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# *Nurturing Creativity, Wisdom, and Trusteeship in Education*

*A Collective Debate*

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As the title of this book indicates, this volume has three points of departure: the concept of creativity, the concept of wisdom, and the notion of trusteeship, all three set in the educational milieu of our time. The three editors came to believe that, at this historical moment, a blend of creativity and wisdom combined with revisiting the notion of trusteeship in education would be highly desirable, and perhaps even necessary, for the survival of the world as we know it and as we would like it to be.

## **INVITING COLLEAGUES TO PARTICIPATE IN PRINTED DEBATE**

Accordingly, we prepared a series of reflections—which we term the three target chapters—on the often uneasy connections among creativity, wisdom,

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trusteeship, and education. We then circulated these target chapters to a set of contributors representing several scholarly disciplines and varieties of educational practice. In the essays that constitute this volume, the contributors offer their critiques of our essays as well as their own thoughts about the nature of, and the relationship between, creativity and wisdom. In this introductory essay we summarize some of the major lines of work in the psychological study of creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship; comment on the educational milieu of our time; and say a few initial words about the contributions that follow and the structure of this volume as a whole.

### CREATIVITY

The concept of *creativity* has been explored by scholars over the centuries. Creativity was initially seen as divine inspiration in Greek, Judaic, Christian, and Islamic traditions (Rhyammar and Brolin 1999), but since the Enlightenment, and particularly after the Romantic era, it has been increasingly seen as the human capacity for insight, originality, and subjectivity of feeling. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, psychological exploration began to be undertaken—for example, through the pioneering work of Galton (1869). Over the course of the twentieth century, a number of distinct traditions addressed issues of creativity. The psychoanalytic approach (Freud 1908/1959, 1910/1957, 1916/1971; Jung 1973; Winnicott 1971) emphasized unconscious motivations and processes. The behaviorist approach brought attention to the conditions that rewarded original responses and products (Skinner 1953, 1968, 1971, 1974). Researchers in the personality tradition highlighted the personal and temperament traits of creative individuals (Barron 1969; Eysenck 1952; MacKinnon 1962). And a humanist tradition considered the crucial role of expression and invention in the lives of individuals (Maslow 1954/1987, 1971; Rogers 1970).

Researchers and practitioners interested in creativity in the classroom have drawn on several other traditions, more avowedly cognitive in thrust (cf. Wallas 1926). Influential first were efforts to measure the trait of creativity through quantifying aspects of divergent thinking (Guilford 1950, 1967; Mednick 1962; Torrance 1962, 1974; Wallach 1971), which led to the development of practical techniques to foster creativity such as brainstorming and question asking (De Bono 1995). A second cognitive strand focused on the mental models—often computational in flavor—characteristic of creative thought (Bruner 1962; Johnson-Laird 1988; Simon 1988). A third strand consisted of case studies of top-flight creators (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Gardner 1993; Gruber 1974/1981; John-Steiner 1997). Finally, these individual-centered efforts have been complemented by scholars who view creativity in a broader context. Authorities have focused on organizational climate/culture and on various forms of collaboration (Amabile 1988; Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner 1994; John-Steiner 2000; Sternberg and Lubart 1991, 1995). Overall, there has been a gradual shift toward facilitating everyday creativity at home and at work, and less of a focus on measurement and prediction (Craft 2005).

The diverse approaches all reflect the *value-neutrality* of creativity; the ends to which creativity is put are not seen as significant—and indeed the apparent *universalization* of creativity (Jeffrey and Craft 2001) in educational policymaking across the world underlines this position. Our book calls into question that unproblematic, value-neutral position on creativity as it applies to education in particular. The book raises the possibility that creativity ought to be conceived of in relation to other human virtues—in particular to wisdom (cf. Sternberg 2003).

## WISDOM

Despite twenty-five years of social scientific studies exploring the notion of wisdom, there is as yet no consensual definition of this trait or even a robust tradition of studying it. Accounts of wisdom are located in multiple domains and perspectives, from the sociocultural (Takahashi and Overton 2005) and the philosophical (Osbeck and Robinson 2005) to the psychological (Kunzmann and Baltes 2005), and this enormous diversity may in part account for the lack of a consensual foundation.

Within the psychological literature, as was the case with creativity, the dominant approaches are cognitive (Bassett 2005). Both the Berlin School (led by Baltes) and the Sternberg approaches emphasize a metacognitive stance toward the practicalities and pragmatics of life. A third approach construes wisdom in relation to Piagetian stage theory of development (Piaget 1932; Piaget and Inhelder 1969). Here, wisdom is deemed an aspect of postformal development—indeed as exceptional self-development—enabled through a decentering of the ego and the capacity to think dialectically and to acknowledge alternative truths and inherent contradictions (see, e.g., Cook-Greuter 2000; Kitchener and Brenner 1990).

