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Perspectives in Gifted Education: Complexities of Emotional Development, Spirituality and Hope

Institute for the Development of Gifted Education, Ricks Center for Gifted Children, University of Denver

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Preface

This is the third in a series of monographs funded by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation through the Institute for the Development of Gifted Education at the University of Denver. The first monograph contained different perspectives on the growth and development of young gifted children. The second monograph addressed the characteristics and needs of the twice-exceptional: those who are gifted and have some type of disabling condition.

This monograph is focused on the personality, spiritual and character development of gifted children, including the process of instilling hope and resilience in this special population. The authors explore the development of personality, spirituality and character of gifted children that advances our current understanding of this population. Strategies are presented to support and nurture the needs of this unique group of children.

The lead article, Theory of Positive Disintegration as a Model of Personality Development for Exceptional Individuals, by Elizabeth Mika, provides a theoretical framework that explains emotional development from the perspective of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration. Examples of case studies illustrate how various characteristics manifest. Imbalance of characteristics can lead to less developed strengths and subsequent skills. This theory is analyzed in comparison to the work of Louis Terman and differences elucidated. The article provides a comprehensive structure for understanding subsequent contributions.

Vicky Frankfourth Moyle challenges the reader to explore the possibility that character development in gifted children is differentiated from the population at large. She advances the idea that the gifted child's experience of their internal and external environment is unique. Moyle examines the notion of character as an "imprint of the soul." Compelling arguments are presented to expand our thinking to include the spiritual nature of character development and to embrace its depth and complexity.

In the article, Empathy in Gifted Children, a Diamond in the Rough, Sal Mendaglio presents a view of empathy that he utilizes in counseling parents and teachers. He suggests that empathy is a natural characteristic of many gifted children that can benefit from refinement. Dr. Mendaglio discusses empathy as part of his model of heightened sensitivity and potential therapeutic application.

There is a growing sense in psychology and in science that the development of spirituality is an interwoven and integrated part of human personality. Kevin Cloninger presents a theory of human consciousness that is evolutionary, highly ordered and exists in discrete planes. He discusses giftedness as the consequence of three different but interralated factors: the psyche, memories and biology. The article explores the possibility that gifted children may display enhanced capacities in one or more planes.

Extraordinarily intellectually gifted children present an even more unique subset of this special population of gifted children. In her article, Dr. Barbara J. Downing thoroughly explores the social and emotional lives of four young extraordinarily gifted children. The children's family settings, their social-emotional development and personality and their educational experiences are clearly described. The responses of these extraordinary children to the world, from the experience of feeling "different" to heightened sensitivities, illustrates the need for educational programming that is differentiated even from the more typical gifted population.

The inner curriculum is a powerful, yet often unrecognized force in the lives of gifted children. Andrew Johnson defines inner curriculum to include among others, emotions, intuitions, ideals and a sense of spirituality, that, when implemented, can become a vehicle for students' self-actualization. He provides specific language arts activities to be utilized in the implementation of the inner curriculum and encourages teachers to recognize the power of these strategies in addressing the affective needs of gifted children.

Dr. Joan Franklin Smutny speaks vividly of the spiritually sensitive child. She describes the extraordinary dilemma faced by these children: gifts that connect them to a larger

sense of life, but lack of maturity and experience for coping. She offers specific strategies to keep the spiritual world alive for the child while nurturing the ability for the child to cope in the world. These strategies, from celebrating bravery and persistence to nurturing humor, provide a foundation to instill hope and resiliency in these children.

Given the unprecedented recent traumatic events in the world today, school violence, acts of terrorism throughout the world, destructive acts of nature from tsunamis to hurricanes, teachers and parents of gifted children may need additional understanding of the concepts and application of strategies for effective work in developing hope and resiliency. We would like to thank Dr. Jim Delisle for serving as guest editor and for his continuous commitment to gifted children.

Dr. Joan Smutny states "Helping these unique gifted children-with all their intensities, sensibilities and complexities-navigate the world with hope and determination will take them far in life." We couldn't agree more. It is our hope this monograph will provide a deeper understanding of the issues presented, useful information for applications and inspiration for work with gifted children.

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THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION AS A MODEL OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT FOR EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS
Elizabeth Mika, M.A., L.C.P.C.

Gifted Minds in Search of a Theory

For some time now, experts in the field of giftedness have been searching for and creating theoretical models of development, which could be applied to the gifted population. Unfortunately, such models often suffer from artificially imposed exclusivity.

As Ellen Winner writes,

> Psychology should have theories that account for the development of the atypical as well as the typical. We should not have entirely separate theories to explain learning and development in ordinary, retarded, autistic, learning-disabled and gifted children. Too often we have researchers devoted to one of these populations, with the result that we have separate explanatory accounts of each population. Ultimately, psychological theory must account for all of the various ways in which the mind and brain develop. We need universal theories of development, but these theories must be able to incorporate special populations, whether these are special because of pathology, giftedness, or both." (1996, p. 313)

Kazimierz Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) shows great promise as a universal theory of development as proposed above (Dabrowski, 1970). TPD is the first theory in psychology that postulates levels of personality development and methods of measuring them; it also describes and explains mechanisms of emotional development. The theory, formulated almost a half a century ago, focuses on positive aspects of mental health and the essential role of positive values in guiding human development, and as such it can be considered a precursor of positive psychology. What is unique about the TPD approach, however, is that, through combining both biological and humanistic perspectives, it articulates a positive view of many forms of so-called psychopathology and human suffering in general—a perspective that is conspicuously missing from the positive psychology's exclusive focus on the good, virtuous and happy (Chang & Sanna, 2003).

While the 1990's were designated as the "Decade of the Brain," it appears that the first decade of the 21st century has been dominated by the focus on emotions and their influences in shaping our cognition, development and our lives in general (Greenspan &

Shanker, 2004). It is worth noting that Dabrowski's insights on the essential role of emotions in human development have preceded the current discoveries by many decades and are, in fact, still waiting to be fully recognized and embraced by today's researchers and theorists.

Even though gifted and talented are not its exclusive focus, Theory of Positive Disintegration utilizes research findings and clinical insights uniquely applicable to developmental needs of gifted and talented individuals. Its broad scope allows a theoretical integration of scholarship in the areas of personality development, particularly its emotional, moral and spiritual aspects; and various forms of exceptionality.

Although his Theory of Positive Disintegration describes adult development, Dabrowski's interests, training and professional activities centered on children for a large part of his life. Seeing development as a process based on positive disintegration grew out of clinical studies of creative and talented children, youth and adults, as well as children and adults who were developmentally delayed and psychopathic (Dabrowski, 1984).

Major Tenets of TPD
Positive Disintegration and Levels of Development
Dabrowski believed that the most important aspect of human development is the emotional one, since only in the area of emotional growth, transformation of behavior and character is possible. He saw development as a progression from the level of primary integration characterized by rigid, automatic and instinctual egocentrism to conscious altruism based on empathy, compassion and self-awareness, expressed the fullest at the highest level of development, the level of secondary integration.

This growth takes place through the process of positive disintegration, which is the loosening and partial, or sometimes global, dismantling of the initial character structure during the course of one's life and replacing it by consciously created personality–the goal of life-long development. Positive disintegration results from and is expressive of multilevel inner conflicts–conflicts between one's ideals and values (what ought to be) and the existing reality of one's internal and external life (what is), which falls short of those ideals

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and values. Those who most readily experience multilevel conflicts are individuals possessing high developmental potential–high and broad, multisided intelligence, special talents and abilities, various global forms of overexcitability and the need and desire for inner transformation–for transcending one's psychological type and constraints of psychobiological maturation process.

The need and desire for inner transformation is an expression of what Dabrowski called the third factor–the drive behind autonomous, self-conscious, self-chosen and self-determined efforts at guiding one's development.

Most people experience symptoms of disintegration that are related to stages of biological development–such as adolescence, old age, or menopauseor–difficult life events. These symptoms are temporary and disappear without causing major changes in a person's functioning. Although conflicts, traumas and frustrations, often cause psychological imbalance in average individuals, these do not lead to efforts at self-transformation and further development. However, in individuals with high developmental potential, difficult experiences awaken and/or intensify the need for psychological growth. As Dabrowski shows–and supports with data obtained from biographies of eminent individuals and case studies of his patients–difficult life experiences can disintegrate one's psychological unity by introducing inner conflicts, and a subsequent need and ability for reflection, introspection and hierarchization of one's values, feelings, thoughts and actions. Hierarchization is an expression of multilevelness–the capacity to perceive and experience different developmental levels within us and in our surroundings.

The role of conflict and frustration in the process of development through positive disintegration cannot be overestimated. Dabrowski writes that "positive inner psychic transformation occurs where children and youth do not have all the things necessary to fulfill all their basic needs and where conditions do not lead to the feeling of complete security. The transformation is more likely to occur where the individuals have only partial satisfaction of their basic needs and where stimuli exist which provoke at least partial dissatisfaction, hierarchization and postulation of an ideal." (1970, p. 35) In some individuals with high developmental potential, we see a tendency to consciously seek out

frustrations in order to facilitate their development. This tendency can be observed early on in the development of some children. Consider Cathy, an exceptionally intellectually gifted 4-year-old, with strong emotional and imaginational overexcitability who, in her parents' description, "likes to scare herself on purpose, imagining that her toys come alive, that bubbles in the paint on the wall will turn into a forest, etc. But she does not like to be comforted then—she wants to work on her fears by herself."

As both the impetus and vehicle for personality growth, inner conflicts with their attendant negative emotions are expressions of positive mental health and not pathological symptoms. And because Dabrowski equated development through positive disintegration with mental health, this allowed him to reframe various psychological states commonly considered pathological, such as anxiety, neurosis and depression, as not only largely positive, but, in fact, necessary for personality growth.

The process of positive disintegration, of which psychological difficulties such as emotional suffering of inner conflicts, neuroses and psychoneuroses are most evident signs, is initiated and guided by developmental dynamisms—instinctual-emotional-cognitive forces—present in people endowed with high developmental potential. Dynamisms, which are intrapsychic factors, are the most potent forces fueling and shaping emotional development. Work of different dynamisms can be observed on each level of development, with the exception of level 1, primary integration, characterized by absence of any developmental dynamisms. The analysis of dynamisms and their strength allows us to understand whether the process of disintegration has a positive or negative direction.

Personality development through positive disintegration, in Dabrowski's views, is not related to human biological maturation process and does not follow a time schedule, although it progresses along an invariable sequence through a hierarchy of five levels characterized by the predominance of either integration or disintegration on each level.

Level 1: primary integration. On this level we observe work of intelligence subsumed under primitive instincts (sex, aggression, power); rigid, stereotypical, impulsive actions and, in general, behavior controlled by primitive drives and external forces. Individuals on

this level of development experience no inner conflicts, but plenty of external ones. The great majority of population lives on and rarely grows beyond the level of primary integration. The most primitively integrated character structures are observed in psychopaths and psychopath-like individuals, who suffer from "emotional retardation," characterized by inability to experience empathy and guilt. On the level of primary integration, we can observe two forms of adjustment of an individual to society: negative adjustment—non-creative adaptation, characterized by conformity to social conventions, lack of reflection and criticism in approach to reality, adjustment to "what is;" and negative maladjustment, which is disregard for social norms and conventions stemming from extreme egocentrism and ruthless realization of one's lower level goals (psychopaths, criminals).

Level 2: unilevel disintegration. This is the first level where work of disintegrative processes can be observed. Here we see a loosening (disintegration) of the previously well integrated primary character structure as a result of usually external circumstances. The term "unilevel" denotes lack of hierarchization—i.e. lack of distinction between "what is" and "what ought to be" in one's internal and external life. Most characteristic manifestations of unilevel disintegration are ambivalencies and ambitendencies, doubts, hesitations, mood swings, various forms of emotional and psychosomatic disharmony. Dabrowski notes that if inner conflicts on this level are present at all, they are unilevel—that is, they involve two (or more) opposing options of the same value. Such conflicts may be severe and may lead to mental disturbances that are very serious and have mostly unconscious character. Because individuals experiencing unilevel conflicts, lacking the ability for inner transformation, do not see a possibility of their positive resolution and further personal growth, the crises engendered by these conflicts often lead to re-integration on level 1, or to severe mental illness and/or suicide.

Level 3: spontaneous multilevel disintegration. On this level, we see the emergence of multilevelness—a growing sense of "what ought to be" and growing maladjustment to "what is" (positive maladjustment). Acquiring a multilevel perspective on our inner and external world can be compared to a Copernican revolution in our perception and awareness. Once we learn to distinguish both lower and higher levels in our feelings, thoughts and

behaviors; once we understand that we are capable of both evil and good, and that the choice between them is uniquely and exclusively ours, we reach "a point of no return" and we are "doomed to develop," to use Dabrowski's words. The awareness of the lower and the higher leads to inner conflicts and the resultant anxiety, shame, guilt, feelings of inferiority and unhappiness–in other words, positive disintegration. With the emergence of multilevelness, we gain intimate awareness of existence of universal human values which become a guiding force in our development, embedded in a powerful developmental dynamism called the personality ideal.

Actions of individuals experiencing spontaneous multilevel disintegration begin to reflect an emerging autonomous hierarchy of values and goals. Typical for this level are multilevel inner conflicts, expressive of growing self-awareness, self-evaluation and reflection, moral dilemmas, search for an ideal and, often acute, existential anxiety. On level 3, we observe an emergence of multilevel dynamisms such as disquietude and dissatisfaction with oneself, inferiority with oneself, astonishment with oneself, feelings of shame and guilt, positive maladjustment, creative instinct, and empathy. Unfortunately, many of these dynamisms are often considered symptoms of pathology by mainstream psychiatry. The difficult experiences associated with spontaneous multilevel disintegration are largely responsible for awakening and deepening sensitivity to other people and to one's own development, and lay foundations for efforts at education of oneself and self-transformation, which become fully engaged at level 4.

In some cases, where one's developmental potential contains strong positive and negative elements, the intensity of the developmental processes on this level can bring an individual close to a "psychic catastrophe" (Dabrowski, 1970, p. 60). Among examples of such dramatic inner transformation, bordering on psychic dissolution, are, listed by Dabrowski, Clifford Beers, Wladyslaw Dawid, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Jack Ferguson, Franz Kafka, Soren Kierkegaard, Abraham Lincoln, John Stuart Mill, and Isaac Newton. Other examples include Gautama Buddha, St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Augustine, Leo Tolstoy, Blaise Pascal, St. Ignatius Loyola, Alfred de Musset, Heinrich Heine, and St. John of the Cross (Sorokin, 2002), and Adam Chmielowski (Mika, 2004). Although the above list consists of eminent individuals, there is much evidence showing that lasting inner

transformation consistent with the developmental processes described by TPD is a much more common phenomenon (Miller and C'deBaca, 2001; Brennan and Piechowski, 1991).

Level 4: organized multilevel disintegration. This level is characterized by conscious efforts at shaping and systematization of one's behavior, all directed toward conscious and planned self-transformation. Inner conflicts lessen here, replaced by ever-growing autonomy and clarity of values and goals. External conflicts are largely eliminated through a distinct growth of empathy and compassion, and work of dynamisms such as third factor (active conscience), subject-object in oneself, self-control, education of oneself, inner psychic transformation and self-perfection, all geared toward realizing one's unique and individual personality ideal. On this level, we can see growing positive adjustment – adjustment to one's personality ideal embracing the highest human values–adjustment to "what ought to be."

Level 5: secondary integration. Dabrowski theorized that on this level we could observe harmonization of personality and personality ideal. One's behavior is guided mainly and consistently by dynamisms of responsibility, authentism and autonomy, empathy, self-perfection and personality ideal. Psychological development does not end on level 5, but from this point on, it is guided by and consistent with demands of the personality ideal. Empirical data on individuals who obtained level of personality in their development (level 5) are scant. Nevertheless, Dabrowski and others (Piechowski, 1992; Nixon, 1989; Nixon, 1995; Mika, 2004; Rush & Rush, 1992) have provided biographical analyses of individuals who appear to have reached this level.

The following table illustrates an approximate distribution of different developmental categories along the integration/disintegration continuum. (Please note that as a rough approximation, the table does not provide exact proportions of the listed categories as they occur on any given level of development; nor does it exhausts many different developmental and psychopathological combinations observed in people. Development through positive disintegration, although conceptually divided into discreet levels, in reality occurs largely along the integration/disintegration continuum, with varying degrees of both present in most people who possess any measure of developmental potential. (Mika,

2002)

Secondary Integration	Level 5	Personality exemplars	
	Level 4	Developing personalities	
ML disintegration	Level 3	Psychoneurotics	
	Level 2	Neurotics, mentally ill	
		Borderline of average person and (psycho)neurotic	}
Disintegration			
		Average person	} Statistical norm
		Borderline of psychopath and average person	}
Primary Integration	Level 1	Psychopaths	

Developmental Potential

The level a person can attain in her development is determined by her developmental potential. Developmental potential (DP) is the "original endowment determining the level to which an individual can develop, if his physical and social conditions are optimal" (Dabrowski, 1984, p. 24). Developmental potential expresses the relationship between individual development and three main groups of factors influencing this development:

1. First factor–genetic and permanent physical traits (intelligence, overexcitabilities, special talents);
2. Second factor–social influences;
3. Third factor–autonomous forces and processes such as self-awareness, conscious inner conflict, free will and conscious self-transformation, etc. Third factor makes self-determination possible and is necessary for creativity and advanced development.

The third factor is rooted in the first two factors–our genes and our environment–but it is an independent force, which propels those endowed with it toward transcending the limitations of their psychological type, their environmental constraints and the human biological cycle. Dabrowski called the third factor "an active conscience" since it is a basis of conscious selection in our behavior that leads to rejecting unwanted responses–those

that go against our values–and affirming and strengthening others–those that express our personality ideal.

DP as a function of all three factors is encountered in cases of accelerated development. Here an individual consciously tries to transcend the limitations of the first and second factors and, in the process, becomes increasingly autonomous and able to direct her own psychological growth. DP is particularly strong when it includes all forms of overexcitabilities, especially emotional, imaginational and intellectual; special talents and high intelligence; and the nuclei of the inner psychic milieu that expresses a tendency to transform one's psychological type and transcend the biological cycle.

High DP is frequently encountered in gifted and talented individuals and manifests in their early childhood. In these children, as Dabrowski writes,

> "We observe above average abilities in many areas, emotional richness and depth, and multiple and strong manifestations of psychic overexcitability. In individuals so endowed one may observe from childhood difficulties of adjustment, serious developmental crises, psychoneurotic processes, and tendency toward disintegration of lower levels of functioning and reaching toward higher levels of functioning. This, however, does not occur without disturbances and disharmony with their external environment and within their internal environment. Feelings of otherness and strangeness are not uncommon. We find this in gifted children, creative and prominent personalities, men of genius, i.e. those who contribute new discoveries and new values." (1996, p. 22)

DP can be weak when either of the three major components (high intelligence, talents, special interests; overexcitability; desire and will to develop) is weak or absent; or negative when only certain types of overexcitability, namely psychomotor and sensual, are very strong and combined with egocentrism and strong ambition–a developmental constellation encountered in psychopathy.

It is worth noting that giftedness should not be identified with high developmental potential. Indeed, giftedness, if understood only as high intelligence, special interests, talents and abilities, is but one component of DP (first factor). Making judgments about the strength of one's DP based on the presence of only one of its components may be misleading. Similarly, although the presence of overexcitability is frequently associated with high intelligence and special abilities, acknowledging only the presence and strength of

overexcitabilities in itself may indicate neither giftedness nor high DP–and thus it should not be considered "a measure of developmental potential" (Piechowski & Miller, 1994).

Various types and forms of overexcitability are characteristic of many mental disturbances, for example, that do not have anything to do with giftedness or high DP. However, there are certain exceptions to consider. We can predict that a child with relatively high level emotional overexcitability, combined with strong intellectual and imaginational types, will also possess high intelligence and a rich inner psychic milieu, with the nuclei of autonomous dynamisms. Indeed, clinical data seem to support this correlation, showing that intellectual overexcitability is always associated with above average intelligence (Mika, 2002). A high level emotional overexcitability sensitizes such an individual to his inner processes and external world, and creates a foundation for development of inner conflicts facilitating accelerated development. An imaginational overexcitability helps him or her envision his or her personality ideal and the process of personality development.

To summarize, high developmental potential, in Dabrowski's understanding, includes high (at least average) and broad, theoretical intelligence; overexcitabilities, particularly emotional, imaginational and intellectual; special talents and interests; and autonomous developmental forces. The absence of either of these components will have a limiting influence on a person's development.

Three Types of Development

Dabrowski distinguished three types of development, based on differences in the strength of developmental potential among people. And so, "normal" development applies to the statistical norm, to a so-called average person, whose developmental potential is weak. Normal development is limited to the fulfillment of biological and social imperatives. Intellectual functions here are typically at least average, while emotional ones remain underdeveloped. There are no or very little attempts at conscious self-transformation. This type of unilevel development is characteristic for the majority of individuals on the levels of primary integration and unilevel disintegration.

The second type, one-sided development, is driven by one particular skill, talent or set of

skills; or by especially strong overexcitability in the context of limited overall DP. As Dabrowski writes, "Only some emotional and intellectual potentials develop very well while the rest remain undeveloped, in fact, (they) appear lacking" (1996, p. 21). One-sided development is the instance where the presence of giftedness does not aid personality growth, understood in Dabrowskian sense as self-transformation based on multilevel positive disintegration. In fact, giftedness itself, occurring here within limited developmental potential, while not necessarily a developmental liability, is not an asset either, since it limits development to unilevelness. One-sided development is often found in cases of genius whose outstanding but isolated talents "hijack" development, to the detriment of other areas of psychological functioning, most importantly its higher emotional and moral aspects. Dabrowski frequently observed that when highly, but one-sidedly developed, individuals succeed in attaining positions of power (as they often do, since they are unburdened by scruples and inhibitions), they often "cause grave, sometimes disastrous, effects for social groups and societies" (1970, p.149).

The two above types of development—normal and one-sided—are relatively narrow and inflexible, and represent the socio-biological maturational pattern of human species, characterized by progressive psychobiological integration, adjustment to external conditions and often unreflective conformity to social mores. Symptoms of disintegration, if they appear here at all, are temporary and related to transitional stages of human psychobiological development.

The third and rarest type of development—global (universal) and accelerated—is fueled by strong DP. Here "all essential cognitive and emotional functions develop with relatively equal intensity and with relatively equal rate" (Dabrowski, 1996, p. 21); all types of overexcitability are present; but more importantly, there is the self-aware and conscious direction of one's own development. Such development is characterized by conscious opposition to influences of the first and second factor, and proceeds through intense crises and conflicts that this opposition creates. This type of development transcends the general maturational pattern of the species and shows maladjustment to it that arises from a relatively high degree of independence from biological and social constraints.

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Accelerated multilevel development is characteristic for many gifted individuals endowed with overexcitabilities–most notably psychoneurotics, representing level III (and IV) in the TPD hierarchy of developmental levels. The term "accelerated" here does not denote the speed of developmental changes, but rather breadth and depth of the inner transformation associated with positive disintegration.

As we see then, gifted individuals can be found on all levels of development–from a psychopath with high degree of primary integration, through all stages of unilevel and multilevel disintegration, up to the exemplars of personality at the level of secondary integration. However, individuals with high developmental potential–a subset of the gifted population–will exhibit signs of positive disintegration already in early childhood. As Dabrowski writes, "Any individual developmental pattern may cover part of the scale but none can cover the full extent of it." (1996, p. 23) Thus, theoretically at least, it should follow that individuals attaining the highest levels of development do not start from the level of primary integration. And indeed, biographical data show that in these individuals, the nuclei of high DP are already present in early childhood and so are signs of disintegrative processes to come, such as precursors of multilevel dynamisms that can be observed early on in a relatively small group of children. Among those precursors are the early capacity to experience strong empathy and compassion, guilt and shame, and early efforts at self-transformation.

Consider Anna (not her real name), an artistically and intellectually gifted 10-year-old girl with mixed types of overexcitability, with the dominance of emotional overexcitability and the remaining types, especially imaginational and intellectual, very strong as well. At 10, Anna decided to learn yoga in order to overcome her nervousness, and become a more peaceful and relaxed person, someone with whom others feel at peace. Coming from a very modest, working class background, she did not feel her plan would be supported by her family, so she worked on it in secret, using books checked out from her school library. In her actions, we clearly see dynamisms of self-awareness, subject-object, education of oneself and autopsychotherapy, elements of personality ideal and distinct elements of third factor–all dynamisms of organized multilevel disintegration.

Another example of the presence of ML dynamisms (or their precursors) in children is a statement from a 9-year-old boy, who told his mother that he would like to have an opportunity to look at himself through the eyes of others. "I'm sure there are things I don't realize about myself, but they must be obvious to others. I think it would be interesting to see how they see me—and it would help me understand myself better."

Clinicians working with gifted population frequently observe signs of advanced moral and emotional development in gifted children. Indeed, examples supporting these observations abound (Silverman, 1993; Lovecky, 1998; Piechowski, 2003). However, one should not generalize them on the whole gifted population, since such generalizations are unwarranted and can be misleading (Margolin, 1994). Here again, Dabrowski's insights on the three types of development and their relationship to different constellations of developmental potential provide a useful framework for understanding and assessing the complex relationship between giftedness and advanced moral and emotional growth.

It is worth mentioning that Dabrowski associated early manifestations of positive disintegration in gifted children with their asynchronous development (Dabrowski, 1964), which he described over a half a century ago, before the term was introduced to the field of gifted education (Silverman, 2002).

Closely related to the concepts of developmental potential and three types of development are the forces guiding our development, which are higher level instincts, representing a function of an individual's developmental potential. While developmental instinct is present in the majority of people in at least rudimentary forms, instinct of creativity arises on the basis of special talents and interests, and certain types of overexcitability, imaginational, sensual and emotional in particular. Creative instinct can be found already on the level of unilevel disintegration, though it gains strength and importance on level III. Creative instinct in itself, however, when not supported by instinct of self-perfection, plays a limited role in the personality growth and often results in one-sided development, or chronic disintegration since it does not awaken the forces of inner transformation.

Instinct of self-perfection is the highest form of developmental instinct, arising at the level of organized multilevel disintegration on the basis of autonomous dynamisms such as third factor, subject-object, self-education, self-awareness, authentism and personality ideal. Combined with the instinct of creativity, it usually applies to the whole character of a person, and propels one to grow toward a personality ideal embodying the highest human values. Although these instincts, characteristic of higher levels of psychological development, are not universal, Dabrowski stressed that they exhibited "a force equal in strength or even stronger than that of primitive instincts" such as the sexual instinct or instinct of self-preservation (Dabrowski, 1970, p. 132).

The concepts of developmental, creative and self-perfection instincts are particularly useful in describing developmental trajectories of eminent, multiply talented individuals who progressed to the highest levels of personality development through positive disintegration (Adam Chmielowski, Etty Hillesum, Dag Hammarskjold, Albert Schweitzer, to name just a few). Analyzing their biographies and written statements leaves us with an appreciation of the intensity of their inner struggles ensuing from often conflicting influences of instincts of creativity and self-perfection—and it further confirms validity of Dabrowski's insights on development of exceptional individuals.

Overexcitability (OE)

This component of developmental potential deserves special consideration as it is frequently observed in gifted individuals, but perhaps equally frequently misunderstood.

According to Dabrowski, overexcitability is a higher than average capacity for experiencing inner and external stimuli and it is based on a higher than average responsiveness of the nervous system. In overexcitability, "responses to a variety of stimuli may markedly exceed the value of an average response, they may last significantly longer (although this is not a necessary attribute of overexcitability), and they may occur with greater frequency" (Dabrowski, 1996, p. 71). Another characteristic of overexcitability is the ease with which psychological experiences based on it are "translated" into symptoms of autonomous nervous system, such as blushing, palpitations, sweating, headaches, stomach butterflies and cramps in response to anxiety, diarrhea, easy fatigue, increased

skin sensitivity, etc.

The role of OE in development is a complex one. In Dabrowski's view, overexcitability is responsible for activating the developmental processes as it "(first,) provokes conflicts, disappointments, suffering in family life, in school, in professional life—in short, it leads to conflicts with the external environment. Overexcitability also provokes inner conflicts as well as the means by which these conflicts can be overcome. Second, overexcitability precipitates psychoneurotic processes, and, third, conflicts and psychoneurotic processes become the dominant factor in accelerated development." (1970, p. 38)

Although his interests in nervousness in children date back to the very beginning of his clinical career, Dabrowski first used the term "wzmozona pobudliwosc psychiczna" (increased psychic excitability, or overexcitability) in 1938 to describe certain characteristics and behaviors suggesting nervousness, which he observed in many gifted and talented children. He distinguished two forms of OE—global and narrow; and five types: psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, intellectual and emotional. The last three types are crucial for the type of advanced personality development that Dabrowski postulated as characteristic for many gifted individuals, particularly for those whose achievement, while not necessarily rewarding them with fame and eminence, was to attain the highest level of emotional and moral growth.

Psychomotor overexcitability is a manifestation of a heightened energy level, and can be observed in restlessness, rapid and pressured speech, predilection for violent games and sports, pressure for action, or delinquent behavior. In its 'pure' form, it is a manifestation of the excess of energy; but it may also result from the transfer of emotional tension to psychomotor forms of expression such as those mentioned above. Cases of tics and self-mutilation, for example, suggest psychomotor OE, which originates in emotional tension. Dabrowski was keenly interested in self-mutilation as a phenomenon suggestive of higher than average sensitivity and DP. His Ph.D. dissertation on "Psychological basis of self-mutilation," first published in 1934 and printed in English three years later, showed the co-existence of self-mutilatory tendencies, creativity and strong developmental strivings in a select group of creative individuals (Dabrowski, 1937).

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As Dabrowski observed, in people with psychomotor OE, the slightest stimulus evokes a strong reaction. Being accidentally touched in a crowd, being opposed in a discussion, cut off in traffic–any and all minimal frustrations can cause irritation or angry outbursts. These individuals are internally and unconsciously motivated to seek higher than average stimulation, because when their internal tension becomes too low, they experience it as a state of anxiety and inner discomfort. A person with psychomotor OE experiencing such a state of "nervous deprivation" will seek appropriate–and sometimes not so appropriate– stimulation to increase the inner tension and then to release it. As Dabrowski writes,

> The real difficulties (for children with psychomotor overexcitability) start with the beginning of formal education. The greatest numbers of children who obtain bad grades for behavior come from this group. These are children who fidget in their chairs, disrupt their peers' work, play with pens and notebooks, have thousands of excuses to leave the classroom, and show severe fluctuations in attention. After school, and even during school, they start and lead fights and other physical escapades. Boys, who excel in independence and exhibit tendencies to rebellion at school, are most frequently individuals with psychomotor OE. Their difficulties are particularly strong in adolescence, but they are also abundant in other periods. During adolescence, psychomotor OE takes on the form of truancy and wandering. Among children hanging from the back of a tram, among those who sell newspapers (on the streets), tramps or those who travel without a ticket, we meet primarily these types. In schoolwork and adult employment these individuals are characterized by unevenness or breaks in the work patterns. They have periods of great intensity at work; in some, we find shorter or longer weakening of ability to work. These individuals are incapable of sustained effort, and are explosive at their workplace. Their work interests diverge in many different directions, and we often see frequent changes from one job or subject to another. In youth, we see tendencies to change schools, in young adults - jobs." (1964, p. 76, trans. E. Mika)

It is easy to see that Dabrowski's description of manifestations of psychomotor OE is remarkably similar to symptoms of the condition known today as ADHD. Indeed, Dabrowski's views on possible origins of psychomotor OE as well as management strategies for its manifestations are not at all different from contemporary views on etiology and treatment of ADHD (Dabrowski, 1964). Unfortunately, this facet of Dabrowski's work is less known in the U.S. and this has resulted in a belief prevalent in the field of gifted education–a belief unsupported by facts–that gifted children with psychomotor OE tend to be "misdiagnosed" with ADHD.

