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BOOK NEWS AND REVIEWS

Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet (2001) by Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and William Damon. New York: Basic Books.

“Be well, do good work, and keep in touch.” Garrison Keillor, as quoted on p. 249 of this book.

The authors are well-known for their research and writing during the last twenty years. Howard Gardner is highly regarded for his extensive writing on *multiple intelligences*, while Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has conducted fascinating research and authored several books on the concept of *flow*. William Damon’s work concentrates on adolescent development with particular emphasis on moral issues. They developed their ideas for this book during sabbaticals at Stanford University’s Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. It is significant that it is dedicated to John W. Gardner, one of the great liberal thinkers and educators of the United States and the World.

Good Work is based upon extensive in-depth interviews the authors and their staffs conducted with individuals in the fields of genetics and journalism – over 100 interviewees per field. This is probably the first of several books Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi and Damon will publish on this topic. Most participants are well-known in their respective fields and many are nationally recognized, particularly in television news reporting. Other participants are “midlevel practitioners” who are not as widely known to the public.

The interview protocols for the journalists and geneticists are contained in the appendices. From reading these protocols, it is clear the study of good work was based upon using a probing set of questions designed to relate core values to current work situations, and to the ethical conflicts that have occurred between these values and work requirements. This is a commendable set of interview questions which can serve as a model for studying good work in government, corporate, military, technology and education settings. The protocols should also be carefully reviewed by national organizations and government agencies concerned with educating the gifted, since they can be used as a model for conducting a similar type of study of good work in the gifted education field. The following statement regarding the reason for studying the ethical basis for good work is an excellent rationale for investigating the work and ethics of educators in the gifted field:

“In every historical era, many people have sought to carry out good work. It has always been true that some people do their work expertly but not very responsibly. People who do good work, in our sense of the term, are clearly skilled in one or more professional realms. At the same time, rather than merely following money or fame alone, or choosing the path of least resistance when in conflict, they are thoughtful about their responsibilities and the implications of their work. . . .” (p. 3).

This book provides educators of the gifted and researchers in this field with an exemplary model for conducting significant research, i.e., research that makes important contributions to human understanding rather than typical career-advancement, journal-article research. For example, by reading **Good Work**, one can learn how to develop four important elements of survey research: (1) conceptual basis for the study; (2) design of a well-reasoned questionnaire, carefully generated from the conceptual underpinnings; (3) description of interesting results; and (4) interpretations and conclusions that place the results in the broader context of American society.

The authors have preceded their findings with excellent discussions of the histories of genetics and journalism to provide a background for understanding their findings (e.g., Chapter 3, Early Attempts to Shape Bodies and Minds, and Chapter 4, Genetics in the Limelight). They also make the point that all findings are based upon the current status of genetics research and journalism/reporting. An important concept, *alignment*, is used throughout the book to discuss how closely the values, concerns and practices of a particular field match those of the American public and professional domain standards. This concept is initially defined in Chapter 2 (The Conditions of Good Work). Journalism is not closely aligned with many American values and concerns although the current War on Terrorism has brought them more closely together. Genetics has serious alignment problems concerned with issues of human cloning and stem cell research. But this field is unified in terms of its broad goals, and public acceptance of the importance of this research for improved health and longevity. In contrast, journalism is rife with internal disagreements and much public hostility.

Some of the interesting findings (Chapter 5, A Golden Age in a Well-Aligned Domain) regarding geneticists are concerned with four major themes permeating their responses and that represent, “. . .the primary sources of intrinsic satisfaction in science.” (p. 75): (1) thrill of scientific inquiry; (2) pleasure in working with scientific materials; (3) quality of thinking; and (4) belief that rational thinking directs scientific inquiry. Another interesting area described in Chapter 5 addresses various types of responsibilities perceived by geneticists, e. g., responsibility to society, to a domain of knowledge, to others, and the responsibility of others. The scientists’ comments on their responsibilities provide an excellent source of information regarding the ethical problems of individuals who work in research and clinical areas of genetics. Chapter 6 (Storm Clouds in Genetics) discusses some of the important issues related to genetics research such as market forces, corporate intrusions, competitiveness, and the fragile role of younger scientists.