Perhaps the richest view of wisdom to date, and the one with greatest potential for use in the classrooms, has been developed by the aforementioned researchers at the Max Planck Institute. These investigators conceptualize wisdom as bringing together characteristics of knowledge, mental capacities, and virtue (Baltes and Kunzmann 2004; Baltes and Staudinger 2000). Wisdom is seen as “an expert knowledge system about fundamental problems related to the meaning and conduct of life” (Baltes and Stange 2005, 196), which enables appropriate courses of action that take account of multiple perspectives.

The Berlin School identifies five criteria for labeling any action *wise* (Baltes and Staudinger 2000), two of which are *basic*:

- rich factual knowledge of human nature and human life course
- rich procedural knowledge of possibilities for engaging with life problems

The remaining three are seen as *metacriteria* and are considered by the group to be “unique to wisdom” (Baltes and Stange 2005, 196):

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- life-span contextualism (i.e., understanding of multiple contexts of life and their interrelationships in concurrent temporality as well as over the life span)
- value tolerance and relativism (i.e., understanding of differences between individuals, group, and wider social/cultural values and priorities)
- knowledge about handling uncertainty (including limits in knowledge—both one’s own and collective, regarding the world at large; Baltes and Stange 2005)

For reflective educators who seek to foster the development of wisdom among students in schools, this perspective is particularly significant. Yet one must be wary of attempts to reduce wisdom to a purely *cognitivist* account. Any full account of wisdom should take into account as well the motivational and contextual factors that are likely to engender or thwart wise thoughts and wise actions.

### TRUSTEESHIP

Every culture depends upon individuals who are considered wise. Typically, in traditional societies, it is the elders who are the repository of wisdom; in more recent times, religious leaders and experts with a wide perspective have assumed that role. We sense that in modern secular societies religious leaders do not automatically command respect, and experts are typically valued more for their technical flair than for their breadth of knowledge. Accordingly, there is a dearth of individuals who naturally come to occupy the status of *wise person*.

At a premium, therefore, are individuals whom we dub as *trustees*. Those who occupy that role are well known, widely respected, and seen as being non-partisan, disinterested. Most trustees work within a particular domain; the most impressive are valued across large sectors of the society. Nearly any person who is mentioned as a trustee would generate a measure of controversy, but in the recent history of the United States, we would mention such persons as the scientist Jonas Salk, the journalist Walter Cronkite, and the civic leader John Gardner; in Britain, individuals like the historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin, the BBC executive Lord Reith, or the entrepreneur Anita Roddick might be cited. Such individuals serve as role models whom younger persons can look up to and hope to emulate.

In the absence of such trustees, young persons either direct their admiration to celebrities or display cynicism about the possibility of good work.

### THE TENSION BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND WISDOM

With the common construal of creativity outlined above comes a set of assumptions which encourage, emphasize, and venerate individual engagement

and success, in a way that may run counter to wise action. As Sternberg (2003) argues,

wisdom is not just about maximizing one's own or someone else's self-interest, but about balancing various self-interests (intrapersonal) with the interests of others (interpersonal) and of other aspects of the context in which one lives (extrapersonal), such as one's city or country or environment or even God. Wisdom also involves creativity, in that the wise solution to a problem may be far from obvious. (p. 152)

Sternberg's *balance theory* of wisdom thus characterizes wisdom in terms of successfully balancing interests. It also recognizes that "wise solutions are often creative ones" and proposes that wisdom is related to "creatively insightful thinking" (p. 158).

Sternberg (2003) makes the point, however, that "although wise thinking must be, to some extent, creative, creative thinking . . . need not be wise" (p. 158). Since the policy perspective on the generation of creativity in classrooms by teachers and schools appears to be value neutral, lacking a moral and ethical framework, the very encouragement of creativity in education raises fundamental questions and dilemmas. It could certainly be argued that creativity developed without wisdom may not serve children, their families and communities, and the wider social and cultural groupings to which they belong—and thus its uncritical encouragement may be seen as a questionable endeavor.

## THE EDUCATIONAL MILIEU TODAY AND TOMORROW

Traditionally, education around the world has pursued three goals: a mastery of the basic literacies; learning the fundamentals of major disciplines (mathematics, logic, and music in an earlier era; history, biology, and psychology today); and inculcating the fundamentals of citizenship and morality, often from a religious perspective. These goals remain today, despite the secularization of education in many parts of the world, but the task of educators becomes ever more demanding and complex (Gardner 1991, 1999, 2007).