Sensual overexcitability is a manifestation of a heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli,

particularly to sensory pleasure. In the narrow form of sensual overexcitability, the unusual intensity of reactions is limited to one sensual sphere (visual, auditory, tactile, or olfactory); the global form, on the other hand, encompasses the whole character structure and all senses equally.

Children with global sensual overexcitability have an increased need to touch and be touched, hugged, and kissed; they frequently exhibit early signs of sexual interests and development; and like to flirt and behave seductively as they get older. Most either like to eat and/or are picky eaters, are interested in food preparation, and like to smell their food (and often everything else). As Dabrowski observed, they like to be the center of attention, approach others without hesitation and start conversations easily and are prone to self-adoration, confabulations, and drama in their everyday life. They usually exhibit strong aesthetic interests and are drawn to artistic professions and pursuits. On the negative side, people endowed with dominant sensual OE may lack the ability for reflection, planning and systematic effort–they tend to live "here and now," dislike serious thought and intellectual analysis. Their interpersonal relationships are often characterized by excessive sociability, an inability to tolerate being alone, a superficial attitude toward loss and death, little interest in lives of others, lack of responsibility, and a tendency to externalize problems and blame others. "As with the psychomotor form, (sensual OE) also may, but need not be, a manifestation of a transfer of emotional tension to sensual forms of expression of which the most common examples are overeating and excessive sexual stimulation" (1996, p. 72).

Imaginational overexcitability is an imbalance in information processing that is skewed toward internal, image-based mode, with a relative exclusion of sensual, affective and psychomotor spheres. For individuals with a dominant imaginational OE, external stimuli matter usually as fodder for their imagination, rather than on their own merit.

Children with high imaginational overexcitability are less able than others to distinguish facts from fiction, are prone to illusions and daydreams, loose associations, lucid dreams, hypnotic trances, sometimes even hallucinations. A child with a particularly strong and unbalanced imaginational OE may consider his fantasy world to be more real than his external reality. As Dabrowski notes, these children have a difficult time in schools,

especially in areas that do not interest them–they may react with sadness, lack of appetite, or depression to school requirements, and are often considered odd, distractible and sickly by others.

Children with imaginational OE mature slowly and even in adulthood show symptoms of immaturity (so-called positive infantilism). The period of fantasy and magical thinking in their development is typically prolonged, and flirtation and sexual experimentation are very weak, or absent. Their first sexual attachment is often a failure, since they are not very skilled in choosing appropriate partners. However, their love failures, even though intense, do not leave major wounds since they are compensated for in their imagination. Frequently, persons with strong imaginational OE seek relationships with older and mature partners who can provide for their necessary daily living needs as well as offer protection and security. Children (and adults) with this type of OE frequently show aesthetic interests in art, poetry and music. They like to spend time alone or in very small groups of select peers and relatives. They do not like games and sports, but love to read and think. Sometimes they lose the distinction between their dreams and reality. Imaginational OE combined with emotional OE intensifies the tendency to prospection and retrospection, as well as maladjustment to external reality, often leading to positive disintegration.

Intellectual overexcitability is the rarest type of OE and one with the least clinical implications. In this type of OE, a person's receiving and processing information as well as decision-making are localized in the cognitive sphere.

Children with the dominant intellectual OE ponder intellectual problems earlier and longer; show high perceptiveness; tend to develop good skills in logical analysis and are less prone to magical thinking; and early on become critical and independent thinkers. This type of overexcitability is most frequently associated with exceptional intellectual and academic abilities in children (Dabrowski, 1964; Mika, 2002). Its presence usually does not create any special developmental/clinical challenges and difficulties, apart from a possible developmental imbalance skewed toward a theoretical (vs. practical) approach to

life, and possible disharmony between intellectual and other forms of maturity. Intellectual OE is often associated with certain socio-emotional immaturity (positive infantilism).

Global form of intellectual OE is frequently found in individuals of mixed introversion/extraversion type. When combined with emotional and imaginational OE, global intellectual overexcitability aids the development of a rich mental structure with multiple talents and great self-awareness.

A narrow form of intellectual OE is often encountered in schizoid and strongly introverted types, and it is characterized by one-sided development of specific abilities. As Dabrowski notes, such development usually leads to life difficulties that may end in negative disintegration, or stunted mental growth.

Emotional overexcitability is a function of experiencing emotional relationships. The relationships can manifest themselves as strong attachment to persons, living things, or places. "From the developmental point of view, intensity of feelings and display of emotions alone are not developmentally significant unless the experiential aspect of relationship is present" (Dabrowski, 1996, p.72). This distinction is of crucial importance, because only through learning based on reciprocal relationships, can a child develop the capacity for experiencing higher level emotions and multilevel dynamisms such as guilt and shame, empathy, compassion, subject-object in oneself.

Children with high emotional OE show an early development of a strong affective life. These are the children who cry easily, are easily frightened and anxious, exhibit strong attachments to people, places and objects; as well as strong envy and anger. Their intense emotional reactions are frequently signs of a higher than average need for security and safety. Other signs of emotional OE include excessive inhibition and excitation, strong affective memory, concern and preoccupations with death; "depressions, feelings of loneliness, need for security, concern for others, exclusive relationships, difficulties of adjustment in new environments (insomnia, irritability and lack of appetite), etc." (Dabrowski, 1996). Teenagers with the dominant emotional OE are often perceived as infantile, naïve, lost, shy, non-competitive and immature. On the one hand, they are

prone to experiencing shame and guilt; on the other, they tend to be overly open and trusting toward others–a combination, which, unfortunately, predisposes them to being taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals. People with dominant emotional OE develop relationships of friendship and love usually with very few or only one person. Because such close and exclusive relationships are the source of meaning in their lives, any losses and betrayals have a lasting, and sometimes devastating, effect on them. Their sensitivity often increases as a result of difficult life experiences, and may lead to extreme self-analysis, and tendencies to meditation and isolation. As Dabrowski observed, in some individuals with dominant emotional OE, chronic anxiety related to shyness may become a dominating personality trait that leads to excessive self-criticism, distrust and sensitivity to rejection. Another danger for high emotional OE person is a tendency toward overidentification with others to the point of losing oneself in the emotional world of another, to the detriment of one's own well-being and growth (1964). However, when endowed with equally strong imaginational and intellectual OE, individuals with strong emotional OE can, and often do, sublimate and transform the pain and suffering that result from their excessive emotional sensitivity into creative and humanitarian efforts.

Emotional OE is expressed differently in extraverted and introverted individuals. In extraverts, emotional reactions are strong, fast, uninhibited and often explosive, although they quickly subside. Extraverts with emotional OE tire easily, but equally easily recover.
In introverts, on the other hand, emotional reactions are strong, but "delayed"–they take longer (days, weeks, or months) to develop, and leave a permanent mark on the psyche. It is important to note that the "delay" does not reflect a slowed-down reaction, but the need to reflect on a given situation and absorb its emotional content. In an introvert endowed with emotional OE, emotional fatigue also occurs easily, though it builds up slowly and lasts longer. In introverts with strong emotional OE, we see positive maladjustment and a strong desire to transcend here and now. They experience longings for a better reality and frequently escape into daydreaming, and show tendencies toward reflection and hierarchization of their goals and values, which protect them from depression in face of failure. Introverts with strong emotional OE usually display a strong affective memory and preoccupation with death and immortality.

(Dabrowski, 1970). Like with everything else in life, when it comes to OE, it is not as much what we have that matters most, but what we do with what we have. As Dabrowski said, Oversensitivity (OE) without inner psychic transformation brings many unnecessary conflicts with others – magnifies the differences, and lessens and obscures the most important things" (1972, pp. 32-33).

Unraveling Terman's fallacy
Even though the association between genius, or exceptional abilities and nervousness or mental instability, has been entrenched in the common wisdom and supported by a wealth of data (Taylor, 1983), the prevailing belief in the field of gifted education maintained that gifted children were well--adjusted paragons of mental health. This tendency to attribute exceptional mental health to intellectually gifted individuals dates back to Lewis Terman and his longitudinal studies of 1,500 high IQ children (Shurkin, 1992).

One of explicit goals of Terman's research was to disprove the notion that gifted children were more sensitive or nervous than average youngsters. He thus assessed a general category of "nervous disturbances"–which included such behaviors like restlessness, nail biting, teeth grinding, excitability, sensitivity, stuttering and sleep difficulties–by asking parents and teachers whether a child was "especially nervous." According to his findings, "nervousness" was reported less frequently in the gifted group than in the controls, while "timidity" and a tendency to worry were equally frequent in both groups. In general, gifted boys were only slightly more nervous than the non-gifted ones while gifted girls were less nervous than their non-gifted counterparts. Based on these findings, Terman concluded that gifted children were indeed in a very good psychological and physical health, certainly free from excessive nervousness. But his data revealed a positive correlation between exceptional intellectual giftedness and different forms of mental and social maladjustment –a finding corroborated by others (Hollingworth, Gross, 2003).

Terman's study has been subsequently criticized for its flaws, and a closer look at his research reveals inevitable biases and omissions that crept into it and influenced what the author saw, and–perhaps more importantly–what he did not see. Although Terman denied higher than average nervousness of gifted children, he observed that one of their difficulties as students had to do with their excessive tendency to daydream and problems with adjusting to demands of structured school settings–both of which are symptoms of

overexcitabilities, as defined by Dabrowski. Dabrowski referenced Terman's study in his work, pointing out that Terman's analysis of gifted children's mental health differed from his own in several respects (Dabrowski, 1970).

Curiously, Terman, who showed signs of intellectual precocity from an early childhood, was a highly nervous individual himself. The twelfth of fourteen children, young Lewis had to cope with the constant threat of tuberculosis, an illness that ran in his family and claimed the life of his older sister. Her death affected 3-year-old Lewis so deeply that even in adulthood he suffered from insomnia aggravated by fears of a similar fate. As a grown-up, he developed a rigid and compulsive daily health regimen designed to protect him from recurring bouts of the illness. An obsessive attention to details and control needs characterized both his work and personal life. Lonely, acutely aware of his uniqueness as a child and young man, Lewis exhibited strong ambition and intellectual strivings, augmented by his nervous temperament. Describing his university seminars with Stanley Hall, Terman wrote this in his biography:

I always went home dazed and intoxicated, took a hot bath to quiet my nerves, then lay awake for hours, rehearsing the drama and formulating the clever things I should have said and did not (Shurkin, 1992, p. 96).

Even this brief confession shows an introverted young man with both emotional and intellectual overexcitabilities. Why Terman would not identify his own behaviors as expressive of nervousness and denied the existence of similar traits in his subjects is a matter of speculation, which goes beyond the subject of this presentation.

Although the questions about the co-existence of nervousness and exceptional abilities in both children and adults occasionally resurface, there is overwhelming evidence, both from clinical and research data, that supports the correlation between the two phenomena. Many clinicians working with gifted children have independently observed and described these children's unusual sensitivity and intensity, which often set them apart from their less talented peers.

In several books, Dabrowski quoted his own research on gifted children. In one of the studies, conducted in Warsaw in 1962, he analyzed psychological characteristics of 80 gifted and talented children and youth (Dabrowski, 1967). The study concluded that all

gifted children and young people displayed symptoms of increased psychoneurotic excitability, or lighter or more serious psychoneurotic symptoms.

Dabrowski also discussed his research comprising 175 highly gifted and talented children and youth from Poland and Canada. According to the results, 85% of his subjects exhibited different forms of OE as well as neuroses and psychoneuroses. Among over 200 eminent individuals from different fields whose biographies he studied, Dabrowski and his collaborators found that 97% of them showed different forms of OE, particularly emotional, imaginational and intellectual, neuroses and psychoneuroses, and also disturbances bordering on psychoses (Dabrowski, 1979). He quoted findings of other clinicians who observed that most children with increased psychic excitability and with neurotic symptoms belonged to the category of gifted and talented (Dabrowski, 1964).

Studies on overexcitabilities and giftedness have been continued in the U.S in the field of gifted education. For a brief overview of relevant research, see O'Connor (2002).

Additional support for Dabrowski's conclusions on the relationship between creativity and overexcitability (not called that) has come from research in clinical psychology and psychiatry. Several relevant studies are summed up in Jamison's book, *Touched with fire*, which examines the relationship between manic-depressive illness and artistic temperament. In her newest book, *Exuberance*, Jamison examines lives of eminent individuals whose psychological make-up is shaped by hyperthymic temperament or manic-depressive predispositions (Jamison, 2005)–both characterized by behaviors typical of overexcitabilities. This theme has been continued in J. Gartner's recently published book, *The Hypomanic Edge* (2005), where he examines lives of American successful entrepreneurs and historical figures endowed with overexcitabilities (though, obviously, Gartner does not use this term). Although Gartner's examples do not represent cases of advanced (or advancing) personality development as understood by Dabrowski, they nevertheless illustrate the correlation between certain forms of creativity and increased psychic excitability. Inadvertently, too, Gartner's examples show negative influences that OE–not tempered and not transformed by empathy and reflection–can have on personality development.

Some recent studies that confirm Dabrowski's insights into the relationship between traits strongly suggestive of increased psychic excitability and creativity include Strong and Ketter (2002), Carson et al. (2001), and Carson et al. (2003). Strong and Ketter, for example, found that healthy (non-diagnosed) creative individuals are closer in their personality types to manic-depressives than to normal population as they exhibited higher than normal range of mood changes and personality characteristics related to neuroticism. The authors attributed these findings to the wider emotional range in the creative individuals. The "wider emotional range" appears to be nothing else but Dabrowski's OE, described for the first time almost 70 years ago.

Apart from the research that continues in the field of gifted education, confirmations of Dabrowski's ideas on development, including his views on positive disintegration as a method of autopsychotherapy and personality development, have come from fields of psychiatry and neuropsychology (Schwartz & Begley, 2002).

Conclusions

Dabrowski considered his theory "work in progress"–"a series of inductive empirical generalizations" (Dabrowski, 1970, p. 130)–and expressed hope that, with time, most, if not all, of these generalizations would be either confirmed, modified or reformulated thanks to new research and theoretical insights.

The benefits of adopting TPD-based perspective on human development appear obvious. The convergence of developmental psychopathology and psychology of exceptionality seen in TPD is a source of a new, and very promising, approach to treating human growth in its exceptional, as well as "normal" and "disordered" aspects. One of Dabrowski's greatest contributions to our understanding of exceptionality and human development in general is the appreciation of the positive developmental value of various psychological difficulties, including many conditions commonly considered as pathological only. For one, we can no longer remain satisfied with labeling traits such as overexcitability and developmental experience they engender as "pathological," since, as Dabrowski showed us, hidden behind the stigmatizing labels are individuals full of "creative restlessness (and

the drive) to penetrate higher levels of reality" (Dabrowski, 1979, p. 187). Conversely, heeding Dabrowski's findings, we are able to become more aware of dangers of one-sided development associated with extreme developmental asynchrony, often encountered in gifted individuals. The problems resulting from using intelligence in the service of most basic, primitive drives—a tendency associated with psychopathy—are especially evident in today's world. TPD offers not only a useful theoretical framework for understanding individual differences and personality development, but also practical solutions for affecting positive change, particularly (though not only) in education and clinical practice.

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AUTHENTIC CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT -
BEYOND NATURE AND NURTURE
Vicky Frankfourth Moyle, M.A., L.P.C., N.C.C.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Character is who you are when no one is looking.
J.C.Watts

What should be considered in a discussion of character development for gifted students? Our ideas should be fully realized, embrace complexity, and not shy from controversial and subtle aspects. They should allow for a notion of self-actualization in the conceptions, and the idea of character being a manifestation of an authentic personality. How might we expand the notion of character to include some interpretations that go beyond a traditional 'Nature versus Nurture' debate? Is it important that we consider the possibility of an unlike phenomenology in a gifted individual's experience that would enhance his development and differentiate it from others?

Theories that encourage us to expand our ideas about character are explored in this article. John Dewey's philosophy, emphasizing the role of intelligence in moral development; James Hillman's acorn metaphor, envisioning one's character as an invisible and individualized soul-image; and Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory, which posits the evolution of a wholly new personality structure, catalyzed by but going beyond the effects of genetic endowment and environment, will be discussed. Hillman (1996) explains the phenomenon of character as a 'calling' --a daimon (p. 6) or sort of guiding angel (for good or evil) with a destiny and purpose of its own--over which the environment has but marginal control. Dabrowski, the Polish psychiatrist whose life's work was the Theory of Positive Disintegration (1964, 1967, 1970, 1972, 1996) developed many of his ideas through his psycho-analytic practice and empirical study of gifted children. He attributed the growth of personality primarily to bio-logical and environmental factors alone unless a person possessed characteristics that impelled him into another way of seeing, knowing, and being. If an individual possesses a particularly fertile inner psychic

landscape, Dabrowski believed that such creative intensity would contribute to the emergence of a truly remarkable human being, developing beyond mere genetic endowment and environmental influences. Incumbent in his conception of growth of the personality was an advanced moral development based on high ethical values and compassionate action.

CHARACTER--RECLAIMING THE DEFINITION OF THE TERM

Everyone has the obligation to ponder well his own specific traits of character.
He must also regulate them adequately and not wonder whether someone else's traits
might suit him better. The more definitely his own man's character is, the better it fits him.
CICERO

What do we actually mean when we speak of character? Surely, the concept must include some discussion of collective core values, individual deeply held beliefs, internal orientation, and external behavior.

The quote above shows us that even in Cicero's day there was a notion of both conscious intention and born destiny in the connotation of character. Each of us has a personal meaning for the word, but we cannot discuss any concept collectively without narrowing its scope with some precision. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1996) has no fewer than 20 definitions for character. One definition is "moral and ethical strength." One is "reputation or public estimation." The first definition, however, is simply "features that distinguish one person ... from another." The word comes from Middle English meaning "a distinctive mark or imprint on the soul."

Character as an 'imprint on the soul' is the context from which this article begins. Focusing on inherent potential implied in the deep meaning of the word, this author wishes, first of all, to neutralize any pre-conceptions of proscribed morality and 'acceptable' goodness in its connotation. Character is rooted in the mystery of a unique individual—continually unfolding in real time and space. As such, and as a manifestation of being in the world, it is necessarily beyond our attempts to completely understand and control.

And yet, our deep desire as educators and parents is that goodness will come from our children's lives. We want what they do to have a positive effect on this corporeal world. But because of the deep attachment to core values, character pulls us into the emotional and spiritual domains. American philosopher John Dewey was all too aware of the difficulties this posed in attempting to include moral guidance in the educational curriculum. It is not a superficial issue, however, and he believed in the importance of trying.

Complexity seems to result in contradictions that educational systems in their practical and bureaucratic simplicity often avoid or outright deny. Strict and literal goal orientation and attempts to produce some sort of competent citizen often do not honor the integrity of the individual. Opposing philosophies of human potential clash daily in the public arena of education. But educators need to embrace this complexity. The discussion of character development needs to be complexified in order to truly touch the lives of our gifted students. Additional considerations and expanded contexts are called for in our approaches, because "character"–as though we all agree with the prevailing interpretations–is being re-emphasized by our public policy makers.

It is useful to keep in mind that most spiritual traditions are in remarkable agreement about what constitutes the highest and most profound values possible in a human life. But it is questionable whether those traits and characteristics are being adequately translated in accepted public school curriculums on character. In practice, educators often suffer from a narrowness of perspective, a failure of creativity, a lack of tolerance, and a distrust of personal agency. When viewing (and inevitably judging) the characters of others, acts are often interpreted in reference to the viewer's own self-interests. Because of the inability to expand perspectives, exemplary character is often not recognized; and admitting the often conflicting variables involved in making a truly ethical decision is discomforting. Doubts about individual power and conflicting beliefs about human nature make educators reluctant to trust the integrity of a child's authentic development.

CONTEMPORARY CHARACTER EDUCATION AS REACTIVE RESPONSE

The character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JR.

In contrast to a consideration of character that involves complexity and an individual destiny beyond our human control, and in response to current trends in education, policy makers are creating their own versions of character. Currently, there is a palpable sense of urgency in the political and educational community to confront the issue of school violence. Some believe that a neglect of core values has been a root cause of this violence and have made a concerted effort to implement character education as an answer to the problem.

The Colorado State Legislature (2000) recently passed "A Resolution Concerning Character Education." In this document, legislators encourage educators to "use their authority to participate in the moral formation of our youth" and work with parents to promote "moral literacy." The text of the resolution names anti-victimization, faith-based morality, common courtesy, civic responsibility, respect for property, and honesty as the goals for this promotion.

One program used by many American school districts is called Character Counts! (2005). It defines a curriculum that includes an emphasis on the "Six Pillars of Character": trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Its claimed "research-based" success aims at reducing criminality, diminishing bullying, and decreasing dishonesty in the classroom. Its underlying objective, rooted in the history of American public education, appears also to be the improvement of a future work-force. A different character education curriculum, also in use, advocates for "aggression replacement training." While such focus might be useful and effective in a rehabilitative setting where behavioral approaches are successful, a deeper and more multi-leveled consideration of character is needed, especially with regard to gifted students. The programs being implemented are behaviorally oriented and simplistic in their quantitatively measurable objectives. Such approaches have severe limitations and marginal (if not negative) effects when applied to many gifted students (Dabrowski, undated; Jackson, personal correspondence; Moyle, clinical notes).

The Six Pillars are couched in external representations.   For instance, the virtue of trustworthiness, rather than honesty, is advocated.   The former is a reflection of how someone else can interpret another's character, and the latter is an internally driven value that is removed from the capricious nature of extrinsic judgment.   There appears to be little room for discussion in these curriculums about who someone *is* versus what someone *looks like* and how they are experienced by others.   There is little consideration of conflict potential and little emphasis of intrinsic motivation--just an acceptance of the trait at face value, as though its manifestation in action would always be without debate.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Thoughts lead on to purposes; purposes go forth in action; actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny.
TYRON EDWARDS

Why might differentiation or complexifying be important? If the 'Six Pillars' are noble goals for all individuals, why wouldn't they be appropriate for the gifted?

Modeling ethical behavior throughout the culture of a school in its daily activities is probably the method by which character is most effectively transferred.   But if words, actions, and intentions are good enough, then missing in the discussion is the importance of personal congruency--an essential variable for gifted students. By relying on externally demonstrable events alone, there is a potential incongruency between the inner psychic world and the outer physical world.   A potential disingenuous-ness is inherent in our attempts to impose simplistic character curriculums on students without a consideration of authentic motivation.

Where many gifted students are concerned, a focus on "character'" in a culture that both conspicuously as well as covertly violates the supposed traits of good character only serves to heighten feelings of disconnect and distrust.   Without trust and respect, no character curriculum can be effective.   As every good counselor knows, one of the most important variables in the therapeutic relationship is congruence—a kind of harmony between therapist's beliefs, attitudes, affect, theory, and behavior.   In other words, the inner self and the outer manifestation must agree.   For an acutely intuitive gifted student,

an incongruent messenger will render the message meaningless, because the feeling of falseness will create distrust and worse, cynicism. It is very important to examine the assumptions, conceptualizations, methods, and implementations of such well-intentioned curriculums.

The Edwards quote above is used often in the context of today's character education. It exhibits a logical determinism that appears to be true. Two fallacies, however, lie in the very first phrase. Implied is an unquestioned virtuous orientation toward a preconceived goal. It is also implied that everyone agrees with the "righ"' goals to which one might aspire. Thoughts may "lead to purposes," but the role of schools should be in teaching our children *how* to think, not *what* to think. In addition, the attempt to influence moral values or to essentially preach—without an emotional connection or deep respect to the 'preacher'—is problematic at best.

As schools are structured ever more increasingly on a business model—where education is viewed as a commodity, where the pervasive focus is on the financial bottom line, and where studies measure that which most everyone agrees is really immeasurable—this disconnect only serves to make character education more of a hypocrisy.   The essential character traits most popular with American teachers today have more to do with success than they have to do with living a truly ethical life.   For example, it is rare to find in the current literature the word "compassion" on an educator's character trait list, and nowhere was found mention of the traits of gratitude, generosity, or humility.

Author and psychologist James Hillman might say that another fallacy lies in the conclusion of Edwards' quote. From Hillman's conceptualization, character *is* our destiny, formed before the person ever was—and is thus, to a certain extent, beyond the power of environmental (or personal) forces to wholly change.

Character traits seem to fall into two categories: the inner/individual and the external/social. Those mentioned most often reflect the role that rugged individualism, cordiality, public recognition, and success—orientation play in the American culture. Many are directly related to making a more compliant student rather than an exemplary moral being. The themes that focus on those traits that look admirable to others are caring,

cooperation, humanity, respect, and service. The more individually oriented ones seem to emphasize taking control of the environment: courage, goal setting, patience, perseverance, responsibility, self-esteem, and (literally) control. It is worth mentioning that some of these traits reflect cultural rather than ethical values that would not necessarily be shared by other cultures or other spiritual traditions.

Perhaps the fundamental question is simply, can character be taught? Dewey certainly wrestled with this problem. Obviously the culture of a school can exemplify high moral values in its decisions and through the conduct of its individual members. But problems exist in the interpretation of behavior, the theoretical orientation of the 'goals' of good character, the selection of particular traits that depend on differences of individual perspective, and the evasion of what is actually concerned in making a truly ethical and moral decision. These are crucial to examine. Far more important than the question of mere relativism is a consideration of intellectual complexity and psychological and philosophical orientation. The Polish psychiatrist Kazimierz Dabrowski understood that the idea of perspective was crucial in the role of development and that it ultimately determined the personality of an individual. He made a careful distinction between what he called a 'Unilevel' and 'Multi-level' perspective, affecting every aspect of a person's being and capacity to know. Interpreting and operationalizing moral values in the literal, rule-based, authority-driven culture of school are bound to simplify what, ultimately, demands complex, multi-level, context-dependent, and unique situations. No one understands this better than the intellectually gifted, emotionally sensitive, and intuitively aware student.

Schools predominately operate using a behavioral orientation, believing that by demanding a change in outward behavior, a lasting change is effected in the individual. But evidence in clinical practice (Jackson, personal correspondence; Moyle, clinical notes) suggests that a behavioral paradigm is simplistic and inadequate when dealing with gifted individuals. Children in school are traditionally viewed as tabula rasa--or blank slates upon which educators can write at will. Not only is the child's experience assumed to be limited or essentially non-existent, there is even some evidence to suggest that teachers

are annoyed when met with a student who exhibits entelechy (Hollingworth, 1997; Gross, 1993, 1998; Lovecky, 1998) or who already knows the material.

One of the biggest conflicts many gifted students face may be in the unspoken, invisible realm which schools do not normally acknowledge. Cobb's research (1993) suggests that children have experiences of profound interconnectedness in encounters with the natural world that endure throughout their lifetimes. She generalized her findings to a theory about the "ecology of the imagination" for all children, but her study involved historical records of eminent individuals–suggesting that her theory may indeed be applicable particularly to gifted children. Implied in her work is the likelihood that an early numinous experience–where the child knows deep congruency in his body, heart, and mind--may predispose an individual toward seeking out or trying to recreate that kind of experience in his learning or his work. This immersion in a feeling of profound interconnectedness that touches the emotional and imaginational aspects of the whole person, what Maslow (1968) called a "peak experience" and akin to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) called the state of "flow" is rarely found or acknowledged in the academic setting. Denying these deep experiences, those experiences for which even adults have no words can be profoundly disheartening and confusing for gifted children.

Moral values cannot be imposed on persons with high developmental potential (Mroz, 2002). Adults cannot manipulate the surface of the environment and coerce the emotionally sensitive and imaginationally intense gifted child into believing that the world is some way other than what it is. Often, his perspicacity is too acute, his sense of consequence and interconnectedness too great, and his drive for integrity and justice too intense. It is virtually impossible for such children to disregard the awareness of hypocrisy in their environment--both local and global. The gifted who are blessed–and cursed–with keen intuition can sense the Jungian 'shadow' (1983) in others even when not recognized by their own consciousnesses (Jackson, personal communication), and an adult not "walking her talk" is experienced as a hypocritical violation of the essence of a character curriculum. A gifted child with high moral development cannot ignore the discrepancy in adults who speak of compassion and fairness while, say, ridiculing the marginalized homeless person on the street, or who emphasize academic honesty while, say, stealing

copy paper from the storeroom. It is an issue more important and intrinsic to these children than mere exacting, albeit often annoying, perfectionism. Encountering a curriculum designed to build positive character traits—but that is taught by adults who, however well-meaning, may lack wisdom or who aren't congruent—creates deep unsettlement for many gifted students. What these children need is a more inclusive paradigm, what Kazimierz Dabrowski (1964) termed a "multilevel perspective." John Dewey called for an intellectual rigor that prepared students for encounters with the inevitable competing factors that are part and parcel of any moral choice.

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN CHARACTER - JOHN DEWEY

It seems to be a lesson of history that the commonplace may be understood as a reduction of the exceptional, but the exceptional cannot be understood by amplifying the commonplace.
EDGAR WIND

American philosopher John Dewey (1901-1972) was particularly emphatic about the role of intelligence in moral actions and the cognitive complexity necessarily involved in making moral decisions. The ability to discriminate, he believed, is key to this process (1984). Dewey saw uncertainty and conflict as an integral part of true moral action and pointed out that the conventional attitude recognizes only an antagonism between good and evil in a moral act. Such a position does not acknowledge that uncertainty and conflict is an inherent part of any moral decision or virtuous deed, and he maintained that denying this truth is not a correct stance in many cases:

> The more conscientious the agent is and the more care he expends
> on the moral quality of his acts, the more he is aware of the
> complexity of this problem of discovering what is good (p. 279).

Dewey maintained that the role of education is to encourage the maturity of a child's impulses and desires by development and thought, and that intellectual control should be cultivated in the school by attending to adequate cognitive depth and rigor. He emphasized that the essence of the moral situation is an internal and intrinsic conflict because "it is characteristic of any situation properly called moral that one is ignorant of the end and of good consequences" (p. 280). To be able to "manage forces with no common denominator" (p. 280) was the essence of the moral dilemma in Dewey's mind.

But if the prevailing values in education dictate that all moral distinctions are given in advance, that virtue has only one source, that what is legitimate can be predetermined, and that right action is not debatable; then inculcation and behavioral control can be the only official attitude for character education--because to oppose such unilevel interpretation is to be immoral; and the multilevel thinker is thus caught in a sort of double-bind. Dewey believed that true moral decline rested with the inability to make delicate distinctions and with the blunting of the capacity of discrimination. He recognized the zealousness of the predominant moral philosophies advocating a unitary view–that, in advance, there is theoretically a "correct" solution for every difficulty–had the effect of oversimplifying the moral life. He dreamed of a common moral philosophy which would truly recognize the "real predicaments of conduct" and would actually help individuals make a "juster estimate of each competing factor" (Dewey, 1984, p. 281) when confronted with moral decision-making.

If moral progress depends on cultivating these discriminating capacities, and if many gifted students are naturally endowed with facility in these capacities, but if the importance and development of these capacities are denied in our educational programming, then children—and perhaps especially gifted children--are hindered from authentic character development on the highest level.

PERSONALITY AS AN INTENTIONAL EMERGENCE -- DABROWSKI'S POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION THEORY

Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or avoids.
ARISTOTLE

Polish psychiatrist Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902-1980) was strongly influenced by Dewey, especially with regard to his moral writings. However, while Dabrowski agreed that intellectual intensity is an important constituent in exemplary ethical behavior, he believed that emotions are even more crucial to advanced development and high levels of character.

Dabrowski called his theory of personality development the Theory of Positive Disintegration (1964, 1967, 1970, 1972). It is a full-spectrum theory of human

development, providing a hierarchical and multilevel model to describe differences in human behavior and functioning. He began with an intense curiosity about the profoundly different ways that individuals responded to one of the greatest horrors in human history: the Holocaust and the Nazi occupations. He proposed that personality is shaped by biological endowment and environmental effects alone–unless some other autonomous factor comes into play that causes the individual to imagine and construct a personality ideal (ibid.) beyond what exists.

