Questions

COMMUNITY

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ARTISTS

PLATO
philosophy learning and teaching organization

Questions **is a journal of the Philosophy**
Learning and teaching organization

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the 23rd edition of Questions. Our theme this issue is "community." We were inspired to set this theme by both the events happening around us (wherever you are) and the ways in which community shapes the individual even as individuals shape the community.

Our contributors for this issue explore the many meanings of community: in classrooms, families, among friends, and across national borders. They invite us to experience transitions from one community to another and the challenges and joys that can accompany such a journey. They challenge us to examine what responsibilities a community requires of us, even as that same community provides us with a rich sense of presence in the world, among others.

This issue features high school contributors offering analytical essays, philosophical commentary, poems and images. We are international. We have contributions from third graders in Italy, from Mexico, India, and across the United States. A number of contributors live in the US now but came here from other countries and share the perspectives on community across these cultures. Our final article shares a program of philosophical exchange between children in South Africa and in the Ukraine. Many of the illustrations capture the notions of community in visual form and come from a fourth grade classroom in Seattle, Washington.

As always I am grateful for the dedication and hard work by our editorial board in reviewing the many submissions we received. Sadly we could not accept all of them but we remain so pleased by the overwhelming response and encourage all readers to continue to philosophize and send us your work. I would be remiss if I did not thank the teachers and parents who worked so diligently with their students to discuss important ideas. And a huge thanks to our editor at PDC for creatively putting together our collective work.

It has been a joy and privilege to serve as editor for this journal for the past years but we anticipate a new editor beginning with out next issue. Our theme for 2024 is still pending so please visit the PLATO website in the fall to find out how to submit for the next issue.

—*Wendy C. Turgeon*

Artist: Olivia Rallo

Plato Essay Contest: Community

Dorcas Ndume—Santa Fe Christian School—April 24, 2023

My name is Dorcas Ndume, I'm 17 years old and I attend Santa Fe Christian School. I moved to San Diego from Burundi, East Africa when I was 9 years old. My philosophy class gets me thinking and prepares me for difficult conversations and for thinking critically.

> Community! What makes a community? It depends on how you define what community first is.

Growing up in an East African community, what community looked like for me was waking up early Saturday morning helping what we call in French le commerçant for street marking, and watching Nickelodeon, sipping tea with a room full of kids that sometimes you have no clue who they are. A community can be a group of interacting populations of people living in the exact common location, a body of people of commonality like professional interests that are scattered through a larger society, or/and a group of people or things that are linked together by proximity. For example, when you are at school, you are in a setting without having to choose who you get to see and who you get to avoid. You are in a place where everyone with different ethnicities and backgrounds comes together to share a common interest, which is seeking a better education in the hope of a better future.

In discussion in our philosophy class regarding Plato's book, The Republic, it seemed that a community is a society organized as an organic whole, with each component doing its part to provide for the proper functioning and prosperity of the whole. As for me, I don't just see a community as a large set of people who happen to be in the same environment, but as a group of people who commune with each other, welcome new incomers, boost mental health and improve resilience to difficult life events, such as illness or job loss. A community that we as humans should be aiming for is the one which influences us to be better people and helps us to make the right choices when put into difficult situations. This could be your friends, relatives, or family but it is one which you want to hold onto for the rest of your life.

In my culture, it is our duty to act in such a manner that we would want everyone else to act similarly. As for my African culture and heritage, community means attending a wedding with everyone contributing by bringing a dish, dancing with loud music, with a space full of laughter and cheering. Why is this important you may wonder, but in my culture the idea of communal gathering is what connects people and celebrates the importance of inclusivity.

What is a Community?
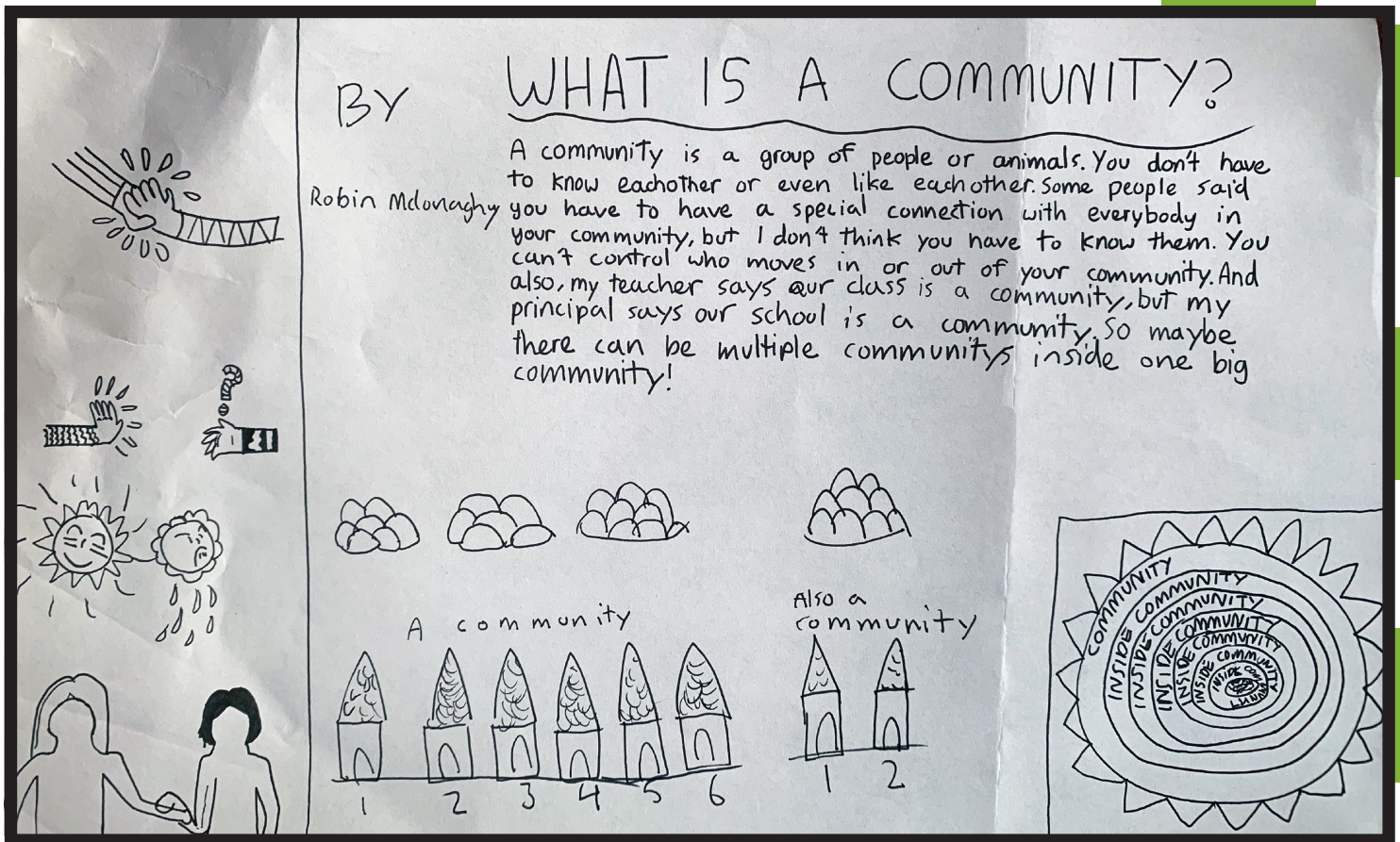
Artist: Robyn McConaghy
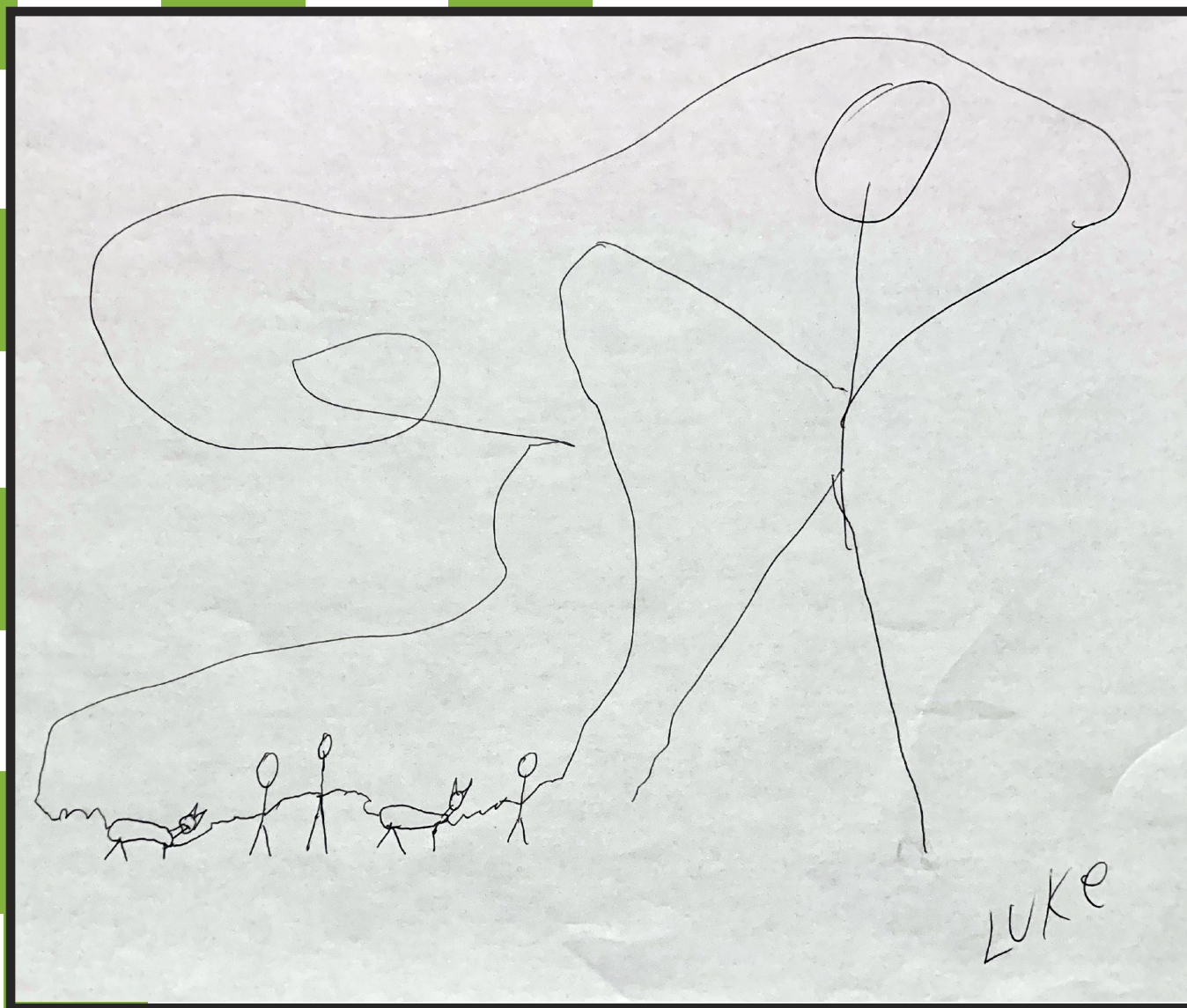
Who Belongs?
Luke Derington

This drawing represents that everyone belongs in our community—including cats. The largest person in the picture has big arms that keep everyone safe and happy—making sure that everyone understands they belong.

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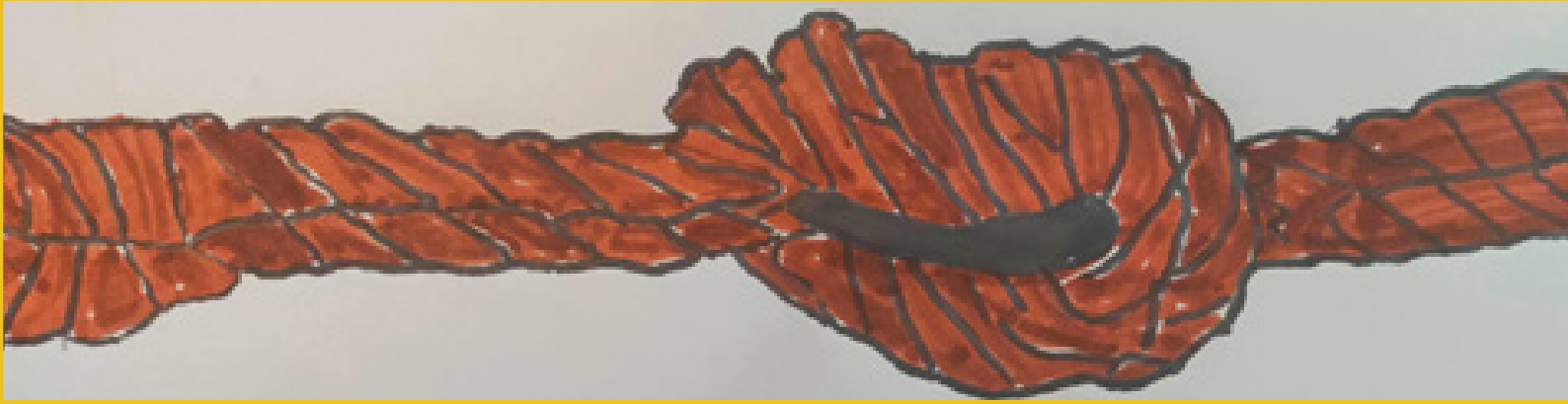
Idea of Community

Artist: Jeffrey Gutierrez

NAME: JEFFREY GUTIERREZ

AGE: 14

LOCATION: LOS ANGELES CA.
RFK UCLA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

When I think of community I think of tied together/united. The first image that comes to mind when I think of united is a rope. A ropes purpose is to unite and keep things together. Communities are made of people working together for the same purpose or living together. I believe that communities are formed with individuals with common goals but they can also be made by diverse individuals. Communities can vary from people working together for a specific goal to people with different backgrounds and ethnicities coexisting together. A relationship that the community and individual have is that they both need each other. For example, An individual at some point will need help from someone else. A community needs help from its people to keep on thriving. Some personal experiences I have with the community are with the soccer community. We all play competitively but we all have good sportsmanship because of the common interest and love we have for the sport.

What Makes a Community?

Za'Riah Prather

Hello my name is Za'Riah Prather. I'm 14 years old and I attend Lincoln Middle School in Ypsilanti, Michigan in the United States Of America.

What makes a community? That is what I've been trying to figure out. I feel as though what makes a community is bond. What is a bond you might ask?

Bond is a strong feeling of friendship, love and shared belief of certain things. Such as religion or experiences.