How are educators to respond, for example, to the forces of globalization: the rapid circulation around the world of currency, ideas, cultural models, and human beings, who migrate in large numbers from one culture to another and perhaps back again to the original site (Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard 2004)? A second problematic issue concerns the powerful new forms of communication technology—not just radio and television but, above all, the new digital media, including computers for work, computer games, friendship networks, virtual realities, and the like. These media can be put to positive educational uses, but they have equal potential for taking students away from their studies and even involving them in antisocial acts (Jenkins 2006). More generally,

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computers can carry out an increasing number of human functions, thus putting an educational premium on those capacities that have not yet been automated—such as, as far as we know, wisdom. A third issue relates to the way in which teachers should acknowledge the pressing planetary problems—global warming, other kinds of ecological disasters, hostility between nations and religions, severe diseases like AIDS and malaria, and, perhaps above all, the unprecedented capacity of humans to decimate the world’s population with nuclear weapons or some kind of biological or chemical toxic agents.

Even educators who are sharply focused on the three traditional goals cannot simply ignore these larger forces—they are brought to school by students, they cast a shadow on the curriculum, and they may even dominate over the goals of parents, teachers, and the wider citizenry. Young people, though sometimes naïve, are often highly concerned and even idealistic about these issues. Thus, it is vital to rethink both the goals and the means of education in the twenty-first century. The development of human characteristics such as creativity and wisdom looms large in these debates.

As we discussed in our brief review of the literature, creativity preceded wisdom as a concern in the classroom—perhaps to the detriment of the pressing human priorities noted above. Of course, creativity may also be construed as playing a vital role in surviving and thriving in a very uncertain immediate and wider context. But much of the debate about how creativity may contribute within education to the preparation of generative citizens is underpinned, internationally, by a particular model of engagement—Western individualism, fed by the market economy—which colors ambient values to a strong degree. Accordingly, creativity as played out in education and in work is vulnerable to a variety of forms of “blindness,” including a disregard for diversity in culture and values, a lack of engagement with the question of how we might foster wisdom, increasing barriers to doing good work through decreasing trust, and a hesitation to assume responsibility for improving society.

A discussion about what we might call *wise creativity* or *good creativity*, and how we might develop trusteeship in fostering this, is long overdue. In these pages, we seek to harness *possibility thinking* (Burnard et al. 2006; Craft 2001; Cremin, Burnard, and Craft 2006), to contemplate how we might conceptualize good creativity and how creativity within education in particular might respond to this rapidly shifting world. As editors we seek to nurture a debate among practitioners, researchers, and policymakers about the ways in which we might refresh our approach to the education of children and young people. The authors pose questions about how to frame creativity in a way that pays attention to outcomes as well as processes, and that sees responsibility as sitting equally with self-realization. Concretely, does creativity, as nurtured within education, need to be wiser? If so, what does this mean, and what practical implications follow?

What does it mean, for example, to view classroom practice as a reflective, intellectually demanding endeavor? In this book, we seek to catalyze a debate about the role and meaning of reflective practice among those working with students in classrooms, in developing curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment

practices, so as to foster learning that encompasses both creativity and wisdom. The pressing need for such a stance is documented by the finding, from Harvard's GoodWork Project, of a decreasing tendency among ambitious young people to prioritize the *common good* (Fischman et al. 2004). The young persons who were studied frequently bent rules and cut corners for self-aggrandizement. All too rarely did they see themselves as part of a community in which peers and others, including respected elders, provide a set of reference points which inform their actions. Such findings underscore the challenge for education and for educators in fostering the emergence of wisdom (i.e., appropriate action taking account of multiple forms of understanding and knowledge, as well as possibly incommensurate needs and perspectives).

## FORMAT OF AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS VOLUME

In a collective and collaborative effort to encourage such reflection, we open in Part 1 of our volume with three target chapters on the subject of creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship. In Part 2, a series of nine responses from colleagues are given, and in Part 3, the editors (authors of the three target chapters) offer a synthesis-response to the nine intervening chapters given in Part 2.

The target chapters in Part 1 were originally papers given at a symposium held at the University of Cambridge in April 2005 and attended by some two hundred researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. This book is derived from debates begun during the Cambridge symposium, and continued since, with colleagues who were present at the symposium as well as those who were not, but whose work we anticipated would shed valuable light on the implications of creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship for education.