His concept of personality incorporates the idea that someone possessed of great potential can envision a possibility toward which he strives–fueled by a notion of 'what ought to be' rather than settling for what merely already "is." Dabrowski's theory depends on a notion of movement in an authentic direction toward integration on a higher level. Although self-determined in nature, this "personality" nevertheless adheres to a hierarchy of values, increasingly incorporating ethical goodness in one's actions that transcends conventions and traditions as interpreted by society. Because it describes a process that progressively frees the self from contextual and social constraint and increases differentiation from others as a self-actualized human being, it can be compared to Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (Kohlberg, 1964; Muuss, 1996). Kohlberg, however, was concerned only with moral reasoning--not action. Both men were greatly influenced by John Dewey (Rich & DeVitis, 1985; Dabrowski, 1970), and supported the idea of universal principals of justice and a common hierarchy of values; and both were concerned about the phenomenon of increased moral relativism in society.

Dabrowski's theory agrees with Erik Erikson's Theory of Identity Development (Erikson, 1950) in the idea that maturity is linked to a virtue of care and a feeling of responsibility to others. But to Dabrowski, higher development demands that actions be congruent with belief, and that striving for this congruence is the essence of higher personality development. Because character is demonstrated only in action (mere noble intention won't suffice) and belongs to and is owned by the person in a moment of circumstance, its ultimate motivation must come from within and is virtually unaffected by external variables at the highest levels.

Dabrowski did not use the term "character" in his theory, but his concept of striving to attain an authentic self-chosen ideal personality, operating out of a necessity to serve higher values, certainly fits the description of "doing the right thing" even when "no one is looking." He defined this ultimate goal of development, the ideal personality, as "an individual standard against which one evaluates one's actual personality structure" (Dabrowski, 1970, p. 175). Dabrowski believed that growth of the personality is the principal aim of an individual and is the result of human development, particularly advanced development (1967). He proposed that mental development--synonymous with growth of the personality–requires a breakdown or "disintegration" of lower, more primitive psychological structures in order to form higher, more evolved and complex structures. In its natural course, development presents dynamic conflicts between what is more reactive or automatic (lower) versus what is more conscious or self-determined (higher) within the individual psyche. Dabrowski called these instincts the "developmental potential" of the individual. They are comprised not only of instinctive, but other phenomenological capacities. One of the most unique aspects of his theory is the emphasis he placed on the role that emotions and imagination, as well as intelligence, play in human development. He viewed emotions as the controlling structure in the personality (1967) and the basis for an individual's hierarchization of values. The interplay of cognitive complexity, emotional responsiveness, imaginative intensity, and a personal value system to stimulate higher personality development is fundamental to Dabrowski's theory.

Perhaps it is simply authoritarian arrogance that imagines individual human character can be controlled. Dabrowski's theory embraces the idea of an intentional emergence for persons endowed with a certain drive, but he was very clear about the impetus of such an emergence. It comes from within the individual, not from external variables or controls.

CHARACTER AS AN EMBEDDED "CALLING" -- HILLMAN'S "ACORN" THEORY

A man's character is his guardian divinity.
HERACLITUS

American author and psychologist James Hillman, on the other hand, fully embraces the idea that character, this "imprint on the soul," comes from beyond. His theories evolve from the transpersonal psychology and transcendent traditions which recognize an

unseen dimension that supports the visible, physical world. Since this Transpersonal Ground is often defined as that aspect of experience or being that incorporates and acknowledges the transcendent or invisible world (Assigioli, 1975; Nelson, 1994), incorporated are notions of imagination, intuition, and spirituality in the definition of character. Character for Hillman is a "calling" –a compelling and urgent drive, a spiritual energy or daimon that accompanies an individual into this plane of existence. Hillman, like Dewey's negative assessment of commonly accepted moral philosophies, argues that current theories in all disciplines aren't big enough for the fullness of a human life. He claims that our paradigms rarely account for the mystery at the core of each unique individual being.

Hillman's theory evolved from "reading a life backwards" (1996, p. 7) to discover and reveal the original, early performances of character in the young life of an individual. Such retrospection acknowledges, respects, and appreciates the "image in the acorn" (ibid.) embedded in all individuals from the moment of their birth. This notion of a fundamental essence in individuality, which can be compared to Dabrowski's developmental potential, is an ancient human idea that our modern world rarely acknowledges except in a religious context, separated from daily life. The daimon represents a potential, both metaphorical and actual, that is beyond human meddling and is not dependent on physical genetic material or societal influence. It embraces the mystery and the poetry in a lived life that allows for the numinosity of grace, the vagaries of circumstance, the inborn endowment, and the individual will to interdependently affect its unfolding. American culture "marginalizes the invisibles" (1996, p.184) says Hillman, and as such, creates dysfunction out of its own. He advocates for "reminding a child of its essential belonging to the call of the angels" (1996, p. 170)–not from a religious viewpoint, but from an uplifting and universal spiritual perspective.

Using metaphors to speak of the kinds of guidance and experiences needed to realize authentic character, Hillman is clear: "There is no right food and no wrong food; the food must only meet the appetite, and the appetite must find its kind of food" (1996, p. 160). If children, and perhaps gifted children most of all, are prevented from finding their own unique "kind of food," then their innate souls are being disrespected and their destinies

compromised. The human poetic basis of mind (Hillman, 1975) simply needs nourishment, and if it is withheld--either out of ignorance or some more intentional motivation--then our children will starve. This is when the daimon becomes malevolent. It is more likely that a lack of mirrored imagination–or any withholding of character nourishment--may result in an unacknowledged desperation, causing more negative consequences than does a lack of character education in our schools.

INTELLECTUAL GIFTEDNESS AND ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT

> *Character is higher than intellect.*
> *RALPH WALDO EMERSON*

It is important to note here that acute moral awareness is not a characteristic of all gifted individuals. Dabrowski, in particular, made a distinction between advanced developmental potential (which depends on exemplifying high human values) and intellectual giftedness (which can be skewed toward what he called "one-sided development" (Dabrowski, 1996a, p. 164)--although he suggested that developing a hierarchy of values and living a personality ideal does depends on a sufficiently high level of intelligence (Dabrowski, 1970; Mendaglio, 2003; Nixon, 2004). Interpretation of research by Hollingworth (1942) and Gross (1989) suggests that the higher the measured intelligence, the more likely one will find a high level of moral development. However, it is probably more accurate that the latter depends on the former, not that high intelligence automatically means high moral development. Much of Dabrowski's work was inspired by his work with gifted children, and he devoted his life to discovering the etiology of profound character.

Following someone else's script for living one's life is just about the last thing to which a truly gifted child wants to succumb. While the Zen master Shunryo Suzuki (1998) taught that we exist for the sake of ourselves, and not something else; he also wrote that the best way to be oneself was by practicing the right way to live, rather than by trying to order things outside us. The notion that humans exist for a purpose is a deep spiritual belief that sustains the spirit, no matter what the religious tradition. Suzuki emphasized that the result (of our intentions) is not the point, but rather it is the effort to improve ourselves that is valuable, and that there is no end to such a practice.

All three of the thinkers mentioned above recognize the crucial role that imagination plays in the healthy development of character. From emotion and imagination come passion and, with intelligence to shape it, the true variables that catapult a gifted child into leading an extraordinary life begin to be more truthfully and completely understood.

INNER EXPERIENCE VS. OUTER MANIFESTATION

Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it;
the tree is the real thing.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Realization of character happens in a moment, as a spontaneous response to an event in the world. Most of what is discussed in today's "character curriculums" might be desirable traits, to be sure, but the discussion falls short of a recognition of the interrelated quality of character, personality, and the integral fabric of the individual. Terman's study of gifted children (1925) emphasized measurement of character traits, as that was a particular interest for him. He correlated these character traits with mental health, however, and his conclusion was that giftedness does not predispose an individual to mental ill-health. Allport (1932) was aware of the difficulty of measuring such qualities, and knew that adequate tests of character must involve motivation and actual drives. He believed that character was only truly revealed in the vital issues of real life.

The majority of gifted individuals exhibit the personality characteristic of introversion (Silverman,1993), which seems to make them especially aware of their inner feelings, their actions in the world (as well as the discrepancies between them), and the effects of their behavior on others. But one important developmental task for all children, wrote child psychologist Virginia Axline (1969), is the synchronization of internal being with the outer manifestation of this inner self. Axline wrote about the consequences of hindering this process:

> ...(So-called mechanisms) of maladjusted behavior such as
> daydreaming, withdrawal, compensation, ... rejection, and repression ...
> seem to be evidences of the inner self's attempt ... to approximate
> a full realization of (his personality or) ... self-concept ... When
> an individual reaches a barrier which makes it more difficult for him
> to achieve a complete realization of self, ... resistance, ... friction
> and tension (result). (However) the drive toward self-realization continues,
> (--he either satisfies) ... this inner drive by outwardly fighting to establish

> his self-concept in the world of reality, or ... he confine(s) it to his
> inner world where he can build it up with less struggle. The more
> it is turned inward, the more dangerous it becomes ...
> Outward behavior ... (is) dependent upon the integration of all
> past and present experiences, conditions and relationships,
> but (it is) pointed toward the fulfillment of this inner drive ... (p. 13-14)

It is crucial for gifted children wrestling with issues of high moral development to have adequate mirrors for their experiences; teachers who can help them give voice to their inner world and to work through the conflicts in their moral development, as opposed to conflating the variables and thus falsifying the true issues involved. It is part of their particular character "food". The gifted child can feel intense psychic disequilibrium when he realizes and understands that his experiences are not shared by others (Gross, 1998). As Adrienne Rich (1986) wrote, "when someone with ... authority ... describes the world and you is not in it, (it is) as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing" (p. 199).

POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION AND AUTHENTIC DEVELOPMENT

> *Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.*
> *HELEN KELLER*

What happens when an individual is faced with an unbearable incongruity between his inner experience and the outer world? The disequilibrium that results must be resolved. Dabrowski would say that the typical individual adjusts to the environment–adapts to the prevailing structure and accepts its rules of conduct and knowledge. In contrast, according to his theory of positive disintegration, the atypical individual capable of advanced development is compelled in a different direction. His developmental trajectory will pass through a stage of personality "disintegration," during which the individual essentially dies to his old self and begins a process of constructing a new and uniquely authentic self. There is evidence to suggest (Jackson, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004; Mroz, 2002) that this disintegration can happen–if it happens at all–at a very young age in gifted children. This struggle to transform, when an individual tries to deal with deep ontological issues and existential moral dilemmas, is usually seen as the conflicts of a mature adult. Erikson characterized the developmental task of old age as a conflict between integrity and despair. Kohlberg's final stage of moral development–the post-conventional stage–was one of an obligation to higher universal human principles

frequently in conflict with societal views. According to him this stage is attained by only 10% of adults and thus represents a growth experience that most adults have not experienced and many cannot even conceptualize.

Dabrowski implied that it is a gifted individual's multilevel developmental potential that puts him most in conflict with his surrounding environment. He had a term for an individual's reaction against the injustices, oversimplifications, and unethical cultural practices of a unilevel society. He called it positive maladjustment. Hillman might say that the conflict is the daimon at work.

Neither theory has much room for the tabula rasa notion. During his lifetime, Dabrowski railed against behavioral conceptualizations and mechanistic processes that dominated psychology and education (Dabrowski, undated) even in his time. However, he conceptualized his theory within the recognized rigors of his profession, and his model includes the causal psychic mechanisms that interplay within an individual to initiate growth toward a fully realized and autonomous personality. He was particularly concerned about the treatment commonly encountered by children who exhibited high developmental potential. Literature is replete (Goertzel & Goertzel, 1962; Hollingworth, 1942; Hillman, 1996) with examples of the negative experiences suffered by eminent persons throughout history in their interactions with school. Even Terman (1925) showed through his psychological tests that children of superior ability were very likely to be misunderstood in this environment. More recently, Gross (1993, 1998) and Lovecky (1998), in their detailed studies of highly gifted children, offer poignant illustrations of such conflicts.

A gifted student with intellectual over-excitability brings to his experiences a probing-ness and intense curiosity, often taking the form of profound existential and epistemological questions. This deep phenomenological orientation in the lived experience can be problematic, especially when that experience is not reflected in the pedagogy of the school, or in the understanding of a teacher. Even if his awareness is not conscious or able to be articulated, such a student appears to require essential congruency between his developing epistemological framework and the facts being taught him. Such

fundamental questioning can shake the foundations of a teacher's certainty and make her uncomfortable in ways that even she does not understand. This conflict appears never to be as penetrating as when confronting issues in the ethical and emotional realm.

Einstein once said that a problem could never be solved on the level at which it was created. If the future of our world depends on imaginational leaps that take us beyond existing paradigms, then perhaps it is a bit ironic that we expect our bureaucratic educational systems to understand and accommodate the future geniuses or moral exemplars of our world.

THE DAIMON AND ONE'S TRUE CHARACTER

Character is what you are in the dark.
AMERICAN PROVERB

According to the integral theories discussed in this article, character (like truth) will "out." Character is not about just what another can witness or what can be recorded while the cameras are rolling for a photo opportunity. Ultimately, when contemporary educators (in their practices, directives, and pedagogy) focus on external characteristics, the innateness of individual character is disrespected and the trust of personal responsibility is denied.

There is a certain narcissism implied by the parent or the teacher who enforces her own visions for the future on a child, without regard to his innate personality, his intelligence, his entelechy, or his daimon. Moral didacticism can be harmful to a developing sense of moral interdependence (Kazemek, 1986). Adult guides must avoid becoming moral propagandists, and they must be psychologically aware to the difference between facilitating the fulfillment of a child's true calling, and enabling their own calling through the child. It is fallacious and arrogant–as Hillman points out–to believe that the essence of true character can be inculcated. Certainly, for the gifted, there is a grave inadequacy in orienting policies and processes from a behaviorist point of view, toward "good" moral ends. There are other dangers in such narcissistic attitudes toward our children. Jackson (2004) suggests that adult narcissism is a primary cause of anxiety in the gifted. At the very least, both overt and covert displays of narcissism–even unconscious manifestations–are discernable by the gifted with intuition and high developmental

potential. Such perceptions are experienced as deep incongruity and may set up confusion, or worse symptoms, in many gifted children (ibid).

Often gifted children react to narcissism–in any form–by some sort of rebellion. Hillman's research (1996) revealed that rebellious intolerance was typical of "acorn" behavior. Positive maladjustment is what Dabrowski called this rebellion of an individual with high developmental potential against the negative, even though culturally accepted, status quo. He emphasized that it is imperative that a child with positive developmental potential be given an incremental independence in his growth, to foster the most harmonious and multi-sided development of his interests and abilities. By allowing such a child to develop autonomy, he begins to realize his own responsibility in developing his inner psychic milieu and to foster his own positive growth by identifying with his higher self (Dabrowski, 1996). Maxwell (1998) stressed the need for an awareness and acceptance of expanded developmental theories for children exhibiting early self-efficacy, who may "feel a stronger urge to reshape their environment than to accommodate to it" (p. 187).

FINDING TRUE PEERS AND TRUE TEACHERS

We learn our virtues from our friends who love us; our faults from the enemy who hates us. We cannot easily discover our real character from a friend. He is a mirror, on which the warmth of our breath impedes the clearness of the reflection.
RICHTER

Communion, deep resonance with another human being and the experience of being profoundly understood by another, appears to be key to ameliorating psychic disequilibrium in the gifted (Jackson, 1995, 1998, 2001), and to giving our gifted children the character "food" they need. Positive mirroring, radical respect, witnessed significance (Shorto, 1999), and the contact with true teachers modeling the struggle to live in the world while maintaining one's integrity in the process is essential for staving off depression. But adequate mirroring and true communion is problematic for many gifted individuals--especially for the exceptionally and profoundly gifted (Gross, 1998; Lovecky, 1998; Jackson, ibid).

Dabrowski emphasized the importance of true mentors. He wrote that it was vital to find teachers whose level of development surpassed one's own (1970), and that the need

grew with age and experience. More recently, clinicians Jackson (ibid.) and Mroz (2000) have separately validated the crucial role that others play for an individual in his development toward a personality ideal.

A gifted child with a post-conventional level of moral development needs courage, hope, and resilience; and research on resilience has correlated having a meaningful adult relationship with the emergence of this trait. In order to maintain courage in the face of difficulty and sustain a belief that the struggle to "do the right thing" is worthwhile, one needs models. But if only 10% of all adults, according to Kohlberg's own estimates, have reached this level, where are these children to find such a teacher, or such a mirror?

Referring to Richter's quote above, a teacher is neither a friend nor an enemy, although for the student she can take on the aspects of both. What a teacher can show the pupil is encouragement and a light for the way which every student must find for himself, modeling the true meaning of education, as a "leading forth."

CONNECTING THE SPIRITUAL WITH THE MATERIAL – "GROWING 'DOWN"

Talent develops in tranquility, character in the full current of human life.
JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Necessary in the emphasis of true character education must be the notion of putting intention to work, of taking the higher values and actually implementing them in the world. Even though a lack of cultural ethos might be a catalyst for development, the individual of profound character must transform what may have begun as a reaction against the negative into a movement toward something positive.

The connection of the non-physical soul with the physical world is referred to in many ways in almost all spiritual traditions. The physical circumstances of a life are only part of its reality, only a portion of its truth. But a focus on only the spiritual as the highest form of character is also incomplete. According to the Platonic myth, the soul descends via four modes: the body, parents, place, and circumstance. Giving back to the world by means of gestures, transforming what these modes of being have bestowed, declare a full

attachment to the world (Hillman, 1996). This "growing down", according to Hillman, is the fulfillment of purpose to which each human being is born.

FIERCE STEWARDSHIP IS CALLED FOR

Lukewarm won't do...
RUMI
A man has no more character than he can command in a time of crisis.
Ralph W. Sockman

If humanity learned any lesson from the Holocaust, it was what can happen when even good people are complicit, or when ego and intellectual brilliance create their own world without regard to high human values. Awareness must be cultivated to ensure that a mismatch or "maladjustment" with the environment does not take a dysfunctional direction. A child who struggles with a calling that is not reflected in the mainstream, whose daimon is thwarted, or who encounters other dissonances in his environment, can turn dangerously inward and become tangled with a strong ego that has little regard for others.

While external events might be catalysts for development, the individual must begin to take control of his own development and create an action toward the positive, not simply react against the negative. What needs to happen is a transformation, an empowerment, and a belief in being able to effect a change in the world. Violent behavior is an act of desperation—a student's reaction to helplessness and marginalization. It is crucial for our gifted students that they are not hindered in their development by the strict interpretations of a unitary moral philosophy, and that their already forged kernel in the acorn is somehow honored and encouraged to bloom in a non-destructive way.

Jackson (personal communication) advocates for "safe holding environments" for our gifted children who are experiencing accelerated development. Sometimes a slowing down of development until a child's experience gives him more tools for emergence is crucial. These safe environments must convey, first and foremost, respect for the purpose that each individual is born to, and give a nod to that metaphorical daimon within.

Hillman reminds us that a child will defend its daimon's dignity. "Even a frail child," he writes, "(will) refuse to submit to what it feels is unfair and untrue, and (will) react savagely

to abusive misperceptions" (1996, p. 27). An awareness of responsibility–not for society so much as for stewardship of one's own gifts for the purpose of helping to transform the world--might be a better focus for character education of the gifted. This would also bring an idea of ego strength <u>and</u> a sense of ego syntony, dissolution, and transcendence into the discussion of character.

GIVING GIFTED CHILDREN WINGS, AS EXPRESSIONS OF THEIR ROOTS

No matter how full a reservoir of maxims one may possess, and no matter how good one's sentiments may be, if one has not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to act, one's character may remain entirely unaffected for the better. With mere good intentions, hell is proverbially paved.
WILLIAM JAMES

There is no shortage of good days. It is good lives that are hard to come by.
ANNIE DILLARD

Perhaps there has never been a more important time to consider the necessity for extraordinary individual character to break through the ramparts of a culture hell-bent on environmental devastation and moral duplicity, capable of mass destruction on a scale previously unknown in history.

Folsom (1998) emphasized that an understanding of the intertwined complexities between intellect and emotion is crucial for nurturing the mind and the moral character of gifted students. Many gifted are virtually impelled, continually, to try and integrate the intellectual with the emotional and moral spheres (Coelangelo, 1991), because as interdependent aspects of being, the sensitive gifted student sees them as being inseparable. Leroux (1986) maintained that a gifted student's intellectual energies required a task of education to be one of assisting in the growth toward higher developmental stages.

A complex living system is more than simply a sum of its parts. There is compelling reason not to deny the essential spiritual nature of character development. Lovecky (1998) notes that the few theories describing spiritual development, independent of a religious tradition, accept the interdependence of reason and compassion--which the moral literature does not. It must be repeatedly acknowledged that "anything around can

nourish our souls by feeding the imagination" (Hillman, 1996, p. 153). Academicians, scientists, educators, and bureaucracies appear reluctant to acknowledge this connection with the "invisible world which supports the visible world" (Campbell, 1991, p. 90) but it is an unseverable one. The great task of a life-sustaining culture, wrote Hillman (1996), is to keep the invisibles attached. Deep development of the personality on a high level with a clearly chosen hierarchy of values—one that can "grow down" to meet the world and engage it with the spiritual realm—is what many traditions regard as the primary task of being in a human incarnation.

All three of the theories introduced in this article help us to conceive a wider spectrum of discourse for the purpose of an enlarged view of character education, which is essential for gifted students.

Advocating for expanded views and greater complexity in the consideration of character allows us to include the aspects of human manifestation that are embedded in mystery. Respecting and honoring character--at the very least, acknowledging it as an "imprint on the soul" would help to validate some of the more numinous experiences of the morally developing gifted child and to contribute to his ethical growth. There is reason to believe that gifted children possess an abundance of "equipment" for realizing this awareness, and this "calling." Giving them deep roots to hold steadfast and sublime wings to soar beyond even their imaginings should be a goal for gifted education.

As parents and educators, we know our children inherit our world, and the problems that we created will have to be solved at a level beyond our present conceptions. Deep development—of the personality and of character—requires full commitment. It is not for the faint of heart. We must prepare our gifted children for fierce engagement in the struggle toward realizing the potential of their unique souls. They must know and be supported in the awareness that, to do it with greatness and fullness, they must be prepared to sacrifice much in the face of enormous challenges. In the process of becoming an ethical person, "you must burn yourself to ash" (Suzuki, 1998, p. 63). The sense of importance is missing from our discourse on character and the sense of urgency,

as if our lives depended on it--which they do. We must be able and willing to give children the courage and the blessing to, in the words of Clarissa Pinkola Estes (2000):

> *Climb to the top of the highest tree.*
> *Step onto the branch that you fear will break under your weight.*
> *Let it break ...*

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EMPATHY IN GIFTED CHILDREN: A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH
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Of the affective characteristics of gifted persons, empathy provides a solid basis for caring and prosocial behaviors motivated by vicarious experiencing of others' distress. Empathy experienced by gifted children is a diamond in the rough. Sensitive handling brings out its full beauty. In essence, empathy is excellent raw material for the development of altruism, but it needs refinement by parents and others who recognize its value in its natural state. In its unrefined state, empathy may spontaneously manifest itself in caring of others, but it may also overwhelm the empathic gifted child. If being empathic is part of being gifted (e.g., Roeper, 1982), then, we cannot eliminate the distress that defines it. However, we have a responsibility to assist gifted children's understanding of and coping effectively with this potentially very valuable trait. In the process, we will help them reduce the intensity of the distress that empathic connection to others creates. The purpose of this article is to present a view of empathy that I have used in counseling parents and teachers of gifted children to assist them in this endeavor.

Empathy in psychology and gifted education has various meanings. In psychology, at least three distinct types of definitions are evident. In gifted education, empathy is often associated with descriptions of heightened sensitivity, an affective characteristic of gifted children (e.g., Coleman, 1996; Lovecky, 1993). The conception of empathy that I use in counseling is one facet of a model of heightened sensitivity (Mendaglio, 1995, 2003). To place empathy, as a facet of heightened sensitivity, in proper perspective, I discuss conceptions of empathy in psychology. This is followed by a discussion of empathy as a part of my model of heightened sensitivity. I conclude the article with a discussion of how this conception of empathy may be applied when interacting with gifted children.

Defining Empathy in Psychology

There are at least three approaches to defining empathy in the field of psychology. One relates to its use in counseling and psychotherapy, two other types of definitions are evident in other areas of psychological research. The seminal work of Carl Rogers (see Rogers, 1959; Rogers, 1980) on empathy is a good point of departure because of his significant contribution to the field of counseling and psychotherapy. It also serves as a

conceptual foundation for the other types of empathy. Empathy, as an important component in counseling and psychotherapy, "has stood the test of time" (Greenberg, 2002, p. 76), and is considered a necessary element of successful therapeutic intervention. Rogers' contribution to our understanding of empathy extends beyond counseling and psychotherapy; his influence may be see in application of empathy to various helping professions especially as an effective communication skill (see for example, Egan, 1994). In these applications of empathy, which I call therapeutic empathy, two specific skills are involved, namely, perception and communication (Gladding, 1996). In essence, through therapeutic empathy, helping professionals attempt to understand their clients from their points of view and communicate that understanding to clients. Simply *understanding* clients' internal states, such as emotions, thoughts, and intentions, does not constitute empathy in this use of the term. *Communication* of counselors' understanding is an essential part of therapeutic empathy.

While understanding persons from their perspectives is associated with a Rogerian approach to empathy, it must be noted that Rogers (1959; 1980) also alludes to the possibility of *experiencing* the emotions of others. However, the intent of therapeutic empathy is not to feel what the other is feeling. For Rogers (1959), empathy "*means to sense the hurt or the pleasure of another as he senses it and to perceive the causes thereof as he perceives them, but without ever losing the recognition that it is as if I were hurt or pleased and so forth. If this 'as if' quality is lost, then the state is one of identification* (p. 211, italics in original). Rogers seemed to recognize that in the process of gaining a deep understanding of another person's internal states, we run the risk of identifying with the person and experiencing what they experience. For counselors and psychotherapists, the goal of therapeutic empathy is not experiencing clients' emotions, but understanding them. Emotional experiencing may be an artifact of engaging in the application of therapeutic empathy. Clients' welfare, however, is not necessarily best served by helping professionals who dwell on experiencing the feelings of their clients: prolonged experiencing clients' despair or depression may interfere with effective counseling.

Differentiating between understanding and experiencing of others' emotions characterizes the approaches to empathy in other areas of psychological research. Hoffman (2002) states that there two definitions evident in psychological research on empathy: "(a) empathy is the cognitive awareness of another person's internal states, that is, his thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and intentions ...; (b) empathy is the vicarious affective response to another person" (p. 29). Empathy as cognitive awareness of others' feelings is concerned with understanding emotions of others. Vicarious affective responding to others emphasizes emotional experiencing of others' feelings.

A comparison of therapeutic empathy, empathy as cognitive awareness and empathy as vicarious affective responding, suggests commonalities and differences. A common element is that empathy concerns itself with emotions of others (see Table 1). In therapeutic empathy, counselors are concerned with understanding the feelings of their clients. Similarly, empathy as cognitive awareness is concerned with accurately understanding other people's emotionality. By contrast, empathy as affective response, describes how emotions of others are experienced vicariously. Of the three types, only therapeutic empathy includes communication as an essential part of its definition. That is, therapeutic empathy, by definition, requires an expression of empathy, includes both covert and overt processes. The other two forms of empathy focus on covert processes, either understanding of, or experiencing others' emotions.

Table 1. Three Conceptions of Empathy

Type	Core Concepts	Processing
Cognitive Awareness	Understanding of others' emotions	Covert
Affective Responding	Vicarious experiencing of others' emotions	Covert
Therapeutic	Understanding others' emotions and communication of that to them	Covert and Overt

Note. Both cognitive awareness and affective responding types of empathy differ in their focus, understanding and experiencing of others' emotions, respectively. These two types are similar in their processing: covert. In therapeutic empathy, an overt aspect, communication, is an essential part of its definition.

Empathy in Gifted Children: A Facet of Heightened Multifaceted Sensitivity

Gifted children may possess all three forms of empathy. However, I place therapeutic empathy in a separate category since it requires effectiveness in interpersonal communication, and, as such, is not considered a characteristic of gifted children. My interest lies in the other forms of empathy. Use of empathy as a characteristic of gifted children needs to distinguish between empathy as cognitive awareness and affective responding. A model of heightened multifaceted sensitivity (HMS) (Mendaglio, 2003) makes such a distinction. HMS depicts sensitivity among gifted persons as a heightened form of multifaceted sensitivity that includes vicarious emotional experiencing; "empathy" is retained for this form of empathy; and, cognitive awareness of others' emotions, termed "perspective-taking". A description of HMS will place these in context.

In HMS, sensitivity is defined as awareness: heightened awareness of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of self and others. As cognitive ability increases, awareness, as a cognitive process, is presumed to increase. HMS, then, is reflective of the superior cognitive ability of gifted persons. As such, HMS is not environmentally created; it is part of being intellectually gifted. It is assumed that the quality of the social environment plays a critical influence on HMS, for example, on its development and manifestation. The core of HMS, heightened awareness, however, is seen as part of giftedness. The descriptor "heightened" is added to reflect the assumption that, while facets of sensitivity are seen in the general population, they appear in greater form in gifted persons *qua* gifted. Technically, each facet of the model is implicitly described as "heightened," for example, heightened empathy. This denotes that, while everyone may have the capacity to be empathic, gifted persons are predisposed to the heightened version of the trait. Four facets of HMS reflect the domains of awareness: self and other (see Figure 1).

For HMS directed at self, self-awareness and emotional experience are used. Other-oriented HMS is described by perspective-taking and empathy. In addition to a self-other, there is a cognitive-affective dimension to these four facets. Self-awareness and perspective-taking refer to awareness of self and others, respectively. Self-awareness refers to being aware of one's thoughts and behaviors. It is metacognitive in nature, enabling such processes as introspection and self-monitoring. Perspective-taking enables

our understanding of other persons from their points of view. We infer their thinking and emotions but the objective is cognitive in nature. In contrast, emotional experience and empathy refer to affective awareness of self and others. Emotional experience is a special case of self-awareness that enables us to feel our emotional states. Through empathy, we experience the emotions of others. Although these four facets are conceived as separate, I assume that they may operate independently or in various combinations depending on the interpersonal context.

Four Facets of Heightened Multifaceted Sensitivity (HMS)

	Cognitive	Affective
Self-Oriented	**Self-Awareness**	**Emotional Experience**
Other-Oriented	**Perspective-Taking**	**Empathy**

Figure 1. The four facets, in bold type, represent cognitive and affective HMS oriented to self and other. It is assumed that each facet occurs in a heightened form.

Since the focus in this article is empathy, I will focus on other directed HMS. Perspective-taking is an inferential process by which we construct an understanding of another person's internal states, such as feelings, attitudes, motivations, and thoughts of others. Among other things, this is accomplished by being aware of another person's verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Being attentive to what people say, how they say it, what they are wearing, and their body language, we generate hunches about their feelings and thoughts in social interactions. With gifted persons, the heightened version of this facet suggests that they need little data on which to base their inferences. Gifted children need little change in our behaviors with them for them to detect changes in our demeanor. For example, parents may try to shield their children from feelings of distress associated with sources external to the family (e.g., job stress). However, subtle changes in nonverbal behaviors such as amount of eye contact with their children may be sufficient for gifted children to detect their true demeanor. Such perceptiveness in the context of interpersonal communication is an aspect of perspective-taking.

While perspective-taking leads to an understanding of others, other-oriented affective awareness leads to an experiencing of other persons' feelings. Empathy is a process of awareness of another's feelings resulting in experiencing those feelings. In HMS, empathy does not represent the feelings themselves. We feel the distress of another but the distress is not empathy. When a gifted child feels another person's joy or sorrow, the emotions are the product of an empathic connection with the other person with awareness as the core element. Under some circumstances, the empathic process represents minimal or absence of cognitive awareness as in the case, for example, of young children who cry because another child is crying in the vicinity. Such emotional contagion is a primitive form of empathy. In my conception of empathy, when we feel the emotions of another, emotions are the product; empathy is the process.

Three of the four facets of HMS, especially empathy, are emotion generators. For example, through self-awareness, I may realize that there is a discrepancy between my behavior in a social situation and my standards for those occasions. The self-awareness process may result in feelings of disappointment or embarrassment. Perspective-taking similarly may create emotions in me. The fourth facet, emotional experience, relates to awareness of our own emotions generated by the other three facets.