Why did you choose bond?

I choose bond because when you look at a community they all have a shared bond. Even if they aren't close they all have a shared feeling of experiences. Humans are versatile creatures. Bond is a way to have a healthy life. Consider a person who is not quite outgoing, they're laid back and shy while the rest of their family is outgoing and energetic. What allows this person to be a part of their family? It's a bond, they are lively around their family but not other people because it takes a little bit more for them to warm up. This is why it's important to have deep emotional bonds with someone they trust.

What are types of bonds?

Research has shown one of the strongest human bonds is the maternal bond. Mothers grow a bond with their child even before they're born. This bond and sense of protection increases their bond with their child. Fathers are also an important factor in baby bonding. When babies are born doctors recommend skin to skin contact between father and baby to get those first steps to a lifelong bond. There are also sibling bonds, now if you have siblings you know that they are mind-bendingly annoying and sometimes you look at them and think why me. But you know no matter how much they annoy you, you would be there for them and they would be for you. Sibling bonds help develop empathy. Empathy is an important part of bonds because it helps us connect to each other even when we don't quite understand how they exactly feel.

Can there be non-human bonds?

Yes, there can be non-human bonds. The second most common bond is animal bonds. Have you ever heard the term a dog is a man's best friend? That's because the bond between humans and animals is strong. Animals can help us emotionally and physically. Most animals love providing service or protection and we love protecting them. Throughout time we have always used animals for companionship or labor. I push that animals can offer us more than labor and companionship. They can make and offer a community through these relationships

With that being said bond makes a community because a community has a shared bond. Whether it's experiences, religion, friendship or love. Bond is shared with all, whether it's with animals, siblings, or parents. It's important to have bonds with someone you trust.

Hello, my name is An'yelle/Andy Peet. I am 13 years old and I am in 8th grade. I go to Lincoln Middle School in Ypsilanti Michigan, in the U.S. I hope you enjoy my essay.

What Do We Owe in a Community?

AN'YELLE/ANDY PEET

Do you think we, as a society, owe anything to our communities? That is the essential question we are trying to answer. My answer is yes, we do owe things in our community. It doesn't have to be largely impactful. My community is a group of 8th grade students and our ELA teacher in which we discuss moral dilemmas. During our conversations I have come up with a term called "In-and-out trust". Before I explain anything, my moral dilemma community came up with our own definition of community, which will be used for the sake of this essay. Community: A group of people linked by common interest or common attribute. Some things about "In-and-out trust" are, this is an umbrella term. Meaning that yes, it has structured rules to it, but there isn't one solid definition to this. It varies with the community. Another thing to keep in mind about "In-and-out trust" is that in the simple terms of this definition is having a community trust you when you're not physically there. The three rules that structure "In-and-out trust" are: don't talk down about your community, don't hurt your community reputation, and respect your community boundaries.

The first rule is don't talk down about your community, especially to other communities. Whatever community you might be in, everyone has beliefs. They don't necessarily have to be religious beliefs, just some things you might see as good and bad, or rules you might follow. You don't talk badly about what your community believes in, in a mean way. That doesn't mean you can't talk about issues within the community or something you might disagree with in a respectful way. What I mean is saying negative things in a negative way. For example, the conservative Christian community holds certain views on social issues. Some of them don't agree with some of their beliefs, people in and outside the community. For example, if being gay is a sin or not. People in that community can speak out on why it might not be true or how it hurts people, etc. But just being blatantly dismissive or rude about the views they have. That would be breaking this rule for In-and-out trust. To build on my prior example, a person who is a part of the LGBTQ+ community and a part of the conservative Christian community can be respectful of both without physically being present. Another example of this type of moral dilemma would be if one of us went around telling disrespectful things about the people in our community to other students in our grade.

The next rule is you don't hurt your community reputation. What that means is you do not perpetuate negative stereotypes that your community has been given for whatever reason. Also, just as a person, don't make a fool out of yourself when representing that community. For example, in the black community, some people think that we eat certain foods such as watermelon, and fried chicken just because we are black. It would be breaking "In-and-out trust" if a black person gave into that stereotype purposely as a joke or entertainment to other people. Another example in my moral dilemma community is telling other students that our discussions are only for nerds and kids who don't have friends. That would be giving a negative light to our group which would be breaking "In-and-out trust". The difference between this and the first rule is that reputation is how we see something or in this case a community. With the first rule it's about talking down about the people in the community and the second rule is about the community itself.

The last main rule of "In-and-out trust" is respecting your community boundaries. There are some things that communities do not want being shared, or things you do not do out of respect for that community. For example, my WEB class. WEB stands for Where Everybody Belongs, where we are 8th grade leaders, who are leaders to our 6th graders. A big boundary in WEB is not sharing personal experiences we share inside the class. We would be crossing that line if we go out telling our non-WEB peers that information. Another example would be my moral dilemma community. If one of us told our other moral dilemma peer that their writing was horrible. That would be breaking "In-and-out trust" because our boundary is never discouraging each others thought process.

"In-and-out trust" is essentially respecting your community when you are and are not there, or in another community.

There are three main rules that if broken then you have gone against "In-and-out trust". Going back to the question at the beginning, what do you owe to your community? I think everyone owes "In-and-out trust" to a community. I think we owe this to our communities because when "In-and-out trust" is used by all people of that community not only will that make the community stronger, but it will also give everyone the basic level of respect. I know this seems like these are a lot of rules to follow but these are things we do in our everyday lives. Lastly, you cannot break "In-and-out trust" if you are not in that specific community, this only applies to people in that community. For example I'm not a part of the band community so I don't know how their definition of "In-and-out trust" is. What I can say is that every single definition of "In-and-out trust" is the three main rules that structure this concept. We owe this to our communities.

SHARED LIFE: Community in the Political Sphere

PATRICK VAN HOVEN

April 2023

About me: My name is Patrick Van Hoven. I am a 17-year-old high school junior at Woodside High School in Woodside, California, US. I live in Portola Valley, California, US. I am interested in philosophy and political theory, and in using humanities disciplines to affect change in the real world. You can reach me at pgvanhoven@gmail.com, or at (650) 880-8315

Community is at the heart of human relation. We are all members of communities, in our jobs, in our education, with our families, with our friends—there is even a community of readers of this journal. We derive meaning and fulfillment from engagement with and membership in these communities. And yet, as Mary Catherine Basehart said, "[w]hat Augustine said of time may well be applied to community: 'If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain to a questioner, I do not know.'"[1] Community is something we can all recognize, and yet its precise nature is elusive; it is so implicit, so ever-present in the everyday human experience that its specific facets are rendered irrelevant in the face of its constant existence. Its most essential form, though, can be distilled into three key factors: community is a common life, as it transcends its individual members. It is a shared life, in that it involves mutual connections between its individual members. And it is a principled life, in that it is defined by ideals and motives around which the members orient themselves.[2]

Throughout history, various thinkers have characterized the nature of the political sphere as a community. This is a fair characterization. Aristotle famously said that "man is by nature a political animal."[3] Interestingly, though, a single word of this translation is in dispute. πολιτικὸν is the Greek

adjective for "political," but is also the Greek adjective for "social."[4] With that in mind, Aristotle's words can be read both as before, and as "man is by nature a *social* animal." There is no way to know if Aristotle intended this word choice to be ambiguous, but these two possible versions of Aristotle's famous quote reveal the intertwined nature of community, society, and politics. The relationships between individuals in the realm of politics form a constellation of shared values and goals that constitute the common, shared, and principled life of a community. In that sense, Aristotle's classification of citizens as political actors is identical to a classification of citizens as social, *communal* actors.

If a citizenry is to be considered a community, it must share some collection of shared values or principles. When this idea is introduced, it can be temptingly interpreted, especially by partisans, as a requirement of agreement on some set of political issues within whatever Overton Window is contextually relevant.[5] However, the shared values necessary for a community *do not* need to be specific, partisan policy positions—indeed, such policy positions would be too fickle to provide a substantive basis for a stable community. Instead, the shared principles of a political community should be broader and more abstract. John Rawls believed that political communities are united by a shared consensus about justice.[6] The American political community could be said to be united by historically precedented values such as liberty, freedom, equality, and opportunity, as such ideals were among those embedded in American politics by our founding documents. In an even broader sense, a political community could be defined merely by a group of engaged citizens willing and able to use their individual agency to improve the polity in which they are a member. Importantly, whatever common values exist, a political citizenry is a community only when those values shape the political interactions between citizens and are valued as legitimate ideals that the work of politics should be oriented toward.

In order for a political community to be considered as such, common values must, as stated, shape the political interactions between citizens. In small political communities—ancient tribes, small town governments—such political interactions occur naturally

in everyday life. On the contrary, community-building political interactions do not occur naturally in the everyday life of a citizen of the modern nation state, as such states are simply too large for people to feel connected to the political process in their everyday social lives. Therefore, large polities require collaborative institutions in which citizens can come together and instantiate political community. John Patrick Coby said that "while the community *originates* for the sake of mere life, it *exists* for the sake of the good life."[7] Communities, then, need effective vehicles of the good life. They need institutions.

The most prominent institution of political community in the modern democracy is the popular election. Emilee Booth Chapman, in her book *Election Day,* examined the role of elections in fostering political community:

> [V]oting makes salient the fact that modern democracy is a mass collective phenomenon. Voting is irreducibly something we do together. It serves as a reminder that our political agency depends on joining together with others. The practice of popular voting, then, especially when it conforms to the ideal of approximately universal participation, provides an occasion for the community to express its commitment to democracy's core values of political equality and popular sovereignty, and for citizens to affirm and participate in this expression.[8]

Voting is an inherently collaborative undertaking. Citizens vote "not just to express a political opinion, but to make a shared decision,"[9] a decision that could not be made without the involvement of most members of the political community. Voting is also the main democratic avenue through which the community can exercise its power to create the good that it exists to create. But voting is not the only institution that can serve to instantiate community in a political citizenry. Citizens' assemblies,[10] civic education, presidential debates, social media discourse, and a free press are all institutions that also serve to identify shared values and act on those values for the betterment of the polity. They serve to bring citizens into engagement with politics

and with each other, and thus bring about the shared life and meaningful interpersonal relations that define what it means to be a community.

Political communities can not be merely reduced to the sum total of their citizens—communities transcend their members. The political community takes a group of individuals united by the cold bonds of citizenship and connects them with the warm tethers of shared ideals and opportunities for interpersonal political engagement. It accepts the differing identities of its constituent members and confers back on them a common identity, an identity of inextricable relation to the other members of the community, an identity that makes possible the social preponderance of political values that drove Aristotle to name the democratic citizen as a "political animal." It is created by institutions of collaborative citizenship, interpersonal engagement, and dissemination of free information, and is maintained by the interests of its members in using the political community to define the political future. In short: community is what bridges the gap between citizen and citizen, who were connected pre-community only by their relation to the state. It is what makes politics human.

Notes

1. Mary Catherine Baseheart, "Edith Stein's Philosophy of Community," The Personalist Forum 8, no. 1 (season-01 1992): 163–73, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20708633, 163.

2. See Baseheart, "Edith Stein's Philosophy of Community," 168.

3. Aristotle, *The Politics* (Penguin UK, 1981), 1253a.

4. πολιτικὸν is derived from πόλις, the Greek word for "city."

5. The Overton Window of a certain political context refers to the spread of policy positions that are generally accepted by society as legitimate options; see "The Overton Window," Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2019, https://www.mackinac.org/OvertonWindow.

6. James W. Nickel, "Rawls on Political Community and Principles of Justice," *Law And Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (May 1990): 205–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00142834, 206.

7. John Patrick Coby, "Aristotle's Four Conceptions of Politics," Government: Faculty Publications, Smith

College (1986), https://scholarworks.smith.edu/gov_facpubs/40, 13–14; emphasis added.

8. Emilee Booth Chapman, *Election Day* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 14.

9. Chapman, *Election Day*, 160.

10. See Eva Talmadge, "Citizens' Assemblies: Are They the Future of Democracy?," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2023, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/feb/01/citizens-assemblies-are-they-the-future-of-democracy.

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Not One Without the Other

Individuality.

Community.

Are they the same?

Or quite the difference?

Two sides of the same coin,

One a personal uniqueness.

The other a shared goal.

One just for yourself.

The other for everyone.

Both essential to life and

Both required to to find yourself

But yet,

There is no community

Without the individual.

And no individual

Without the community.

Rhea Narayanan
9th Grade
Horace Greeley
High School
Chappaqua, NY.
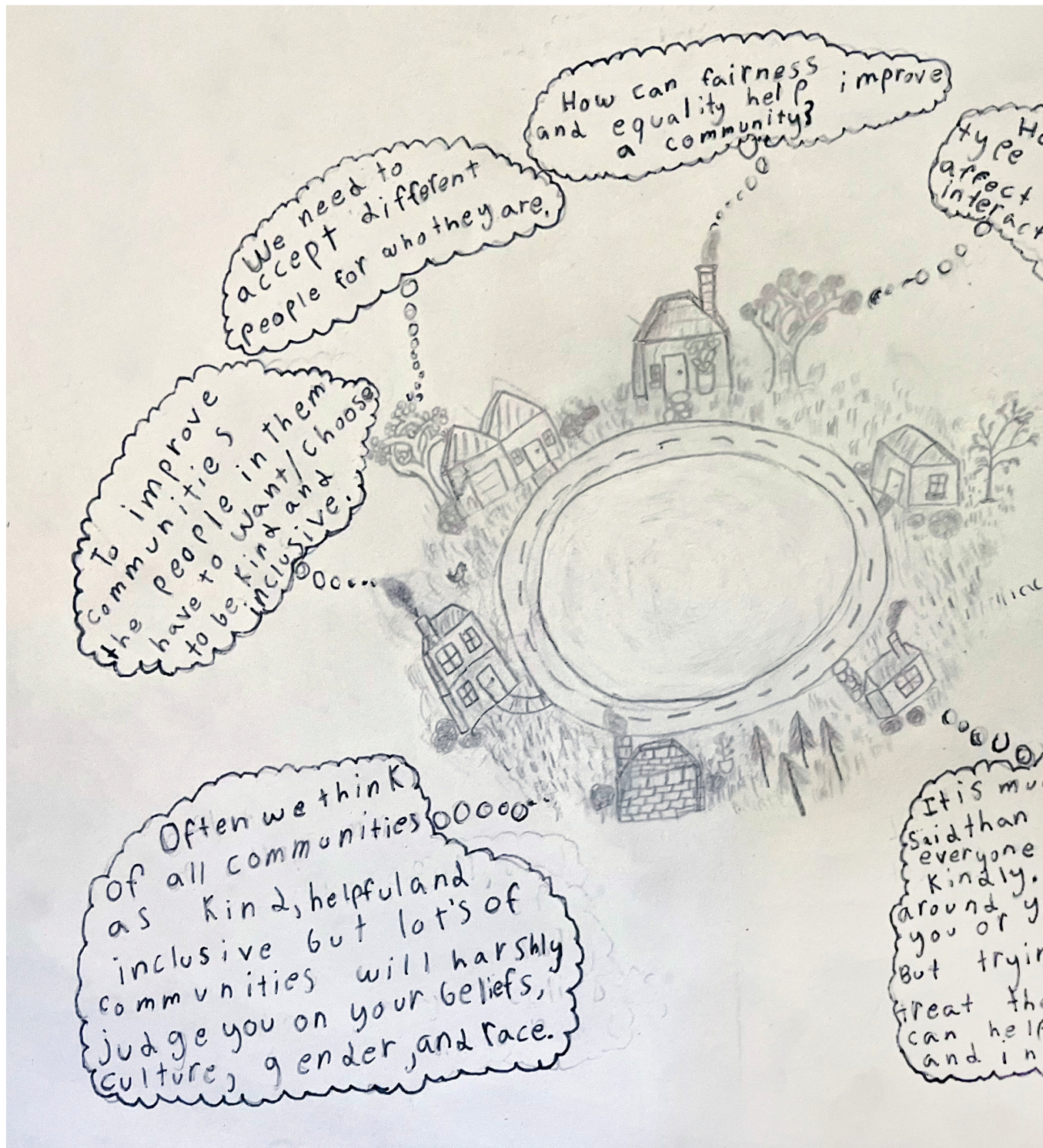
COMMUNITY

u does the
or community
how its members
and treat each other?

