ZELDA

Zelda turned herself in to Honor Council for a potential academic violation of the Honor Code. An inquiry was convened to address the situation.

After the Chairperson explained the relevant sections of the Code, the factual portion began as Zelda recounted the events which had transpired. She had had a take-home, timed and open-book, exam in her math class. Upon opening the exam, she realized that she was too tired to take it at that time and unsure of the material which it covered. Zelda completed what she could but panicked on the first question: she could not understand its phrasing and could find no similar example in her notes. She remembered that a friend had already taken the exam and thought that if she could simply look at the formula needed to solve the problem she could arrive at the answer herself. Thus, under the pretense of comparing answers, Zelda procured the completed exam, read the first question, returned the exam, finished her own, and submitted it to the professor. Immediately thereafter, she felt ashamed. She realized that if she could not understand a question she should have gone to the professor. Zelda felt that she had let herself down but could not face the professor. After speaking with her dean, using other problems as an excuse, Zelda withdrew from the math class. During the next month, further discussions with the dean and Zelda’s increasing self-disgust caused her to report herself to Honor Council. Zelda admitted and the jury consented that a violation had occurred.

The circumstances surrounding the infraction were then examined. At other times, after completing exams, Zelda had compared answers with friends in the class but had never changed her own. It became apparent that it was the method not the answer which confused her. She could not understand the language of the question and, thus, the principle at which it was aimed. As it turned out, she had over-looked a similar problem in her notes. Zelda knew during the exam that what she was doing was not "ethical," but only after handing it in did she realize the gravity of the violation. She felt unable to approach the professor for fear of being thought stupid. When asked why what she had done was wrong, Zelda replied that she had always felt proud of her own achievements but now had broken the trust of the professor and had let herself down. Shame caused her to drop the course; by not receiving credit, she felt better. As the jury discussed why cheating is not good, the jurors discovered that Zelda saw the problem not as a violation of the Honor Code and, as such, of our community values but as a breach of her own ethics and morals. But, because they are so similar to the Code, it, in consequence, was violated too.

The jury resolved that Zelda should fail the math class but, to address the violation of trust between student and professor, recommended that she re-take it with the same professor. To repair the broken trust with the community as a whole, Zelda would volunteer ten hours of tutoring in her major subject. As a final suggestion, the jury advised her to take a course on Quakerism. Aware that she had her own morals and ethics, this would enable Zelda to gain a better understanding of the source of our community values.