Empathy as Double-edged
Empathy has this aspect in common with virtually all the characteristics of giftedness: it is both a blessing and a curse. Cognitive as well as affective characteristics represent potential for positive as well as negative outcomes for gifted children (Clark, 1997; Karnes & Bean, 2001). Superior intellectual ability when actualized results in exceptionally high achievement with an accompanying enhancement of self-confidence. A high level of intelligence may also be a source of intense frustration when, for whatever reason, the potential cannot be realized. Unchallenging educational experiences, poor family dynamics, or lack of work habits may interfere with academic production (Reis & McCoach, 2000). Gifted students may become frustrated because they are aware of the discrepancy between their potential and the reality of their achievement. Further, superior ability can pose unexpected problems when others, age mates and teachers, are threatened by it and react defensively or aggressively toward a gifted child. This double-edged quality is also seen in the case of affective characteristics. Perfectionism, for

example, is described as normal or neurotic (Orange, 1997; Siegle & Schuler, 2000). Normal perfectionism is associated with a striving for excellence. It is a positive personality trait where level of expectations for performance varies with the importance of situations and tasks. Neurotic perfectionism, in contrast, is a compulsive quest for perfection in virtually everything a person does, such that he/she is never satisfied with his/her efforts or products.

Empathy's double-edged quality rests in its potential to motivate altruism and simultaneously producing intense negative emotionality in a gifted child. Feeling the distress of another, a gifted child may intentionally lose at a game or go hungry him/herself when another child is upset at the prospect of losing or has no lunch. Empathy may also motivate a child's inquiring after the well-being of a parent as the child becomes aware of the distress that mother may be trying so diligently to mask. The benefits of empathy extend to expressing concerns about and actively campaigning for action to remedy children's plights in other countries. Concerns with injustices in a global context may be part of an empathic child's experience.

On the dark side, empathy may produce such intense experience of distress that it interferes with children's functioning. When gifted children become aware of the suffering of others, whether it is in their immediate surroundings or oceans away, they may feel it so deeply that they cannot sleep or eat. Some experience night terrors. In other instances, achievement motivation is negatively affected as they become preoccupied with their worries for other people.

Expressions of concern themselves are not always signs for celebration. A child asking a parent if he or she is all right with a tone of concern is positive at one level. However, it belies an anxiety that may not always be obvious to the parent. When a parent experiences distress, a child's empathic connection, in addition to triggering an expression of concern, may create anxiety because parents are sources of security for children. Experiencing parental distress seems to engender feelings of insecurity, or anxiety, in children.

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High empathy children run the risk of being emotionally overwhelmed by other persons' negative emotionality—distress in others and concomitant anxiety—none of which is of their own making. There lies another difficulty: children who experience the negative emotions of others may do so intensely that they make no separation between self and other. The other person's pain is experienced as one's own. Such experiencing is perplexing for parents and teachers when they see no apparent reason for the child's distress, since empathy is a covert process. Negative emotions in parents and teachers trigger a state of anxiety within such children since the quality of their daily experiences, physical and psychological, depends on them. Tensions in significant others detected by empathic children creates negative emotionality that is independent of the child's behaviors.

To help gifted children learn to deal effectively with heightened empathy, our approach needs to address both edges of empathy. The goal is self-evident but difficult to achieve: we need to reduce the negative and enhance the positive aspects. One approach to help significant others reduce the negative aspects of empathy is to help them identify avoidable sources of anxiety in adult-child interactions. Assisting them to enhance the positive includes helping parents and teachers enhance their effective responding to children's expressions of their empathy.

Identifying Sources of Avoidable Anxiety
As a psychologist, I am concerned with the reduction of the negative outcomes of empathy for gifted children. Specifically, I am concerned with the reduction of anxiety that I associate with empathic experiencing of these children. While anxiety is an unpleasant fact, there are sources of unnecessary anxiety to which children are exposed in their dealings with significant others. A theme in these sources is the state of mind of the child's significant others. I have identified four such sources of anxiety as a result of my counseling gifted children, their parents, and teachers: conflict between parents (between teachers, between parents and teachers); discussion of adult themes in children's presence; intensely negative emotions when interacting with the child; and distress within significant others.

Conflict between significant adults. This is not surprising since all children will be affected by tension between their parents, teachers or between parents and teachers. The difference for highly empathic children rests in the amount of information needed to detect tension and the intensity of their experiencing of significant others' tensions. Open warfare between parents will be devastating for all children. With highly empathic children, it is difficult to hide tension from them. Masking the conflict is not sufficient. Parents have to genuinely put their own differences aside when they interact with their children. What they do behind closed doors out of the sight and earshot of children is another matter. Their demeanor and behavior with the children present is paramount; masking or faking will not do with these children. Specifically, parents should avoid all discussions of their relationship issues, fighting or bickering. Parties in marital discord should enter into a pact that they will do their utmost to protect their children from the tensions of their problems. Parents should also refrain from criticizing the other's parenting in the presence of children. A common form of conflict is created by parental inconsistency. Disagreements regarding parenting issues should be worked out by parents in private, not fought over with children present. For example, when one parent insists on the child's adhering to bedtime, it is not appropriate for the other to intervene advocating for the child.

Discussion of adult themes. It comes to the surprise of some parents, when I raise this as a source of anxiety. Some parents think nothing of discussing issues relating to their own families of origin in the presence of their children. Some do not realize that expressing their frustration with Rita, Aunt Rita for the child, will be a source of discomfort for him or her. Discussion of current events, watching the news on television are also potential sources of anxiety for an empathic child. Through empathy, such children experience vicariously the distress of others in the news (people in poverty stricken countries, war casualties, accident victims, etc.). Being confronted with these negative events, gifted children may also experience worry and anxiety that they may have a difficult time overcoming.

One reason parents are often unaware of the negative influence of exposure to adult themes on their gifted children rests in the definition of empathy: empathy refers to the experiencing of the emotions of others, not to expressions. With no obvious indication of

the process of empathy, parents are unaware of the distress the child is feeling. Parental self-awareness and perspective-taking may be used to determine the presence of distress in their children. Parents who discuss such themes should become aware of their engaging in these discussions. They should take note of children's behaviors before, during, and after such discussions. Changes in children's nonverbal behaviors may serve as clues to their internal states. Several questions may be used to assist parents in this endeavor: Are the children looking at parents from time to time? Sporadic eye contact? Changes in interest in child's current activity? Do children display disruptive behaviors or seem upset during or after the parental conversations? Sometimes children display disruptive behaviors after hearing such parental conversations. In these instances, negative behaviors seem to "come out of nowhere."

Intensely negative emotions in interactions with children. Regardless of how significant adults handle teaching their children what are acceptable or unacceptable behaviors, such situations are inherently negative for them. Parents and teachers who overreact emotionally in the process needlessly increase the negativity of the situation. Emotionality disproportionate to a situation is a source of avoidable anxiety for children. This is illustrated in a parent's being angry rather than irritated with a child's misbehavior. In extreme situations, when parents become enraged (often described as "losing it" in counseling sessions), children's experience of anxiety is equally intensified. This is particularly the case when there is a Jekyll and Hyde situation: a parent who is usually very calm but occasionally and unpredictably erupts with extreme anger. Intensely negative reactions can prove devastating to children. Ironically, parents report that they, too, feel severe discomfort on these occasions. It is unrealistic to expect parents and teachers to be completely calm in the face of all children's misbehaviors. The goal should be the avoidance of overreactions.

In counseling parents, I have used two concepts that have proven useful in eliminating parental overreactions: self-monitoring and proportional emotionality. The underlying principle is that parental negative emotional reactions should be in sync with children's level of non-compliant/disruptive behaviors. Responding to a child's noncompliance to a request to remove dinner plates should not have the same intensity as telling a child to

stop hitting a sibling. Self-monitoring of parental emotional responses to daily disciplinary situations serves to enhance awareness of their emotional reactions. Change begins with awareness; however, a specific type of awareness is needed. Through practice, parents become aware *during* their interactions with children. There is little value of awareness after the fact. Awareness in the moment of interaction itself serves to reduce the intensity of emotional response. My thinking, in effect, is that by increasing our awareness in disciplinary situations, our intensity of emotionality will become more proportional. In this analysis, emotional overreactions are defined with respect to the child's behaviors. In other words, children's misbehaviors at times may elicit very strong reactions, which would not be considered "over" reactions. Children's behaviors that verge on creating serious health and safety issues for the child or others (playing with knives, running toward a busy street) will likely elicit strong emotional reactions from parents; these are in line with the seriousness of the misbehaviors. Having said this, there is no question that reducing emotional overreactions requires sustained effort by parents. For parents of empathic children, however, attaining this parenting goal is an important contribution to their emotional well-being.

Tensions in significant others as individuals. A fourth source of anxiety is the tension or stress that parents and teachers bring to parenting and teaching that has nothing to do with their roles. Children also detect adults' personal stress such as job stress and frustrations with personal life issues. Being children, egocentric in processing such interactions, they will typically assume that our negative demeanors in their presence have something to do with them. They may automatically assume that our bad moods are their fault. Highly empathic children will not only feel the distress of the adults but also the anxiety associated with assumption of responsibility for that distress.

Responding to Empathic Gifted Children's Expressions of Empathy
To facilitate the development of the positive side of empathy, we need to concern ourselves with at least two areas: altruistic behaviors and emotional expressions. We need to acknowledge and praise occurrences of children's behaviors when focused on the needs of other people. While this seems self-evident, I am surprised how often parents of gifted children report that they do not communicate this to their children. Reasons provided by parents vary: their children "already know" how pleased parents are, altruism

is a "normal" expectation, and, fear of "inflating their egos." Belief that acts of charity have intrinsic rewards and that the child knows what a parent is thinking are negative influences. When parents and teachers acknowledge children's positive behaviors, these are more likely to increase; such is the basic principle of reinforcement.

Dealing with children's emotional expressions associated with empathy is a challenging task. In empathy as affective response to others, a central theme is that of emotionality. As noted above, emotional expression is not part of the definition of empathy, experience is. However, based on instances reported during counseling sessions, there is a threshold of emotional experience above which "leakage" (spontaneous emotional expression) occurs. When a child experiences the distress of others in an intense manner, perceptive parents and teachers will notice changes in the child's nonverbal behaviors. Some significant adults notice such changes instinctively though the source of and reason for the distress is not readily apparent.

Some children may shed tears silently as they are overwhelmed by their perceptions of other children's unjust treatment by children or adults. Noting such changes is not the difficult part, knowing how to respond is. In such instances, where we see nonverbal signs of intense emotionality, children need adults' verbalizations indicating that they notice and are interested in their children's feelings. For example, saying "I see that you are upset" or "You look sad" serves to acknowledge children's emotionality while providing an invitation for them to express themselves. In the process, significant adults communicate that children are important. Regardless of the wording of a response from significant others, a lack of response is often the worst choice. Children who appear stressed need acknowledgement from us. They need us to show interest in them at those times.

A less problematic situation arises when a child engages in verbal emotional expression. As in the case of empathy motivated behaviors, emotional expressions are observable indicators and provide information that parents can address. For example, children's expressions of their worries about human beings living in deplorable conditions should be accepted and acknowledged. Descriptions by parents of their responses to such situations

with gifted children reveal a tendency to acknowledge children's emotions immediately followed by parents' attempting to reduce children's expressed discomfort. There is an "acceptance-acknowledgement-solution" sequence to this type of parental response. Initial parents' acknowledgement responses reflect an accepting attitude by communicating affirmation of the children's expressions ("Yes, it is awful that some people live under those conditions.") and/or providing supportive feedback ("It bothers me to see you upset but I am pleased to see how caring a person you are."). With little or no time interval, a follow-up statement indicates a solution orientation aimed at reducing children's pain: "But you know, there are agencies that do a lot of good work in that country." Neither the parents' motivation nor the statement itself is the issue; it is the timing. Such discussions tend to be more beneficial after children have had opportunities to fully express their feelings and feel fully heard by parents.

When confronted with children's expressions of empathy, I have found that the most powerful adult response is acceptance without the immediate solution focus; empathically created emotions are to be expressed fully, not "fixed." Allowing a child the opportunity to express, that is, elaborate on his or her feelings, is the challenge for parents. This requires parents' inhibition of their natural inclination to worry about their children on such occasions. The only way that I have found to "fix" empathically elicited emotions in children is to provide a supportive environment within which they can express them. In many cases, this can be achieved within a few minutes when parents encourage the full expression of children's worries.

Nurturing Empathy: Summary of Implications of a HMS Perspective
Empathy as a characteristic of gifted children is assumed an integral part of giftedness. In this sense, parents and teachers will encounter it in their interactions with gifted children. Empathy conceived as a facet of HMS or in the definitions found in psychological research emphasizes its experience, not expression. Based on my counseling experience, I have concluded that many parents operate under the belief that "if I don't see it, it isn't there." From my HMS perspective, I begin with the assumption that empathy is there whether parents have seen expressions of it or not. I believe that nurturance of empathy begins with accepting this assumption.

Nurturing expressions of empathy can be accomplished by direct instruction, lowering unnecessary anxiety, and facilitative responding by significant others. By understanding empathy as a part of giftedness, significant others can use direct instruction to normalize children's experiences. Teaching gifted children about empathy is best achieved during so called "teachable moments" when children experience empathic reactions. Observant significant others will discover many such opportunities judging from parents' and teachers' depictions in counseling sessions and workshops.

A second way of nurturing expressions of empathy is to reduce children's exposure to sources of anxiety that are under adults' control. Parents and teachers should empirically assess how they stand on the sources of anxiety noted above. Identification and removal of needless expressions of distress by significant others will contribute significantly to empathic children's well being. Children who are likely to experience the distress do not need exposure to stresses brought on unwittingly by significant others who are entrusted with children's well being.

Facilitative responding to children's emotional leakage, verbalizing of emotions, and altruistic behaviors is a third category significant others should consider. The theme in these is attentiveness to children's behaviors by parents and teachers. From an HMS point of view, parents and teachers need to engage in perspective-taking when interacting with their children. By observing children's verbal and nonverbal behaviors, significant adults can generate inferences about children's internal states. These inferences provide teachers and parents with a point of departure for gaining an understanding of children's attitudes and moods. The concept of perspective-taking formalizes what we do spontaneously on a daily basis. Further, significant others need to be mindful of their own empathic connection with children. The conception of empathy discussed in this article applies to adults as well as children. Parent or teacher empathy is both positive and negative. In the face of empathic expressions by children, it is the "cognitive awareness" or perspective-taking that is more important. As significant others, we are responsible for the well being of children, including their emotional welfare. Our own empathic reactions to their emotional expressions may interfere with this duty should we allow our vicarious experiencing of their distress to overwhelm us.

For significant others, empathy in the counseling tradition is the most appropriate type when responding to empathy in gifted children. To review, therapeutic empathy includes perspective-taking (understanding the other person's internal states) and communicating that understanding to him or her. Because of the popularization of this form of empathy in courses and self-help books, it is important to note that the potency of empathic communication does not rest in the words used. There is no formula to use. In fact, parents' attempts to use such formulas (You feel _____ because_____) may backfire: children may detect discomfort parents may feel as they attempt to talk in an unfamiliar way. The power of therapeutic empathy is in the attitudinal area. To use it effectively, we need to accept the other person in the interaction. As we genuinely try to understand him or her from his or her point of view, we need to communicate our inferences in a way that is consistent with who we are.

Conclusion
Empathy in gifted children is a diamond in the rough; whether it becomes a gemstone will depend on the caring, wisdom and facilitative responding by significant others they meet. Left in its rough state, expressions of empathy will shine through occasionally, but its true brilliance will not be actualized. Left unattended, the dark side of empathy will pose a challenge for gifted children throughout their lives. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to assist gifted children transform naturally occurring empathy into a trait that will enrich their own and other people's lives.

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THE SCIENCE OF WELL-BEING:
A NEW WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE GIFTED
Kevin Cloninger

He who despairs of man does not know God, for in times of light He is called Faith and in
times of darkness He is called Hope.
Alphonse de Lamartine

Introduction

Hope is a sublime aspect of human existence. It is the ultimate shoulder in hard times. Its
function in human psychology is vital to perseverance, persistence, and indeed resiliency.
However, Hope is not universally understood or relied upon. A brief reflection on our
friends and family will quickly reveal that people are not equally hopeful or resilient. The
common debate between pessimists and optimists does well to highlight this point.
Optimists would argue that pessimists are lacking confidence in regards to life; while
hoping for the best, they expect the worst. Optimists on the other hand, tend to look for
the best and try to hope for it in troubled times. As Voltaire astutely advises in *Candide*,
optimists would do well to avoid following in the footsteps of the famous Dr. Pangloss,
whose mantra rang, "Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." Clearly
this is optimism run amuck. Pessimists would rightly argue that by taking this position, we
fail to be attentive to the tragedy and suffering in existence. Nonetheless, Voltaire, at the
close of *Candide*, offers another suggestion that is important for this discussion on
giftedness and Hope:

> The whole little society entered into this praise-worthy plan; each started
> to exercise his talents. The little property produced much. True,
> Cunégonde was very ugly, but she became an excellent pastry cook;
> Paquette embroidered; the old woman took care of linen. Not even
> Friar Giroflée failed to perform some service; he was a very good
> carpenter, and even became respectable; and Pangloss sometimes
> said to Candide: "All events are linked in the best of possible worlds.
> "That is well said," replied Candide, 'but we must cultivate our garden."
> (p. 249).

This quote illustrates what I wish to express in this paper. If provided with a rich
educational environment that allows students to cultivate their gifts, giftedness allows
young students not only to think about Hope, but also to have a deep comprehension of it.
The educational environment is the nourishment, water, and light necessary for these
young students to blossom in their comprehension of Hope. Hence, in the spirit of

Voltaire, we must help guide our students and children to work on cultivating their gardens if we wish for them to reap a bountiful harvest of Hope and resiliency.

Definitions of Giftedness

Understanding how to guide our students requires an understanding of the development and origins of giftedness. Recent advances in modern psychology provide a new lens for examining giftedness (Cloninger, 2004). This new approach to psychology is significantly different from prior theories in the field and will require a long investigation before we can fully explore the relationship between Hope and giftedness. Let us begin by exploring several definitions of giftedness.

As early as 800 B.C., in the Torah and in the works of Pythagoras, we see references to gifts. These gifts of the spirit had been discussed such a long time that it is difficult to know the origins of the term "gift." The fact that we refer to the amazing capacities and talents that certain individuals possess as gifts alludes to their mysterious origins in that, just like a gift in the material sense, its arrival is unexpected and its purpose is unclear. In America, it was in 1972 that the U.S. Commissioner of Education presented a definition to Congress:

> Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. (Coleman, 2004, p. 10)

As might be expected, the definition was left a bit open-ended to maximize the freedom of those in gifted education. Since that time, definitions of giftedness have greatly expanded (Coleman, 2004; Renzulli, 1986; Sternberg, 2000, 2003; Winner, 1996, 2000a, 2000b). The increased interest in definitions has led to a debate on numerous issues concerning giftedness (Coleman, 2004; Winner, 1996). The constant debate about definitions of giftedness have led some, like Laurence Coleman (2004), to ask if consensus on a definition in the field is possible, desirable, or necessary.

As research on intelligence, creativity and cognition has advanced, definitions have enlarged to encompass more than just strict intellectual gifts; they now include an ever-broadening set of abilities and talents (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999; Sternberg, 2000, 2003; Winner, 1996;). Gardner, in his theory of multiple intelligences, proposed eight discrete forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1983, 1999). By looking in a pluralistic fashion at intelligence, Gardner helped widen the view of gifted from something purely academic or intellectual. Likewise, Sternberg's work on defining giftedness has broadened definitions of giftedness to include wisdom, creativity, and intelligence, something he has since termed the WICS model: Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity, Synthesized (Sternberg, 2003). In his words, the WICS model contends that "... wisdom, intelligence and creativity are sine qua non for the gifted leaders of the future. Without a synthesis of these three attributes, someone can be a decent contributor to society, and perhaps even a good one, but never a great one" (Sternberg, 2003, p. 112).

Despite advances in the field which include broader definitions than had existed at the beginning of the 20th century, the gifted identification process still relies heavily on quantitative measures to assess student preparedness for gifted education and gifted programs. This is the result of the legacy of IQ testing and Terman's early research on the gifted (Terman, 1925). Quantitative IQ tests represent the most commonly used battery to identify gifted students. Winner (2000b) points out that the children in Terman's now famous longitudinal study of 1,528 children with IQs averaging 151 were surprisingly well-rounded and socially well adjusted—all growing to lead successful professional careers. However, none of them made "widely recognized intellectual breakthroughs" (Winner, 2000b, p. 153). Research has shown that although some children may have exceptionally high IQs, this in and of itself does not necessarily lead to eminence. Thus, although IQ is a measure that can be used to detect some developmental abnormalities, both positive and negative, there is now consensus in the field that giftedness cannot be defined solely through the use of IQ testing (Lovecky, 1998; Renzulli, 1986; Roeper, 2004; Silverman, 1994; Sternberg, 2003; Winner, 2000b).

There are tests that attempt to assess creativity, artistic prowess, and other such talents, but what of theological or spiritual understanding? What of athletic ability? Qualitative approaches to identification of the gifted take into consideration such gifts or abilities but have not taken a dominant place in the assessment of the gifted. Current identification protocols do a much better job of identifying talents that lie in an intellectual or creative domain, rather than those that lie in an emotional, athletic, or spiritual one. In Annemarie Roeper's words:

> Interest in gifted children is focused primarily on their intellectual and creative characteristics rather than on their emotional nature. There is, however, an awareness of the dichotomy between their intellectual and emotional development, the intellectual viewed as advanced and the emotional as normal or slow. I believe this model to be inaccurate and detrimental in planning for the gifted child. A child is a total entity, a combination of many characteristics. (Roeper, 2004, p. 74)

We often focus on the intellectual aspects of giftedness at the expense of more inclusive views of giftedness. When we focus exclusively on the intellectual aspects we can forget others, such as emotional or spiritual giftedness. As Roeper argues, we neglect the fact that the child is a "total entity," with many aspects.

It is easy to see the forgotten aspects of giftedness when working with gifted children. In my own experience, I have found that many have a clear and profound sense of deep philosophical notions such as Truth, Beauty, Time, Hope, God, and the Soul. I have been fascinated to learn that if we do not take the time to listen to these children we could easily miss this dimension of their experience. In a philosophy class I taught to third and fourth graders, the children wanted to discuss the Iraq war. One little girl began to speak about her views of good and evil:

> I don't believe that there is evil. I don't think there is anything called evil because, what about the other people ...There is no such thing as evil, cause good, um, people ... because everyone has good in them. Sometimes they do it for the wrong reason. Now we can do something like that [like war] and sometimes they do it for the wrong reason.

Aristotle first made the argument this nine-year-old was making—no one intentionally does evil, because everyone is intrinsically good. It is only a lack of free-will that leads people to commit evil acts. One young boy, 10 years old, who was fascinated by the

creation of the universe, had put his finger on the problem of first cause and causality: "If God created the universe, then who created God, and when would it ever stop?" Lovecky (1998) gives many examples of gifted children who demonstrate spiritual sensitivity. At the age of six, Ruby Bridges was one of the children chosen to integrate New Orleans Public Schools in the early 1960's (Lovecky 1998). When asked about it at the age of ten, she reported that she felt she had she had needed to be the one to do it. In her own words, she was "God's Ruby." Jennie, a four-year-old girl, asked herself, "If God really loves everyone, then what happens to bad people?" (Lovecky, 1998). She felt that the bad people should also go to Heaven if God really loves everyone. One very young boy named Martin, age three, grieved when his grandmother passed away. He described that he was angry with God for allowing this to take place—that is until he thought about what happens after death and decided that at death human beings went on to become angels, much like caterpillars become butterflies (Lovecky, 1998). He found a deep sense of Hope at the age of three. Similarly, in an article entitled, *The World as I See It* (1931), Einstein described what brought him Hope:

> To inquire after the meaning of an object of one's own existence or that of all creatures has always seemed to me absurd from an objective point of view. And yet everybody has certain ideals which determine the direction of his endeavors and his judgments ...The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. (1954, p.8)

These examples, and many others, force us to confront our conceptions of giftedness. What are the various "characteristics" that make up the whole child? Are our definitions of giftedness sufficiently developed to account for all characteristics of giftedness? What are the origins of giftedness? Where does this "wisdom," to use Sternberg's word, come from?

The disregard for spiritual aspects of giftedness can be explained in part by examining our assumptions about reality. Our metaphysical assumptions about the world can strongly impact the way we view the world. Johnson (2005) discusses three metaphysical perspectives that are currently extant in the field of gifted education: materialistic monism, dualism, and transcendental monism. The materialistic monist perspective assumes the universe is made up of only matter and energy and explicitly denies any spiritual dimension in existence. Those holding this view in the field of gifted education argue that

learning consists of receiving knowledge from outside of the individual and that that knowledge must be demonstrated by success on tests and assignments. This metaphysical perspective assumes that giftedness is a matter of scoring high on an objective, standardized assessment or psychometric ability test (Johnson, 2005). From the dualist perspective, in addition to the world being composed of matter and energy, there also exists consciousness; however, the latter is separated from the former. Johnson states that:

> Consciousness (people's subjective interpretation of the outer phenomenal world) is studied using observations, descriptions, ethnographies, and interview. Consciousness also pertains to the subjective interpretation of one's inner world of feelings, memories, and impressions ...Some will posit that consciousness also includes superconsciousness or spirituality. (Johnson, 2005, p. 68)

The philosophical view of constructivism is consistent with this view. That is to say, individuals are responsible for the construction of knowledge. Truth is subjective to each individual in this view. Thus, learning takes place as a result of the interplay between the individual and his or her environment. Achievement is viewed as the students' ability to use knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. This view of achievement, Johnson argues, reflects Gardner's (1983) definition of intelligence. It also concurs with Sternberg's notion of intelligence "as using a creative, analytical, and pragmatic thinking to adapt to or shape the world in which we live." Johnson (2005, p. 68) adds, "From this perspective, giftedness is having outstanding abilities to solve problems, make products, or perform in a particular domain." Johnson argues that Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) typifies programs built according to this perspective (Renzulli & Reis, 1997, in Johnson, 2005).

The last metaphysical view, transcendental monism, differs from the dualistic perspective in that the very nature of reality is consciousness. Matter and energy are a viewed as a form of consciousness, not a separate substance. This view of reality is supported by our knowledge of quantum physics, which provides us with a plausible mechanism for seeing all things as connected at the quantum level. Those who view the world from this perspective see the universe as made up of integrated wholes that cannot be reduced to the sum of their parts. If we extend this to curriculum, the key notion would be making connections. Truth is seen to be innate and existing within the individual. Thus, teachers

must create conditions in which students are able to encounter phenomena that help individuals to reap their rich innate endowment. As Johnson (2005, p. 69) states, "Learning is said to have occurred when this view elicits a transformation of consciousness that leads to a greater nurturing of self, others, and the environment. From this perspective, a school's fundamental purpose is the creation of better human beings, which occurs through self-actualization and self-transcendence." From this perspective, gifted students are not identified formally; instead, gifted behaviors are sought within all students. This point of view resonates strongly with Roeper's view that we neglect the fact that the child is a "total entity," possessing many aspects. Johnson does well to point out how each of these various perspectives can strongly influence our definitions of giftedness and learning. Johnson does not advocate one perspective but suggests that one of the current problems in gifted education is an over-reliance on materialistic monism to determine the advancement and direction of the field. The materialistic perspective is the most reductionistic, and therefore it reduces dialogue and inclusiveness in the field. As we have already seen, definitions in the field of gifted education have greatly expanded, and while the materialistic perspective may stifle progress, the dualistic and transcendental monist perspectives allow for the application of these discoveries (e.g. Sternberg's wisdom).

In recent years, there has been a call in the field of gifted education to attend to the oft forgotten aspects of giftedness, such as wisdom and spirituality (Harrison, 2000; Lovecky, 1998; Piechowski, 2000; Roeper, 2004; Sisk and Torrance, 2001; Sternberg, 2003). Moreover, some contend that the field has become too insulated and specialized in certain regards and could benefit from an expansion of conceptual horizons (Ambrose, 2005a, 2005b; Coleman, 2004; Dai, 2005; Johnson, 2005; Miller, 2005). Ambrose (2005b) proposes that the field take a deeper look at advancements in the fields of psychology, biological, neurobiology, and quantum physics. He states:

> The field of gifted education is very complex, covering broad and deep conceptual terrain. Insights about giftedness and talent are available from diverse academic disciplines and at multiple levels of analysis. These levels are captured in an interpretive framework that moves from the macrolevels of broad sociopolitical, cultural and economic contexts through the levels of the immediate classroom context and psychology of the individual to the microlevels of organic structure, microbiology and the subatomic realm. (Ambrose, 2005b, p. 137)

Indeed, each of these levels of analysis is important to our understanding of giftedness. The subatomic level of analysis, for example, may provide many new insights to the field of gifted education. Many experiments in subatomic physics have demonstrated that the experimenter's own subjectivity can influence the outcome of an experiment. Thus, when considering the future of subatomic physics, physicists have had to come to terms with the role of consciousness in all experimentation in physics. Among others, Penrose (1994, 1998), Stapp (1998), and Eccles (1996) have begun to look for quantum level dynamics at the level of the brain-mind system. Ambrose states:

> For example, physicist-mathematician, Roger Penrose theorized that tubulin dimers within microtubules, which are minute substructures within the neurons, are small enough to support quantum events thereby providing a quantum level basis for consciousness ... Given the profound success of quantum theory, efforts to connect it with the brain-mind system warrant some attention from our field. (2005b, p. 138).

Ambrose does well to point out that there are insights to be gained from outside the field of gifted education. The fact that there are structures in the brain small enough that we could expect to observe quantum level effects is quite exciting and indeed some have been observed in the brain (Cloninger, 2004). What is clear is that definitions of giftedness, while having expanded in the last twenty years, still neglect the spiritual aspects of giftedness. This is due in large part to our metaphysical assumptions about the universe. From a materialistic monist perspective it simply isn't good science to consider spirituality. Nonetheless, many people in gifted education have argued that we must consider the spiritual aspects of giftedness. As Ambrose points out in his article, we must at least consider looking outside the field of gifted education for fresh insights into the field of gifted education. The rest of this paper will be devoted to exploring insights for the field of gifted education based on the work of Cloninger (2004), which attempts to integrate data from the various levels of analysis to which Ambrose refers.

The Science of Well-Being

Dr. C. Robert Cloninger—a psychiatrist who has worked on the neurobiology, genetics, and development of personality for over twenty years—has recently advanced a theory he calls "the Science of Well-Being" (Cloninger, 2004). Cloninger was among the first to seek a comprehensive "biopsychosocial" explanation for human personality growth and development. That is, Cloninger has shown that the human being is an integrated

hierarchy of biological, psychological, and social systems that adapts to changes in the environment. He argues that the degree of adaptability depends on the level of awareness of the context in which one lives. An individual's awareness of his/her context varies greatly, even within the same individual over the course of time—even from moment to moment. Cloninger states that individuals can grow in their degree of self-awareness over time. More specifically, he has shown that the self-aware consciousness of a person progresses through a hierarchy of stages that leads to increased levels of wisdom and well-being. Cloninger traces the development of human consciousness as a movement through a nested hierarchy of complex adaptive systems; or in other words, not a linear, step-wise growth. The individual is growing in multiple planes simultaneously, and changes in any of these levels (or nested hierarchies) in turn affect the others. Notice that these are not value-laden hierarchies. Each plane is essential for human existence and all planes interact and interrelate with one another. This is a very important point that merits further historical explanation.

The study of human development has been a subject of great interest to the field of psychology from its very origins. Freud was concerned with the development of the individual based on experiences from early childhood (e.g. anal stage, oral stage, etc.) With the work of Piaget, the focus of human development took on more biological roots. Piaget, a zoologist by training, applied a biological perspective to generate a theory of child development. Piaget attempted to explain epistemology and cognitive structures as a result of the interaction between a child's genetic endowment and his or her environment (Piaget, 1926). Accordingly, Piaget believed that children did not begin life as cognitive beings, but rather slowly through perception and motor activities the child would develop and modify schema. Piaget called this process *adaptation* (*assimilation and accommodation*). In this sense, the child is constructing meaning through interaction with the environment. These *schemas* are essentially cognitive structures that help the child make sense of the environment.

