

Hierocles Circles of Concern

Background

“The whole without the parts is nothing” Hierocles

Hierocles was a Stoic philosopher from the second century CE. He believed in a world view called Cosmopolitanism. This is the idea that all humans deserve respect and justice regardless of who they are, the kind of life they live or even where they live. He proposed that we are all creations of our family, society, country and, in fact, the entire population of humanity. He expands on this idea to say that all these elements of humanity have contributed to make who we are and also give us the means to succeed and be happy in our lives. In turn, he suggests, we should embrace a caring relationship with each of these elements of human life. That we have a responsibility to care for and contribute to our family, community and all of human life to ensure this cycle continues for ourselves and others.

Hierocles imagined the individual in the centre of a series of concentric circles of ‘concern’ or significance, flowing ever outward to embrace more of humanity. By doing this he hoped that we would reflect on these relationships and over time feel more connected to each of the circles, understanding that they are important to us and we that are important to them.

Preparatory Discussion

Before undertaking this art activity prepare students by introducing the ideas of Hierocles. Share the image of his *circles of concern* to help them see what he meant, explaining that by *circles of concern* he means his sense of community. Then, encourage students to discuss what this would look like for them. Who would they include in their circles? What important subcategories of community exist for them in each circle, such as state AFL teams etc.?

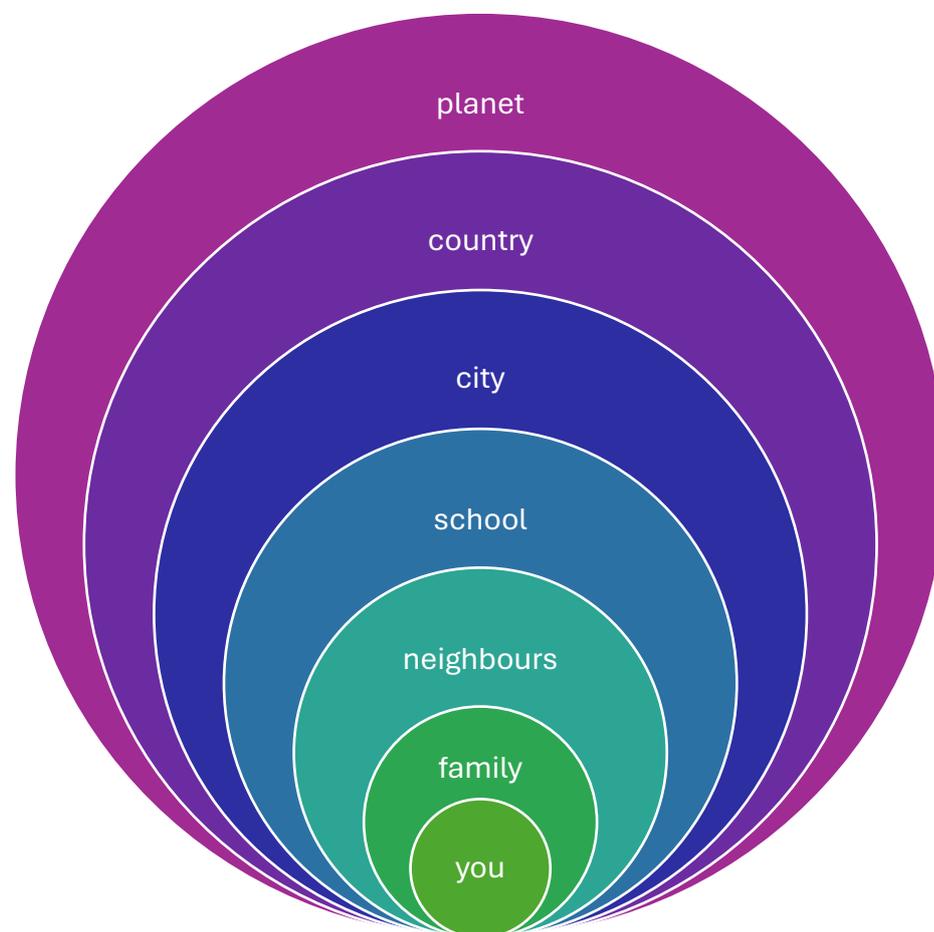
Activity

1. Prepare a series of circles to cut out. These may have different colours or be white. You can do either six or seven if you wish to combine the neighbours/school circles. They should fit inside one another with enough room to see the labels on the lower circles.
2. Students cut out and label their circles.
3. Students can then illustrate the people and ideas that come to them about each of these categories of community.

4. Encourage students to consider symbols for subcategories of community that are meaningful to them, such as sports' teams they follow.
5. Students or helpers then link a student's circles all together at the top with a string or ring passing through all of them so that they can easily be flipped through.
6. When complete students should share and reflect on their creations.

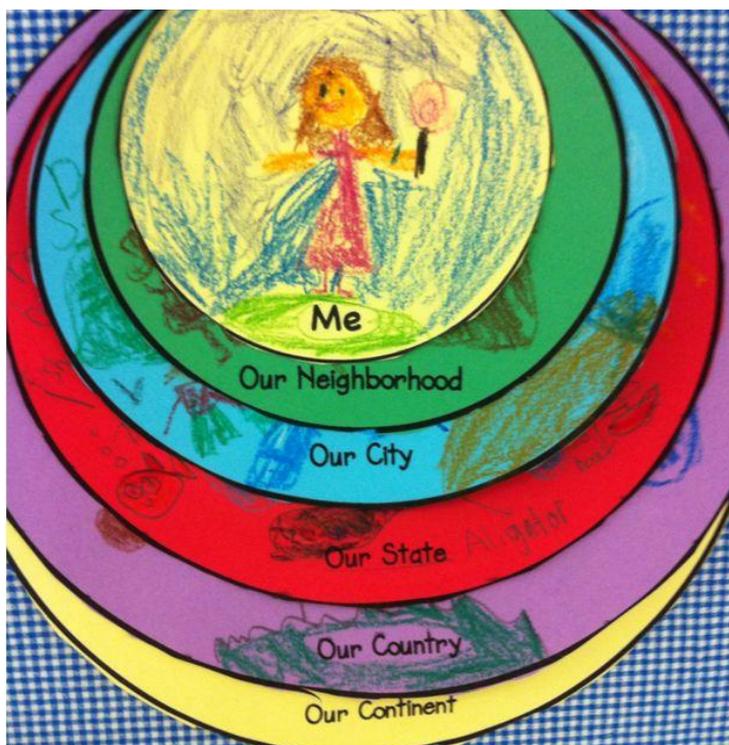
Post-Activity Discussion

In reflecting on their creations students should be encouraged to think about how they feel connected to different parts of the circles of community. Which circles do they feel most strongly about? Why do they think that is? Are there people they don't feel like are a part of their community? Why is that? Which area do they think they need to work on? Do they think seeing the whole planet as part of their community is helpful in any way?



Hierocles' Circles of Concern

Examples



Sources

Marion, D., Shogry, S. and Baltzly, D. 2023 "Stoicism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/stoicism/>.

Taylor, T. (trans) 1882 *Political fragments of Archytas, Charondas, Zaleucus, and other ancient Pythagoreans, preserved by Stobaeus; and also, Ethical fragments of Hierocles, the celebrated commentator on the Golden Pythagoric Verses, preserved by the same author,*

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Political_fragments_of_Archytas_and_other_ancient_Pythagoreans