At the Cambridge symposium, the three editors of this book each approached the subject of creativity and wisdom in education from a different angle, but we sought to extend thinking and practices around several themes: terminological, conceptual, and empirical differences between creativity and wisdom; the immediate and the wider (even global) contexts in which creativity occurs; the motivations for creativity; the means for developing wise forms of creativity; the implications of these considerations for teachers and schools; and, finally, the ways in which the broader society nurtures and honors trustees—wise figures whose concerns encompass global survival.

In Chapter 2, Anna Craft discusses the cultural saturation of policy and practice regarding creativity in education and problematizes the universalized calls for creativity which can be seen emerging globally. She discusses the purposes to which creativity is put in relation to values implied by a creativity agenda in education driven by globalized economic imperatives. Dilemmas and constraints facing schools are highlighted together with areas for consideration by educators, one of which is the problem of how creative student aspiration is encouraged within this challenging values context in

such a way that values the role of the trustee in fostering creativity with wisdom.

In Chapter 3, Guy Claxton tackles the concept of wisdom head-on. He argues that rather than trying to define *wisdom* as an abstract, unitary quality, we seek to identify a collection of dispositions that might be at play in agreed instances of wise action. In analyzing a series of putative instances of wise action, Claxton draws out a candidate list of such dispositions, which includes perspicacity, disinterestedness, and empathy—as well as creativity. Thus he concludes that wisdom often requires creativity, but that creativity may equally often lack (some of) the essential qualities of wisdom. Claxton also offers some suggestions as to how the contributory dispositions for wisdom might be cultivated in educational settings.

In Chapter 4, Howard Gardner asks whether, and under what conditions, individuals who are creative can turn their talents toward socially constructive ends. His approach is built on a large-scale empirical study of highly regarded professionals working in various domains. Gardner argues that *good work* or *humane creativity* consists of work that is excellent, engaging, and carried out in an ethical manner. Such high-quality work is difficult to achieve and sustain at times when market forces are powerful and attractive role models (which he calls *trustees*) are on the wane. Nonetheless, when working with younger individuals, it should be possible to meld aspects of creativity and wisdom in future workers and leaders.

The authors of the remaining chapters were invited to respond to the issues raised by the three lead authors and thus to engage in a debate with us. In Chapter 5, Dean Keith Simonton addresses the themes of perception and context, considers what it means to apply creativity wisely, and asks how and why educators in schools may respond. He highlights some of the similarities and differences between creativity and wisdom, exploring ways in which these two exceptional human assets, as he refers to them, may be integrated and applied particularly in education. Simonton suggests the need for wise creativity to function in an adaptive way, so as to incorporate social and ethical ramifications of ideas and creative outcomes. He suggests that, in balancing originality against functionality, the creator may in fact be prone to living a more mentally balanced life as well as acting in relationship to more broad-based values.

In Chapter 6, David Henry Feldman considers motivation—what we use our creativity for and what it means to apply creativity wisely. He takes up the relationship between creativity and wisdom in a more skeptical fashion, asking whether creativity and wisdom may actually be fundamentally incompatible. Feldman's answer is that this determination depends on how we conceive of both creativity and wisdom. He suggests that in creative efforts which are focused in the social, political, religious, or spiritual domains, creativity and wisdom go hand in hand, in that creativity without wisdom is meaningless in such contexts. This observation leads him to consider the extent to which we may be describing creativity at all, given its distinct manifestation within contrasting domains. In particular, he acknowledges that creativity may involve

breaking with the norm rather than respecting it, to differing degrees depending on context. He proposes a means by which we may understand both creativity and wisdom in terms of a transformational impulse.

In Chapter 7, Jonathan Rowson focuses on what it means to apply creativity wisely. He ponders what the disposition toward creativity and wisdom might entail; he warns of the dangers, when holding education in mind, of commodifying creativity and wisdom such that they become products to, as he puts it, “squeeze in to a bloated timetable.” He argues for an understanding of creativity and wisdom which accounts for motivation and disposition, and which captures the complexity of relationships among motivation, values, habit, and freedom. His argument leads into a consideration of how educators in schools can respond, and he anticipates tensions and dilemmas thereto. Accordingly, he considers approaches to pedagogy and implications for the practitioner—placing emphasis on the cultivation of dispositions toward both creativity and wisdom in fostering learning through experience and by example. Meaning-making is all important in the process of learning to act wisely in relation to creative engagement.