Furthermore, Piaget believed that all children progressed through a series of developmental stages in a linear progression: 1) The Sensorimotor Period (0 to 2 years); 2) Preoperational Thought (2 to 6 or 7 years); 3) Concrete Operations (6 or 7 to 11 or 12

years); and 4) Formal Operations (11 or 12 to adult). During the sensorimotor stage, infants and toddlers use their eyes, ears, hands, and other sensory organs to think about and feel the world. During the preoperational stage, Piaget thought that children acquire skills in the area of mental imagery, and language. They are very self-oriented and have an egocentric view. In contrast to children in the preoperational stage, children in the concrete operations stage are able to take into account another person's point of view and consider multiple perspectives simultaneously. They begin to use logic and think more fluidly during this stage. Piaget considered concrete operational phase to be the ultimate stage of development. In this phase, children were able to think logically and abstractly, as well as being able to perform complex problem-solving behavior and to use hypothetical-deductive reasoning. Children would only continue to grow in experience and knowledge, but cognitively they would not advance further.

Although Piaget was extremely important in the field of developmental psychology, his theories have been subject to much criticism in recent years. Psychologists can no longer accept the notion that all children develop in a linear progressive fashion through a series of stages. It is best to consider the various stages as an "average," where many children are at a specific age when considering the population as a whole. However, when individual development and growth are taken into consideration, such broad trends become less useful. In fact, giftedness is perhaps one of the most striking examples of how such linear views are shortsighted. Gifted children display "asynchronous," or non-linear, development (Silverman, 1994). A child may be capable of solving complex mathematical problems at an early age, and then the same child will turn and show you the food in their mouth or burst into tears. If we consider the various domains of human life, we can see how individuals differ in growth within each of these domains. For example, the child who showed you his food and burst into tears may be exhibiting typical behavior of a child of that age, but doing math problems like a person many years older and wiser. Similarly, children with gifts in different domains, such as the corporeal or emotional domain, may exhibit behavior that is extremely advanced in such domains and at the same time totally "normal" in others. Winner (2000a) cites research that demonstrates that academically gifted children, when assessed with difficult tests with no ceilings, often reveal uneven or "jagged" ability profiles. In other words, a gift in one

scholastic area does not imply a gift in another. Detterman and Daniel (1989, in Winner, 2000a) have found that the higher the IQ, the more common it is to find mathematical ability far higher than verbal ability in individuals with a high-IQ as compared to those with a low-IQ. Winner (2000a) describes similar discrepancies that have been reported by Wilkinson (1993), Achter, Lubinski, and Benbow (1996), Benbow and Minor (1990), and Silver and Clampit (1990). Furthermore, Winner points out that such unevenness in abilities is not surprising because the abilities that underlie mathematical and verbal giftedness are not the same. That is, mathematical giftedness requires greater spatial understanding than verbal giftedness (see also Mann, 2005). Gifts in music or art can exist in children with average or even below average IQ's (Winner, 2000a). Furthermore, autistic and mentally retarded children who display great musical ability, often called "musical savants," demonstrate that high IQ has nothing to do with giftedness in music. "Twice-exceptional" students and gifted children with learning disabilities also demonstrate the discrete nature of gifts (Nielsen 2002; Winebrenner, 2003). In the case of twice-exceptionality, it is clear that gifts are not a continuous phenomenon that we see in multiple domains; they are present in one domain and absent from another. In a more recent study, Mann (2005) looked at gifted students with spatial strengths and sequential weakness, a population she says is greatly overlooked and under-identified in the gifted population.

Clearly, the linear, step-wise development envisioned by Piaget is a thing of the past. Psychologists can no longer accept such thinking in the face of overwhelming evidence of individual differences in development. Nonetheless, the shadow cast is quite long and since many children do follow developmental paths that are close to those described by stage theorists, many schools still operate and design curriculum assuming that such a view is correct. Certainly the materialistic monist perspective plays an important role in maintaining the stagnation in this dualistic and linear thinking. Thus, the notion of an individual that is growing in multiple planes simultaneously has only begun to be understood and studied by those in the field of gifted education. With a more complete understanding of the meaning of a non-linear pattern of development, we can start to consider the quantum nature of thoughts and gifts.

New Perspectives on the Origins of Gifts
The Quantum Nature of Gifts and Human Consciousness

As Ambrose (2005b) points out, the field of gifted education can certainly learn from the quantum revolution. In particular, conceptions of giftedness and gifted identification methods can be helped greatly by a quantum understanding of the human being. As was previously described, it is well known by researchers, parents and gifted educators that many gifted children tend to be gifted in specific domains and not across the board. Take for example, a child who is gifted in mathematics or gifted in music. While it is possible that the child is gifted in other areas, it is not necessarily the case. There are many important questions that arise in contemplating this conundrum. Why is it that some students have a gift that is very narrow or discrete? For example, there are students who are gifted in math and poor in reading, or they are very creative but exhibit a poor memory. The discrete nature of giftedness is well illustrated in savants, who have low general intelligence but can possess astounding gifts in specific areas like music, reading, or art. On the other hand, we sometimes observe individuals who are gifted in many if not every domain. Leonardo da Vinci is the obvious example of such a being, but there have certainly been others, both female and male.

Recent research in psychology, based on an understanding of quantum properties, gives us new insight into why gifts could demonstrate such a distribution (Cloninger, 2004). The discrete nature of gifts is similar to the quantum behavior of atoms. Electrons that circulate around the nucleus of an atom do not do so haphazardly. They exist in discrete energy levels at specific distances around the atom and are confined to these levels. This leads to the name "quantum," which refers to the discrete packets of energy that allow for these specific distances around the atom. The discrete nature of gifts warrants their description as "quantum" or "quantum-like."

Gifts arise with little or no experience at a very early age. For example, as a young child, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote his first symphony at the age of 9, an oratorio at the age of 11, and an opera at the age of 12 (Grout and Palisca, 1996). The talented mathematician Ramanujan was capable of deriving complex mathematical formulas without any formal training or education in mathematics beyond the normal school curriculum (Kanigel, 1991). We already saw how individuals with severe mental retardation may still have genius in discrete aspects of intelligence, such as music, art or

mathematics. The gifts displayed by savants are not consistently associated with any individual differences in brain structure or family background (Treffert, 2000, p. 264-265). In other words, a genetic or neurological basis has not been identified in studies of savants. Treffert (2000) attributes the gifts of savants to what he calls "ancestral memories" which he believes to be inherited like instincts even though there is no consistent family resemblance for gifts (Treffert, 2000, p. 219). Treffert (2000, p. 200) quotes William B. Carpenter, who concluded that the abilities displayed by savants were based on innate intuition:

> In each of the foregoing cases, then, we have a peculiar example of the possession of an extraordinary congenital aptitude for certain forms of mental activity, which showed itself at so early a period as to exclude the notion that it could have been acquired by the experience of the individual. To such congenital gifts we give the name intuitions: it can scarcely be questioned that like the instincts of the lower animals they are the expressions of constitutional tendencies embodied in the organism of the individuals who manifest them.

This leads to a challenging question: what is it that allows gifted children to behave as if they had years of experience? The analogy of gifts with quantum mechanics is useful because the standard model of particle formation in quantum physics requires the assumption of a universal field of energy and information, which is called the Higgs field. According to quantum field theory, quanta are constantly arising from, and returning to, a universal field that is filled with energy and information beyond the detection of the physical senses (Cloninger, 2004). If gifts truly are quantum-like phenomena, then, just like discrete packets of light coming in and out of a universal field of energy, gifts may arise out of the recollection of bits of information from a universal field or ocean of memory. To consider this point more fully, we need to look at some mechanisms.

Currently, some extreme modern thinkers believe that experience and culture are all that are needed to explain the human mind. However, with the help of modern developmental psychology, genetics, and neurobiology, we now understand that human beings are not born a *tabula rasa*; rather, human beings come with a rich capital of information. The genetic endowment of the parents ensures that this "newborn" is not at all completely new, but rather very ancient as the parents' gametes carry with them a stock of capital passed on from person to person for generations. Presently, research has not found a significant

genetic or neurological basis for the heredity of gifts. At the level of the mind, gifts may well represent another form of intellectual, psychological, psychical, and spiritual capital of ancient origins. In other words, gifts are a quantum of intuition (e.g. just like a photon is a quantum of light that is capable of exciting electrons to another energy level around an atom). Cloninger suggests that heredity not only exists at a material or biological level, but also at a mental and spiritual one. Thus, each of the three aspects of human existence, body, mind, and psyche, has its own laws of heredity that must be understood. This idea is of course not new; it is at least as old as science itself. However, with the advent of genetics, scientists had considered whether DNA was enough to explain all human heredity. Giftedness is clearly one domain of human behavior that is not as readily explained with genetics alone, and yet gifts still behave as if they were inherited.

A New Look at Factors Influencing Giftedness: Psyche, Memories, and Biology

Similar to Roeper, Cloninger argues that the Cartesian error of separating the body and the mind is a major obstacle to understanding the healthy functioning of an individual. He argues that the only way to reconcile this dualistic thinking is to see how the evolution of the body and the mind move along a common path of growth in self-awareness, which he calls the "path of the psyche." As he states,

> Soma and psyche exist in an irreducible correspondence with one another. *At every step in psychological development, there is synchronous correspondence between the development of our spiritual values, our social relationships, our thoughts, and our brain states as we move along the path of self-awareness to well-being.* (2004, pp. xxi-xxii [italics in original])

Thus, human beings are an irreducible triad, one whole with three aspects moving along a common path towards integration and well-being. Readers will notice that this view is more consistent with the transcendental monism perspective described by Johnson (2005).

This heredity of the mind can be explained, at least in part, by two factors discussed by Dr. Cloninger. These two factors, the psyche and memories, are interrelated and particularly important. Extremely gifted children appear to remember or recollect things of which they have no experience. For example, some children possess the intuitive

understanding of certain problem-solving skills that allow them to solve problems in mathematics without any prior exposure. In this sense, giftedness may in fact be a form of memory, a quantum of intuition, in which the individuals possess a stock of knowledge that affords them the abilities and talents generally exhibited by an individual with years of experience. As previously discussed, this memory or capital may be the result of genetic factors; however, due to a lack of genetic evidence, it seems likely that giftedness is influenced by other factors.

The quantum nature of giftedness helps explain how children could possess such memories. Modern quantum physics has had to deal with similarly astonishing realities. For example, it is known that the sub-atomic particles that form the electrons and protons that constitute the atom disappear and reappear on a routine basis. The big question is "Into what and from what do sub-atomic particles disappear and reappear?" These observations and many others have led physicists to a new assumption in science: all things in the universe exist in unity. This assumption can be demonstrated in numerous ways. For example, physics assumes that physical laws are universal and apply throughout space and time. Furthermore, the standard model of particle physics, with its sub-atomic particles popping in and out of existence, relies upon the acceptance of a universal field, the Higgs field, from which all particles continually arise and to which they return. Similar assumptions must be made in the study of human psychology to explain processes like human thoughts and giftedness. As Cloninger states:

> *The science of well-being is founded on the understanding that there is an indissoluble unity to all that is or can be. The universal unity of being is recognized widely as an empirical fact, as well as an essential organizing principle for any adequate science.* The universal unity of being is not an arbitrary philosophical assumption, and it is not an optimistic assumption. Rather the universal unity of being is the only viewpoint consistent with any coherent and testable science. Any coherent science must recognize its interdependent position within the nested hierarchy of adaptive systems within which everything operates. *Psychology, like particle physics, must postulate a universal field in which all aspects of each person are bound together at the same nodal point in space and time* (2004, p. 317).

Thus, if gifts are truly quantum in nature, then they may represent a type of memory that individuals can access through the unity of consciousness. This is similar to Jungian notions of the collective unconscious. The quantum-like nature of gifts provides a

framework and a justification for the collective unconscious. That is to say, like discrete packets of light in the atom, gifts arise by the recollection of memories from a universal field of memory akin to the Higgs field. A computer analogy is useful for understanding this phenomenon. Memories, which exist like the information in the Internet, are downloaded into the individual, allowing one to manipulate and access the information.

While new to definitions of giftedness, this notion of the collective unconscious has been discussed for centuries. Whenever we speak of innate abilities or of *a priori* knowledge, the issue of its origin and location in the human being always arises. However, the need for some form of innate knowledge to explain certain aspects of human consciousness has been discussed elsewhere. Chomsky argued that the development of language and other forms of knowledge unique to human beings must be the result of innate modules in the mind of the individual. He thought that this was necessary to explain what we observe in human behavior. If most people could not acquire language in the way that a normal human child is observed to, we would consider children with normal language acquisition as "gifted." Chomsky stated:

> My own suspicion is that a central part of what we call 'learning' is actually better understood as the growth of cognitive structures along an internally directed course under the triggering and partially shaping effect of the environment … Scope and limits of development are intimately related. Innate factors permit the organism to transcend experience, reaching a high level of complexity that does not reflect limited and degenerate environment. (Chomsky, 1980, p. 3)

Chomsky is describing innate ideas. Furthermore, Chomsky states that without the common development of language and cognition, our human capacity for empathy and the development of a civilized society would be impossible. If language acquisition is based on an innate endowment, then an individual will not be completely subject to the environmental conditions that one is in; were this not the case, people would be as varied as their environment. This is well explained by Chomsky:

> Consider again the question whether cognitive functions are both diverse and determined in considerable detail by a rich innate endowment. If the answer is positive for some organism, that organism is fortunate indeed. It can then live in a rich and complex world of understanding shared with others similarly endowed, extending far

beyond limited and varying experience. Were it not for this endowment, individuals would grow into mental amoeboids, unlike one another, each merely reflecting the limited and impoverished environment in which he or she develops, lacking entirely the finely articulated and refined cognitive organs that make possible the rich and creative mental life that is characteristic of all individuals not seriously impaired by individual or social pathology. (1980, p. 4).

Chomsky makes a persuasive argument for the importance of shared innate structures for the development of language. This, of course, has wide ramifications for the structure of cognition, as these innate ideas are more intuitive in nature. These basic structures, according to Chomsky, are so basic to our understanding of human language that we do not even ask how they originate. While we have discussed the role of memories in the gifted, Chomsky's work suggests that that this mechanism may be at work in all children. In fact, Chomsky has been criticized for not providing a sufficient explanation of his work. As previously stated, whenever innate ideas are invoked, the mystery of their origins arises. Chomsky has been fairly agnostic on this point. The notion of a universal field of memories gives plausible explanation to what has hitherto been unexplained.

Another important mechanism regarding the origins of giftedness is the level of the psyche. The level of the psyche interacts with memories in order to make them more accessible. The word *psyche* is more commonly referred to as "soul" or "spirit," but Cloninger chose psyche precisely because it makes fewer assumptions than the other more frequently used terms (Cloninger, 2004). The connection between the psyche and gifts has been discussed previously in educational literature. Annemarie Roeper (2005) stated:

> When we look into the eyes of gifted children and adults we see their souls. We receive their message with our own souls. It is my belief that giftedness exists in the heart and soul. (p. 1)

Similarly, Linda Silverman (1994) made the following charge in her paper on the moral sensitivity of gifted children and the evolution of society:

> If we want to have moral leaders, we need to understand and nurture the inner world of the gifted. We need to understand the inherent relationship between abstract reasoning, complexity, moral values and the evolution of society. In forsaking the term, gifted, we seem to have abandoned much more than a name. We have chosen to ignore the

> rich, deep internal milieu from which moral sensitivity and higher level
> value systems emerge. We have forgotten the Self or soul of the child.
> This does not appear to be a wise trade. (p. 115).

Both authors point to this relationship between giftedness and the soul. Cloninger (2004) takes the notion of the psyche head on and describes a number of its characteristics. One is the level or "magnitude" of the psyche:

> First, let us consider the functions of the psyche. The functions of the
> psyche are recollection, understanding, and will [...] Individuals vary in
> their ability to recollect information contained in the cosmic order. The
> level of order of a person's memories of reality greatly influences the
> ability to recognize the way to well-being [...] The greater the level of
> elevation of the psyche, the more extensively and more closely it is
> connected with the whole unity of being. In Erikson's psychodynamic
> terms, the higher the level of elevation of the psyche, the greater will be
> the "social radius" or "sphere of influence" of that individual. In other
> words, the higher the level of awareness and influence, the greater is
> the "magnitude" of the psyche [...] The higher the level of elevation of
> the psyche, the more elevated is a person's world view, average
> thought level, and capacity for well-being. (p. 325)

Based on this understanding of the psyche, we can see that it serves two roles. First it has a tendency to shed light on the individual's level of awareness of reality and to enable the individual to make free choices before taking action. The level of the psyche may also engender certain types of creative gifts in and of itself—these being gifts of the spirit, such as wisdom, patience, council, and creativity. However, the psyche also interacts with the memories of the individual to make them more accessible. To continue our computer analogy, the psyche is analogous to the processor. The more powerful the processor, the more readily available information stored in the long-term memory of the computer becomes for the short-term memory of the computer. Thus the role of the psyche is twofold: it is the root of certain intuitive capacities and gifts, and it serves to amplify the memories that exist in the individual.

We also know that some gifts come from biological capacities. The biological components of giftedness help explain why giftedness sometimes runs in families (Silverman, 2003). Often gifted children can perform difficult mental tasks with relative ease. Such examples, generally speaking, seem to suggest that some children may simply have brains that work more efficiently, more effectively, and more quickly. This can therefore lead to increased

performance in mental and physical abilities such as learning, coordination, agility, and even artistic prowess. Since the advent of gifted education in the United States, IQ tests have been used as a means of identifying the gifted. Mackintosh and others now suggest that the famous "g" factor is probably best understood as working memory (Mackintosh, 1998). This would help explain why IQ can predict successful behavior across a number of different academic tasks. It is well known that gifted children tend to score very well on IQ tests, although not all gifts are identifiable in this manner (Renzulli, 1986). Nonetheless, many gifted children exhibit tremendous memory and can generally manipulate information quickly and efficiently.

We have seen three factors that help us to understand giftedness more clearly: the level of psyche, memories, and biology. Each of these three aspects corresponds to one of the three aspects of our being: psyche, mind, and body. Nevertheless, it is evident that these three factors do not operate in isolation; however this does not preclude the possibility that there are certain forms of giftedness that may be explained by one of the three alone. Although, for the sake of clarity, the three aspects of the being must be discussed individually; reductionistic thinking in the field of gifted education must be avoided at all cost. They are aspects of one unified whole. As Roeper (2005), Lovecky (1998), Johnson (2005), Ambrose (2005b), and Silverman (1994) all point out, we need to adopt a more inclusive view of giftedness without watering down the notion of gifts. Indeed, it may be that what allowed for the genius of Mozart is a combination of all three of these factors. He was born into a family with the means and biological capacity to play music well. He had an elevated psyche and was blessed with a tremendous endowment of musical memory.

As Johnson (2005) pointed out, our metaphysical perspectives strongly impact our views of giftedness and gifted education. Cloninger (2004) is writing from a transcendental monist perspective. Many of the ideas that have been presented may appear shocking or bizarre if considered from the perspective of material monism. Two hundred years ago, the thought that a microscopic substance inside the cell would contain the blueprints for every aspect of the human body would have been regarded as laughable and inane. In much the same way, postulating the existence of a spiritual aspect of the human being

and the universe may seem unscientific from a materialist's perspective. And yet, the notion that consciousness is the fundamental aspect of the universe, something physicists working at the subatomic level must accept, has proved a more powerful explanatory model than Newtonian physics ever was. Indeed, the description of human thought and giftedness presently offered requires a reorientation of our view of human consciousness and human development. Nonetheless, I must ask the reader to remain open to the ideas and notions in the spirit of truth. In the words of Montaigne, "... truth is so great a matter that we must not disdain any method which leads us to it" (Montaigne, 1991, p. 1207). With these factors in mind, we can now turn to another aspect of Cloninger's theory that can help shed light on giftedness and Hope.

A Quantum Description of Human Thought and Giftedness
As previously described in this paper, Cloninger (2004) regards human development not as a linear, step-wise process, but rather as a non-linear complex adaptive system. As he stated:

> Despite the widespread use of stepwise models to describe development in the past, I was surprised to find that psychological development is not really linear. In a one-year follow up study 593 individuals in the general population, we tested my stepwise model and found that dynamics of change were highly nonlinear ... Despite substantial differences between individuals, there is a recognizable path that is most frequent, which we called the "canonical sequence." This canonical sequence is what is usually described in linear stepwise models. The canonical sequence is an approximate description of overall group tendencies, but it does not say anything with precision about any particular individual. (p. 61).

Cloninger's theory of step-wise development integrated many aspects of the developmental theories of Piaget, Freud, Erikson, along with recent evidence in the fields of neurobiology and genetics (Cloninger, 2004). And yet, this model of linear, step-wise development was unable to predict individual development with any precision. For this reason, Cloninger (2004) sought a method for describing the movement of thought in individuals. He describes:

> Likewise, in clinical therapeutic work, I began to face the reality that people simply do not think or change in a predictable linear sequence of developmental steps. When a person's thoughts are observed in their

> natural state of flow (i.e., in free association as described by Freud), they often range widely over many concerns, such as sexuality, aggression, attachments, intellectual questions, and spirituality—all in a rapid succession of complex patterns during one meeting ... Likewise, our interpersonal relationships, which substantially influence psychological development, are not predictable from information about the individuals in isolation from one another ... Rather, our relationships generally depend on factors that are unique to the particular relationship and its context. Furthermore, our interpersonal relationships with individuals vary across many aspects of life, including sexuality, aggression, emotional attachments, intellectual issues, and spirituality. As a result of these clinical and research findings, I concluded that the dynamic organization of thought and interpersonal relationships must involve a complex matrix of states of consciousness, which is not reducible to a linear sequence of development. (pp. 61-62).

What Cloninger realized is that all step-wise models merely approximate the true complexity of human thought and human consciousness. Rather than reducing the true nature of human consciousness to the linear stages of growth Cloninger described a system where the individual is actually growing in multiple planes simultaneously, and changes in any of these levels (or nested hierarchies) in turn affect the others.

Concretely speaking, what are the multiple planes of human consciousness? Cloninger (2004) developed a system for describing the movement and development of human thought based on the evolution of human learning abilities (See tables 1 and 2 for detailed description).

Table 1: Evolution of Consciousness

Evolutionary Level	Animal Group	Emergent Ability	Thought Process
1	Invertebrates Jawless Fish	Reflex Instinct	——
2	Bony Fish Amphibians	Associative Habits	Habit
3	Reptiles	Procedural skills	Intention
4	Mammals	Social Nurturance Play	Emotion
5	Primates	Personal knowledge	Reasoning

| 6 | Great apes

Early *Homo* | Cultural inheritance | —— |
| 7 | Homo Sapiens | Self-awareness | Intuition

Creativity |

Table 1 shows the evolution of consciousness as evolution progressed from invertebrates to human beings. At each evolutionary level there is the appearance of an emergent ability. However, changes in thought processes only occurred at evolutionary levels 2,3,4,5, and 7. Cloninger's descriptions of the planes of human thought and self-awareness consciousness are based on the evolution of human consciousness. **Table reprinted with permission of the author.**

In essence, we can consider human consciousness to exist in five content domains or planes: the sexual or reproductive plane, the material or corporeal plane, the emotional plane, the plane of communication or the intellectual plane, and the spiritual plane. Each of these planes can be seen in the process of human thought described in table 2. Habit corresponds with sexuality (plane 2), intention with the material plane (plane 3), emotion with the emotional plane (plane 4), reason with the intellectual plane (plane 5), and intuition with the spiritual plane (plane 7). The number system, planes 2 through 7, correspond to the developmental order of the thought process in evolutionary history. For this reason the numbers 1 and 6 are skipped (see table 1 on the evolution of consciousness).

Table 2: The Process of Human Thought

Temporal Sequence	*Thought Process*	*(Evolved Order)*
Initial perspective	Intuition	(7)
Abstraction of Ideas	Reason	(5)
Automatic Response	Emotion	(4)
Motivated Response	Intention	(3)
Repetition of Response	Habit	(2)

Table 2 demonstrates the temporal sequence of the human thought process and demonstrates that human thought progresses in the opposite of the evolved order. That is to say that all human thought begins with an initial perspective or intuition, then there is an abstraction of the idea through reason, after which there is an automation of the response via emotion, followed by a motivated response demonstrated through intentions, and finally a repetition of the response demonstrated through habit formation. **Table reprinted with permission of the author.**

Human relationships provide a useful example of the five content domains or planes because one can easily imagine the types of thoughts that are shared in each of these different types of relationships. A lover is an example of a relationship in the sexual plane. A business associate would be an example of a relationship in the material plane. A good

friend you confide in would be an example of a relationship in the emotional plane. A relationship between a teacher and a student would be a good example of a relationship in the intellectual plane. The relationship between a priest and a member of the church might demonstrate a relationship in the spiritual plane. Of course, someone may be in love with his or her business associate, just as a student may disclose his or her emotional problems to a teacher. Thus, it is clear that not only do relationships and thoughts exist at each of these planes; they also exist on multiple planes simultaneously. The essential point is that the discrete or leveled nature of thought provides a basis for the measurement for the natural non-linear movement of human thought.

Based on this notion of the five planes of human thought, we can see that thought is discrete in nature, much like gifts; hence human thought is quantum in nature. In the brain, human thought does not arise in a fragmented state; each thought is a whole and occurs in a discrete packet (Cloninger, 2004). We organize sets of thoughts into sentences using the theorum-like processing of language, but the components that make up language are themselves discrete. The consciousness of the individual will flow from one quantum of thought to another, just like a long conversation with a good friend.

Evidence for the discrete nature of human thought can be seen through work in electrical imaging of the brain using EEG (Cloninger, 2004, pp. 241-244). Essentially, work on the electrical activity of the brain has revealed that changes in the topography of the electrical activity of the brain are strongly discontinuous, changing in discrete steps that last for a fraction of a second and that occur simultaneously with transitions between conscious thoughts in individuals. These brain "microstates" reveal the discrete nature of human thought. Researchers working on brain microstates have dubbed them the "atoms of the mind" in light of their discrete nature. Cloninger (2004) describes it in the following manner:

> Different spatial landscapes of the distribution of the electrical potential are generated by different active populations of neurons, so the different frequencies of thought occur synchronously with transitory connections of different sets of neural networks distributed throughout the whole brain, bound by will as the strong force bind particles in atoms. (p. 245)

Further evidence for the quantum nature of thought is based on the fact that thought can be quantified. Quantification is based on the hierarchy of planes and as we shall soon

see, sub-planes. Moreover, variability in thought can be summarized because we can discuss the average and range (maximum and minimum) of thought in each plane and across all the planes (Cloninger, 2004).

It is interesting to note that gifts can also be classified according to the model of the five planes proposed by Cloninger. Table 3 illustrates an example of how gifts manifest in the various domains of human experience.

Table 3: Gifts in the Planes

	Plane 2 *Sexuality* (Drive and Charisma)	Plane 3 *Materiality* (The Brain, Memory and Physical Talent)	Plane 4 *Emotion* (Empathy and Intensity)	Plane 5 *Communication* (Creativity, Inquiry, and Reasoning)	Plane 7 *Spiritual* (Insight, Integrity, and Spirituality)
Gardner's Intelligences (1983,1993, 1999)	Sexual	Bodily/ Kinesthetic (Martha Graham; Michael Jordan)	Interpersonal (Freud); Naturalistic (Darwin);	Musical (Stravinsky, Mozart); Verbal/Linguistic (T.S. Eliot)	Visual/Spatial (Picasso); Spiritual (Gandhi); Intrapersonal (Freud); Existential (Plato)
Gifts	Seductive or alluring; Charismatic; Leadership	Athleticism; Business; Coordination; Bodily awareness; Dance; Culinary talents	Empathy; Counsel; Imagination	Academic talent; Artistic talent; Creativity; Oratory gifts; Communication	Spiritual Insight and wisdom; Moral insight; Gifts of the spirit

Table 3 demonstrates the quantum nature of gifts and human consciousness. Gardner's intelligences have been included because he gave examples of individuals with the gifts that correspond to each plane. Gardner is still unsure as to whether or not there is spiritual or sexual intelligence, but they were included here for the sake of example. I added Mozart, Michael Jordan, Darwin, Plato, and Gandhi (in the case of spiritual intelligence) to the chart above. Gardner included Martha Graham for bodily/kinesthetic, Gandhi for inter-personal. Stravinsky for musical, Eliot for Verbal/Linguistic, Picasso for Visual/Spatial and Freud for intrapersonal.

Gardner's intelligences were also placed in the structure to demonstrate that correspondence between the various domains and Gardner's theory. The discrete nature of gifts can be clearly seen; however it is interesting to note that individuals may be gifted in more than one domain, as Gardner also points out in his book (1993). Thus, although gifts are discrete in nature, they are still part of a whole human being who may express gifts in several domains simultaneously.

Evidently, it is a bit reductionistic to approach these planes as completely separate from one another; rather they are intrinsically interconnected and interrelated. The fact that all the planes are interconnected means that each of the different planes contains aspects of all the others. Let's think again about the relationships described above. A teacher-

student relationship while primarily an intellectual affair is not necessarily confined to study of a specific subject matter discipline. Teachers can teach a student about sexual education (sexual aspects of the intellectual plane), how to deal with management of finances (material aspects of the intellectual plane), how human relationships develop (emotional aspects of the intellectual plane), metacognition (intellectual aspects of the intellectual plane), and how different cultures view religion and spirituality (spiritual aspects of the intellectual plane). The specifics that I just named are less important than the fact that the intellectual plane can be seen to have aspects of all the other planes within it. In fact, each of the various planes can be seen to have aspects of all the others imbedded within them. Consequently, there are five gradations or sub-planes within each of the five planes of human existence. That is to say, each plane is distinct, but each plane includes aspects of all the others (see table 4). For example, the reproductive plane has sexual aspects, but also material aspects, emotional aspects, intellectual aspects, and spiritual aspects. The same is true of the material plane, the emotional plane, and each of the other planes. Thus, the whole structure is thought to be spiral in nature. In each plane there are sexual, material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects. But as one elevates through the planes from sexual to spiritual one spirals back through the sexual, material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects. With the elevation through each plane the spiral is wider, encompassing all that came before it. Thus, the structure of self-aware consciousness in human beings is spiral in nature (Cloninger, 2004).

Cloninger chose to represent this structure using a 5 by 5 matrix (table 4) that describes, in both qualitative and quantitative fashion, the scope and content of human thought (Cloninger, 2004).

Table 4: Thoughts in the Planes

Sub-plane	Plane 2 (Sexuality) Touch	Plane 3 (Materiality) Taste	Plane 4 Emotion	Plane 5 Intellectual	Plane 7 Spiritual
Sub-plane 7 (Spiritual Aspects)	Mockery or Flirtation	Power or Sarcasm	Contentment or Comfort	Self-Actualization	Coherence (Wisdom) (Well-being) (Freedom) (Creativity)
Sub-plane 5 (Intellectual Aspects)	Devaluation or Idealization	Pride or Inferiority	Empathy or Detachment	Self-transcendence	Patience
Sub-plane 4 (Emotional Aspects)	Harm Avoidance (Worry or denial)	Novelty Seeking (Anger/envy or stoicism)	Reward Dependence (Warmth or coldness)	Persistence (Calmness and conscience)	Conciliation
Sub-plane 3 (Material Aspects)	Hate or Eroticism	Greed or Submission	Attachment or Aloofness	Cooperativeness or nonprejudice	Reverence
Sub-plane 2 (Sexual Aspects)	Emptiness or Lust	Desire or Aversion	Succorance or Rejecetion	Self-directedness or Irresponsibility	Humility

Table 4 demonstrates Cloninger's quantum structure of thought. Human thought varies widely in content with movement across five planes that correspond to the evolutionary hierarchy of brain development (shown in Table 1). Each plane is concerned with the modulation of a different basic emotional conflict. For example, the sexual plane of thought (plane 2) involves the modulation of the conflict between emptiness and lust, which is shown as the sexual aspects of plane 2. **Table reprinted with permission of the author.**

There is also a correspondence between the five planes and our body (see table 5). This is evidenced by looking at the correspondence between our senses and the five planes (Cloninger, 2005). Each of the five planes of human thought corresponds to information gathered through our five physical senses—touch with sexuality, taste with materiality, smell with emotionality, hearing with intellect, and sight with spiritual insight (see table 4).