All communities
are different and can't
be expected to have
the same needs!

h easier
done to treat
fairly and
Maybe there is someone
ou who frustrates
has diffrent beliefs.
g your hardest to
m kindly and with respe
build a more sustainable
clusive community.

Artist: Sarah G.

How to Ethically Govern Communities: Kant's Categorical Imperative

DAVID GIBSON—17 YEARS OLD— COOPER CANYON, TEXAS— HOME-SCHOOLED

"Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law."[1]

—Immanuel Kant

Public policy and ethics are sometimes viewed as completely different fields. When a government passes a policy that is perceived as unethical by the community it governs, some may rally or protest against it, but people will often accept it and move on. However, unethical public policy begets unethical government, and an unethical government is not a just government. Thus, to allow for a just government, public policy requires some type of ethical framework. I posit that the best ethical framework for government is Kant's categorical imperative. Kant's ethical framework creates an environment where ethical public policy and just governance can create thriving communities.

In contrast to the Platonic belief of ethics as an eternal and unchanging truth[2], I believe ethics are how each one of us would like to be treated, and we project those preferences onto others. I subscribe to Kant's categorical imperative, specifically the Principle of Consistency. This principle can be understood by asking a question: If your actions were to be adopted by every other person as a model of what to do, would that create a world you would like to live in?[3] For example, stealing is unethical because if every person accepted

it as ethical, the idea of property rights would disappear, and that is not a world I would like to live in. I also prefer not being lied to, deceived, or hurt without reason. These feelings, along with similar preferences, guide my personal ethics. Because I desire these things for myself, I project my preference onto the situation I am in, and try and find a solution that would improve the world if everyone acted accordingly.

Ethics are as necessary in public policy, as they are in our everyday lives. In a democracy (or a republic), the government (what gives the public policy maker power) is simply an organization that is led at any one point by people raised up to serve their communities for a given period. There is nothing special about the policy maker. If the public policy maker is simply another person, they must act on their ethics the same way everyone else does. Even more importantly, the creators of public policy must consider themselves among the people they govern when making policy; for public policy to be just, its creator must be as satisfied to live under it as the average citizen. This can be achieved if public policy makers subscribe to Kantian ethics, for why would any person wish an unjust policy upon himself?

Kant's Principle of Causality is ideal for ethical public policy. Public policy and ethics are thought of independently, when they actually are closely interconnected; when a government's public policy is unethical, that government is unjust and the community suffers. Public policy needs to be closely woven with ethical concerns along the whole of its development. From its creation as an idea, to its final passing, the creators of public policy must always ask: could I live and thrive under this policy as a member of my community?

Notes

1. Ellington, J. W.; Kant, I. (1981). In Grounding for the metaphysics of morals (pp. 30–30). essay, Hackett Pub. Co.

2. We Need a Moral Operating System . (n.d.). TEDTalk. Retrieved October 3, 2021, from https://www.ted.com/talks/damon_horowitz_we_need_a_moral_operating_system.

3. Ellington, 30–30.

Tuesday 7 March 2023

Dear Diary,

Today in class I read a text "The diary of happy numbers" and the teacher asked us to say what our happy number was, motivating our choice.

I've thought about it and my favorite number is 22 because it's the number of pupils in my class.

I met my classmates in first grade and the relationship with them has changed and improved over the years.

During the pandemic I missed them a lot and was always sad at the thought of not being able to see and hug them in person. Luckily this year I can share my days with them, and we can hug each other!! Coming back together we had to get reorganized and learn to be together again. Philosophy for Children helped us in this.

Once a week we get together in a circle to reflect on and discuss many important issues. We have learned to analyze thing well, to share ideas, to support them and to help each other in many activities. Gradually we have become a small family, where we can share our problems, and we are sure to find help. Sometimes we quarrel but in the end we manage to find a solution.

This is why for me the number 22 is the

Chiara Torregrossa
9 years
I C S SCELSA
PALERMO
ITALY

COMMU

winning number, because it reminds me
of my class and my class is a winning
community!

A winning
Community!

22 pupils

Chiara Torregrossa.
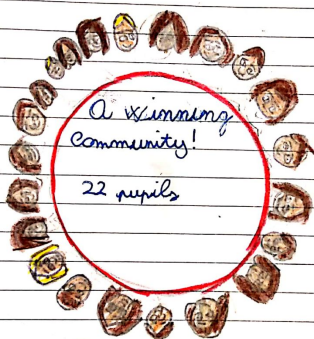
Children of LV 1 of the
G. Scelsa School

A sweet community
Medium difficulty
Execution time–60
Persons–20

A SWEET

UNITY

Ingredients
As much wonder as is necessary–collaboration–
freedom–empathy–thought–concentration–
respect–ideas–imagination–emotion–silence–
stimulus to think–questions–dialogue
Procedure
We arrange the pupils in a circle in silence.
We watch a video or read a text, one line each.
We reflect and concentrate to formulate
questions that arise from wonder and fantasy.
We choose a question and start a dialogue
expressing our ideas, adding a pinch of respect,
empathy and freedom.
We cook our philosophical research for 20
minutes, valorizing differences and abilities.
During the cooking process, we sprinkle on
emotions and thoughts like powdered sugar.
To check the cooking, we collaborate in the
final self-assessment.
We take a community of philosopher friends out
of the oven: the guaranteed result will be a
tasty thinking team.

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What does an outsider think about belonging?

Fátima Barrera Argüello

10th Grade, Colegio Williams, Mexico City

The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.

"Beyond Good and Evil"
-Friederich Nietzsche

There is complexity when it comes to belonging, we often question ourselves if we actually do belong wherever it is that we find ourselves in. Aristotle argued communities can provide us a sense of belonging, of personal growth; while this is completely true, because we should have in mind that we are social beings, this may not be totally accurate when it comes to our present day society.

I am a 16 year old girl, who has often questioned herself . . . "What's the role I'm supposed to be playing? What's the *play* I'm supposed to be in?" I can say I've experienced the feeling of being neglected, just for thinking or acting a certain way that could be considered different, or just not as typical as others. Youth has a definition of belonging to a community, and that's being ordinary.

We think there is *one* correct way of being, one correct way of acting, just to prove that we are worthy of attention, of love, of any sort of affection. . . perhaps we are too desperate to be heard, to be seen; that should be one of the most tragic moments of any human life,

losing ourselves in exchange for belonging to a community in which you have to be a certain way just to not be invisible.

Is it worth it? *To lose oneself, one's dignity*? We have to understand that our differences as human beings will always be there, no matter the changes anyone tries to make. We are all different, but we all share the same human spirit, that is, the importance of just being part of a community, not anything else, just that.

Us, as humans, are not able to live the rest of our lives in miserable solitude, that's not our nature, but you can't go against your principal, your dreams, your morals, especially your morals, to feel a little less lonely. A community is a space where you should feel safe, a space where you share values and ideologies with people, or sometimes you don't but you are able to respect them, a space where you can be different yet it doesn't matter, because at the end of the day you have a heart, a mind, you have feelings. An individual needs to learn where it is that they feel they belong, where they are themselves. A community it's that home we may long

for, we need to be able to adapt and survive, which it's not always easy.

In a community, you will give and receive, and this is not about material possessions, it is more about respect, friendship, knowledge, support, and kindness. So embrace your differences, never let yourself dissolve in the ordiniarity of society, just because it's normal, it doesn't mean it's always correct. If you feel like you don't belong, like you are a wallflower, just know that there are people, or a social group that will accept you for that. It is harder to find oneself again than finding the correct community.

"Belonging is being accepted for you. Fitting in, is being accepted for being like everyone else."

—Unknown

Artist: Aria Y.
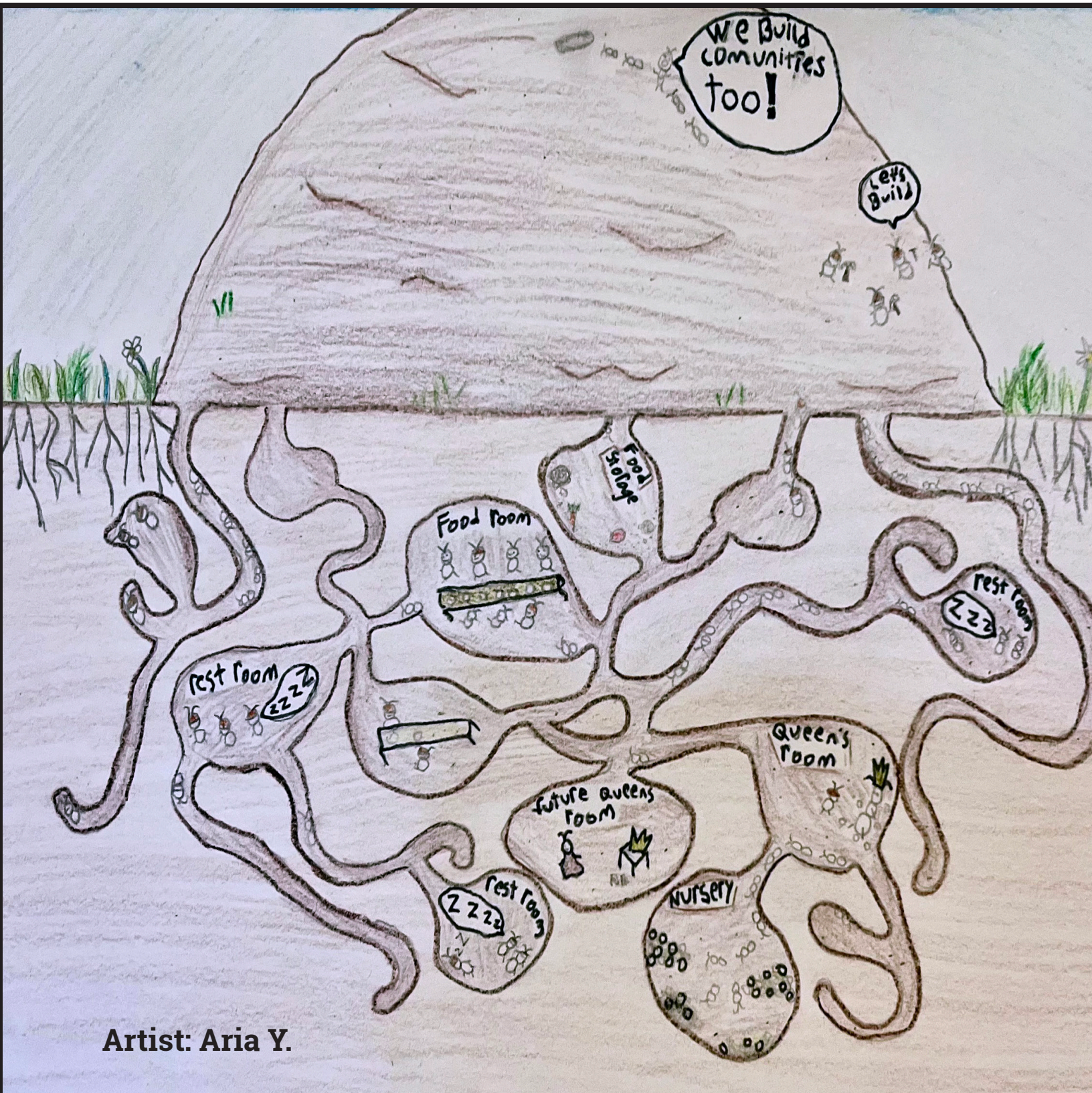
Bonded Dichotomy: The Individual and Their Community

My name is Arjun Rajpal. I am 16 years old and am currently a sophomore at Collegiate School. My family is originally from India, but I was born and grew up in New York City.

The individual and their community,
A bond that's strong yet often murky,
For one cannot exist without the other,
And yet they clash, like sister and brother.

The community shapes the individual,
Their customs, beliefs, and way of life,
It molds them into social beings,
And gives them a sense of purpose and drive.

But what of the individual's own desires,
Their dreams and aspirations, their inner fires?
Do they bow down to the will of the group,
Or do they forge their own path, and remain aloof?

It's a delicate dance, a balancing act,
To be a part of the whole, yet stay intact,
To give and take, and compromise,
And still preserve what makes you wise.

For in the end, the individual and the community,
Are but two sides of the same entity,
Both are necessary, both incomplete alone,
In their relationship, a bond is sown.

The Hidden Glue of the Global Community

MY NAME IS GABRIEL OLANO. I'M 16 AND ATTEND CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL IN MIAMI, FLORIDA.

I could eat a grilled cheese sandwich for three meals a day and my snacks in between. Occasionally when pondering its delectable taste, I've stopped to consider the many hands who've helped make it: the bread was produced with the help of skilled factory workers, the cheese was crafted by dedicated cheesemakers, and the frying pan was manufactured and delivered to the store through the help of even more people. It's hard to find anything we use on a daily basis that doesn't require the input of others in some way. The global community works wonders in getting everyone what they need and want through joining together the work of people from the world over. But does it, really? Is it possible that our global community is comprised of as much parasitism as mutualism, if not more? Although our world has become deeply interconnected, the division faced by those who are most exploited by the global community is worse than ever before.