In Chapter 8, Helen Haste’s initial focus is on three areas: perceptions of the context in which creativity is manifested, motivational issues in relation to what creativity is used for, and queries about what it means to apply creativity wisely. She questions to what extent we may reconcile the perspectives on creativity, wisdom, and ethics explored by the three lead authors. Her response seeks to integrate them by recognizing a tension in our collective and individual lives between managing continuity and generating and coping with change at the same time. Addressing how educators can respond to this tension, she proposes five “key competencies” as foci for education, as the basis of fostering the capacity in children for creative transformation. Each, she argues, has cognitively creative and ethically creative dimensions. These pose challenges to educators: in tackling the unwitting culture of anxiety propagated so often within school, in fostering the use of dialogue in developing and recognizing multiple perspectives, and in encouraging a view of rationality which recognizes the influence of subjectivity.

In Chapter 9, Patrick Dillon develops the themes of context to creativity, what it means to apply creativity wisely, and how educators in schools may develop wise creativity. He argues that creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship are cultural patterns emerging from engagement between individuals and their contexts, with culturally situated implications for how we foster these patterns. Education, he suggests, in favoring certain kinds of cultural patterns, or niches, can be seen as an intervention in behaviors and ideas, one that involves a rich engagement between environment and culture. The location-specificity, as well as the context- and temporal-dependence of creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship, are vital to Dillon’s perspective. He emphasizes the situatedness of each and thus highlights the tension between generality and specificity in understanding any of these terms, while also recognizing the interconnectedness of local and wider systems.

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In Chapter 10, Hans Henrik Knoop analyzes what it means to apply creativity wisely, set in the broader social, political, and economic context of what creativity is used for. He stresses the contribution of the collective in exploring the “wisdom of the crowd” and arguing that creativity and wisdom may be seen as two sides of the same coin. His analysis of accelerating growth in economy and shifting political values, with joint consequences of degradation (environmental and other), explores the mirroring, in culture, of biology. He discusses, therefore, the intricate and intimate relationships between individuals and their surroundings.

The question of how creativity and wisdom may be understood in performance arts is raised by Christopher Bannerman in Chapter 11. He examines the context in which creativity is manifest, and he puts forth an embodied approach to what it means to apply creativity wisely. He argues for a view of creativity that emphasizes interconnectedness between creators and the live balance between the individual and the collective, together with the integration of “knowledge and skills coupled with spontaneous insight.” Bannerman’s reconciliation of creativity with wisdom, like Knoop’s and Dillon’s, and to a degree Haste’s, involves recognizing that the group can involve both collective and individual creative processes, serving as a vehicle for building “situated wisdom.”

The final two chapters are concerned in different ways with leadership, specifically with reference to the role of the educator. In Chapter 12, exploring what it means to apply creativity wisely, Robert J. Sternberg explores the Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity, Synthesized (WICS) model of leadership. He outlines each of these components and suggests ways in which they can be productively synthesized. The main goal of schools should be to produce leaders who embody these traits rather than automatons who merely reproduce inert knowledge on demand.

In Chapter 13, Dave Trotman focuses on the teacher. He explores questions related to the context in which creativity is manifested, with particular reference to its wise deployment by professional educators. The target chapters stimulated him to contemplate “the mystery and emotional heart of what it is to learn, teach, educate, and be truly creative.” Professional judgment emerges as pivotal in fostering creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship among learners. Trotman explores aspects of professional educational judgment which are significant in developing creativity with wisdom in education. He also identifies a body of teachers who could be considered trustees of creative education in that they are skilled practitioners technically as well as inspirational shape-shifters. The restoration of professional judgment could liberate other educators to approach their work in similarly informed ways.

The aim of the book is, naturally, to foster debate; the writing of it has involved the sharing of perspectives between the editors and the response authors. As a conclusion, in Chapter 14 the three lead authors offer responses to some of the key themes and issues arising from the debate, further deconstructing and then reconstructing creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship in relation to the endeavor of education.

## REBALANCING TIPPING POINTS?

As a whole, this book reflects a perspective on the educator as a reflective practitioner—one who considers actions and intentions by reflecting both *in* and *on* practice (Schon 1987). Despite the current global focus on accountability (Ball 2003), manifest in the pressure on teachers and institutions to demonstrate certain kinds of performance, to raise standards, and to work from what often appear to be rigid curricula, standards, and templates, the culture of reflection on practice survives. This insistence on retaining professional artistry and integrity effectively provides a counterbalance to the reduction of the classroom practitioner to technician and resurfaces the essential debate around values in education. We seek to contribute to the debate which explores means and ends in reinvigorating both cognition and education at a time in global history when we may be approaching alarming tipping points in ecological, political, or cultural matters. We hope then to problematize creativity, to integrate it synergistically with wisdom, and to propose ways in which trusteeship may be meaningfully developed or resurrected in the twenty-first century.

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