Table 5: The Body in the Planes

Sub-plane of Body	Implicit Hedonic Value	Plane 2 (Sexuality) Touch	Plane 3 (Materiality) Taste	Plane 4 (Emotion) Smell	Plane 5 (Intellect) Hearing	Plane 7 (Spirit) Vision
Visual/Spiritual Aspects (7)	"Satisfy"	Equilibrium (eye-tracking & balance)	Savoriness (meaty broths, glutamate)	Aroma (comforting blends & progressions)	Harmony (progression and consonance)	Orientation (4D) (sense of direction & interrelatedness in a contextual whole)
Auditory/Intellectual Aspects (5)	"Like"	Tactile (3D) recognition & discrimination (stereognosis)	Sweetness (sucrose)	Scent recognition & discrimination (scent)	Tonal recognition & discrimination (timbre)	Depth (3D) Recognition and discrimination
Olfactory/Emotional Aspects (4)	"Want"	Pain and temperature sensitivity	Saltiness (NaCl)	Fragrance (attractive qualities)	Melody (tuneful intonation, pitch variability)	Color (hue, value, intensity)
Gustatory/Material Aspects (3)	"Explore"	Proprioception (kinesthesia and vibration)	Sourness (acids)	Pungency (impact variability)	Rhythm (beat, accent)	Motion & Line (sense of contrast & movement)
Tactile/Sexual Aspects (2)	"Avoid"	Simple Touch (2D) (smooth/rough) (soft/hard)	Bitterness (alkaloids, glycosides)	Disgust (burned/oxidized, putrid/decaying)	Pitch (categorizing frequencies)	Shape (2D) (categorizing visual patterns)

Table 5 demonstrates the correspondence between the five planes and our body. This is shown through the correspondence between our five senses and the five planes of self-aware consciousness. Each of the five planes of human thought correspond to information gathered through our five physical senses–touch with sexuality, taste with materiality, smell with emotionality, hearing with intellect, and sight with spiritual insight. **Table reprinted with permission of the author.**

In summary, many aspects of the human being are quantum in nature. Cloninger (2004) offers an architecture to measure and describe human thought based on the evolution of the consciousness in animals (see tables 1, 2, and 4). Essentially, the evolution of consciousness represents a series of nested hierarchies. Thus, we can consider that thought exists in five content domains or planes: the sexual or reproductive plane, the material plane, the emotional plane, the intellectual, and the spiritual plane. However, these planes are interconnected; they do not exist in isolation. Individuals many be growing at different rates in different planes. Furthermore, each plane includes aspects of all of the other planes within it. So each plane has sub-planes that correspond with all the other planes. That is to say, each plane has sexual aspects, material aspects, emotional aspects, intellectual aspects, and spiritual aspects (see table 4 and 5). Furthermore, there is also a correspondence between the five physical senses and the five planes of the

human being (table 5). With this architecture in mind, we can now turn our attention to the characteristics of giftedness and explore how gifts exist within each one of these planes.

Understanding Giftedness through the Science of Well-Being
Characteristics of Giftedness
We have already discussed how giftedness can be understood as the consequence of three different and interrelated factors: the psyche, memories, and biology. Each factor has its unique contribution and the three work in synergy. In either case, these factors lead to an enhanced capacity in one of the five planes of the human being. In some rare cases, like a particularly elevated psyche, an individual may demonstrate enhanced capacity in more than one plane. All persons—all animals for that matter—have capacities, but gifted children display enhanced capacities in one plane and thus we label them gifted. This is not a trivial distinction. This view helps us to understand that giftedness, at least in our times, is an exceptional thing.

In an attempt to better understand the quantum nature of giftedness, I took the major characteristics used in the identification of the gifted and organized it according to the 5 X 5 matrix of the planes and sub-planes of self-aware consciousness described by Cloninger (2004). Traits were identified from three sources: 1) the NAGC website; 2) the Gifted Development Center (see www.gifteddevelopment.com; they lists sets of characteristics used in the identification of the gifted that have been pulled from the gifted literature over the last 20 years); and 3) Renzulli's three-ring conception for the identification of the gifted (Renzulli, 1986). The results of the study can be seen in table 6. Current understandings of the characteristics of giftedness can be understood in each of the five planes (table 6). In plane two, the plane of sexuality and reproduction, the characteristics of the gifted have been mostly ignored, although there is often discussion of the intense motivation of the gifted. In plane three, the material or corporeal plane, characteristics of the gifted concern the brain, memory, and physical ability. In plane four, the emotional plane, characteristics of the gifted concern empathy and intensity. In plane five, the plane of communication and culture, the characteristics of giftedness concern creativity, inquiry, and reasoning. Finally, in plane seven, the spiritual plane, the characteristics of the gifted involve insight, integrity, and spirituality.

Table 6: Characteristics of Giftedness in the Planes

	Plane 2 *Sexuality* (Drive and Charisma)	Plane 3 *Materiality* (The Brain, Memory and Physical Talent)	Plane 4 *Emotion* (Empathy and Intensity)	Plane 5 *Intellectual* (Creativity, Inquiry, and Reasoning)	Plane 7 *Spiritual* (Insight, Integrity, and Spirituality)
Sub-plane 7 *Spiritual Aspects*	[Charisma] [Generative]	[Sarcasm]; [Stamina]; [Power];	Great sense of humor;	Perfectionism; High expectations; Mastery;	[Wisdom]; [Spirituality]
Sub-plane 5 *Intellectual Aspects*	Perseverant in their interests;	Rapid learning ability; Extensive vocabulary; Excellent memory; Fluid, concise self-expression	[Gives counsel and guidance]	Advanced comprehension; Formulates abstractions	[Teaching abilities]
Sub-plane 4 *Emotional Aspects*	High Degree of Energy; Pursues special interest areas with enthusiasm and vigor;	Sensitivity; [Attention to detail]	Intensity; Very Empathic	Prefers older companions; Wide range of interests	Compassion for others; Moral Sensitivity; Concerned with justice and fairness
Sub-plane 3 *Material Aspects*	[Self-Confidence]	Early or avid reader; Good memorization; Excellent motor coordination; Acquires basic skills quickly	Excited about new ideas	Good problem-solving ability; High degree of creativity; Vivid imagination; Processes info in complex ways; Creates and invents; Independent thinker; Improvises	Keen powers of observation; Insight [Reverence]
Sub-plane 2 *Sexual Aspects*	Motivation	[Eager to learn]	Well-liked by peers	Long attention span; Strong curiosity; Inquisitive	[Hopefulness]

Table 6 demonstrates the quantum nature of gifts and the leveled nature of characteristics used to identify the gifted. These commonly used characteristics for identification of the gifted were taken from a variety of sources (NAGC, A. Roeper). Also, the Gifted Development Center has a list of characteristics that have been extensively cited in the literature (see www.gifteddevelopment.com). Characteristics in brackets ([ ]) were not observed in the literature and were generated through an understanding of Cloninger's (2004) architecture of the planes and sub-planes.

It is interesting to observe that very little has been offered in the reproductive plane (plane two) and the spiritual plane (plane seven) (see table 6). In 1986, Renzulli proposed a three-ring conception for identification of the gifted that was primarily concerned with three factors: task commitment, above average general ability, and creativity (Renzulli, 1986). Again, here we see that the emphasis placed on identification is primarily in the material planes three and five, the cognitive domain. I am not suggesting that this approach does not sufficiently identify many gifted children. I only intend to underscore that many approaches ignore certain planes, particularly planes two and seven.

Using Cloninger's architecture (table 6) to understand giftedness has two major advantages. It allows us to have a comprehensive view of the individual in all planes and in all three aspects of the being: body, mind, and psyche. Secondly, through an understanding of the five planes and 25 sub-planes of the being, it offers us a comprehensive structure that can be used to generate characteristics not yet or rarely identified. In table 6, the reader can observe that the characteristics used by most professionals to identify gifted children do not encompass all of the 25 sub-planes. Some of the cells in the 5 X 5 matrix would be blank if not for the characteristics in brackets in table 6, which represent additions based on Cloninger's architecture of planes and sub-planes. The architecture offered here may be used to help us better understand all the characteristics of the gifted, particularly those that are overlooked or rarely observed. It is interesting to point out that Dabrowski's notion of overexcitabilities (1967) and the emotional development of the gifted are primarily concerned with sub-plane four, the emotional sub-plane of all the various planes (table 6). It is clear that within all the emotional sub-planes (sub-plane four) of the five planes, particularly in planes two (sexuality), three (material/corporeal), and four (emotional), there is a great deal of conflict and sensitivity, as Dabrowski (1967) explains. Notice also that plane seven (spirituality) and the sub-planes seven, the spiritual aspects of each plane, are not as well described or understood as the cognitive and material aspects of each plane (sub-planes five and three). In other words, we do a better job of identifying gifts that are in an intellectual, emotional, or material sphere than we do in a spiritual, athletic, or reproductive sphere.

The Organization of Gifts in the Five Planes

There are gifts in the reproductive plane (two), the material and corporeal plane (three), the emotional plane (four), the intellectual plane (five), and the spiritual plane (seven). There is a correspondence between the characteristics of giftedness in table 3 and the gifts that manifest in each of the five planes (table 3). Based on the Cloninger's work, it can be argued that giftedness manifests itself as the result of being slightly above the average, developmentally speaking, in one of these planes (see table 3). This understanding is synonymous with the quantum nature of giftedness. That is to say, gifts are discrete and are therefore manifestations of certain enhanced capacities in one of the five planes of the human being. Table 3 provides a global look at the various manifestations of gifts in the planes in contrast to table 6 which shows a much more detailed examination of giftedness.

This table of gifts (table 3) is by no means exhaustive or perfect. It represents a first approximation of the true nature of giftedness in the planes. As we have already seen, giftedness is the result of three factors (biological components, memories, and the level of the psyche) that correspond to each of the three aspects of the being: body, thoughts and psyche. Thus, it would be necessary to do a more extensive exploration of each of these three aspects—as they relate to giftedness—to be truly exhaustive. Nonetheless, exploring gifts through this framework is extremely useful, precisely because it helps to identify the gaps in our current understanding. Consider table 3 to be the first attempt at what will undoubtedly be a long exploration.

As the reader will notice, table 3 still sheds light on the phenomenon in new ways. First of all, looking at the correspondence between the gifts and the planes helps us to understand how each gift is really the manifestation of an enhanced capacity in one of the planes. Secondly, what is probably obvious to the reader is that modern identification techniques focus on the different planes of the individual. Each identification technique ignores certain planes or certain aspects of a plane. For example, many identification techniques do not discuss all the gifts in plane two, the realm of reproduction. Nonetheless, such gifts undoubtedly exist. An example that illustrates this point is Marilyn Monroe, whose seductive gifts led many of the men of her time to fall for her. Similarly, many famous individuals have been known for their powers of charisma, even if these

gifts are rarely recognized as such. Gifts in plane three (the material/corporeal plane) are varied. Some people are clearly talented in business; they have intuitive gifts for doing business and dealing with money. Others display physical gifts of coordination, bodily awareness, and athleticism. Gardner's work on multiple intelligences (1983, 1993) highlighted what he called bodily/kinesthetic intelligence. The example Gardner gave, Martha Graham, the great contemporary dancer, typifies the gifted individual in plane three. Gifts in plane four include empathy, imagination, and counsel. Roeper has written extensively on the emotional gifts of gifted children. Individuals such as Freud or Jung possessed powerful gifts of empathy and counsel. Gifts in plane five are well known; they are academic, artistic, creative, and spoken. Individuals like Einstein, Mozart, and Martin Luther King Jr. typify individuals with such gifts in plane five. Gifts in plane seven are relatively unfamiliar. These gifts may be subtler than academic talent and therefore more easily overlooked. Spiritually gifted children feel a heightened sense of rapture and interconnectedness with the universe. As a result of this, many of them, like Ruby described above, find themselves drawn to spiritual vocations such as theology, ministry, rabbinate, priesthood, or other such religious callings. These individuals, though clearly undervalued in modern society, are present. Nevertheless, some individuals with spiritual gifts have been extremely prominent in society. For example, Gandhi, the spiritual leader who led India to independence, was renowned for his spiritual intelligence. Hollingworth (1942) and Lovecky (1998) have extensively documented anecdotes from their work with the gifted that illustrate the spiritual dimensions of giftedness.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983, 1993, 1999) provides a complementary example of the various manifestations of gifts, talents, and abilities in gifted individuals (see table 6). A look at giftedness in the planes of human existence is helpful for the identification and recognition of forms of giftedness that often go unnoticed or at the very least underappreciated.

Giftedness and Hope

The ramifications of this approach go beyond the simple recognition of gifts in the various planes. Because gifted children have an increased capacity in one of the planes, they also has the potential to understand the corresponding sub-plane in all the planes. We

have already seen how each of the five planes—reproductive, material and corporeal, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—has five sub-planes. Each plane has sexual aspects, materials aspects, emotional aspects, intellectual aspects, and spiritual aspects. When an individual is gifted in one plane, he/she possesses an enhanced capacity in that plane. However, this understanding can diffuse to all the corresponding sub-planes of all the planes because of the spiral nature of the development of self-aware consciousness. That is to say, if a child has enhanced capacity in the emotional plane four, then he or she will also show increased understanding of the emotional aspects of all the planes because of the spiral nature of the architecture. The enhanced capacity and awareness in one of the five planes of the human being will engender increased awareness in the corresponding aspects of all the other planes. Take for example emotional gifts, such as gifts of empathy. The gift of empathy in the emotional plane four can diffuse into sub-plane four (the emotional aspects) of every other plane (see table 4). To see this relationship, look at the emotional aspects of every plane in table 4, that is to say sub-plane four of every plane except plane four. A gift in the emotional plane four could facilitate being desirable or charming in the sexual plane two, cooperation and meaning in the material/corporeal plane three, calm-mindfulness and creativity in the intellectual plane five, and hopefulness and conciliation in the spiritual plane seven (see table 4). Thus, thanks to an enhanced capacity or gift in one plane, the individual has the ability to understand the corresponding sub-plane in all the other planes because of the spiral nature of self-aware consciousness. A gift for harmonious composition in music, in plane five, can help develop a person's recognition of the benefits of harmony and coherence in other aspects of their life. Likewise, a gift for sensitivity in taste or smell can help a person to learn to savor and enjoy other aspects of life, such as social diversity and freedom. Hopefulness, a gift in the spiritual plane seven, is likely to give rise to an elevation of all the other planes to their biological and psychological limits.

Let us call this phenomenon the "diffusion of understanding." This mechanism of the diffusion of understanding of one plane to the corresponding sub-planes of all the other planes is particularly important for our discussion of Hope in the gifted. With the help of their gifts, individuals have the potential to understand the spiritual aspects of existence in more profound ways. Consider that Hope is a spiritual aspect of human experience. We

would therefore expect that Hope would be understood in plane seven. We know that all children are receptive to spiritual ideas at a young age. However, thanks to this wonderful mechanism of diffusion of understanding, gifted children can have a depth and clarity of understanding regarding spiritual ideas. This is due to the fact that they have a perspective and awareness, an enhanced capacity in one plane, which allows them to have clear answers at a young age in the spiritual sub-plane corresponding to their gift due to the spiral nature of self-aware consciousness. That is to say, a deeper understanding of the corresponding sub-planes of the plane in which their gift is located will allow them to not only be receptive to spiritual ideas in plane seven, but to have a deep understanding of these ideas with clear answers to their questions. If they have a deeper clarity of spirituality in plane seven, they can be more hopeful. Thus, <u>if their gift is used in the right way it can bring them a lot of Happiness and Hope.</u>

Fostering Hope through Gifted Education

It is important to provide gifted children with a rich educational environment that will foster the use of their gift. Furthermore, we need to encourage gifted children to work on elevating their gift to the other planes. Take, for example, a child with a gift in the plane three such as an athletic or bodily/kinesthetic gift. Since the child has an enhanced capacity in plane three, the material/corporeal plane, the child will also have a deeper comprehension of the material/corporeal aspects of spirituality (in sub-plane three of plane seven). If we want to encourage and foster their hopefulness, then we must work on teaching them about the material and corporeal aspects of spirituality (sub-plane three of plane seven). To teach a student at a particular sub-plane implies addressing that sub-plane's content. Concretely speaking, curriculum designed to describe the material/corporeal aspects of the spiritual plane (at sub-plane three of the plane seven) would provide information that helps children to understand freedom, piety and reverence: personal freedom, spiritual freedom, material freedom, emotional freedom, reverence for nature, reverence for people who stand up for what they believe in, reverence for the order inherent in the universe, reverence for a virtuous way of living, reverence for gentleness and acts of kindness. Two quotes typify thought in plane seven, sub-plane three: 1) Augustine said, "Our greatest efforts should be for a most virtuous life;" and 2)

Lamartine said, "To love, pray and sing: here is all my life." Curriculum designed in this manner would help foster hopefulness in individuals with gifts in plane three.

This mechanism of the diffusion of gifts reveals the need to create curriculum that addresses aspects of life that describe the reproductive, material/corporeal, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of the spiritual plane seven. In other words, at all the sub-planes of plane seven. As we know, many gifted children have gifts in each of the five planes. Thus, in a classroom full of gifted children, it would be important to address each of the five sub-planes of the plane seven (see tables 4 and 6). The spiritual understanding necessary to engender a rich and deep view of Hope in children can be nurtured if each of the five sub-planes is taken into account. Although such a project is clearly interesting, it goes beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, for those interested in understanding how to foster Hope in gifted children, table 4 presents a description of thought in plane seven (Cloninger, 2004) and table 3 presents the manifestation of gifts at each of the five planes. Future papers will be written to address the development of curriculum in this manner. Ultimately, it was necessary to elucidate the framework described in this paper before addressing the development of such a curriculum.

The key to fostering Hope in gifted children is to help them nourish the spiritual understanding they already have. The gifts of children can allow them to understand different aspects of the plane seven (see table 4). This spiritual understanding is not only important for the Hope of these gifted children, but also for the future of our country. Gifted children can be deeply aware of Hope and help to lead our country through the unforeseen future with optimism and compassion. Like Martin Luther King Jr., individuals with a deep comprehension of Hope can be powerful catalysts for change on multiple levels.

Conclusion

We have seen a new approach to the modern understanding of giftedness through the lens of Cloninger's *Science of Well-Being* (2004). Current scientific understanding is predicated on the understanding that nothing in the world can be known with certainty and that things which seem to us stable and predictable are, in fact, quite uncertain and flexible. At a quantum level, things that seem impossible, based on our understanding of

the everyday world, happen quite frequently. To understand the complexities and subtleties revealed by giftedness, we need to adopt a fundamentally different approach to human psychology. This quantum revolution in psychology is only beginning to take shape, and the insights gained through a quantum approach to giftedness, as illustrated in this paper, provide examples of the importance of this perspective.

As Voltaire elucidates in *Candide*, it is essential for children and adults to work on cultivating their inner gardens if they wish to be hopeful. Giftedness represents the fruit of this labor. Giftedness allows a deeper comprehension of things at a spiritual level and this in turn leads people to be more hopeful and content with their lives. At the spiritual level of human thought, there is a reconciliation of struggles and fights that lead to the inner tensions and blockages that cause so many problems in our relationship with ourselves and our relationships with others. Voltaire was wise indeed to encourage us to work on exercising our talents in order to find more Hope amidst the daily tragedies in the world. By encouraging the use of gifts and talents, we enable people to find clear answers to spiritual questions. Through this spiritual understanding, children and adults will come to understand Hope in all its manifestations, and as a result they will come to be happier and more optimistic about the world. It is only through such spiritual understanding of the world that we can help people to live a life of Hope and Happiness, the best of all possible worlds.

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THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LIVES OF
FOUR EXTRAORDINARILY INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED CHILDREN
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Introduction

Given the degree of awe the extraordinarily intellectually gifted inspire in others, why are the exceptional and profound ranges among the least studied? And, why is it acceptable to educators, mental health providers, and other social scientists to allow this to continue?

Within the population of individuals who are intellectually gifted there are many subsets. The subset comprising the exceptionally gifted (170 ratio IQ through 179 ratio IQ), and the subset comprising the profoundly gifted (180 ratio IQ and above) are among those whose educational and affective needs appear to be the most under served (Feldman, 1979; Gross, 1993), and the least studied from a psychologist's perspective and expertise (Janos & Robinson, 1985). The understanding of the social-emotional needs of exceptionally and profoundly intellectually gifted individuals is crucial to developing a successful school experience.

Because they are among the least studied, the quality of the current educational opportunities for the exceptionally and profoundly gifted varies with the availability of resources and dedication of advocates (Colangelo, 1991; Feldman, 1991; Gross, 1993). The work of Leta Hollingworth (1886–1939) and Lewis Terman (1877–1956) set the stage for advocacy for exceptionally and profoundly gifted learners. Hollingworth and Terman were quite concerned about the general lack of understanding of the educational and social-emotional characteristics and needs of these learners.

In 1931, Hollingworth described the public school experience of intellectually above average children as constrained by curriculum designed to meet the learning needs of children with average intelligence. This meant public schools offered little, if anything, of value to the education of a child with an extraordinary intellect. Hollingworth (1942) went on to say "children of IQ 140 waste half their time" during the elementary school experience, while "[t]hose above IQ 170 waste practically all their time." This statement continues to be true especially when exceptionally and profoundly gifted children are not recognized by their schools to have unique learning needs. Since extraordinarily gifted

children have often mastered the elementary curriculum prior to entering elementary school, their time in a regular education setting is wasted, in part or entirely (Feldman, 1991; Gross, 1992).

In Hollingworth's 1942 classic, the *Children Above 180 IQ*, she foresaw, "to have the intellect of an adult combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulties" (p. 282). Terman and his colleagues tackled the social-emotional issues in his sample, concluding fewer personality problems and less mental illness than would be expected from a similar sample of average intellect peers (Oden, 1968; Terman, 1954; Terman & Oden, 1951). However, even Terman eventually voiced reservations regarding the mental stability of the most intelligent in his sample, citing greater incidence of maladjustment among the members of this group (Shurkin, 1993; Terman & Oden, 1947).

Compelling Reasons to Study the Social-emotional Lives of Extraordinarily Intellectually Gifted Children
School experiences are often some of the most difficult any child faces. The early identification of the social-emotional needs of each exceptionally or profoundly gifted child by the school is thought to be an essential component of educational plans for extraordinarily intellectually gifted learners (Delisle, 1986; Gross, 1994; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982). Lovecky (1992, 1994) has studied gifted children and their families through her practice as a clinical psychologist. She has found extraordinarily gifted children experience significant emotional distress when their academic and affective needs are not adequately identified or met. A comment made by Janos & Robinson (1985, p. 175) underscored the need for an optimal match between learner and learning environment: "For the highly gifted [defined by them as children scoring in the exceptionally gifted range of intellectual ability], the discrepancy between the child's abilities and the ordinary school environment, with its peer group of same aged children, is so strong that maladjustment is very likely."

The Research Study
This study (Downing, 2005) examined the psychological profiles of four extraordinarily intellectually gifted elementary age students in the hope of finding out more than is already known about their social-emotional functioning. The fulfillment of their extraordinary potential hinges upon the individual's perception of well-being (Feldman, 1991).

Therefore, this study has attempted to investigate the intra- and interpersonal world of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children toward providing information which could be used for the creation of supportive school environments.

Research in gifted education is designed to better understand giftedness as a phenomenon and to identify the effects of the educational process upon gifted individuals (Moon, 1991). Foster (1986) advocated for the use of single subject research with intellectually gifted individuals because they are "unusual, the atypical, the unique," and because our "ultimate concern" as educators of the gifted must be for the "educational and psychosocial wellbeing of the individuals with whom we work" (p. 33).

Therefore, a case study approach to the understanding of exceptionally and profoundly gifted individuals was used for this research project. It is well suited to the study of extraordinarily gifted individuals for two reasons: incidence and complexity. The understanding of the social-emotional traits unique to the exceptionally and profoundly gifted must be approached from the study of individuals as this phenomenon of extraordinary cognitive ability is so rare (Foster, 1986; Moon, 1991).

Locating Participants
A search for four children whose intelligence is in the exceptional and profound ranges of intellectual giftedness began by making contacts to the administrators of public and private schools designed for gifted elementary age students within a metropolitan area. Nine families decided they would like to have their children assessed to determine whether or not they would qualify for the study. Of these nine families, five children were evaluated, three families shared previous assessment data to determine qualification, and one family chose not to continue. Of the eight potential participants, two qualified easily, and two were in the ratio IQ 170+ range. These four were accepted. All are Caucasian, live within the same metropolitan area, and appear to fall within the middle class of socio-economic strata.

Looking at them individually, the oldest participant at 8 years 4 months is male and attends a public school for intellectually gifted children located in the school district in which he lives. This young man selected "Will" as his pseudonym. Will qualified for the

study with a ratio IQ of 176 on the Stanford-Binet: L-M. The next oldest participant is female. She was 5 years 9 months old at the beginning of the study and attends a public school designed for intellectually gifted children, located in a neighboring school district. She selected "Isabelle" as her pseudonym and qualified for the study with a Stanford-Binet: L-M ratio IQ of 173. The two participants who were 5 years 8 months when initially contacted are identical twin boys, and are home schooled. They selected the pseudonyms "Gorge," pronounced "George", and "Tomas," pronounced "Thomas." Both Gorge and Tomas qualified for the study with Stanford-Binet: L-M ratio IQs of 212.

The Assessment Process
The assessment process with all four participants was identical and had three primary aspects: formal psychological assessment, a long series of informal questionnaires, and observations. Each of the participants was assessed using IQ measures, including the Stanford-Binet: Form L-M; a full academic achievement battery; a test of visual-motor integration; several measures of adaptive behavior; and several measures of personality and emotional functioning. Each of the families completed a long series of researcher-developed questionnaires. All of the students were observed in their school settings. And, three were observed in structured and leisure activities in their homes.

The Results
The results of the study are presented here integrated with the results of previous research reported on in the literature. Three aspects of the lives of the study participants will be discussed: adaptive behavior within the context of the family; personality characteristics, social-emotional issues as revealed through psychological assessment; and the participants' educational experiences.

Adaptive Behavior in the Family
A review of the literature informs us that the parents of intellectually gifted children are older, well educated people who have mindfully led their lives according to a set of personal and interpersonal principles (Bloom, 1995; Olszewski, et al.,1987; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002). They are in stable marriages, valuing mutual support and collaborative decision-making (Keiley, 2002; Olszewski, et al., 1987; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002). Although they tend to initially feel daunted by the responsibilities involved in raising an

intellectually gifted child (or a whole family of them), once they realize their own capabilities, they find they are energetic about and equal to the task (May, 1994). Successful parents of gifted children use a team approach to parenting, are more permissive than parents of children below the gifted range, and encourage independent thinking and behaving (Karnes & D'Ilio, 1988; Olzewski-Kubilius, 2002; Rimm & Lowe, 1988; VanTassel-Baska, 1989). The parents of successful intellectually gifted children are deliberate about creating healthy relationships among all family members (Cornell & Grossberg, 1989; Feldman, 1991; Gross, 1989, 1993; Janos & Robinson, 1985). They model a strong work ethic and are actively supportive of their child's talent development (Bloom 1985).

All of the parents of the children in this study are still married to their original spouses. Each parent was in her/his 30's when the study participant was born. All of the parents have advanced degrees, and the families are financially stable. Each family is child-centered. Each of the mothers works from home, maintaining her primary commitment to her children while engaging in occupational tasks as time permits. All fathers are engaged in professional occupations and work for large institutions or corporations. All of the parents directly teach appropriate problem solving strategies so their children will be competent to solve problems on their own. All of the parents are also readily available to their children when they need emotional support or advice.

The formal assessment of adaptive behavior revealed the similarities and differences among the study participants. Each of the students demonstrated high levels of adaptive behavior and functioning above chronological age level expectations for public and school behavior. Gorge and Tomas also demonstrated high levels of adaptive behavior within their home and family. However, both Isabelle and Will demonstrated difficulty with coping skills and anger management in the context of the home and family.

Social-emotional Development and Personality.
The social-emotional portrait of intellectually gifted children appears to develop differently from that of intellectually average children (Moon, et al., 2001; Neihart, 1999; Roeper, 1983). The differences in development appear to increase as intelligence increases

(Hollingworth, 1942; Terman & Oden, 1947). Hollingworth (1942) found emotional stability to be inversely related to IQ. Gifted learners in the lower IQ ranges demonstrated more typical social-emotional development than those in the higher ranges. Terman and Oden's (1947, 1951) research indicated there was no greater incidence of emotional concerns in their sample of intellectually gifted children than there was in the general population, except among children in the highest IQ ranges. The students in the sample representing the highest ranges were reported to experience significant difficulty fitting into society. Many researchers have found when the highest ranges of intellectual giftedness are reached, social-emotional struggle is almost assured (Austin & Draper, 1981; Cornell, 1990; Ford, 1989; Hollingworth, 1942; Rimm, 2002). This is especially true of extraordinarily intellectually gifted children in school. Janos & Robinson (1985) found when the difference between the child's abilities and the typical school environment with chronological peers reaches significance, maladjustment often occurs.

Exceptionally and profoundly intellectually gifted children experience unique stressors which can contribute to personal and interpersonal distress. Researchers list many stressors common to extraordinarily gifted children: advanced cognitive development, acute awareness of being different, preference for older peers, the early passage through developmental stages, and the early acquisition of a variety of competencies, especially language; perfectionism; and the expectations of others (Delisle, 1982, 1990; Freeman, 1994; Gross, 1993, 2002; Hollingworth, 1942; Kaiser & Berndt, 1985; Moon, et al., 2001; Whitmore, 1980; Yadusky-Holahan & Holahan, 1983). Baska (1989) and Clark (1988) add a variety of humanistic virtues including: idealism, sense of justice, consistency between stated values and one's behavior, and developmentally advanced moral judgment. Silverman (1994) adds introversion. Parker (2000), Schuler (2002, and Whitmore (1980) are among the many researchers who have found that the propensity to set unrealistically high expectations increased the stress levels of extraordinarily intellectually gifted children. Ford (2002) and Kitano (1991) found the unique needs of gifted children from culturally diverse backgrounds to be a source of stress. Being a creative, sensitive, nurturing intellectually gifted male in our society is stressful (Alvino, 1991; Hebert, 2002). Intellectually gifted girls can feel as though they need to hide their intelligence to be acceptable to their peers (Kline & Short, 1991).

Although there are a number of stressors affecting the lives of individual gifted children, there seems to be agreement in the literature that, for the majority of intellectually gifted children, especially those in the upper ranges, the propensity toward what researchers various call "hypersensitivity," "intensity," or "supersensitivity" significantly contributes to feelings of stress and depression (Gallagher, 1990; Janos & Robinson, 1985; Keiley, 2002; Kitano, 1990; Kline & Meckstroth, 1985; Lovecky, 1992; Roedell, 1984; Roeper, 1983; Webb, Meckstroth, and Tolan, 1982; Whitmore, 1980). In a broad sense, hypersensitivity is described as a gifted child's natural ability to absorb and apprehend a greater amount of sensory information, and respond affectively and intensely to all sensory experiences (Hollingworth, 1942; Lovecky, 1992, 1998; Whitmore, 1980). One of its components is the extraordinary ability to identify with others and be compassionate and empathic (Lovecky, 1992, 1998). Another is the tendency toward introspection, especially around existential issues (Derevensky & Coleman, 1989; Lovecky, 1998). Yet another component allows a gifted child to perceive beyond rational boundaries and involves passion, creativity, and intuition (Brown & Wolf, 1986). And, a darker component is the experience of heightened vulnerability (Delisle, 1984; Freeman, 1994).