The earliest forms of communities can be found in the first ecosystems formed as life evolved billions of years ago. From then to now, all components of natural ecosystems are essential to each other's survival. And humans, too, follow this pattern. People in different communities perform different critical roles. From doctors to teachers to farm workers, all are paramount to the wellbeing and growth of a community. The vital members of one's community used to be one's neighbors, but communities have expanded with globalization. We can now see a doctor from the other side of the world via a Zoom call, go to a university on another continent, and eat the produce of farms from around the globe. However, the same processes that brought about this globalization have also created mass consumerism; together the two forces have led to human exploitation in the form of sweatshops and child labor, which arose to meet people's growing demands of their new worldwide community.

As the group of people that individuals rely on has grown larger and larger, our collective acknowledgement of them has diminished. People used to buy shoes directly from their shoemaker in a personal interaction starting with "please" and ending with "thank you." When consumers started buying from faceless brands, the labor that went into production was rendered totally invisible, to the point of almost giving the illusion that goods just materialize out of thin air. As such,

companies justified meeting their supply demands in the most expedient ways possible. Not only are the laborers never recognized, but they might also be on the other side of the planet. The distance between consumers and laborers is larger than ever before, and so it is unsurprising that corporations get away with unethical practices. Huge brands such as Nike make sure to amplify their voices on prominent social justice issues such as LGBTQIA+ with their BETRUE collection, but their ethical action balks when it comes to the unknown workers that toil away in their sweatshops. Furthermore, GAP, H&M, and Zara are just some examples of major clothing companies which have been found to employ child labor under harsh conditions, including shifts up to 14 hours long. Again, the absence of these workers in the mass consciousness allows corporations to continue exploiting them.

Globalization has taken hold of the world and is not going away anytime soon. But this isn't necessarily a bad thing. Humans have been able to accomplish more than ever before as a result of the world's newfound interconnectedness, and our future relies on our ability to foster cooperation and unite efforts. That which is causing the suffering could also provide the remedy. The key is to spread awareness through personalizing the victims, for example with testimonials and videos and photographs that show their humanity. As individuals, we can support companies that are known to have ethical practices and educate ourselves on which brands to avoid, in addition to advocating for workers' rights.

If you're ever considering buying bread or cheese from potentially unethical companies, make sure you at least acknowledge the unknown workers who hungrily suffered to produce your grilled cheese sandwich; although you may never get to tell them directly, you can still recognize their efforts and their humanity with two simple words they've likely never been told: "thank you."

Our future relies on our ability to foster cooperation and unite efforts
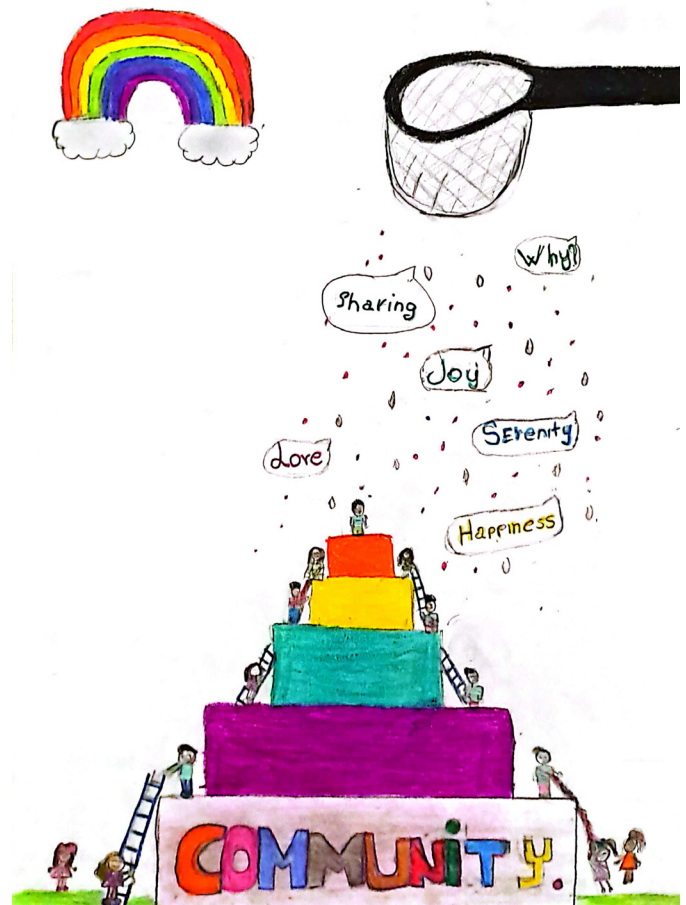
SABRINA SIMEK 2023

Body of the People

An illustrated poem about community
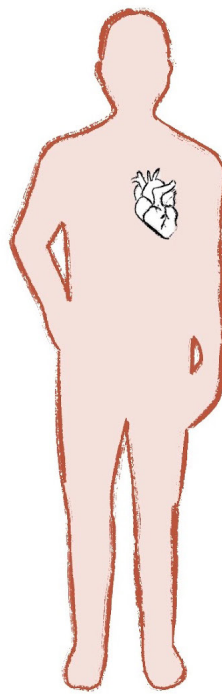
By Sabrina Simek
Freshman/9th grade
Harvard-Westlake School
2023

SABRINA IS A FRESHMAN AT HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL AND LIVES IN LOS ANGELES, CA.

SABRINA SIMEK 2023

Tragedy can bring people together.

It is our suppressor,
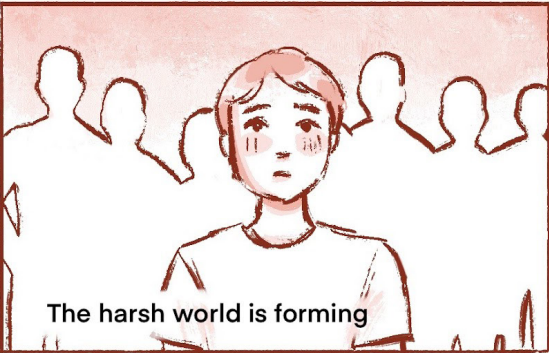
yet we endeavor.

Weathered but tethered

to a common goal

at our center.
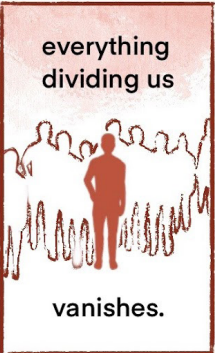
everything
dividing us

The harsh world is forming
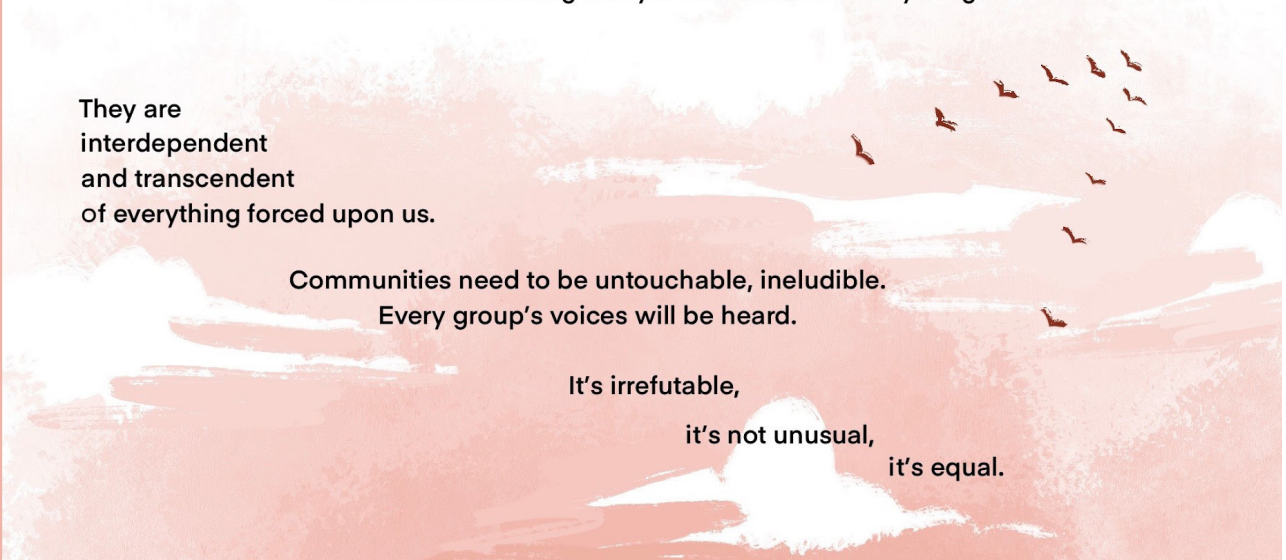
communities sparked
out of nothing,

vanishes.

We owe them nothing and yet we owe them everything.

They are
interdependent
and transcendent
of everything forced upon us.

Communities need to be untouchable, ineludible.
Every group's voices will be heard.

It's irrefutable,

it's not unusual,

it's equal.

SABRINA SIMEK 2023

They are eternally the framework of humankind,
the reason we unite.

We share the same heart,
our blood runs with faith   in each other,   in ourselves,   in its entirety.

This heart is
a drawing of
a person's
silhouette,
stamped
again and
again, to
form
something
greater.

From afar it
is a whole,
but up close
there are
individuals.

This heart is
made from
over 1,500
others,
beating to
the same
rhythm.

Humans and animals alike,

communities are breathing bodies

of beings who have become one.

From Community to Character

BY JAY PARK, SOPHOMORE,
ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL, NEW HAMPSHIRE

When Jean-Jacque Rousseau introduced the Social Contract in 1762, his work sought to identify the state's authority over the individual. At the core of this text, one finds not only the ideas of government but also the ideas of morality that exist between a community and its individuals. Unlike philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, who argue that there are absolute moral truths,[1] Rousseau's arguments focus on moral theory framed through the lens of community. One of the ways in which these two scholars' ideas conflicted was through justice. Rousseau proposed that justice exists to promote human well-being, while Kant thought that justice existed to uphold what is right.[2] Accordingly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau held the belief that community plays a strong role in one's integration into society, which ultimately makes an individual moral in the process.[3] Rousseau disagreed with Kant's focus on moral truths, stating that morality isn't necessarily purely defined but is realized through one's participation in society. Hence, we, as humans, discover moral truths as we engage with our communities because these truths are subjective and relative to certain situations and places.

The relationship between community and individual has often been discussed among philosophers. The philosophical idea of Communitarianism expands upon Rousseau's initial Social Contract to suggest that the individual and the community are in a mutual, two-way relationship. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's Communitarianism section explains that ". . . communities shape, and ought to shape our moral and political judgments and we have a strong obligation to support and nourish the particular communities that provide meaning for our lives."[4] Such ideas have been supported by modern philosophers such as Michael Sandel and even older ones such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Communities' influence on our moral and political views is especially prominent in religious settings. While religious participation has been on the decline among Gen-Zers,[5] faith communities often serve as a way to establish moral values for individuals. Regardless of doctrines, faiths often share values. Christian values of forgiveness, love, and kindness often parallel Buddhist ideas built upon respect. Though it is difficult to see this in today's rapid polarization of political parties that obscures many underlying religious ideas, the values in these religious communities guide individuals towards a strong moral character.
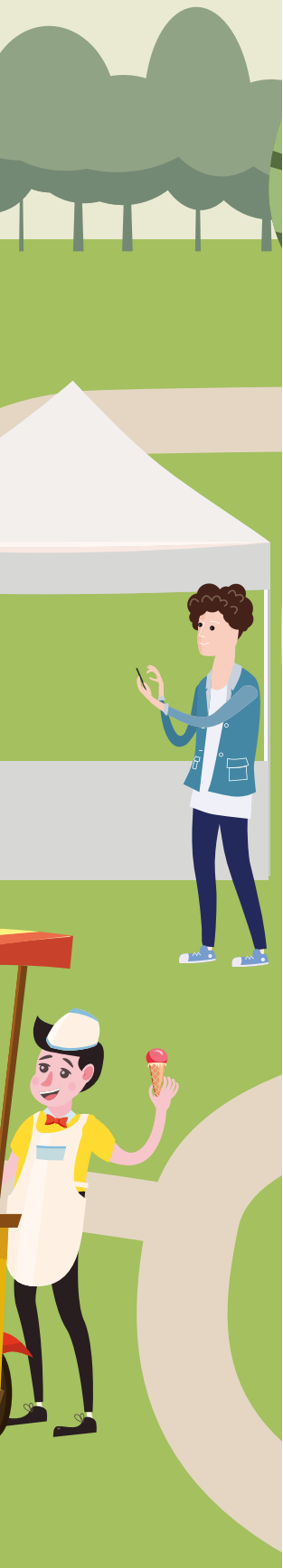
I'm uniquely in the position to understand that various religious communities contribute to strong moral foundations. As an individual who lives in Korea—a country rooted in Neo-Confucian ideas that integrate concepts from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism—and is a member of the Orthodox Christian community, I've gained firsthand insight into how one's communities can be varied but also incredibly formative. Raised by a Buddhist mother against the backdrop of Korea's Confucian values, I was taught to respect elders and treat them with due esteem, whether I am interacting with my parents, grandparents, or teachers. Now, as a boarding student in the United State, reverence for others comes second nature to me. Even if I do not agree with the ideas of my elders, I maintain a composure that balances respect and dissent. Thus, my community background ultimately defines how I interact with others.

As I turn to my immediate neighborhood in Korea, which is situated near several embassies, it is noticeable that my immediate surroundings are quite diverse, with neighbors and peers from all around the world. As a result, my neighborhood quickly introduced me to diverse cultures and traditions, sparking my curiosity and respect for those who are different from me.

Because my residential and family community embrace religious differences, it felt natural for me to explore and discover my own faith in the Orthodox Christian community. In this particular community, I've felt especially immersed in the relationship between individuals and their communities. I would say that I am different from everyone else in this community. I do not live near my church, nor do I have many social or academic connections with other parish members. I can't speak Korean as well, I don't live in Korea year-round, and I am technically not a true Orthodox church member because I have not been baptized yet. But, gathering once a week for the Divine Liturgy together has taught me that one does not have to be the same as others to belong to a particular community.