The journalists' responses (Chapter 7, Power Gained and Debased in the News Media) to problems in their field were quite different from the geneticists. Fifty-one percent of the journalists indicated that recent changes in the news media were negative (p. 128) whereas the geneticists indicated much greater satisfaction – “Nearly all of the people [geneticists] we interviewed expressed great excitement about their scientific work. . . .” (Chapter 5, p. 73). Such factors as the pressure to expand commercial markets, the move toward superficial coverage of important news, the use of high technologies, changes in newsroom culture, and the changed roles of editors have produced much frustration among journalists (Chapter 7).

The extensive historical and ethical principals by which journalism has functioned in the United States are described in Chapter 8 (Sources of Strength in Journalism). Most of the respondents demonstrated these principals by their adherence to standards of truth and fairness. In Chapter 9 (Good Work in Journalism Today), the authors present many positive examples of how journalists use their ethical standards to practice their work domain. This chapter also includes many strategies used by successful journalists who have high ethical standards. The final two chapters concentrate on the authors' opinions concerning how to improve good work in journalism and genetics. Chapter 10 (Restoring Good Work in Journalism and Genetics) includes such recommendations as creating new institutions and taking personal stands. Chapter 11 (Good Work in the Wider World) discusses some of the pressures against doing good work in journalism, genetics, medicine, law, teaching, and artistic crafts. The authors see technology, commercial ownership of creative products and the dumbing down mentality as major forces that impede good work. But they end their book in a positive manner by examining many actions people in different fields can take to improve the opportunity for good work. Their “Final Words on Good Workers” is a wonderful letter to younger relatives or their own children concerning how they can do the best possible work and maintain high ethical standards while doing it.

The Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi and Damon study is a paragon of qualitative and survey research, comparable to the works of others who have used similar elements in their research models – Jean Piaget, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Sigmund Freud. This is why researchers and educators concerned with gifted children need to study **Good Work** to learn how to effectively use this qualitative-survey research model in today's World. 🍷🍷🍷🍷

GIFTED STUDENTS AND THE WISDOM POEMS OF ROBERT FROST (1874-1963) BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE SCHOOLS

“They cannot look out far./ They cannot look in deep./ But when was that ever a bar/ To any watch they keep?” *Not Out Far Nor in Deep* (1936) by Robert Frost.

There is a new edition of the early poems of Robert Frost that has been recently published in paperback by Signet Classic in 2001. This reissue of the collections, **Poems by Robert Frost: A Boy's Will and North of Boston**, is a wonderful reading experience for any gifted student. These collections were originally published in 1913 and 1914 respectively. On the cover is a photograph of Robert Frost when he wrote the poems in early middle age. There is also an enlightening introduction by William H. Pritchard and an Afterword by Peter Davison. Pritchard is professor of English at Amherst College who has written both a biography of Frost (**Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered**, 1993, and **Lives of the Modern Poets**, 1980). Davison is a well-known American poet and the current poetry editor of the Atlantic Monthly.

Davison defines the poems in this book as being “wisdom poems.” Although Frost's language is simple, since he uses the American vernacular, his meanings are profound. These poems were originally published while Frost resided in England before World War I. He returned to the United States and won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923, 1930, 1936 and 1942. He was invited by President John F. Kennedy to read one of his poems (“The Gift Outright”) at the inauguration in 1960. Despite the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, he was invited to tour Russia by Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of Russia in the 1960s. This was because of Frost's popularity among Russia's people and poets.

Gifted students will find Frost's wisdom poems stimulating to both their intellectual and artistic sensibility and attributes. In the poem, “The Death of the Hired Man” (1915), there is a famous section that can be used to generate ideas for writing essays. The lines of this section are world renowned: “ ‘Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/ They have to take you in./ ‘I should have called it/ Something you somehow haven't to deserve.’ ” (from the collection, **North of Boston**, published in 1914). This collection also contains the poem, “Mending Wall,” which gifted students will find relevant to our present conflict in Afghanistan. The following lines describe the attitudes of neighbors who have problems trusting each other: “He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors’. . . . / What I was walling in or walling out, /And to whom I would like to give offence. /Something there is that doesn't love a wall, . . .”

Another wonderful project for gifted students would be to write an essay on why three Nobel Prize winners in poetry considered Frost's poems to be their greatest inspiration. These were the Russian poet, Joseph Brodsky, the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, and the Caribbean poet, Derek Walcott (**Homage to Robert Frost: Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott**, 1996, Farrar, Straus and Giroux). The wisdom poems of Robert Frost are a gift outright to gifted individuals.

L L Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher, Copyright © by Gifted Education Press, February-March 2002 7 7