Hypersensitivity manifests in extraordinarily gifted children as adult-like concerns (Clark & Hankins, 1985; Galbraith, 1983; Gross, 1993; Lovecky, 1998; Neihart, 2002a), and developmentally mature social awareness (Derevensky & Coleman, 1985; Holahan & Sears, 1995; Neihart, 1999). Clark and Hankins (1985), Lovecky (1998), and Neihart (2002a), among others, found sensitivity among gifted children to manifest as existential philosophical concerns. Galbraith (1983), Gross (1993), and Jackson (1998) found gifted children to feel intense powerlessness and pessimism over the problems of the world because they feel they are not able to do anything about them even though they are capable of imagining a solution. Derevensky and Coleman (1985) found the common fears among intellectually gifted children to be similar to much older children in their social awareness.

Coping with hypersensitivity can be a struggle for extraordinarily gifted children, especially the young ones when they start school (Delisle, 1982; May, 1994; O'Connor, 2002; Piechowski, 1997; Terman, 1939). Older children find ways to cope with their distress.

Sowa, McIntire, May, and Bland (1994) described the coping strategies of older gifted children as either focused on the problem or on the emotions triggered by the problem. They try to change their behavior to influence the problem, or they try to change how the problem makes them feel so they can interpret it another way. Many gifted children are resilient in the face of struggle, using their intelligence, internal locus of control, insight, sensitivity, and creativity to handle stressful experiences (Bland, Sowa, & Callahan, 1994; Neihart, 2002a). Bland and his colleagues found gifted children use the adult strategy of intellectual appraisal to assess the harmfulness of a situation. They also use their persistence, independence, positive self-concepts, and ability to delay gratification to master emotional struggles (Franks & Dolan, 1982). Resilient hypersensitive children can use these qualities as assets toward compassionate service to others (Neihart, 2002a, 2002b).

Although some intellectually gifted children use effective coping strategies, many do not, especially those in the exceptional and profound ranges. Whitmore (1980) indicated sensitive, perceptive gifted children tend to adapt to life's experiences in a way that defends them from the emotional stress they experience as a result of their heightened sensitivity. Unfortunately, their defenses can fail them during emotionally demanding experiences. They can succumb to feelings of melancholic hopeless and despair. At these times gifted children can feel especially vulnerable and respond in ways that are counterproductive and maladaptive.

The most tragic manifestation of coping deficits in gifted children is depression and suicide. Reports of depression and suicide among very young extraordinarily gifted children are rare, while depression and suicide among gifted adolescents is more extensively documented (Delisle, 1982; Farrell, 1989; Gust-Brey & Cross, 1999; Hayes & Sloat, 1992; Jackson, 1998; Keiley, 2002; Kline & Short, 1992; Neihart, 2002a). Hayes and Sloat (1989) attributed the suicide propensity of gifted adolescents to the disparity between their increased sensitivity to life's adolescent experiences, and the lack of emotional maturity or judgment to comprehend and effectively mediate their internal reactions. Other researchers attributed feelings of depression to an experience of failure,

especially academic, as some among extraordinarily intellectually gifted children rarely experience failure (Keiley, 2002).

The personality, and social-emotional development of all the participants was assessed through questionnaires and extensive psychological measures. All four of the participants in this study embody many of the social-emotional characteristics attributed in the literature to gifted children in general and exceptionally and profoundly gifted in particular. Each of them experiences the hypersensitivity typical of extraordinarily intellectually gifted children. They all are predisposed to experiencing many of the stressors described in the literature: extraordinarily advanced cognitive development, acute awareness of being different, early passage through the developmental stages, idealism, sense of justice, moral discernment, introversion, and high expectations for themselves and for others. All four are especially vulnerable to the stressors accompanying their perception of the world through adult-like eyes. Each of them copes well with some aspects of their experience because of their intellectual gifts; but not with others, also because of their intellectual gifts. When their strategies for coping fail, each feels vulnerable and responds in ways typical of the intensity of extraordinarily gifted learners.

Gorge and Tomas. Gorge's social-emotional profile is reflective of extraordinarily intellectually gifted children. He has demonstrated excellent coping skills throughout his life, with the possible exception of the public school kindergarten experience. Gorge's hypersensitivity manifests, not only as profound intelligence and preference for following rules rather rigidly (because why would you have them if they weren't to be followed?), but also in his compassion for others, his willingness to protect children that are vulnerable, knowing what actions to take to be effective interpersonally, his spirituality, and deep experience of emotion. The primary sources of stress for Gorge appear to be his intellect, compassion for others, his dedication to his learning process, and frightening experiences that have confounded his understanding. So far, Gorge indicates he feels his intellect is something about which he can feel positive. Gorge's compassion for others, altruism, idealism, sense of justice, and morality can be sources of stress for him. When Gorge is aware someone is struggling or about to make a poor decision, he is moved to action, comforting or taking responsibility for the other person while instructing the person about

how to make a more preferable choice. Another potential source of stress for Gorge is his dedication to the learning process. His dedication has many components: depth and breadth of interests, self-discipline, high degree of motivation, persistence when faced with a learning challenge, and propensity to gauge his progress. And, Gorge, like many intellectually gifted children, has a tendency to process emotions intellectually rather than viscerally and emotively. Overall, Gorge appears to be an emotionally healthy youngster whose social-emotional development is characterized by the calmness of his demeanor, self-awareness, sensitivity, maturity, spirituality, and compassion.

Like other extraordinarily intellectually gifted children, Tomas experiences hypersensitivities and sources of stress not common to chronological age mates. There is evidence of Tomas' extraordinary intellectual giftedness in his hypersensitivity to the plight of all living creatures. One way Tomas' hypersensitivity manifests is through his ability to use extraordinary insight when experiencing situations in which others are being treated unfairly or are vulnerable as a result of circumstances, such as the new student in a class. For example, when he encounters a situation in which another child is being treated unfairly, Tomas will assert himself in a leadership role to resolve the problem. He approaches situations such as these with a gentle and empathetic approach that allows all participants to feel successful. Using his insight and interpersonal skills, Tomas will guide play situations toward peaceful and co-operative games so everyone has a positive experience and is treated kindly. Tomas' compassion for the great apes and the protection issues they face is another manifestation of his hypersensitivity. Among his potential sources of stress that are commonly found among extraordinarily intellectually children are being profoundly gifted, the duality of a child-like and adult-like approach to life, being a compassionate and sensitive male, having a sense of justice and ability to make moral decisions not common to chronological age mates that are less intellectually capable, being interested in studying subjects that are generally more appealing to adults than to children (e.g. Eastern religions), and setting very high standards for his own learning and work ethic. Although he experiences challenges in life, Tomas appears to evidence a high degree of emotional health and social adjustment.

Isabelle. Like other extraordinarily intellectually gifted children, Isabelle is hypersensitive to life's experiences, and, as a result, is impacted by the stressors unique to that special

group. The stressors she may experience include her exceptional giftedness, introversion, appetite for subjects not common to chronological age mates, ability to be empathic and interpersonally insightful, and propensity to set exceedingly high expectations for herself. Also common to extraordinarily intellectually gifted children is the ability to cope exceedingly well with many facets of their life experience, and not be able to abstract these excellent coping skills to some aspect of their experience that really challenges them emotionally. When extraordinarily intellectually gifted children are challenged emotionally beyond their ability to cope adaptively, they can evidence coping skills more characteristic of either much younger children or characteristic of children whose strategies are maladaptive regardless of age. Isabelle's challenge with coping with certain aspects of home and family life is a good example of the use of coping skills more characteristic of younger children. Isabelle appears to draw on less sophisticated strategies to deal with frustration, sadness, and anger when it occurs in the context of certain home and family situations. However, in other situations both in and out of the home, Isabelle copes well and is interpersonally insightful. She uses her insight to guide her ability to understand situations and meet her own needs and those of others.

Will. Will's emotional health and social adjustment appear, in many ways, to be more typical of the profile of extraordinarily intellectually gifted children: an adult mind in a child-like body. He is plagued by an unusually acute awareness of the condition of humanity and our mistreatment of our planet, to the point of despair. Although he grieves our foibles as a species, he experiences a deficit of skills when it comes to treating his sister and parents with kindness. Will appears to be an exceptionally intellectually gifted student who, in the context of home and family, uses both maladaptive coping strategies and strategies more characteristic of much younger children. Will tends to be introverted, is acutely aware of being intellectually different from age mates, has an appetite for thinking about things only interesting to adults, and is highly vulnerable as a result of his propensity to see the world through adult eyes. Will is significantly challenged with regard to establishing and maintaining peer relationships. Many social situations that children typically enjoy fill Will with overwhelming anxiety and fear. Will often retreats to a fantasy world to cope with his interpersonal struggles.

The Educational Experience

The statement made by Janos & Robinson (1985, p. 175) captures the common experience of the extraordinarily intellectually gifted learner at school "For the highly gifted, the discrepancy between the child's abilities and the ordinary school environment, with its peer group of same aged children, is so strong that maladjustment is very likely." Advocates for intellectually gifted children know they do not flourish in school because of their intellect alone (Delisle, 1984; Gallucci, 1988; Gross, 1993). School success for intellectually gifted children requires an optimal match between the child's intellectual capabilities, social-emotional development, and the opportunities offered by the school environment (Colangelo, 1991; Gross, 1993; Hollingworth, 1942; Jackson, 1998; Moon, 2002; Neihart, 1999; Rimm, 2002; Roedell, 1989).

As Feldman (1991, 1993) pointed out, the transformation of childhood intellectual giftedness into adult professional accomplishment requires emotional stability in addition to the development of one's intellectual capabilities. The school experience of the extraordinarily intellectually gifted children plays a formative role in the development of their mental health. Advocates for intellectually gifted children, especially those who are extraordinarily gifted, emphasize the importance of an optimal match between learner and learning setting as a key element in healthy social-emotional development (Colangelo, 1991; Hollingworth, 1942; Roedell, 1989).

The incidence of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children is very low and their educational and affective needs are unique, often outside of the range of services that public schools typically offer. Students who are exceptionally and profoundly intellectually gifted can thrive in educational settings that have a large enough resource base and complement of highly educated faculty to identify their educational and affective needs, and to meet those needs. But, very few schools actually have the necessary resources and trained faculty. Schools are typically constrained by budgets, limited programming options, and faculty and teachers not specifically trained to manage the curricular and affective needs of extraordinarily gifted children.

The search for an appropriate educational setting for an exceptionally or profoundly gifted child can be a family's greatest source of stress (Colangelo, 1997; Keiley, 2002; Keirouz, 1990; Maxwell, 1998; Moon, 2002). Parents look for educational settings that achieve the

delicate balance between meeting the child's academic needs while providing generous opportunities for social-emotional growth. They also look for settings that welcome parents as equal members of the educational team. Creel and Karnes (1988) studied the importance of parent involvement in the educational programming of their gifted children and found it to be a highly essential factor in the child's school success, especially when the child first enters school.

When families become discouraged with the public school services offered to their gifted child, parents begin to search out other options (Gross, 1989a, 1993; Moon, 2002; Rogers, 2002). Private schools, home schooling, and using mentors to supplement educational experiences are common options. Feldman (1991) studied the lives of several prodigies whose families chose to home school their children as a result of unsatisfactory public school experiences. These families used a combination of mentoring and parent teaching. Ambrose, Allen, and Huntley (1994), in their research on mentorship with highly creative students, indicated mentors meet a variety of the needs of the extraordinarily gifted because they are in a position to validate the thinking/producing style of the student while compelling the student to stretch in new directions. They also provide essential emotional support, direction, and career guidance.

The early identification of the social-emotional needs of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children by the school is thought to be an essential component of their educational programs (Delisle, 1986; Farrell, 1989; Moon, 2002; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1983). To assist exceptionally and profoundly gifted children cope with their school experiences, researchers have proposed incorporating additional psychological support in their school settings (Farrell, 1989; Ford, 1989; Freeman, 1994; Kline & Short, 1991a; Lovecky, 1992). By providing direct instruction in affective education and interpersonal skill development, school psychologists can constructively assist students with developing appropriate strategies to cope with their uniquely sensitive natures. This approach can be especially effective with students who consider themselves to be different from their chronological age peers and experience this differentness as a negative quality.

The experience of feeling "different" is often the variable that distinguishes children who

experience greater social-emotional concerns from those who do not (Greenspon, 1998; Gross, 1993, 1998, 2002; Janos, Fung, & Robinson, 1985; Keiley, 2002; Neihart, 1999). The studies of "different-feeling" students revealed they experienced lower self-esteem, feelings of loneliness and social isolation, poor peer relationships, and a need to act-out their feelings. These issues are attributed to the difficulty extraordinarily intellectually gifted children have finding peers who share their intellectual abilities, interests, and motivation (Gross, 1993; Rimm, 2002). Janos, et al. (1985) indicated the students who feel different from peers not only tend to lack social success, but also fail to achieve academically.

All four of the families in this study were dissatisfied with the general education public school experience. Three of the four participants do not attend school in the school district in which they live because of their parents' dissatisfaction with any of the educational opportunities available through the public schools in their district. All four of the participants in this study participate in highly individualized academic settings. Two are home schooled, and two attend public schools designed specifically for intellectually gifted children.

Although diverse, each of these settings offers many of the factors necessary for the academic success and social-emotional growth of extraordinarily intellectually gifted children. Each setting is homogenous, provides appropriate opportunities for intellectual grouping, allows each student to accelerate through the curriculum, offers stimulating instructional experiences, matches the student to the teacher best suited to nurture achievement and growth, and is free of the negative peer influences that can occur. The teachers in each setting are specifically trained or are pursuing specific training in gifted education and are able to work effectively on a team in which parents have an integral role. All of the settings offer ample opportunities for their students to participate in activities that promote social-emotional growth.

Finding these settings was an extremely stressful experience for all of the parents of the study participants. The public schools did not take an active advocacy role in finding appropriate settings for any of the students. This burden was on the shoulders of the

parents. All of the families committed significant amounts of time and financial resources to gaining satisfactory educational opportunities for their children.

Gorge and Tomas. Gorge was enrolled in a public preschool and kindergarten. His public kindergarten experience lasted only a few days. During those few days, Gorge was not able to adjust to the typical experiences of a general education classroom. The teacher was not understanding of Gorge's needs. Classroom management was of concern. The other children in the classroom seemed to Gorge to be unable or unwilling to follow the classroom rules. As a result of the tremendous mismatch between Gorge's needs and the capabilities of the teacher and the chaos in the classroom setting, Gorge became very withdrawn and irritable. He indicated, "The teacher would put me somewhere else when the other kids were in the book section to learn their alphabet. The teacher moved me around and wouldn't wait for me to be done [with independent seatwork]. She became very not patient." This experience left Gorge feeling different, lonely, rejected, and sad. It took a month after parents withdrew him for the emotional concerns Gorge experienced to fade away and his behavior to return to normal.

Any educational setting must understand Gorge's unique needs as a learner. His interests are diverse, and he enjoys being able to study an assortment of subjects, delving into some deeply, and just skimming the surface of proficiency with others. Gorge is self-motivated, self-disciplined, and takes personal responsibility for his learning. He learns at a rapid pace and is able to memorize tremendous amounts of information in short periods of time. He thinks logically, reflects upon the information he is learning, loves detail and precision, and takes in nuances of information that others skim over or ignore. Gorge is thorough in his work production, able to concentrate for long periods of time, is persistent when mastering new material, and demonstrates somewhat of a preference for working alone. Both parents report Gorge is an energetic youngster. His energy level would have to be sensitively accommodated in a learning setting.

Gorge indicates that he likes his home schooling very much. He especially enjoys the field trips and his mathematics courses. Science is also a favorite. He has particularly enjoyed studying "nature–communities, populations, environments, biomes." Gorge lists

science, history, art, spelling, language, math, music, ice skating, and computers as the most important areas of study. He appreciates the fact that his input about which courses he studies is valued and taken into consideration when it is time to make course selections. Gorge explains that, although there are three other students in his class, his interpersonal skills with peers are actually nurtured through his involvement in his church choir, going to the park, to the "rec" center, to Big Bear (ice arena), Tae Kwon Do, school field trips, guitar lessons, and Boy Scouts.

Gorge feels his parents have been supportive and responsive to his needs as a learner. He feels he is now receiving a satisfactory balance of intensive 1:1 instruction, classroom instruction, and independent pursuit of his courses of study. Gorge also feels he is satisfied by the level of complexity of the curriculum that is being presented to him. And, ultimately, Gorge indicates it is his personal responsibility to pursue academic excellence.

It appears home schooling provides an optimal match between Gorge's social-emotional needs, his academic needs, and his learning setting. This is evidenced by Gorge's behavior and ability to cope well with day-to-day life as seen though self-report, his parents'/teacher's eyes, and through the social-emotional assessments. It is also evidenced through his significantly advanced academic achievement. Gorge appears to be a happy and thriving student as a result of his healthy relationship with his family and teacher/mentors, and his satisfaction with the approach to learning offered to him in the home school setting.

If a school outside of the home were to be selected, Tomas' parents indicated they would take the responsibility for frequent communication between themselves and the teachers to insure Tomas is challenged and supported. Tomas' parents keenly feel this responsibility as a result of the less than satisfactory kindergarten experience Tomas had in a public school. Tomas was enrolled for four days. During that time, he experienced the teacher as uncaring, mean-spirited, and unable or unwilling to honor his needs as a person and as a learner. Tomas and the teacher engaged in several power struggles. Tomas' parents met with the teacher and quickly discovered the teacher's limitations. They withdrew him and began home schooling with support from on-line instruction. From

the kindergarten experience, Tomas' parents learned how critical it was to them to be able to discern subtle changes in Tomas as an experience unfolds and to listen to his concerns without censoring or minimizing them.

As a home schooled student Tomas quickly demonstrated mastery of the all the kindergarten curriculum, and was moved to first grade curriculum. By the end of his second year of home schooling with support from the on-line academy, Tomas had mastered the entire second and third grade curriculum. He began his third year in school (when most students are beginning second grade) with the fourth grade curriculum. He is also considered to be advanced in his music lessons.

Tomas' home school teacher (aka his mother) reports Tomas learns very quickly and puts a significant amount of effort into the learning process. She reports Tomas' attention span for enjoyable endeavors is lengthy, and he willingly follows through with long classroom projects. Reading and computers are two activities that have engaged Tomas' attention for hours at a time. He can also be engaged in lengthy and imaginative creative writing assignments.

To complement the educational experience, Tomas' parents feel their role is to provide a nurturing presence. They feel this presence works to allow Tomas to express his motivation and passion for the many things he is studying. It allows him to feel safe to explore a subject even if errors are made. They have found Tomas is able to very successfully navigate a rough intellectual patch on his own as a result of his feeling nurtured and safe.

Tomas and his parents are very satisfied with home schooling. Tomas' virtual academy offers typical grade-level curricula, length of school day and school year, and grading expectations. It is flexible about how quickly a student moves through the individual core curriculum for each subject, enabling Tomas to study in depth when intrigued, or merely tackle mastery at grade level. This is an excellent match for Tomas as his written language skills can be more typical of elementary school students, whereas, his voracious appetite for American history could potentially challenge a high school student in a head to

head competition. Tomas is also pleased with the flexibility of the program, especially because it allows him the opportunity to succeed at his pace.

Tomas' indicates his professional goal is to become a zookeeper. Home schooling has allowed him to select the most professionally salient subjects for study at school. He lists science, mathematics, geography, veterinary science, language, and history as the necessary areas of study to prepare him professionally. Although Tomas enjoys the pace and scope of his academic studies, he feels his social-emotional growth occurs during recess, on school field trips, through Boy Scouts, and through Sunday School and church choir.

The optimal match between Tomas' needs as a learner and his learning setting are seen in his far-beyond-grade-level academic achievement and his excellent adaptive behavior and normal emotional adjustment. His healthy emotional growth and well developed interpersonal behavior have been observed by his parents and teacher/mentors, as well as through formal assessments. Tomas' advanced academic achievement is evidenced by his performance in his home school and his performance on formal measures.

Isabelle. Isabelle, as the third child in a family of profoundly gifted children, benefited from her mother's research to locate school settings that would meet the needs of her older siblings. When the time came to enroll Isabelle in school, her parents were aware of a public school setting that matched their vision and her unique learning and social needs. The school Isabelle attends is specifically designed for intellectually gifted children. The faculty are trained in gifted education, distinguished by their advanced degrees and have demonstrated proficiency in their fields of study. In addition to the outstanding faculty pedigree, Isabelle's parents desired a structured approach in the classroom and caring teachers who are able to manage behavior well. Her parents were also looking for the instructional program to be flexible enough to meet Isabelle's academic needs at her academic level without sacrificing her personal and interpersonal development. Although her parents are proponents of grade skipping in theory, their preference is for Isabelle to receive instruction in each subject according to her measured skill level, with opportunities to interact socially with chronological age peers who are also intellectual peers. To

accomplish these goals, Isabelle is enrolled in a first/second grade "homeroom" class and goes each day to other classes to receive instruction at her academic ability level. Isabelle also has a voice in her educational process. She has the opportunity to select the inter-term activities and research projects in which she would like to participate.

Isabelle's parents feel highly satisfied with the educational and social experience she is receiving. They feel they are integral members of Isabelle's educational team, and Isabelle is an honored student in her classroom. If they could change anything, they would desire smaller class sizes, so students could receive more individual attention from the teachers to nurture social-emotional growth. At home, mother supports Isabelle's instruction by providing her with books, captivating math activities, and art materials.

As a student, Isabelle is the model of appropriate classroom behavior and academic dedication. She sets high standards for herself, is self-confident and self-motivated, learns quickly, loves precision, and has a propensity to be self-aware and reflective of what she has learned. Isabelle memorizes information easily and can be quite persistent when engaged in mastering an activity. Her attention span is very long. She thinks logically, is self-disciplined, and enjoys studying a variety of subjects. Isabelle, as a classmate, interacts well with peers and adults, is an eager participant in all activities, demonstrates mature decision-making, shows empathy, and advocates for interpersonal justice among her peers.

Isabelle is a happy and productive student in her school for gifted children. Her emotional adjustment and adaptive behavior in the school setting are observable by teachers and parents and assessed through standardized measures. Isabelle's academic achievement is beyond her grade level, often significantly, as demonstrated by her academic performance at school and as measured by formal assessments. These results indicate there is an excellent match between Isabelle's social-emotional and learning needs, and the learning setting.

Will. Will was initially enrolled in the public elementary school in his neighborhood. He was excited to go because the thought of it appealed to his sense of curiosity about the world. However, his kindergarten experience was tremendously intellectually frustrating.

Will remained in the neighborhood school throughout the school year even though he hated going. By the beginning of first grade, Will was increasingly emotionally fragile, irritable, moody, and combative with his sister. Mother was determined to find a stimulating and supportive educational environment for Will. An application to a magnet school for intellectually gifted children in Will's school district was made, and he was accepted for his first grade year. Once Will changed schools, it did not take long for his low energy for school to grow into enthusiasm. Mother reports his personality at home "changed drastically" as well. She describes him as "happy, gaining interest in others, and being less combative with his sister."

Will's teachers from his first and second grades describe him in the utmost of glowing terms. His first grade teacher treasured his "wonderful curiosity" and was pleased that he had adjusted so well to his new school. The teacher reported Will got along well with classmates, was under his own control, respected others, and worked co-operatively in a group. As a learner, the teacher described him as self-confident, able to work independently, and able to manage time well. As a gifted learner, the teacher reported Will demonstrated excellent comprehension and had a propensity to be able to solve problems both conventionally and by using original strategies that would pop into his head. She/he indicated Will was especially facile with quickly solving mathematical problems in his head. In classroom discussions, the teacher reported Will was thoughtful and demonstrated superior skills of inference, evaluation, and appreciation of the topic. Although Will's second grade teacher noted his curiosity and high level of intellectual giftedness, he/she was not as dynamic in his/her description. Will did receive all "excellents" as grades on his report card during the year, and his adaptive behavior was excellent.

Will's parents report, as a learner, he demonstrates keen powers of observation and takes in tremendous amounts of detailed and precise information that a typical child his age would miss. Using this information, Will applies his skills of deep reflection, logical thinking, and analysis to produce views, perspectives, solutions, and/or opinions. Will can be intensely focused, persistent, dedicated, self-disciplined, motivated, and serious at the times he is engaged in a captivating intellectual pursuit. Will can also procrastinate and

put off completing assignments until the last minute. Fortunately or unfortunately, he is still very successful on his assignments, even though, from time to time, he hurries through them.

Will's parents are very satisfied with his current school. They attribute the success of this school situation to the ability of the faculty to understand how deeply sensitive and emotionally fragile Will is, and through their willingness to make accommodations for him. Will's parents have especially kind words for the principal who creates this learning environment and pays close attention to each student's needs as a whole person. The vision and mission of the school is not only to create an environment for intellectual growth, but to also create an environment conducive to the growth of each student as an ethical, caring, and responsible person. Students are hand selected to be with particular teachers because the student's needs can be best met through a particular teacher's strengths and sensitivities. One pivotal reason why Will may be doing so well in his current school is the support the school has given him toward feeling good about himself. Mother reports, as a result of Will's emotional fragility, this is key to his success as a learner and as a person.

Although the match between Will 's needs and his school seems satisfactory, it may not be optimal. He is progressing academically and socially at school as evidenced through teacher observation and formal assessment, but not at exceptional levels as his IQ and formal achievement scores would suggest. Will's exceptional intellectual capabilities do not seem to be tapped into in his school. Although he is in a school designed entirely for intellectually gifted children, his program appears to be unable to stretch into his range of intellectual ability. He is contained in a classroom throughout the day. There is a single teacher who is responsible for adjusting the level of the curriculum in each subject for all two dozen of the students in the class. The instruction seems to be designed for gifted learners in the lower ranges of ability and is not flexible enough to be genuinely stimulating to Will. Will also experiences a concerning degree of anxiety and fear when interacting with peers. As a result, he often withdraws and isolates himself from typical play experiences.

The potential for Will to be underachieving and for him to show signs of social-emotional distress as a result of the lack of an optimal match between his school and his needs is readily apparent. Will's adaptive behavior and emotional adjustment, especially at home, is similar to students who are radically accelerated without affective support. Will states he feels "different." Research has shown, "different" feeling children experience lower self-esteem, feelings of loneliness and isolation, poor peer relationships, and a need to act-out their feelings. Will evidences all of those characteristics through parent reports and formal assessment. The fact that Will is doing minimally well in his school setting is seen in his classroom performance and generally appropriate, but isolative, adaptive behavior. It is projected that there could be a more effective match between Will and his learning setting.

Conclusion

The results of this study reinforced the decades old contention that exceptionally and profoundly intellectually gifted children do not thrive in typical public school environments –no matter how bright and well adjusted they are prior to entering the typical general education setting. All four participants received psychological assessments prior to being matched with their current educational environments. Each of the male participants was assessed after his initial disastrous school experience. Isabelle's family knew from experience with her siblings to have her assessed before entering school. The psychological assessment has been a key tool for each family in securing the current educational setting for each of the participants. And, they are all successful (Will to a potentially lesser degree) in their current settings because they are aspiring to meeting their academic, social, and emotional needs.

What is the cost? As evidenced by the significant distress experienced by three of the four participants as a result of their general education public school experiences, the cost is very high to children and families. The currency of the cost is the emotional distress and the wasted learning opportunities. There is also a real cost. Families spend tremendous amount of money moving to find appropriate school settings, setting up home schools, or paying private school tuition.

There is also a significant cost to the school district in which these students live. Each of

the families in this study live in the same metropolitan school district. There are a total of nine exceptionally and profoundly gifted children in these three families. Only two of the nine attend the public schools in this district. That means this district has "lost" seven of its brightest students because the families were dissatisfied with the district's minimal efforts to accommodate the educational needs of their children. School districts genuinely advocating for intellectually gifted children in the exceptional and profound ranges need to provide highly individualized educational settings. The construction of effective settings for extraordinarily intellectually gifted students begins with thorough individual psychological assessments. The results of these assessments are used to design, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of the school settings that are designed for the students. Providing effective educational settings for extraordinarily intellectually gifted children is a powerful way to remove one of the primary sources of distress in the lives of these children and their families.

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LITERACY AND THE INNER CURRICULUM
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"Science and education, being too exclusively abstract, verbal, and bookish, don't have enough place for raw, concrete, esthetic experience, especially of the subjective happening inside oneself." (Maslow, 1968, p. 229).

Educational systems that are preoccupied with measurement, test-taking, and a positivistic, empirical orientation often ignore students' inner dimensions. This monograph defines the inner curriculum and demonstrates how it can be used to address the affective element within the parameters of gifted education programs and classroom literacy curriculums.

The Inner Lives of Gifted Students
Highly creative, artistic, and intellectually gifted students often have lives that are marked by intense feelings, sensitivity, and emotional extremes (Dabrowski, 1964; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Piechowski,1991; Silverman, 1993). These traits combined with high intelligence or creativity can leave them particularly vulnerable to emotional issues. Dysynchrony can also make gifted children more emotionally vulnerable. Dysynchrony is a psychological state where children's intellectual and creative development supercedes their psychological, emotional, and social development (Silverman, 1993). But because of the strong reasoning capabilities of gifted children, these symptoms are often masked.

Defining the Inner Curriculum
The inner curriculum is a school's plan for addressing the inner life of students. This includes their emotions, imagination, intuition, ideals, values, and sense of spirituality. The inner curriculum can be inserted into any curriculum that is currently in place. It can also be used as the basis of pull-out programs or in-class curriculum differentiation for gifted students. The inner curriculum is comprised of four elements:

1. Intrapersonal. This element involves three parts. First, emotions. In dealing with emotions, students must identify feelings, then connect them to external events or situations. Second, intuition. Intuition teaches students how to use their general impressions or sense of knowing apart from logic and emotion. And third, spirituality.

Spirituality can be defined apart from any religious context as honoring the inner, subjective experience. Here one looks for symbols, images, and impressions and then assigns meaning. Techniques involving meditation, guided imagery, free writing and association, and mythology are often used with this intrapersonal element.

2. *Expressing the Intrapersonal.* With this element students give expression to what is discovered in the intrapersonal element above. The arts are often used for this. Music, dance, visual art, drama, poetry, and creative writing are all activities that can be used as separate curricular elements or inserted across the curriculum. Also, bibliotherapy, analogies using metaphors, journal writing, and small group discussions where students are engaged in honest dialogue can also be used to express the intrapersonal.

3. *Interpersonal.* This element involves understanding one's self in the context of a group, culture, or social setting. Activities here include social skills, cooperative group activities, values clarification, moral dilemmas, and responding to literature.

4. *The Human Condition.* With this element students seek to know themselves in the context of humanity. The goal is to begin to understand what it is to be human and to find similarities over time and across cultures. Comparisons using mythology, literature, and history as well as newspapers and current events are often used with this element.

Self-Actualization
When implemented, the inner curriculum can become a vehicle for students' self-actualization. Self-actualization is the state where one is able to accept and express one's inner core or self and begin to actualize those capacities and potentialities found there (Maslow, 1968). There are four tasks specifically related to this:

1. *Discover and understand oneself.* This reflects the intrapersonal element described above that occurs through various self-reflective experiences. Understanding oneself makes it less likely that the conscious will be ruled by unconscious forces (Bettleheim, 1984). Part of self-actualizing then is the integration of the conscious and unconscious parts of one's personality (Russel-Chapin, Rybak, & Copilevitz, 1996; Smith, 1990). Only by bringing unconscious images, wants, and feelings to consciousness is one free to act

upon them. Also, understanding and accepting oneself makes it more likely that these qualities will be applied others. This reflects the interpersonal element described above.

2. Express one's inner core. This is the expression of the intrapersonal element described above. Once images and ideas from the inner, subjective realm have been identified, the next step is to express them. This expression serves two functions: first, it creates a more dynamic and more richly defined interaction between the ego and the self or the conscious and unconscious mind (Sylwester, 2000). And second, it allows these images and ideas to interact with other humans.