Engaging in this community also teaches me about friendship and equality; we must see people for their character and not judge others based on their situation or appearance. When I enter the church doors of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, the global perception of Korea as homogenous and conservative fades away. In the pews, I see faces from all around the world, various languages flutter in the air, and I marvel at the fact that we—in the face of all of our differences—belong. I watch two congregants, one from Ukraine and the other from Russia, exchange a sign of peace. I witness Slavs smiling and embracing Koreans like brothers, and I see people of all ages, colors, and sex treating each other with kindness and respect.

While the community defines my perspective on equality in the face of our differences, I form the community through my contributions. When I joined this community on my journey of faith, I wasn't sure that I would be able to influence my community because I felt so different. But, last summer, I had the opportunity to work as an English teacher and camp counselor at the church's summer camp. Working with kindergarten and elementary kids, I felt a duty to help them grow and develop. On the first day of the camp, a student

walked up to me, almost tearing up, and confessed in Korean, "I don't know any English." She was beet red and stiff as a baseball bat, embarrassed and scared that asking for help would result in being mocked by her peers.

Looking into her eyes, I informed her that asking for help is nothing to be ashamed of. I, too, struggled to speak up for help when I was younger so I could empathize with her. We solved each grammatical and English question, bit by bit, and she ran off, happy that she had learned something new. In class, she would bravely raise her hand when she didn't know an answer, showing her peers that seeking guidance and assistance was not a weakness. As she continued to develop as a student and community member, I recognized that I wasn't just helping the kids learn English; I was helping them build their character and the way they interacted with the world.

Just as Rousseau had proposed, I ultimately learned a valuable lesson regarding righteousness. Rousseau said that our moralities are ultimately realized through our participation in the community, as it is not necessarily defined concretely as Kant said.[6] In a similar manner, I saw this dichotomy occur before my eyes. Moral truth isn't just there, but it is tailored out to fit us. Before, I felt like teaching was just a black-and-white interaction between teacher and student; the teacher simply passes information from one generation to the next. However, with this experience, I've come to realize that I feel a duty to teach as a means to better our collective.

Communities of all different traditions and practices exist in every corner of the world. Despite the sometimes conflicting schools of philosophical thought, the exchange between an individual and their community is universal among these diverse groups. No matter how small of an action, it impacts a community. Therefore, it's important that one contribute to their community in a way that nourishes the development of all.

Endnotes

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5. Jones, Jeffrey. "Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time." Gallup. March 29, 2021. Accessed April 14, 2023. https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx.

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SAM WSOL

**14 years old
Friends Academy in Dartmouth MA**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools, jobs and clubs moved online. Although separated by distance and a screen, these people continued to work together in a less conventional way. This raises a question: How does one define a community if its members are not all in one place? To think about this question, I will borrow ideas from a medieval philosopher.

Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) was widowed at a young age and proceeded to support herself as a writer. Her most famous writing, *Book of City of Ladies*, finished in 1405, is a work of fiction sharing her thoughts through dialogue. Christine imagines a place where women can be free from at least some of the expectations of men and yet still live in the current society.

During the opening of this very metaphorical work, the character Christine is greeted by three ladies: Reason, Justice, and Rectitude. They talk about creating a city for virtuous women. Christine suggests, "For bad things spoken about women do not dishonor women, only those who utter them" (*City of Ladies* 1.2). This means that the only people who should feel shame for saying cruel things towards women are those who say them. When I read this quote, along with the motivational music I'm listening to, I feel empowered not to take insults from anyone, because that just brings shame to them, not me. The way Christine used her voice to say these things is simply incredible.

Each lady holds an object in place of a scepter. As they tell stories about the virtues they represent, the City is built. Reason holds a mirror as her scepter. The mirror shows what people are in their true form at that moment. Reason helps those who have lost their way in life and leads them back to the path they should be on. As Reason tells stories about Smart People,™ the walls

of the city are built. Next, Rectitude, meaning uprightness, holds a ruler and tells stories about how women take care of their parents when they are old. With this, the towers are built. Finally, Justice, who holds a measuring cup, introduces the queen of the city, the Virgin Mary, and her court of virtuous women. When Justice fills the city, she is finding people who rightly belong there. She is filling the city using her measuring cup. With this, the city is fully built and inhabited.

The community Christine creates goes against the confines of societal norms and instead finds a way to speak directly to those who can't speak for themselves. This community is only ladies, women with virtue, and Christine writes this at a time when men were in control over most things, including their wives and ladies. Many men at the time wrote about women in a derogatory manner. As Christine put it, "Nearly all essays by philosophers, poets and orators offer a similar view, describing female nature as full of vice" (*City of Ladies* 1.1).

Book of City of Ladies is a thought provoking piece. The way Christine supported herself through writing even around 1400 was beyond her time. She created a community that was metaphorical but with real problems. The resulting text is a beautiful mix of confusing and comforting. From her we learn that communities aren't just one perfect thing, but instead a group that is unique and created with a purpose. In sum, the City of Ladies is a community that is held together by virtue and purpose.

Today, we are always connected to some sort of community, whether it be by screens or in person. When I think of community, I think of a sense of belonging, a way for me and others to feel heard and represented in the spaces they choose to exist in. I think of being able to be yourself in a place that is supportive and kind. Neighborhoods, schools, and jobs usually bring people together face-to-face. But online spaces where people can find others that share their interest, or just have fun nerding out together, are also communities. These people can be so far apart and still create a community that is just as strong.

Artist: Dia Rowland

Conversations: Schools as Communities

The Kutztown Area High School Philosophy Club is open to all students. This year's submission is a group project by Philosophy club members: *Isabella Oroxom*, 16 y/o, from Lyons, PA; *Lacey Collins*, 15 y/o, from Lyons, PA and *Laura Fosnocht*, 15 y/o, from Kutztown, PA. Club members come together every week to have philosophical discussions regarding other interests that they bring such as: current events, popular culture, and art. Our club motto is *Audire et Audiri* which means, in Latin, to hear and be heard.

An everyday definition of community might be a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. An example of a written definition might be a social, religious, occupational, or other groups sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists.

Our High School Philosophy Club decided to do a group presentation for this year's Questions, focused on the theme of community. Club members put together questions, and chose different members of the school, to engage in conversations around the concept of schools as communities. The people who were invited to these conversations represent diverse parts of the school. Below are transcribed parts of those conversations. The conversations and comments were edited for clarity, and names were altered for confidentiality.

One question posed was what makes a community and can individuals with diverse goals and interests make up a community?

"I feel like if we're listing characteristics [of what makes a community], I feel like the biggest one might be respect, a shared value of respect. And knowing that whatever you do, it won't be ridiculed."—*Student 1, High School Sophomore*

"Part of the reason why a community might get together is they want to have an emotional connection and that mutual respect or that group is part of that. Do you think that would be more of an attribute of a community though, as opposed to what actually would make the definition of one?"—*Local School Board Member/President*

"I think in its general sense, any group of people that share a common interest or goal could make up a community."—*Student 1, High School Sophomore*

"Basically, they all have some common characteristics. I think often if there was a visual of a community, I would think of Kutztown [the physical location of this High School]. You sort of see it like that."—*Student 2, High School Sophomore*

"I would say that a community is just a group of people who are generally alike in one way or another. I feel like there is always some way that other people can relate to one another, which makes me sort of think of a community. And also, with that, a community kind of comes with individuals who all have different goals in mind and different interests."—*Student 3, High School Sophomore*

"I would define it [community] as just people united under some common umbrella for some common cause. Communities I think are supportive, and I think people within a community look out for one another.—*High School Teacher*

"We are a community of humans, and we live on this planet. I think there's a responsibility we have to fellow humans of just upholding certain basic human rights. I think if you kind of take a smaller school community as a microcosm of that giant global human community, I think it's the same thing, realizing we're all on the same team."—*High School Teacher*

"You have people who are into sports, people who are into more academic things, but you all still have that common goal. So yes, I do believe that diversity plays a huge part and you come from different backgrounds, but you still can work towards that common goal together or support each other in that common goal."—*High School Secretary*

Another question that was discussed was are schools communities and if so, how?

"Well, in a way, isn't the school community a subset or a reflection of the greater Kutztown area school district, community and, yeah. So, I mean, we are a school community, but in one sense. but in the other,

could we be just a reflection of the greater community." —*School Board Member/President*

"It just depends on the context, I guess. But technically, yes, I mean, besides the fact that it's our community, just because we're in the same area, the different groups that make up the whole school really have to work together in order for the school to work." —*Student 1 and Student 2, High School Sophomores*

"So, I think school is very much a community, just because we're all here every day, at least in Kutztown, we all live in the same place. I think we all try to be supportive of one another. I think we help out people when they need help."—*High School Teacher*

"I think they are learning or trying to lean more on communities to try to support students and get them to where they need to be. I think Kutztown is definitely a community. I just think you see it just because people put their roots here and you see it in fundraising efforts, and you see it in the school musical and you see it in all sorts of activities."—*High School Teacher*

"I would say a community's made up of people who are working probably for the same goal or common goals. And I would say yes, the school is a community. You all are working towards a common goal of graduating and becoming adults." –*High School Secretary*

"I absolutely agree with that. I would say the school is a community as well, not only because of students having the common goal of becoming adults, but also because sometimes there are things where we as students are taught to collaborate or work together, which can be a common thing to see in communities as well as in adult sort of situations."—*Student 3, High School Sophomore*

Conversation participants also discussed their roles in schools as communities, how they see others' roles, and how they interact in those roles within the school?

"You're fulfilling one kind of role in one group within the community, and then you might be fulfilling a different kind of role in another group, or you engage with someone in one way because you're a part of the community and you're engaged that way, but then you engage with them differently."—*Student 1, High School Sophomore*

"So, people definitely act differently depending on the setting, and you might act differently depending on what school setting you're in as well. to your point, like you said, even to a particular class, one way another. A different way, just a different group of people and a different dynamic."—*Student 2, High School Sophomore*

"But in the context of the school community, is it just getting something back that's beneficial to you that should give fulfillment or make you happy? Because if you're really engaged in community, if you're just volunteering or giving back to some person or some group? Don't you get happiness for fulfillment from that"—*Local School Board Member/President*

Conversation participants also discussed their roles in schools as communities, how they see others' roles, and how they interact in those roles within the school?

"So, I think like most things, there's power dynamics. There's a hierarchical structure almost. You know, it's like the popular Spiderman quote, as Voltaire said, more power comes with more responsibility."—*High School Teacher*

"I think there's a responsibility for certain community members with power to make sure, like younger members of the community realize that communities are good, you know? That they're beneficial, that they're helpful, that they provide support nets or protection or a sense of belonging.—*High School Teacher*

"Well, I'm here to support the staff. The guidance department first, the students as well and the administration. They need me to help, so if it's helping you guys with transcripts or getting your schedule straightened out, or the principal needs rooms booked or anything like that's my part of the community."—*High School Secretary*

"I feel like the adults all have the same goal. We're all here to help you guys get through this and get to the next step of your lives. However that needs to be."—*High School Secretary*

"I also feel as though the adults have the same goal of helping students get to their next steps in life and get through all of the education needed for that. Though, there is also the part of the students in our community who kind of play the role of also trying to help the other students there, though sometimes people in the school community are not always helpful, but everyone is different in some way, you know? Not everyone is going to react or interact in a necessarily good or bad way."—*Student 3, High School Sophomore*

In conclusion, through conversations with different people in our school, in various roles, the consensus was that schools are communities. The way that a community is defined was different for each person who responded to the questions including students, staff, teachers, and administrators. Hearing these different perspectives gave a broader vision of what a community is and of our school as a whole.

Artist: Josie Linster

Community and the Artist

Kate Given, 16, is a junior at the Orange County School of the Arts in Southern California. She loves film, theater, and art history, and is interested in the works of philosophers from Ancient Greece and Enlightenment-era Europe. She is a 2023 American Philosophy Open finalist and the founder of Young Philosophers, a program dedicated to teaching philosophical concepts to elementary schoolers through art.

In much of contemporary media, there exists a popular conception of the archetypal "lone artist"—a creatively driven, somewhat eccentric artistic genius whose talent is attributed, at least in part, to the individual's social ineptitude and the struggles that subsequently follow. Historically, these figures have often been described as inexplicably content with their loneliness. Think Vincent van Gogh or Edvard Munch: the best artists are immune to the human need for belonging; they are anomalies that thrive off of their own ostracism.

From my own experience, however, this could not be further from the truth.

For the past four and a half years, I have attended one of the top pre-professional art schools in my state. There, every student is required to dedicate at least two hours of each school day to their personal artistic pursuits, whether they be musical, literary, or otherwise. Many of these students share the common aspiration to become professional artists, much like van Gogh or Munch, but I have yet to meet a peer who shares, or even admires, these painters' social attitudes.

On the contrary, these students thrive in companionship with one another. In the classroom environment, they are given the unique opportunity to freely discuss their passions, bounce creative ideas back and forth, and otherwise engage in meaningful artistic debate. When they feel themselves losing passion or motivation for their art form, these students are able to use the thoughts and works of their peers as sources of inspiration. Oftentimes, these students are more than willing to collaborate with each other—and are all the more productive because of it.

