

Tianyou Luo (U95043694)

Professor Michaela McSweeney

PH 100 A1

10 December 2023

Reflective Letter

Dear Allen my friend,

I have always been baffled by this question: A question that has also confused a lot of other people. I found it hard to understand decisions made by people around me and sometimes even by myself. So, I keep wondering what made me the person I am today, and what is the constitution of my identity. I became fond of genres such as dystopian novels that illustrate drastic changes that shift one's personality and beliefs. When you introduced the MBTI 16 personality test to me, a belief slowly emerged in my mind: there is this inherited personality everyone holds at birth. Future events may affect how you eventually interact with your surroundings but would not change the deepest part of who you are. I say this because what I have experienced suggested that I have changed a lot not in my identity or personality but in the way that I interact with the external world. My friends from primary school used to remember me as a very extroverted person, significantly different from the introverted person I am today. When I told them this idea that I have never changed, they did not believe a single word. So, instead of arguing about what they saw from their perspective, I told them what I saw from my perspective. Growing up I was always the kind of kid that other parents wish their own kid would be like, I am good at studying, good at athletics, and not as naughty as other kids of the same age. From my perspective though, it is not that I am not naughty, the reason why I behave

in such a way is that I have a strict principle that regardless of what I want to do, when it is giving others trouble, I should stop doing that or else I would feel very uncomfortable. These traits of mine seemed to be quite helpful when I was little until everyone around me started to grow up. At some point in my middle school and high school years, I was the only one left around me who still prioritized others' feelings in front of my own feelings. This was also the time that I gradually started to realize people are just not the same and slowly encapsulated myself in my own world so that I could stabilize my baffled mind and vulnerable identity.

So, now you know my belief and the reasons, I want to tell you about this interesting philosophy class I took this semester where ideas from the philosophers reinforced the belief that I talked about. I remember this priority philosophical question by Menkiti that interests me where he talked about whether personhood depends on being a member of a community or being a member of a community depends on being a person. In the end, he thinks that personhood is processual as a result of incorporating into the community. I agree with his reasoning, but my conclusion is quite different from his. Community is indeed the major reason that a person changes their personhood, but I think the idea of personhood is more like the external reaction of a person in response to his or her community. In short, the shift of personhood is a way to fit into the community. However, I do not think that the deep identity and personality have changed for that person. In other words, the external representation is characterized by the communities he has been in while the internal principles hold constant regardless of the shift. About this internal principle and identity, I want to talk about Wolf's reading about the deep self-view. Though this view is set to consider problems of free will and determinism, I found it helpful to talk about my beliefs. First of all, I think the first-order desires are quite similar among individuals. For example, we may be drastically different people but we probably both wanted to be happy, eat

good food, do what we are enthusiastic about, etc. However, the abilities and pathways to achieve these desires vary among individuals, why? This is where the second-order desire comes into play to determine if you take action to get the desire and how you going to do that. I consider this part as the principle and identity that doesn't change much. This would be the variable among different people and the community would be the constant factor applied to everyone. In this way, the final reaction displayed by each individual is different because this deep principle and identity within them reacted differently under the pressure of the factor of community. I too believe that I am different, not in the deep identity but in the way I display myself in my current community.

Sincerely,

Tianyou Luo