and think about what is most important in life and it is often out of contemplations of such nature that epiphanies emerge about self. While we share most of our characteristics with billions of other inhabitants of Planet Earth, **our real identity holds the key to our individuality that casts us as a separate element of this cosmic universe**. It is during peak-experiences that we are able to drop our inhibitions and in those moments these underlying features that lend us our individuality come to the fore. Peak experiences allow us to truly be, a hundred percent, in the present. **It is only when we shed our scars of the past and fear of the future that we will have the mental capacity to understand what truly shapes our identity. In a sense, Peak experiences allow us to be closest to the supreme power in the universe and thus closest to be able to understand the fabric of our being.**

1. **What is your understanding of peak-experience?**

ANSWER:

According to Wikipedia, a peak-experience is a moment accompanied by a euphoric mental state often achieved by self-actualizing individuals. This is a notion that has been positively reaffirmed by Maslow in chapter 7 of the book ‘*Toward a psychology of being’.* My understanding of the term has been heavily influenced by Maslow’s opinions as most of my contemplations on the term has been in the company of my reading his textbook. From what I have gathered, there is no single activity that you could pin point as a peak experience. Rather, there are certain features that peak-experiences have in common which could allow both, the individual experiencing it and also the observer, to recognize them. As I have already mentioned in my answer to the 1st question, Peak-experiences are the medium through which our real-identities reveal themselves. Peak-experiences allow us to be more integrated, lend inner peace and tranquility and distinguish us from other human beings. They allows us to operate at the peak of our powers, making everything look effortless and natural. Ultimate Creativity accompanies peak-experiences in which ideas and actions flow freely. They allow us to shed all inhibitions that hinder our personal growth. Peak-experiences allow us to be happy without any goals or agendas. That is happiness in the true sense of the word. It is the closest that we can be to the state of complete nirvana. Ultimately, it is not really the activity that counts but the ecstatic feeling that is achieved during it.

1. **Do you have a peak-experience that you would like to share with others? How far you realize that the moment of peak-experience made you realise what your real self/identity is?**

ANSWER:

Given my understanding of peak-experiences, of how extreme they are, I do not believe I have yet had an experience that could be purely categorized as a peak-experience. However, I have had brief moments where I have been immensely happy without any strings attached or when I have had utmost clarity and peace in my life or when I have felt that I could do things effortlessly. One of life’s most gratifying feelings for me is to see my little sister laugh in her most natural way. It is those moments that I cherish the most in my life and they help me forget any troubles I might have in life. I often end up recalling those in my memory whenever I feel a little down. They never fail to lift my spirits. It has made me realize that her happiness is more important to me than any material possessions that life could offer. I believe that I am precocious person and therefore I realized very early in my life that it is much easier to speak the truth than to remember your lies. This coupled with my indifference to pleasing others just for the sake of being liked has given me immense clarity in my life as to what constitutes me. Also, sports have played a major role in shaping me as an individual. I think I find myself most comfortable when I am playing a sport, be it Cricket or Football or Table Tennis or Basketball or any other. They allow us to be completely in the present. None of my problems enter with me onto the field. In any sport, there comes rare moments when you know that you cannot fail, that you would certainly be able to beat the goalkeeper or that the shot is definitely going to go into the basket. There is something about the euphoria of those moments that keep on calling me back in search for them. These are a few experiences of my life that have shown me glimpse of my true self.

1. **“Growth has not only rewards and pleasures but also many intrinsic pains and always will have. Each step forward is a step into the unfamiliar and is possibly dangerous. It also means giving up something familiar and good and satisfying. It frequently means a parting and a separation, even a kind of death prior to rebirth, with consequent nostalgia, fear, loneliness and mourning. It also means giving up a simpler and easier and less effortful life, in exchange for a more demanding, more responsible, more difficult life (p. 204).”**

ANSWER:

I know literature provides us the freedom to wield our imagination and therefore could have provided countless examples to resonate with the above stated quote. However, I believe that life and therefore history is the best storyteller out there. Thus my example to relate with the quote comes from real life and it’s actually one of the stories that inspires me the most. It’s the story of a boy from a small town in Argentina who had been, quite ironically in this case, diagnosed with **Growth Hormone deficiency** in childhood and is now **arguably the greatest footballer on this planet**. **This is the story of Lionel Andres Messi**. When I say he is the greatest footballer on this planet, it’s not just an opinion. It can be backed by dozens and dozens of records that are in his name. A simple Google search of his name would reveal that to the reader. However displaying his greatness on the field is not the subject of this answer. What forms the crux of this answer is that while all of us can look at the end result, only few really think of the journey. Imagine yourself to be a boy who is merely 13 years of age, already grappling with a rare hormonal disease, when all of a sudden you need to leave your family behind and move to another continent all together. That’s what happened to him when FC Barcelona offered him a contract and agreed to pay for his treatment. A mere child, thrust into an unknown and unfamiliar place away from his loved ones. A child who needed love and support had to rather go through rigorous training and practice to get to where he is right now. He used to complain of feeling homesick in Spain but nevertheless he continued to work hard and develop as a professional footballer. It kind of goes on to show the level of sacrifice that is required to reach the pinnacle in any field. Throughout his career, Messi has suffered several career threatening injuries that could have easily made him retire from the sport. However, the resilience that he has shown to come back each time goes on to exemplify his dedication to his craft and his understanding of the responsibility he has towards his team. The thing to understand here is that at many crossroads of his life, he could have chosen the easy way out. However, he continued to live a demanding life and that is the reason that now he reaps the reward. Owing to his prodigious talent, many viewers seem to have the notion that since football is so natural to him, he never had to work hard to be at the position he is in. However, I would like to end this answer with a quote from the man himself,***“It took me 17 years and a 114 days to become an overnight success”.***

1. **“These experiences are life-validating, i.e., they make life worthwhile. These are certainly an important part of the answer to the question, “Why don’t we all commit suicide?” (p. 210)**

ANSWER:

It is really an interesting question. “Why don’t we all commit suicide?” What is the reason that we continue to wake up each day to go through the same repetitive motions? Is living compulsory? If not, why are there 7 billion people on this planet? Surely there must be something that life has to offer us that death cannot. Is that something referring to the peak-experiences and the ecstasy and clarity that accompany them? Maybe. At least that is what happens with Santiago in *‘The Alchemist’*. Santiago goes through life having experiences that allow him to realize his purpose in life and reaffirm his belief in his abilities and his worth as a human being. His experiences allow him to realize the worth of being able to exist, observe and appreciate the beauty that life has to offer. To him, life never ceased to amaze. His journey from meeting an old king to being lost in Africa, to work for a crystal merchant and to meet the alchemist and the love of his life actually made his life worthwhile. The treasure was a mere by-product for him in his life. Most often, people tend to focus so heavily on achieving their goals that they miss every instance of gratification that the journey provides. That is the reason that most people tend to be dissatisfied with their lives. But that was not the case with Santiago. He knew how to appreciate the peak-experiences he had and use them for self-actualization and personal growth. Thus, every day brought with it a reason for Santiago’s existence and that ensured that he could always enjoy life and look forward to whatever it had in store for him.