After all, there is a reason arts schools were originally created, rather than restricting impassioned students to the bounds of a traditional high school arts department. It's the same reason these students are willing to make the hour-long commute from across the county each morning to attend these specialty schools, instead of settling for the private arts lessons only a couple blocks away from home. And it's the reason
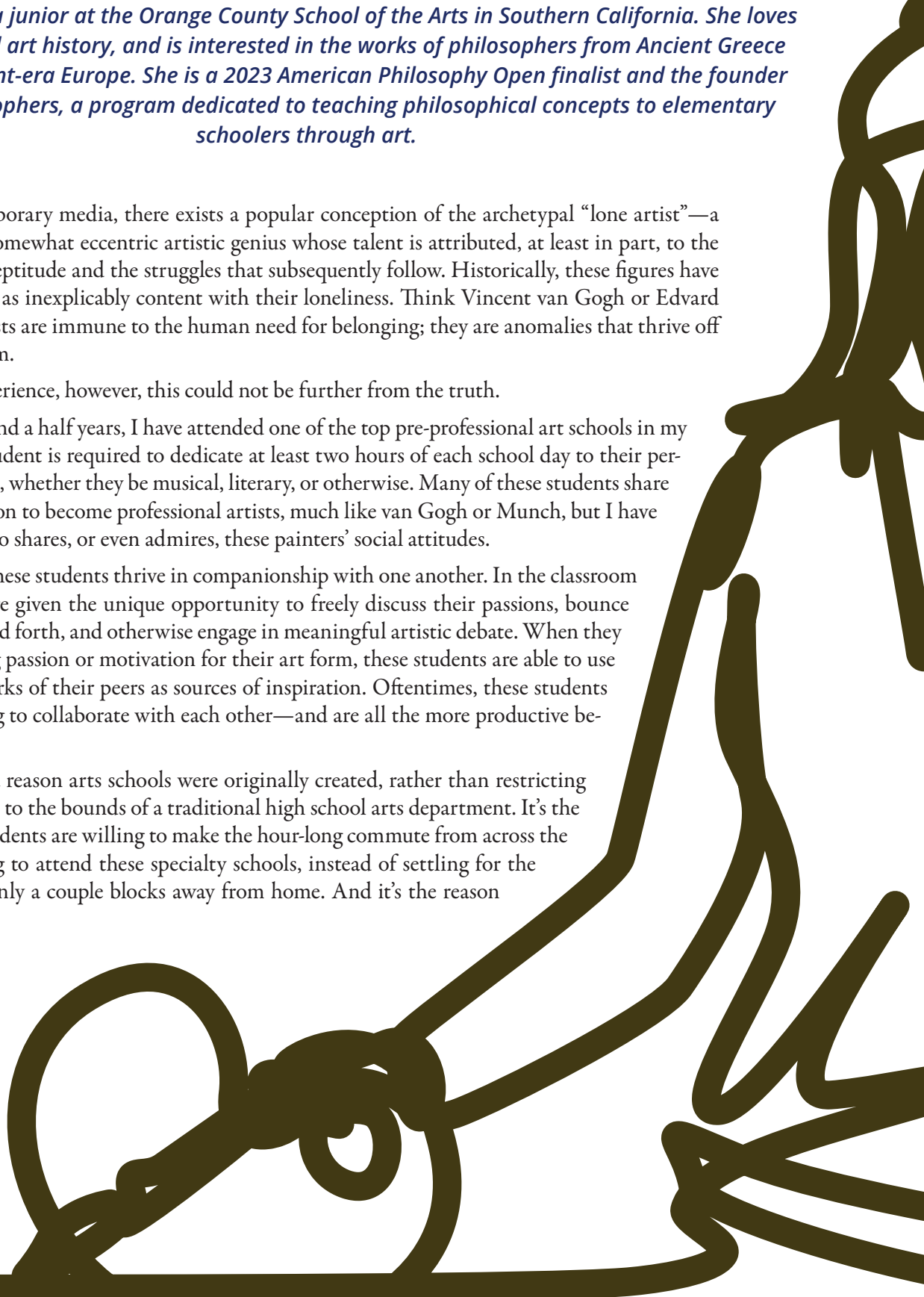
alumni ultimately graduate from these schools with more experience and better-honed skills than any of their independently trained counterparts.

The reason, quite plainly, is the community that these schools provide.

There is no doubt that school is one of the most prominent communities any child belongs to. The school community, which is composed of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other staff members, is invaluable to a student's growth and development. It follows, naturally, that a school dedicated to the disciplines of the arts would be the grounds for an even closer-knit, mutually beneficial community made up of artistically inclined individuals who seek similarly creative colleagues.

A close friend of mine, who is currently a member of my school's acting conservatory, once admitted to me that she is most comfortable performing when she is in a room with other actors. "I just feel less judged," she said. "I know they're going to understand what I'm doing, and even if they don't, they'll understand where I'm coming from."

This is not an uncommon thought. Being surrounded by a community of people who share our passions and interests is not only exciting; it's comforting. It makes it easier to try new things, to take more risks, because we know our fellow community members will be there to catch us when if we fall and build us back up again right away. Any good community will encourage its members to lower their guards, will make them feel welcome in expressing their ideas and exploring new outlooks around one another. Arts schools only exemplify this notion.

A certain psychological concept perfectly encapsulates the phenomenon I am attempting to explain. Group polarization, which has been studied in social psychology since the 1960s, describes the tendency of a group made up of similarly thinking people to, over time, develop a more extreme stance on their shared opinion. Unsurprisingly, then, a student who enrolls in an arts school as a free-thinking, inspired, and passionate individual will emerge even more so, in all aspects. In other words, knowing our peers care just as much as we do about the things we care the most about prompts us to work even harder.

The community provided by arts schools enables students to elevate their artistic talent to a higher level, with both the obvious technical training from teachers and the unceasing emotional support from peers. While it is regrettably unrealistic for arts schools to be accessible for all those interested, it is nevertheless essential that aspiring artists are given the opportunity to be a part of communities with like-minded individuals; if not at school, at community centers or extracurricular programs instead. For artists to thrive, it is not only helpful, but necessary, to create and promote communities that will grant them the confidence and companionship to carry them through their careers.

—— KATE GIVEN

Tribalism and the Social Contract

CHARLES DE BELLOY

Charles de Belloy is a 15 year old Franco-American junior at the Lycée Français de San Francisco living in Tiburon California, interested in philosophy, logic, math, and ethics.

The philosophical considerations of community are somewhat specific, as the rules of typical social contracts can't necessarily be applied, but neither can those of individual interactions. A community isn't quite a society, defined by individuals coming together under certain rules and a hierarchy, but neither is it just individuals interacting. Rather, it is a grouping of individuals around a certain shared trait. Community interaction stands apart from society as a more primitive form of interaction: tribalism (individuals irrationally feeling a sense of membership to a group, and therefore superiority over different or opposing groups). Nonetheless, communities have their own set of rules, obligations, boundaries, and benefits, but these aren't quite a social contract.

Communities, more like precursors to society that persisted after the advent of the latter than a separate form of group, formed because they were advantageous. It is better for individuals to be in groups for obvious reasons of safety and support, and a great way to define a group is over a shared trait because that increases the likelihood of other individuals being like-minded. To that extent, tribalism is at play, and it is the same urge to be with those that are similar that makes us dislike those that are different. Even in communities where the common trait is a shared interest, meaning that the

advantage of being in a community also allows individuals to further pursue that interest, it is an underlying urge to be in a group with those similar to oneself that tends to drive these communities. Although this paints communities as purely the irrational impulse to be in groups, in part due to the negative connotation of tribalism, this ignores the fundamental benefit of this want (and most likely the reason we have it in the first place), which is, as mentioned above, protection and power. Nowadays this power or protection is usually in the confines of society, and so the benefit is less prominent and sometimes even limited to social interaction. If the need for community was rational, like the need for society, then it would have come about much later. An individual living day to day with perfect rationality, but not looking ahead would never make a sacrifice for a group.

The variety of communities makes finding a particular rule set or way they are governed seemingly impossible. In the past, another common trait of communities was that they were centered around a geographic area, as it is hard to form a bond with a group that one cannot see. With today's modern means of communication, this is no longer the case, leading to communities being seemingly more loosely defined around common interests. An individual owes something to their com-

munity and vice versa. The individuals owe a certain level or respect to the other members, as there is a sense of commonality between the members because of the fact that they share a trait. In return, the community offers a group to be a part of and a sense of belonging. Where communities start to diverge from typical social contracts is that a certain loyalty is required to be in the community, whereas in societies individuals cannot get out of the social contract without completely abandoning society. If an individual breaks the social contract, society or its representatives punish them, but if one no longer shares the trait in a community, they just aren't part of the community any longer. While there can be symbolic and even decision making leaders in a community, they cannot punish members for not abiding by rules (besides excluding them), or that would make them societal leaders. In Rousseau's The Social Contract*, two important parts of society are the sovereign and the government, both of which are missing in communities due to lack of laws that they derive their power from. Similarly, joining a community doesn't entail the loss of freedom that Rousseau believed joining a society does, as communities don't necessarily impose their will (also due to the lack of explicit laws). Finally, because communities are tribalist in nature, a community doesn't necessarily have a goal besides interaction with similar people, which is why it differs from and coexists with society so well.

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contrat Social (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1762)
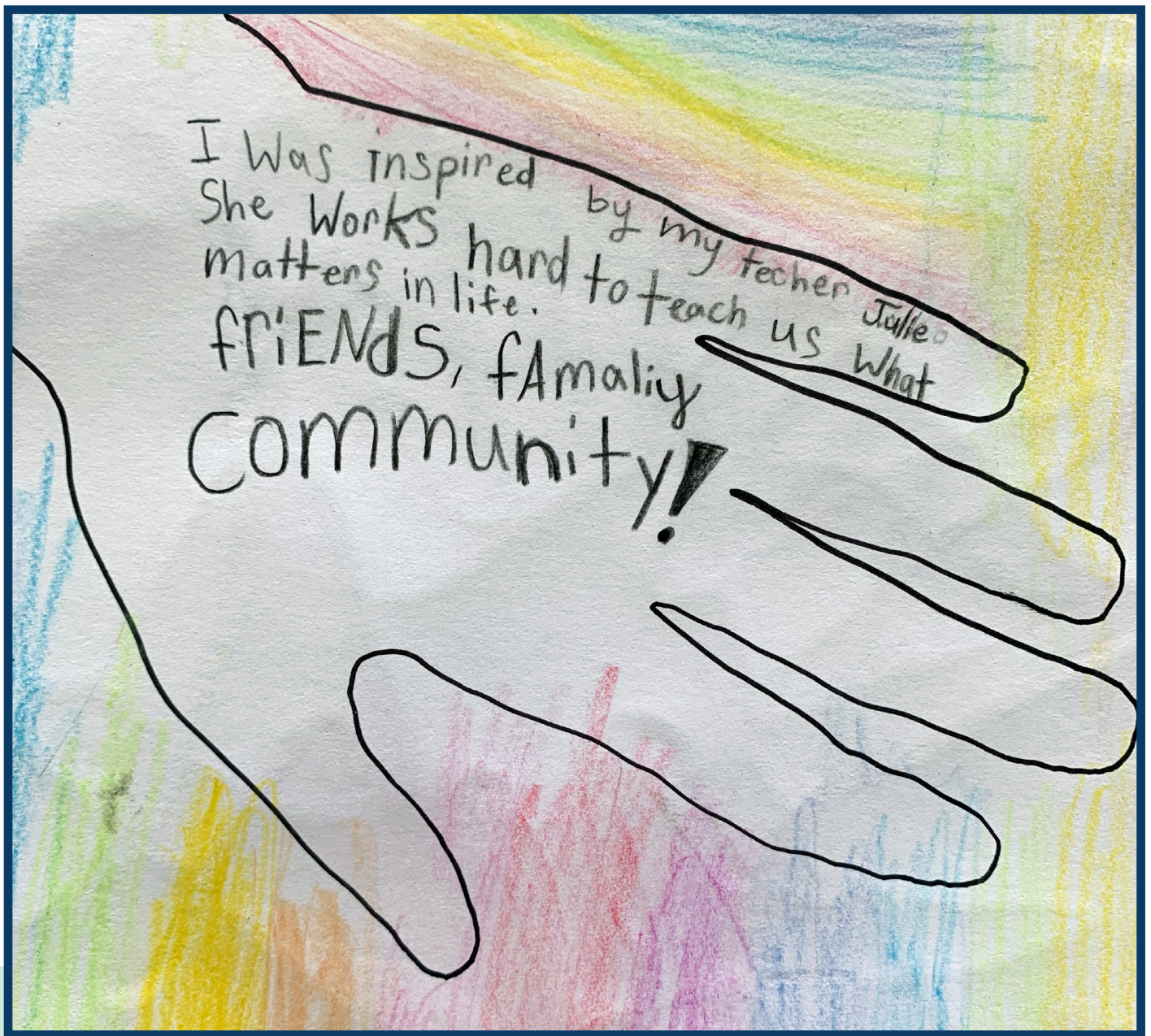
Artist: Olivia Rallo

Artist: Robyn McConaghy

Where I Come From, and Where I Am Going

BY RHINE PENG

Rhine Peng, 16, is from Bellevue, Washington and is currently a junior at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. Prior to coming to the United States, Rhine was born in Guangzhou, China, and lived in that area until the second grade.

"A stranger to myself and to the world [.]"
-- Albert Camus

Where I come from, my father studies names in small bold serif-font: Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, Franklin. Mostly with patience and occasionally with childlike frustration, he carefully reads the black-and-white text: CON–sti–TU–tion, Consti-tution, Constitution.

Where I come from, I check for boxes needing to be filled. No, we are *not* communists. My father memorizes facts about your—our—country: four hundred thirty-five, Congress, twenty-seven, the pursuit of happiness.

Almost to make up for the reality that my parents couldn't vote, I carved "vote" in big block letters into a Halloween pumpkin. And I placed a candle inside the orange-yellow pumpkin shell and I watched the flame glow and flicker in the night. Given where I come from, I shouldn't feel hollow, or fake, or like a shell of

who I am. I should glow with delight and gratitude for all that this place has given us—and for all that it has done to celebrate us.

But questions like *where I come from* must be reserved for philosophers, dead men who must care about these inquiries more than we do. The deep blue passport with an eagle on it—that doesn't tell me *where I come from*. Because *where we come from* is political, *where you come from* is patronizing, and *where I come from* is horror in ambiguity.

Where I come from—I could live in boxes and pigeon-holes, stereotypes and assumptions, dilemmas and false dichotomies. "Go back to—," they say. But what is *back*, and what is return? How do I *come home*? And why not *here*, this tiny blue sphere? I may be the perpetual foreigner, but we are all perpetually foreign to everyone else and to ourselves, but then when we all

see humans no one is "foreign." And return is difficult because I'm always *going* somewhere and it doesn't always occur to me where I'm coming from, or what's coming, or what comes.

For aliens like me, that little green card is for going places—places an ocean apart and galaxies away.

Even now, I am still afraid. Afraid to go out, sometimes, afraid to live in my own skin, but I'm afraid that's another matter. Years ago I was watching the Olympics on the television with my father's parents, and when the United States won an event my father and I stood up—like the young American I was—and we put our hands over our hearts and we started to sing the national anthem, no, our *country's anthem*. But *O*

Say, the next moment all I could remember was my angry grandma, her eyes perhaps saying, *we need to talk*. And I didn't understand why she was mad at me or my father and all I knew was that I didn't want to make her angry, or afraid, or worried, or disappointed, and that without a doubt I was wrong, that I shouldn't have sung the American anthem, that I am indeed Chinese, that I'm sincerely sorry. In that blur of colors and sounds, of snapshots of that vaguely familiar Wuhan living room, of portraits real and imagined—perhaps a photograph of my deceased grandfather, a Chinese professor of German—I felt guilty. And confused.

To try to erase the memories I wished I'd forgotten would be like erasing some part of myself. And sometimes, to this day, I am still ashamed, afraid, alone,

apologizing. *Where I come from* isn't anyone's business but mine—isn't it so?

When seven or eight years have gone by, you feel ready to join the party. But what is it that'll be waiting for me—for *us*—at the party? What should we celebrate? What should we believe? Is this too much—too *inconvenient*? Today, I try not to say sorry for not fitting into the boxes, for living in translations and syntax—is it where I *came* from or where I *come* from?

And now there is also Boston. This was the first place, the place I knew yet never remembered, a city so familiar and forgotten to me. But this city seems to remember me, because it keeps reminding me that I left and arrived but also returned, yet that I must also reconstruct the who and what of home. And now I live in between moments and places—I have watched faces both familiar and unfamiliar as if through a television

screen, as if I drift through space freely, a spectator invisible. Between Boston and Seattle, sometimes I do not quite feel that I am here, or there, or anywhere at all. I am across the continent, across the ocean, and yet today, I am here. Sometimes, everything feels wrong and out of place—no, it was me. Sometimes, *I* was the one who was out of place.

Since I am always *going* somewhere, between departure and arrival I will think of home again, for sometimes I don't know what home is, or to what and to where I will return, or what I am sick *for*, or sick *of*. And I will wear my blue school t-shirt with the bold letters that say "HOME" in all caps and sit in the park of my childhood as I watch people pass by, always coming and going and reminding me that I am a tourist in my own city, that I belong here and I don't and am out of place all over again.

A Pilgrimage for Brotherhood

SHEIKH ALAM
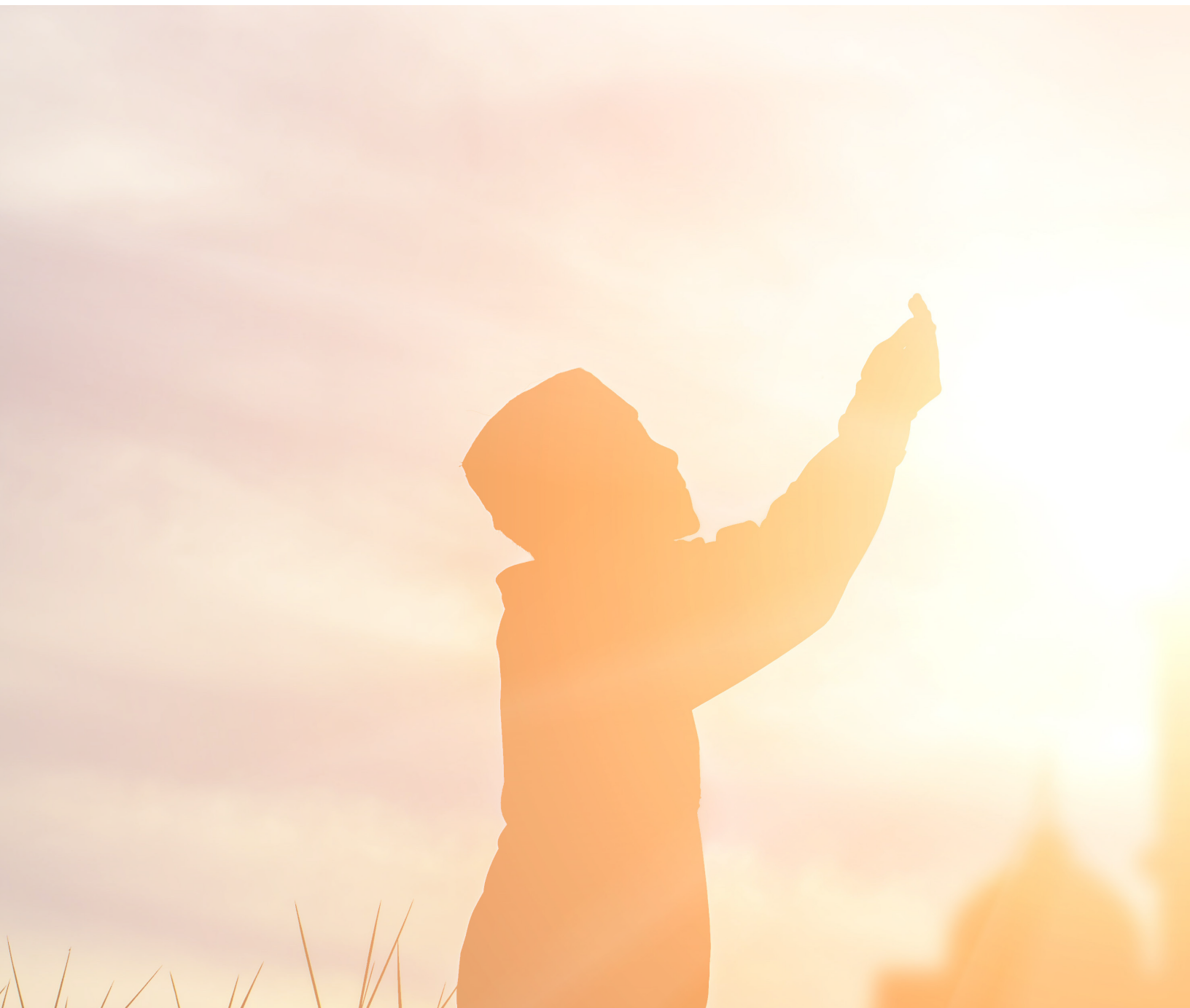
*My name is Sheikh Alam. I am a sophomore at RFK high school. Growing up in Koreatown, I was part of a melting pot of America. This community was super important. As a Muslim, I learned to respect other religions and cultures. Unfortunately, the way Muslims have been described in the media was also in a negative light. Thus I wish this essay will give insight into a beautiful part of my religion.*

It is reported that every year about 2.5 million Muslims make their way to Mecca to perform their obligatory Hajj. A question may rise of what purpose it serves for the religion and its followers. The simplest answer might be that Muslims endow themselves with austenitization in both their travel to Mecca and the ritual they conduct to glorify their lord. This although a valid response would overlook a central part of why the Hajj has been seen as a sacred ritual to all Muslims in the past millennium. Hajj serves as a purpose for Muslims to increase their bond with their fellow brother and sister. The bond between the Muslims is what creates an affectionate and powerful global Muslim community encompassing of all nations.

To start with it is interesting to note that many civil rights movement activists had taken Islam as their religion. One of their main bases of conversion is the inclusivity of all races inside of Islam. One of the most prominent civil right activists, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz or more commonly known as Malcolm X, wrote in one of his letters "There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world . . . We were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white... What I have seen, and experienced has forced me to rearrange much of my thought patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions". Malcolm X and many other civil right activists saw something in the Islamic community which they failed to see in other communities. It would be ignorant to state that other communities and societies did not reject racism. What set the Islamic community apart however is their very practices such as the Hajj set to dismantle racism.

Just from this individual record, it is clear to see the impact Hajj has on its participants. Looking collectively the same message echos, according to the Harvard Kennedy School in their Journal *Estimating the Impact of the Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam's Global Gathering* it states that "Numerous pilgrim accounts suggest that the Hajj inspires feelings of unity with the worldwide Muslim community" and furthermore it states "Our results tend to support the idea that the Hajj helps to integrate the Muslim world, leading to a strengthening of global Islamic beliefs, a weakened attachment to localized religious customs, and a sense of unity and equality with others who are ordinarily separated in everyday life by sect, ethnicity, nationality, or gender, but who are brought together during the Hajj." This information although fascinating is nothing new to Muslims. Reported in Al Bukhari, an important Islamic text, Mohammad (to whom peace and blessing be among) in his sermon states,"Verily there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a non-Arab over an Arab, or of a white man over a black man, or of a black man over a white man." Muslims around the world are united by their shared religion, and the Hajj serves as a necessary reminder to Muslims of the importance of unity.
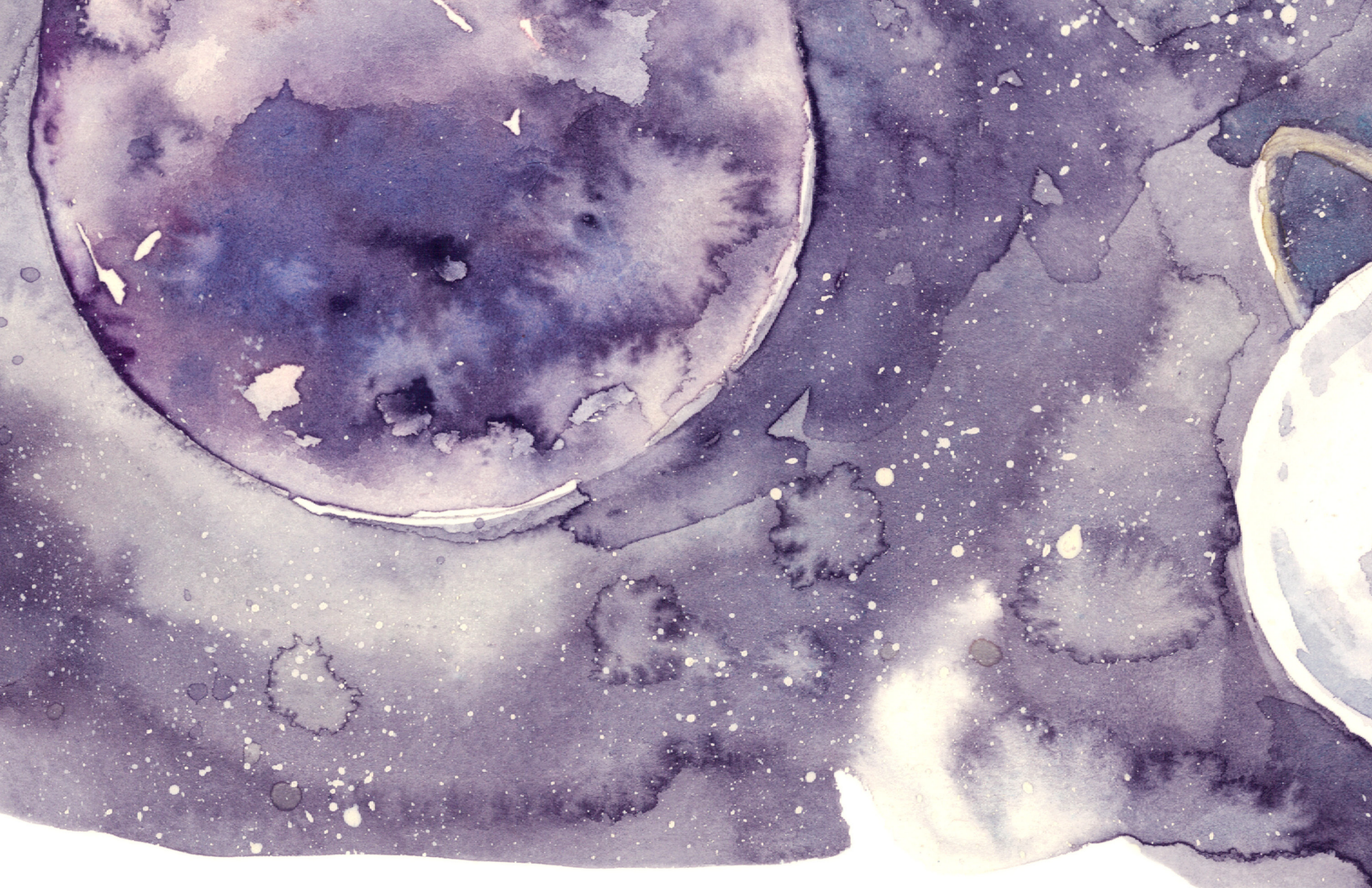
In Memory of Gabriel Marcel and The Little Prince

My name is Grace Williams-Kim, and I am a junior at University Laboratory High School. I live in Champaign, IL, blessed with the best corn and soy fields one may ever see.

Let's say you are being retro and listening to the radio when you hear about an event at your local library to help encourage young kids to read more books (what with this craze of screens and sorts nowadays). You like to help when you can, and this is a cause that you would like to be involved in. The library advertises that as a community member, you can participate by either donating books or volunteering to read to kids. You try to decide which option is best. On one hand, donating books is simple, takes less time, and still helps the children. On the other hand, it might be more fulfilling to actually interact with the kids and to know that you are actively participating in the cause. At this moment, you might be inclined to ask yourself: What is the relationship between an individual and their community? But before we can arrive at this question, we must first ask,

what does a relationship entail? What is the meaning of our individual existence and influence, and how, then, can we create these relationships, and why are they important?

Like on the occasional game show that allows one to "phone a friend" for help, we can call on French existentialist Gabriel Marcel to rise from his Parisian grave and help us formulate the closest thing to an answer to this question that has plagued my own existence for the past month. Existentialism is the subfield of Philosophy that believes the meaning of life and human existence is within the realm of our individual responsibility. Gabriel Marcel was one of the leading existentialists in the 20th century, and he believed that concrete experience, the reality we supposedly witness

day-to-day, is the route to choose when studying philosophy. His belief in concrete experience allowed him to comfortably make observations about our world, including one of his main perceptions:

we live in a broken world where ontological exigence, a need for the sense of being, is lost.

According to Marcel, ontological exigence can come from the idea of "having a body" vs. "being a body." During our encounters with others, he relates "having a body" to a state of assimilation, a body that only takes up space in a room and offers no participation, while "being a body," on the other hand, encourages one's contribution to society, which meaningfully connects one with others.[1] Marcel's idea has now provided us with a foundation of understanding the relationship between one and their community, but it is often helpful to view these kinds of ideas in a more illustrative manner.

We can then call on the well-known short novel, *The Little Prince*, which tells of the encounter between a pilot stranded in the desert and a golden-haired boy, the Little Prince, who is also foreign to the area as he has come from his home far from Earth—Asteroid B-612. Irritated by the countless questions of the Little Prince, the pilot is initially dismissive of him; however, throughout the course of the eight days they are together, a relationship

of great importance forms. Their narrative builds on the tales of the Little Prince's life and travels in which the readers are introduced to ideas that align with Marcel's states of being—having a body and being a body. *The Little Prince* not only shows the significance between these two distinctions, but it also depicts how cultivating relationships can establish a meaningful contribution to society.

The state of having a body can come in different forms, which we see when the Little Prince visits other planets. The Little Prince experiences a rocky relationship with his flower on his asteroid, so he leaves home and travels to other planets to find more friends where he encounters an adult on each one. There are some who are perfect portrayals of Marcel's "having a body" ideology. The planets of the conceited man, the tippler, and the businessman, for example, are quite literally only bodies filling up space. The conceited man only listens to praise, the tippler is stuck in an endless cycle of drinking to forget he is ashamed of drinking, and the businessman has devoted his life to counting stars whose numbers he keeps in a bank, an activity even the Little Prince acknowledges is useless. These adults are so absorbed in their own lives that neither their actions
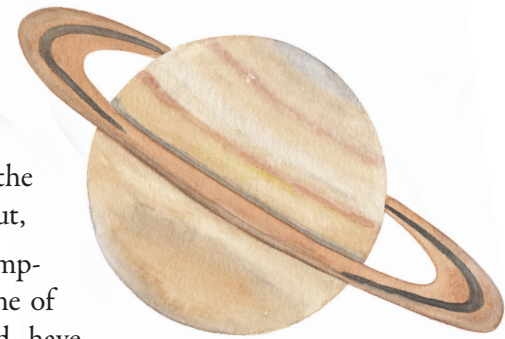
nor presence contributes meaningfully to their community.

There are also people, however, who can contribute productively to society but still don't fulfill the standards of "being a body." In the novel, it is the lamplighter who is depicted as so. The lamplighter serves his community day and night by providing (and extinguishing) the planet's light. Unfortunately, the planet has spun faster and faster so day and night only last for a minute, so the lamplighter is forced to stay at his post forever; his job has swallowed his life. Yet the Little Prince likes him because "he is thinking of something else besides himself."[2] He is not only providing light for the whole planet but figuratively, he can be seen as guiding others on the "right path" as he is supplying them with light to see. Can the lamplighter then be seen as "being a body," one whose contributions to society in turn allow them to connect with others? Not exactly. The lamplighter is in fact an excellent example of Marcel's other characteristic of having a body: the "broken world and the functional person."[3]

According to Marcel, our feeling towards a routine task which we initially find tedious, can evolve into a "necessity that is accepted with indifference."[4] Marcel says that our sense of need of being can come from finding a task frustrating, for it implies that we are at least conscious of our broken world; however, the extreme case develops when we become numb to this ontological exigence and can no longer see how our world is broken. The lamplighter seems to represent this extreme case as he has accepted that his monotonous task is now his life. His task also prevents him from creating relationships, for as the Little Prince points out,

"That man [the lamplighter] is the only one of them whom I could have made my friend. But his planet is indeed too small. There is no room on it for two people . . ."[5] Not only is there physically no room, but perhaps it is also implying that the lamplighter himself doesn't have the capacity to develop relationships with others. His fixation on completing his job has not only obstructed his life, but the possibility of establishing ties with others as well. As there is no mention of anyone else on his planet, we can say that the lamplighter is so focused on following orders, he isn't even aware that his job has such an influence on others.

Even if he is technically contributing to society, his actions mean nothing if he cannot also create relations with others.

So why are these relationships so important? Imagine, you arrive at a new school where you know no one, so therefore you are surrounded by people who mean nothing to you. At this point, you could decide to live the rest of your school career alone (lunch, homework, recess, all by your lonesome), or you could venture out and meet your peers and teachers. I suppose if you are an introvert extremist, you could choose to talk to no one, but I think most would agree that meeting others would be more fulfilling. And what's more, form-

ing meaningful connections with other people increases the value of these relationships. While this might seem obvious, the Little Prince is introduced to this idea from the fox he meets on Earth. The Little Prince is ready to become friends right away, but the fox tells him that they must first tame each other, "to establish ties."[6] It is only through this taming that they will then become meaningful to one another. The fox says,

> **"To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you . . . To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other."[7]**

As the fox says, the world will remain ordinary only until you make it not so. It is not just about one's contribution, for if everyone had a mindless job like that of the lamplighter where no one ever interacted with each other, then what a pointless world that would be; no one would be able to appreciate their own existence or one another's. It is the relationships that are conceived which bring meaning to our lives, even including the little things. The fox tells the Little Prince how the fields of wheat have no meaning to him now, but once they have tamed each other, the color of wheat will remind the fox of the Little Prince's golden hair, and he "shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat . . ."[8] The connection between the Little Prince and the fox makes even the ordinary, like wheat, more meaningful. The Little Prince leaves the pilot with this same thought in the last pages of the novel. When it is time for the Little Prince to go back to his planet, the pilot does not want to leave him, but the Little Prince tells the pilot that he will be up in the sky laughing, so every time the pilot sees the stars, he will be reminded of the Little Prince.[9] The stars will always remain in the sky, so it is like the Little Prince, too, will never truly leave the pilot.
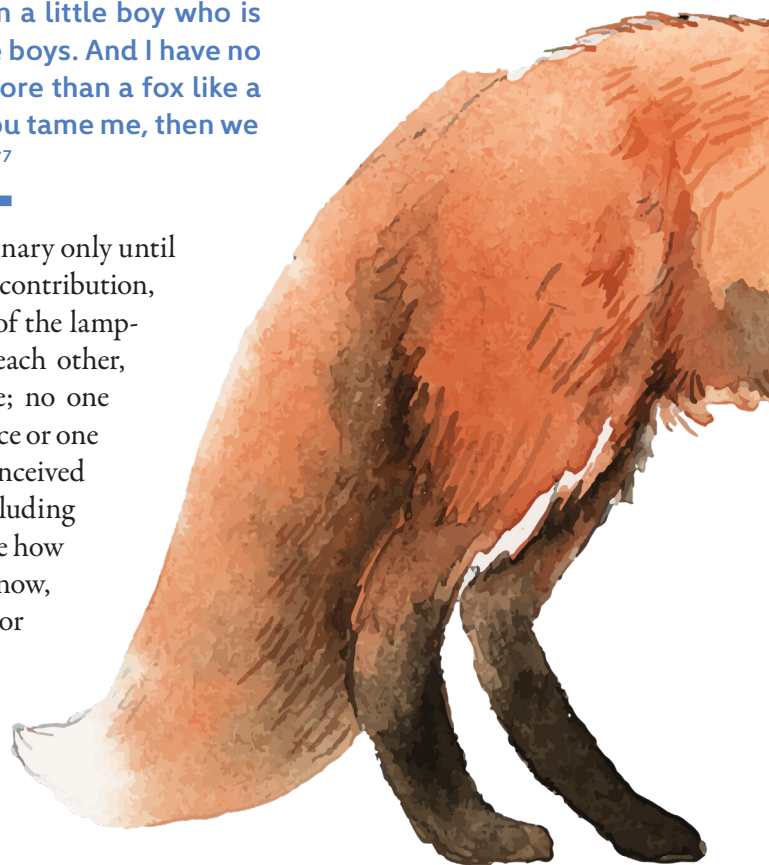
The Little Prince is no longer physically with the pilot, but his thoughts and words of wisdom have lingered with him, for here the pilot is thinking about the Little Prince and his stories six years later. The pilot had once been like any other adult—dismissive of curiosity and the little things—yet his time with the Little Prince reminded him of the importance of keeping one's imagination and childlike wonder alive, which many times disappear when one grows up. If we return to our original question, what is the relationship between an individual and their community, we now know that the answer is beyond merely having a body. It is even more than physical contribution, like the lamplighter. Rather, we have learned that this relationship emerges when one imprints a meaningful influence on their community, which is especially important, for this bond is not one sided; it is a perpetual growth of reciprocity. Your ideas ripple through others in such a way that perhaps one day, your absence will still leave a presence. This, I propose, is the closest explanation to a question with endless interpretations of the true answer.

Endnotes:

1. Brendan Sweetman and Brian Treanor, "Gabriel (-Honoré) Marcel," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last modified May 9, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/marcel/.

2. Antoine Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*. Translated by Katherine Woods. (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1943), 61.

3. Sweetman and Treanor, "Gabriel (-Honoré) Marcel."

4. Sweetman and Treanor, "Gabriel (-Honoré) Marcel."

5. Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 61.

6. Saint Exupéry, 80.

7. Saint Exupéry, 80.

8. Saint Exupéry, 83.

9. Saint Exupéry, 104–105.

Ukraine and South Africa in a community of philosophical enquiry

ROSE-ANN REYNOLDS, UNIVERSITY OF CAPETOWN

We are a community of philosophical enquiry which stretches across more than 10,000 kms from South Africa all the way to Ukraine, Poland and Bulgaria. We have been meeting once a week for about 80 minutes since January 2023. This collaboration started after Yuliia Kravchenko's appeal to members of the International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children to support students and their teachers after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022. The philosophy with children sessions are conducted with support from the Junior Academy of Sciences of Ukraine which initiated the project: Philosophizing with children in war time. We work in a multilingual way with a translator in every session. We move between the languages of Ukrainian and English and include in our interpretation gestures, laughter, and silence too. We also try to work in creative and inclusive ways, to share what we are thinking about so that we can encounter each other philosophically without relying only on language.

Below are the names of the members of our community and the places where we live. We choose to honour where we live when our homes are in a country at war. Some participants have also included where they have had to flee to during the invasion.

Student participants:

Olga—Zaporizhzhia (Ukraine)

Danylo—Zaporizhzhia (Ukraine)

Denis—Zaporizhzhia (Ukraine)

Margarita—Odessa (Ukraine)

Sabrina—Village Cherche
(Khmelnytskyi region) (Ukraine)

Ana—Village Cherche
(Khmelnytskyi region) (Ukraine)

Daria—Village Cherche
(Khmelnytskyi region) (Ukraine)

Anna—Village Cherche
(Khmelnytskyi region) (Ukraine)

Erika—Village Monastyryshche
(Cherkasy region) (Ukraine)

Polina—Hlukhic (Sumy region) (Ukraine)

Ilaria—Village Chornomorske (Odessa region), village
Vyshchetarasivka (Dnipropetrovsk region) (Ukraine)

Teachers:

Natalia Gutaruk—Zaporizhzhia (Ukraine)
and translator

Lyudmila Shumeiko—Varna (Bulgaria)

Tatiana Shipko—Zaporizhzhia (Ukraine)

Natalia Yazvinska—Village Cherche
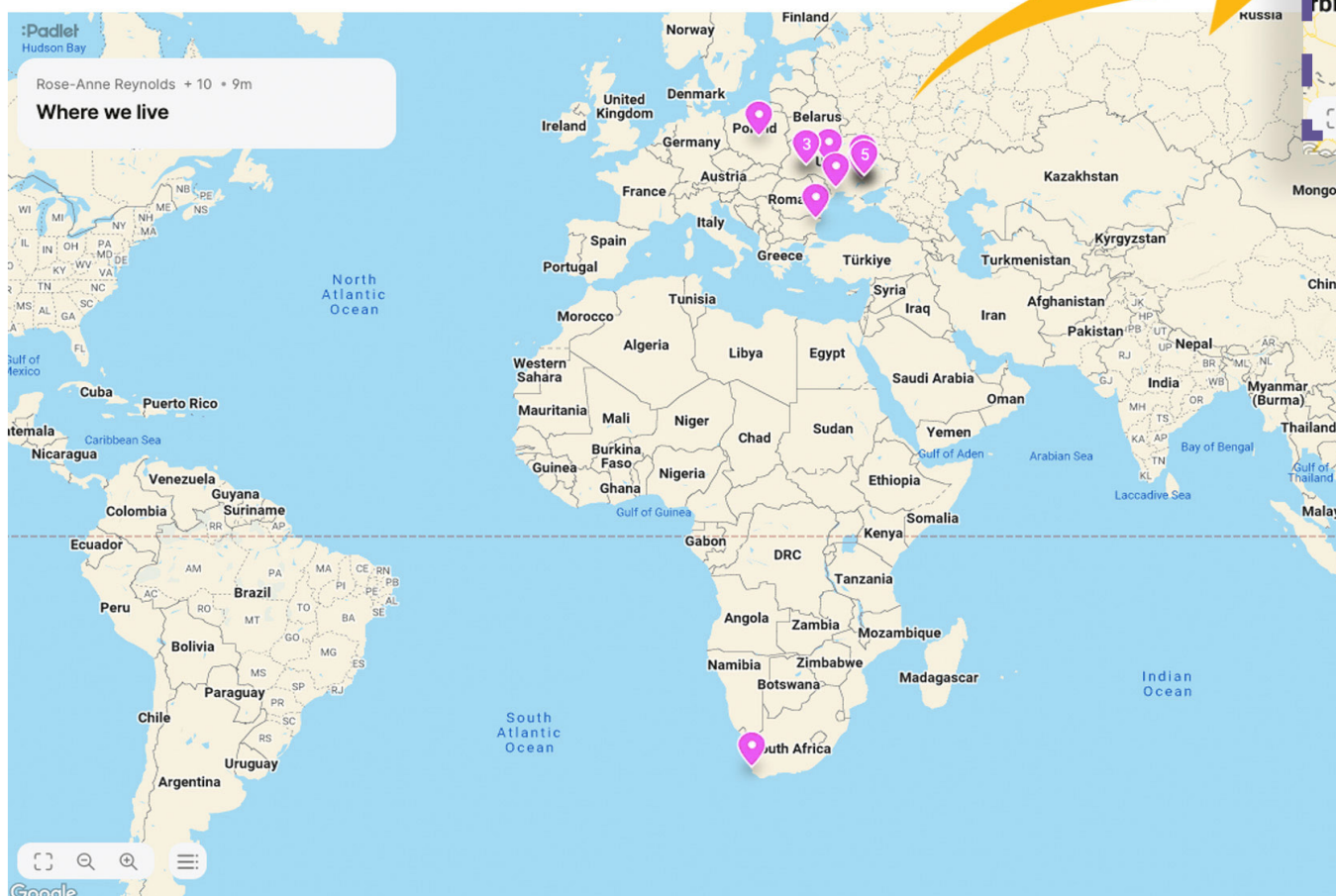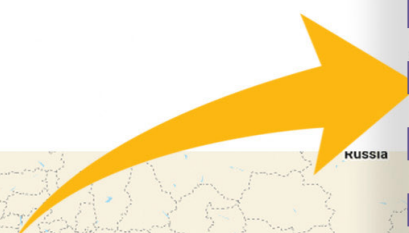(Khmelnytskyi region) (Ukraine)

Moderator and Organizer:
Kateryna Kushnarenko—Lodz (Poland)

Head of the Critical Thinking Development Lab:
Yuliia Kravchenko (Ukraine)

Philosophy with Children Facilitator:
Rose-Anne Reynolds—Cape Town (South Africa)

Our community is

a place for development
the art of questioning
of good
excavation   philosophical   unique
cognitive comfortable different talk special positive   interesting   stable
philosophy   happy
littel bit of psychology   creative   thinkers
smart friendly   principales beautiful
chderful respect developed opinion safety   chill balanced   thoughts native variable
caring   philosophising freedom good
inspiring

Where we live
Rose-Anne Reynolds + 10 • 9m

Ukraine and South Africa in a community of philosophical enquiry

CONTINUING COMMUNITY!

Artist: Mina Pasalic