3. Find one's passion and act on it. This is a matter of discovering what one is interested in and indulging in it. This is what mythologist Joseph Campbell (1968) calls finding your bliss. Part of a teacher's role then is to expose students to a wide variety of topics and activities and create the structure whereby they can indulge their passions. This is essentially a description of Type I and Type III activities used in the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reis, 1997).

4. Discover one's strengths or particular talents and learn how to use them to solve problems. As Robert Sternberg (1996) describes in his book, *Successful Intelligence*, highly successful people are not necessarily those who have a great many strengths and few weaknesses; rather, they are those who learn how to use their strengths to compensate for a weakness in order to solve problems or create products. Thus, part of any program related to gifted education and talent development should be devoted to helping students develop their preferred ways of thinking and knowing.

Activities in the Inner Curriculum
As stated above, the inner curriculum need not replace curricula already in place. Like a small glove inside a larger one, it can augment and enhance those things schools and teachers are already doing. Described here are inner curriculum activities that can be used in literacy related classes. Some of these activities might be familiar to educators with a whole language or holistic learning philosophy. Knowledge of the inner curriculum will allow these familiar activities to be used with new intent.

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Language Arts Activities

The language arts are particularly well suited for the inner curriculum as assignments and activities here can easily be designed to encourage students to look inward. Keep in mind also that the language arts can and should be used across the curriculum in order to (a) manipulate content and learn more deeply, (b) reinforce language arts and writing skills, and (c) connect subject matter to one's experience or personal life. And, while the activities described here are particularly suited for highly creative and intellectually gifted students, they would be of benefit to all students and, thus, can be included in any classroom as well as used for gifted students in special classes or pullout sessions.

1. Include and embrace silence. Some of the recent brain research describes the need for breaks after instructional input in order to fully process new information (Jensesn, 2000). Silence can be used in this way as lesson closure to help students identify what they learned. Here a teacher would ask students, "What is at least one thing that you found interesting or important? How might it connect to your life?" After a moment of silence, the teacher would then say, "Turn to a neighbor and share your ideas." These silence moments need last only 30 seconds to a minute.

Silence is also needed to fully process life's instructional input or to understand one's emotions and unconscious prompts (Miller, 2000). Here silence is used to bring stillness to the mind in order to enhance self-reflection. The Buddhist mystic, Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) says a stilled mind is like the smooth surface of a pond in that it reflects the wealth of images that surround it.

Finally, silence can also be used as a pre-writing activity by asking, "What are you thinking about today? Take a few minutes, breathe deeply and try to focus on what thoughts are running through your head." These moments of silence can be made more powerful by having students record their thoughts in a journal, power write, or share with a neighbor (each of these are described below).

2. Inner curriculum writing prompts. All students are more motivated to write and take greater pride and ownership in the final product if the writing topics come from within. Thus, if writing prompts are used, they should be asked to describe their experiences,

feelings, ideas, or perceptions. The inner curriculum writing prompts in Figure 1 can be used to this end. These are prompts that focus on both interpersonal and intrapersonal elements.

Figure 1. Inner Curriculum Writing Prompts

Make a list of heroes or people you look up to. What are some traits that they have?
Describe a safe place. Describe a place that doesn't feel safe.
Describe a safe time. Describe a time that didn't feel safe.
Make a list of people who have hurt you. Why do you think they acted as they did?
Make a list of people who think *you* may have hurt them in some way. Are they right?
When have you asked for help?
When have you helped?
List ten events in your life. Put them in order from (a) most to least important, (b) sad to happy, (c) exciting to boring, (d) safe to risky.
You are leaving something in your life (place, stage, period). What is it? What will come next?
You are/will be starting something new in your life. What is it?
What is your secret power?
What special talents do you have?
When or where do you feel alone?
When or where do you feel apart form others.
Make a list of things you would like to do. What does this list tell you about you?
What are some things you've outgrown?
What are some activities that used to be fun, but aren't any more?
Describe a goal for your life. What are some things you will need to do to achieve your goal? What are some things you can do right now? What things might get in the way of accomplishing this goal?
Describe the most beautiful thing you have ever seen. If you can't, describe a very beautiful thing you encountered. Use words or pictures.
Describe or list three objects that are important to you. What do these say about who you are?
Shadow side. What feelings or parts of your personality do you try to keep hidden? Draw a picture or create a character that has some of the traits of this hidden side.
Doing and being. In the middle of a circle or shape, write something you did today or yesterday. On the outside of the circle, list dreams, feelings, ideals related to that thing. (Free association. Don't think too much.)

Informally, these writing prompts can be used with journal writing activities (described below). They can also be used with the five-step process writing approach described by Donald Graves (1983). These steps are (a) pre-writing, where ideas are generated, (b) drafting, where the first attempt is made to capture ideas on paper, (c) revising, the heart of the writing process, where a piece is re-visioned and reshaped many times, (d) editing, the last writing stage where grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors are corrected, and (e) publishing, where the writing is shared with an audience. Most of the writing activities in a classroom should involve only pre-writing and drafting. Graves recommends that students be given a choice as to which of these drafts they want to take to the revision step. Generally, students find only about one in five drafts worthy of investing the mental and emotional energy necessary to revise and create a finished product. The rest of the drafts can be kept in a file folder as a junkyard for other writing ideas or included in a portfolio to document students' journey.

3. Journal writing. Journal writing is a natural follow up to a moment of silence described above. The goal of the journal is to provide a place for students to record their thoughts, observations, or interesting ideas. It is to be a written version of their thinking space and thus should not be graded for spelling, mechanics, or content. Sometimes a teacher might give a specific journal prompt such as, "What kind of things make you happy?" Or, "Describe a time when you were very angry." The best kinds of journal prompts are more general and allow for students to write about what is important in their lives: "What do you want to say today?" Or, "What's going on in your life?" Or, "What are you thinking about?" Or, "What are you feeling? Why are you feeling this way?" The goal is to get to a place where students no longer need teacher prompts for writing.

Having others respond to a journal makes it become a more dynamic entity and greatly increases student interest and the quality of writing. Students should always be given a choice as to which entries they want to share with others. Paper clips can be used here to denote entries to be responded to. Students will also need to be taught how to respond aesthetically to journal entries. An aesthetic response is when readers describe the effect the writing has on their imagination, emotions, or associations. The aesthetic response questions in Figure 2 can be displayed in poster form some place in the room and used to

teach students how to respond to the writing of others. Figure 3 shows an example of a journal entry with an aesthetic response. The response does not address mechanical issues of grammar, spelling, or punctuation; rather, it is used only to describe the feelings and images the writing evoked.

Figure 2. Questions that elicit an aesthetic response.

1. What did it make you think about?
2. What is something it reminded you of?
3. What book, movie, TV show, or historical event is this like?
4. What images were painted in your head as you read?
5. What did you want to know more about?
6. What is one idea that you liked?
7. What were you feeling as your read this?
8. What experience in your own life has triggered similar feelings or situations?
9. What events in your life are similar to those described?
10. What do you want to say to the writer/author?

Figure 3. Journal excerpt with an aesthetic response.

Student journal: Every Sunday for eight years, I took Don to church. The people that greeted him were either sympathetically saucy or somewhat distant and demeaning. Don was in his sixties, used a wheelchair, and was mentally retarded. He acknowledged others by slightly tipping his head down and motioned with his hand as if he was tipping a hat. When the collection plates came around, all the other members would put in their little money envelopes. When the plate came to Don, he would take out his wallet and dump everything in with great flourish and showmanship (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, dollars, and assorted tickets, cards, and other papers). Then he'd pound his wallet on the edge of the plate to make sure he'd gotten everything out. Around Easter, he'd always take along a few of his beloved jelly beans and toss them in as well.

Once a year, the church would print a bulletin listing how much every individual had given that year. Don's usually came out to be around eight dollars. He always had the lowest money figure. It always seemed like such a misrepresentation of his generosity and sense of duty.

Aesthetic response: I loved this description! I can picture Don in my mind putting his money in the plate with great dignity and ceremony while everyone else sits quietly, staring straight ahead. What an interesting and noble figure. I would love to know more about his other encounters and how he deals with people in his life. What made you pick this scene? I like the term, *sympathetically saucy.* This is a very interesting character!!

4. Sharing. Sharing one's writing with others helps students see a certain universality or commonality of experience and understand each other at a deeper level. Sharing also has a certain cathartic effect in that it allows students to identify things that may have been harboring in their unconscious, record them, and then share them with others.

Described here are five ways that sharing can be done. First, as described above, students can trade journals or have others respond to specified journal entries by writing on the journal page. Second, students might read or describe a journal entry to a partner and let that partner respond orally. Third, students can read or describe a journal entry in small group. As members of the group respond orally with aesthetic response kinds of questions (Figure 2), these entries become natural vehicles for small group discussions. Fourth, teachers might create a magic circle (described below). And fifth, two or three volunteers can sign up to share an idea or journal entry with the class. Teachers should never do more than three of these whole-class kinds of sharing in a given class period as students naturally get distracted after a few minutes of listening passively.

5. Power write. A power write is where students try to catch as many ideas as they can in a three-minute period of time (two minutes for younger students). This is different than a free write where students write whatever they want in an extended period of time. The goal in the power write is to get students to bypass the logical mind by free associating quickly, catching the first thought that pops into their mind. In this sense, it is much like the Buddhist koan which uses a riddle or a question to bypass the logical mind. A stopwatch should be used here so that students know they are writing for a specific amount of time. They are to keep their pencils moving, writing down the first thing that comes to their mind. Often students start out with, "I don't know what to write about. I can't think of anything ..." but this always leads to something else.

Students writing should be very disjointed here (see Figure 4). It helps if teachers model this sense of disjointedness by showing and reading a copy of a power write they have done. Encourage students to use scribbles, scratch marks, arrows, diagrams, single words, incomplete sentences, and quick impressions. If done correctly, the power write will help the writer to discover the images and thoughts residing in the unconscious.

Figure 4. Example of a power write.

> Cold, cold, cold. Too cold to go running. Hard to run outside when you have glasses and it's 10 degrees below zero. Glasses fog up. Can't see.
>
> Need to get my eyes checked. Remind me to buy a new pair of dress pants. Funny how I think nothing of plunking down $50 for a book, but it's like pulling teeth to get me to "waste" money on a new pair of pants ... funny how that is ... Hilarious ... good humor ...
>
> Anyway, I miss church music ... To me, that's always been the center of a worship experience ... Different people react differently to different things --- The sermon addresses the logical mind -- Liturgy, in its essence, was meant to be a form of chant to go beyond the logical mind ... icons and painting carry another message ... music carries another message ... all that's missing is dance, drama, and perhaps poetry or creative writing ... Mime? ... Where do you stop? Juggling? Anyway, there's an interesting article in here ... truly be a multi-dimensional worship experience ... Multiple forms of intelligence ... spiritual intelligence ... triarchic theory ... generate intuitive ideas, evaluate the ideas, apply them to one's life or circumstance.
>
> Drinking St. John's wort tea --- trying to pound out the finishing touches on an article. Pounding .... there's an interesting metaphor ... Crafting? Shaping? Birthing?

6. Magic Circle. The first step in Magic Circle is give the class a writing/thinking prompt to respond to. There are three kinds of prompts that can be used here: (a) a question, (b) a memory prompt, and (c) priming-the-pump. The question might be something such as "What do like to do best on a sunny, summer day?" The memory prompt is where students are asked to tell about a time or event in their lives. For example, "Tell me about a time when you were angry," or "Describe a time when you were very proud," or "Tell me about an ending and a beginning in your life." Priming-the-pump is where teachers share a piece of writing to get ideas flowing. This could be a piece of poetry or a short segment from a story or newspaper. However, the most effective kind of prime is when teachers share something they have written.

The second step is for students to describe on paper what is going through their heads or what the prompt made them think about. Students and the teacher then write for three to five minutes. This can be extended if students are still writing with great energy. Near the end of the writing time students should be given a verbal mile marker: "There's about a minute left. Try to finish up the idea that you are working on." This prevents the abrupt ending and allows them to create a sensible last thought.

The third step is to collect students' writing. They should not put their names on the their papers. This is an important point, as all writing needs to be anonymous for magic circle

to be effective. The pile of papers are then shuffled and students' desks are arranged in a circle. One paper is passed out to each student.

The fourth step is to have students respond to each paper using some form of aesthetic response described in Figure 2 above. When a student has finished with a paper, he or she stands up, moves to the center of the circle, and looks for a desk that somebody has vacated. The student then moves to that desk and responds to that piece of writing. For younger students, this provides the physical movement that they need to keep them engaged. This part of magic circle takes a fair amount of concentration on the part of students and can generally be maintained for only ten to twenty minutes. (A good beginning goal is to ask students to try to respond to at least three pieces of writing.) When students have responded to at least three papers or when they seem to be losing concentration, they should be asked to finish the paper in front of them and gradually find their own.

At the end of Magic Circle, each piece of writing should have the responses of three or four students on it. Again, this makes the paper become a dynamic entity and it also allows students to interact with the thoughts and emotions of others in a safe way.

7. Free verse poetry. Poetry uses words, sounds, and phrases to paint a picture. Free verse poetry paints this picture without the use of rhyme, meter, or other defined poetic devices. This form of poetry allows young poets to concentrate on the sound of the poem and re-create a feeling or event. Free verse is a good starting point for poetry writing as feelings and ideas are not sacrificed for form. Other poetry forms will naturally develop from here as students begin to experiment with different sounds and their effect.

At first it may be necessary to provide a prompt or structure for students. To do this, first ask students to picture something they have seen or experienced. Then ask them to quickly record feelings, sounds, smells, tastes, and sights associated with that thing or experience. Here students should be encouraged to use words and phrases but not complete sentences. Finally students should experiment with sounds and put the words and phrases together in a way that paints the picture of that thing seen or experienced.

Free verse poetry need not be long or elaborate. Often, a few simple words can best capture a feeling. Figure 5 contains a free verse poem that was created for a unit on the History of Music. This shows how poetry might be used to bring another way of seeing to other subject areas.

Figure 5. A free verse poem.

Music
A skin stretched over a hollow log.
The ancients, pounding.
Vibrations, traveling through the air.
Moving outward, invisible through space.
Sounds,
Coming one after another.
Repeating, pulsating.
People moving now,
Moving in time with sound.
Responding to sound.
Transforming by sound.

A chant,
A prayer, repeated over and over.
The sound becomes line.
The line takes shape, moving here and there, fluttering about,
A butterfly,
A dancing butterfly of sound.

The dancing line, now joined by another.
Line upon line, intertwining, one upon the other.
The other upon the one.
Many together to produce blend.
Chord.
Colors of sound, perfectly matched.
Harmonies knit,
A bridge from here to there.
Between inner and outer.

Sound
The sound of the mothers heart within the womb.
The sound of life.
And the sound of silence.
A pounding silence then.

Literature Activities

In the classic text, *Literature as Exploration* (1983), Louise Rosenblatt describes literature as something that contributes powerfully to students' image of the themselves, the world, and the human condition. Through literature, students can (a) clarify their own emotions; (b) vicariously experience new situations; and (c) interact with and come to understand humans from a variety of regions, historical contexts, and cultures. This section contains a description of six inner curriculum activities that could be used with a wide variety of literature in many classes and situations.

1. Bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy uses literature to help students understand themselves or to help them understand and solve personal problems (Herbert & Richard, 1999). It can take a variety of forms; however, the three key elements are identification, catharsis, and insight. In the identification phase readers identify with a particular character in the story. Catharsis happens when there is an active release of emotions. Here readers have followed a character through a situation or a problem to its resolution. During the insight phase readers apply the insights gleaned from the story to their own lives or situations. This is often followed by a small group discussion or journal activities where students can share their insights.

The two Story Connectors in Figure 6 can be used to provide structure here. Using the Feelings Connector readers first select and describe an interesting or important event or action from the story. In the second column, readers list all characters involved with or affected by the event and describe their feelings or perspective. In the third column readers list a similar event or action from their own life. And in the fourth column readers lists the feelings and perspective of all people affected by it. Using the Problem Connector readers describe a problem found in the story and brainstorm possible solutions. Then they describe a similar problem in their own life and brainstorm possible solutions.

Figure 6. Story Connectors

Feelings Connector - The Wizard of Oz

event/action in the story	feelings of character/s	similar event/action in my life	my feelings
- Dorothy lands in Oz and finds herself in a strange, new place.	- Dorothy doesn't really know what to do or expect. There's new people and situations.	- Reminds me of when I went to jazz camp when I was in 9th grade..	- Like Dorothy, I felt out of place at first. I had never been to a music camp. There were many new people. I was by myself. Like Dorothy, I made friends once I got to know people.

Problem Connector - The Wizard of Oz

problem in the story	possible solutions	similar problem in my life	possible solutions
- The Wicked Witch is trying to hurt Dorothy and take her shoes.	- Give her the shoes. - Reason with her. - Ignore her. - Explain the situation with her and try to get her to understand. - Try to find compromise. - Share the shoes with her.	- A colleague is trying to discredit our program and take our graduate students.	- Explain the concept of synergy. - Invite the colleague to by part of our program. - Look for a common graduate program. - Ignore the colleague and maintain my standards.

2. Creative problem solving. Creative problem solving (CPS) is best used in pairs or small groups as it is easier to generate ideas and get multiple perspectives when working with others. Here students (a) identify one problem in the story, (b) brainstorm to list as many possible solutions as possible, (c) pick the best solutions, and (d) elaborate and refine the solution. CPS helps to provide greater perspective and more possibilities to problems that students may be facing. The CPS Organizer in Figure 7 can be used to provide structure here.

Figure 7. CPS Organizer.

Problem:	
Ideas:	Best solution:
	Elaborate and refine:

3. Double journal entry. The double journal entry is a way to combine students' objective and subjective views. In their journals, students draw a line down the middle of the page (see Figure 8). On the left side they select and record interesting or important passages from the text verbatim (objective view). On the right side they describe thoughts, impressions, or associations related to the selected text (subjective views). This can be used with both narrative and expository text. It can be extended for use in science or inquiry projects by describing what is observed on the left side and students' ideas or interpretations on the right side.

Figure 8. Double journal entry.

From the movie script, *The Wizard of Oz* (MGM, 1939).

text	my ideas
Dorothy: No - it was an accident. I didn't mean to kill anybody; really I didn't. **Witch:** You didn't eh? Accident eh? Well, I can cause accidents too, my little pretty, and this is how I do it...	- The Witch, green face, scrunched up. Everyone is scared. The Witch represents the shadow side, that part of us that we all have inside us.
The Lion jumps from the woods and starts terrorizing Scarecrow and Tinman. They are frightened. Toto, not afraid, barks. He chases Toto behind the tree. Dorothy slaps him and tells Lion he should be ashamed. Lion starts crying.	- Dorothy is showing courage and acting on moral principles. It is not right for bigger things to pick on smaller things. Not knowing Lion is just a big coward, she risks her life to stand up for this principle. Isn't it funny that the one character who does all the killing in this movie also acts upon the highest moral principles?
Uncle Henry tells Dorothy that he won't let Miss Gulch take Toto. Miss Gulch tells him that he could lose the farm as a result. Uncle Henry takes Toto from a sobbing Dorothy and puts him in Miss Gulch's basket.	- Apparently Uncle Henry doesn't have the moral fiber that Dorothy has. He takes a moral stand, but then changes his mind. He is willing to have Toto destroyed. What kind of spineless bastard is Uncle Henry?

4. Aesthetic response questions. Instead of the usual worksheets or study guides, students can respond to a story using the aesthetic response questions in Figure 2 above.

5. Values clarification activities. A value is any trait or characteristic that one finds important such as honesty, creativity, loyalty, hard work, cooperation, participation, self-discipline, responsibility, dignity, freedom, positive attitude, equality of all, compassion, or kindness. Values clarification activities are those in which students are asked to identify, rate, rank, or apply a value. Three values clarification activities are described here: (a) ranking decisions, (b) inferring values, and (c) predicting actions.

In ranking decisions, students are presented with a description of a situation found in the story. As a class or in small group, students generate three to four possible decisions that could be made by one or more of the characters. Students then rank the decisions and describe the value or values reflected in their top choice (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Ranking decisions.

Situation	Possible Decisions	Rank in Order of Preference
- Miss Gulch wants to take Toto and have him destroyed.	- Run away from home. - Talk with the humane society. See if they can help. - Take the matter to court. - Get to know Miss Gulch. Try to reason with her. - Send Toto away to live with somebody else. - Threaten Miss Gulch.	1. Get to know Miss Gulch. Try to reason with her. Offer to help her at home. 2.Talk with the humane society. She if they can help. 3. Send Toto away to live with somebody else. 4.Take the matter to court. 5.Run away from home. 6. Threaten Miss Gulch.

Reflected Values: Our group values human interaction, reasonableness, and a willingness to understand and compromise. Our top choice reflects this. We think people are basically kind and reasonable. Our group does not value threats or the use of violence in any situation, as this always makes things worse.

In inferring values, the teacher or students select an example of a choice or an action made by a character in the story. Inference is then used to try to describe what values determined that character's choices. The Values Infer-O-Gram in Figure 10 can be used to provide structure here. In the left hand column students list relevant data or clues gleaned from the story. In the right hand column students list any relevant knowledge they may have related to similar things, people, or experiences in their lives. Based on this data, students make an informed guess or inference as to what values determined a particular character's choice or action. For younger children, a list of values may need to be provided.

Figure 10. Values Infer-O-gram.

Choice or action: Dorothy slaps Lion on the face when he is threatening Toto.

Important things the story tells us about the character:	Important things you know that were not in the story:
- Dorothy takes action. She steps in to save Toto. not knowing that Lion is a coward. - Dorothy says it is wrong for big things to pick on little things. She is standing up for a principle here. - After hurting Lion. Dorothy tries to comfort him when he cries. **Important things the story tells us about the situation:** - Dorothy does not know Lion is cowardly. - Lion is growling and trying to scare Toto. - Scarecrow and Tin Man do not take action. They only cringe. - Lion threatens Scarecrow and Tin Man. Makes fun of them. Says he want's to fight. - Lion is brave until he's challenged.	- Lions will usually hurt you if you slap them on the face. - Courageous men and women throughout history have stood up for what they believed. even though they may have been hurt: Malcolm X, Martian Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks. - Cowardly men and woman throughout history change their mind, retreat. or don't stick to their guns when threatened or challenged. - In books and movies. the hero or heroine often display the traits that Dorothy does. - Many of the traits described by Joseph Campbell in *Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1968) apply to Dorothy.

Conclusion: Dorothy has courage. stands up for what she believes. and is willing to take action based on a principle even though she may be hurt.   Dorothy represents the classic hero archetype as described by Joseph Campbell.

In predicting actions, students select an action or choice that a character must make and then predict the possible action or outcome. The Values Infer-O-Gram in Figure 10 can be adapted for use here as well.

6. Web-of-Comparison.   The Web-of-Comparison can be used to help students find similarities and differences between any story element, character, or situation and their lives (Figure 11). Once a story element has been selected for comparison, similarities are listed in middle column and differences in two outer columns. Students are then asked to describe insights, observations, or ideas below.

Figure 11. Web-of-Comparison

The Wizard of Oz

Similarities

The Story	↓	My Life
Dorothy discovers she has magic shoes.	- My life has been a journey. I seem to be following a path. - I have had good friends to help me along.	- I discovered my magic is determination and discipline.
- Dorothy kills two people (Wicked Witch of the East and Wicked Witch of the West).	- I have encountered selfish people that seem to want to take or destroy. - Water, in the form of consciousness, can make selfishness disappear.	- I have never had to kill anybody and hope I never will.
- Glinda the Good Witch teaches Dorothy and points her to where she needs to go.	- Dorothy and I have traveled to strange places. - We both discovered the importance of caring for those in your own back yard. - Dorothy and I have both had to fight and stand up for what we believe.	- I have had good books, wise teachers, and parents to teach me and point me to where I need to go.

Differences

The lesson, observations, or ideas: There are many similarities between Dorothy's life and my journey. I am hoping that my journey will have a happy ending like Dorothy's. I would like to know what happened to Dorothy after she woke up at home. How was her life different? Did she every reconcile with Miss Gulch?

Final Word

Because of their characteristics, highly creative and intellectually gifted students may be particularly vulnerable in regards to emotional issues. The inner curriculum is a school's plan for addressing the inner lives of students. In this monograph I have defined the inner curriculum and demonstrated how it can be implemented within a literacy context.

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ANSWERING THE CALL: INSTILLING HOPE AND RESILIENCY IN SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE GIFTED CHILDREN
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I can remember the day exactly. I was six years old, living in England, and I was standing in the playground during a recess, not thinking about anything in particular. All of a sudden, I felt as though I were sucked up out of my body and was floating in the air above the school building. As I floated there, I saw years pass by—the sun spun up and down overhead, seasons zoomed by, workmen gathering leaves, shoveling snow, renovating the building and teachers and kids coming and going—all at lightening speed. At one point, I remember somehow knowing that it was 100 years in the future and I looked down and saw kids playing the in the playground but none of them knew me or even heard of me because by then I was gone. Gradually, I descended again to the ground where I was instantly called upon to join a game by my friends. But I just stood there for a few moments trying to digest what I had experienced. I had no idea what this was. Because I couldn't explain my experience to anyone and could hardly understand it myself, I lived for months in a state of both wonder and fear for much of my childhood. I vividly remember feeling confronted by the possibility that no sign of me would exist after I'd gone and this saddened me greatly. I continued to do my homework and whatever else the adult world expected of me but always asked myself: "What's the point when it will not be here in that other time?" I once posed this question to my parents, insisting that my homework would disappear, with every other temporary thing. They laughed and probably thought I had devised a clever argument to get out of doing my homework. By the end of the year, living a life that would leave a footprint of some kind had become an important idea in my mind, though I could hardly put it into words. To this day, I regard the sixth year of my life as the beginning of my spiritual quest. ---- (as told by "Elizabeth" in a letter to the author)

We may never know how many gifted children lie awake at night confronting deep spiritual or moral questions or how many project themselves into the future, as this girl did, looking for footprints from her own life on earth. As the above true story shows, experiences and insights of such magnitude can shake the foundations of a child's inner world. A piano teacher once told me about a young child she taught, who, following a lesson one day, looked up at her and said, "I remember when I was in my mummy's tummy." The teacher nodded and said, "Oh? Is that so?" The child then said, "Yes, and I remember before that, too." Exceptionally gifted in both music and languages, this child then recounted what he could remember about his life in some other place with other people before he "came here." The piano teacher said that from the child's point of view, he had arrived on

earth much the same way as a person on a train and he described in detail where he'd come from in a casual but knowing way. She said "I had no idea what to say to this amazing little child who was barely tall enough to reach the pedals, but I felt somehow that whether true or no, this boy was in touch with something much larger than himself and he knew it."

The Spiritually Sensitive Gifted Child
Over a hundred years ago, William James (1902, pp. 476-477) in *Varieties of Religious Experience* said that the spiritually gifted tend to adopt the following views:

1. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;
2. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;
3. That prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof—be that spirit "God" or "law"—is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world;
4. A new zest which adds itself like a gift to life;
5. An assurance of safety and temper of peace, and in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections.

Hoffman (1992) conducted interviews with a number of adults who, in recalling early childhood experiences, revealed a rich inner world of spiritual insight and sensibility. They described such phenomena as feelings of profound joy, timelessness, oneness with nature, experiences with a supreme being or life force, extraordinary inner convictions (sometimes contrary to adult belief systems), ability to enter non-ordinary states of consciousness, and a highly developed sense of self. At the same time, these sensitivities are apt to also bring disappointment or sadness when these children look at the moral failings of human beings. Hollingworth (1942) shared an example of a boy of nine who "wept bitterly at how the North taxed the South after the Civil War" (p. 281). Lovecky (1997) described a child of six who befriended and bravely defended a developmentally disabled student of 12 who was tormented by the teasing of his peers.

Clearly, gifted children with enhanced intellectual powers are in an ideal position to understand complex moral and spiritual questions. A young child whose knowledge about the ever-expanding universe leads him to deeper questions about eternity or infinity would not be able to do so without these intellectual gifts. But with these gifts come a broad range of emotional, sensory and intuitive gifts that deal not merely with thoughts about religion, God, the universe and spiritual existence, but with ethics, compassion, kindness, intuition, artistry, inspiration, joy, and so forth. The following list reveals a broad range of the characteristics commonly seen among this population:

- Interested in philosophical and spiritual questions way in advance of their years;
- Inspired by a sense of the wholeness of life (encompassing all beings and the universe) and feeling part of this large whole;
- Inclined to probe religious beliefs with questions that are often difficult, if not impossible to answer;
- Profoundly affected by experiences that inspired a completely new way of thinking or experiencing the spiritual domain;
- Inclined to sense another, invisible world/pattern/force/intelligence beyond the visible, material one;
- Acutely intuitive about human and animal behavior;
- Deeply drawn toward the creative, artistic and the imaginative;
- Interested in unexplained phenomena—UFOs, telepathic abilities, near-death-experiences, visions of the future, etc.;
- Devastated by cruelty, war, destruction to the environment etc. and inclined to worry about these issues;
- Highly sensitive and compassionate toward others, particularly toward those who are mistreated, troubled or unhappy;
- Strongly connected in an empathic (and even telepathic according to some children) to animals and nature; convinced of a spiritual connection;
- Able to take strong, courageous stands about ethical issues based on well reasoned arguments for doing so and in spite of opposition;
- Connected to a higher source or a larger vision of life that gives them strength and an ability to feel independent of others' opinions.

The Struggle

Spiritually sensitive gifted children face an extraordinary dilemma. On the one hand, they have this special gift that links them to a larger sense of life and being. On the other hand, many of them are ushered into this awareness without the emotional maturity or life experience to cope with it. The now familiar phenomenon known as "asynchrony," which refers to being "out-of-synch" both internally and externally, makes a child seem like 25 in metaphysical understanding and six in emotional maturity (Webb, Meckstroth & Tolan, 1982; Gross, 1993; Lovecky, 1997). A seven-year-old talks about the nature of consciousness at one moment and weeps over a missing toy the next. A 10-year-old asks if humans" ... can evolve into a kinder species than the 'moral Neanderthals' they are now" while watching Sponge Bob on cable television.

Like the woman who told the story of being lifted up above the school at the age of six, these children receive insights and impressions at an age when they can't fully process what they mean let alone explain their experience to an adult. What does such a child do? In this case and in many like it, the child keeps her thoughts to herself. In the case of the child who remembered living before he was born, the situation was quite different. Undoubtedly, his parents' openness to what he communicated and respect for their son's convictions enabled him to say what he knew and be at peace with it. However, this rarely happens. Many gifted children continue to struggle alone.

> I remember lying in bed at night holding on to my stuffed animals. I felt like beyond what I knew—my little world—was this pitch black, unknowable universe that stretches out in all directions. It was where all my unanswered questions were, where animals whom I loved had died, where my own parents' nihilism lived. My parents never said anything scary or dark and often bent over backwards to make me feel safe; yet, I could always feel this hollowness, this darkness. Something about the things they said to each other and the way they responded to daily life permeated the atmosphere of our home. A kind of existential fear is what I remember most, fear of some dark impenetrable thing that I couldn't define.

These children are usually out of synch with peers and sometimes with their own families as well. Families who hold strongly held views about religion, for example, find it difficult to debate with their own child about issues they themselves never questioned. A child suggests that perhaps the story of Jesus' transfiguration recounted in the New Testament can be explained by physics—since time is not really as linear as we suppose. Deeply

immersed in science and the connections she feels between physics and spirituality, this child starts looking at Bible stories through the lens of quantum physics. But because of the mixed responses she gets from family members, she keeps this project to herself, secretly exploring hints about the nature of matter that she discovers in the pages of the Bible.

Other children—so open to different points of view and sensitive to those who hold them—may struggle to understand how anyone can believe that his or her religion is the true one. Troubled and confused, they badger adults for evidence that clearly supports a particular religion or viewpoint. Parents, teachers and relatives have often reported the endless "How do we really know?" question that some of these children ask. A boy who recently moved from a conservative religious community to a city where students follow a variety of religions remained committed to his faith community, but not to their statements about non-believers. He would ask questions like: "Can anyone be chosen and not everyone? If God talked to Jesus and Moses and Mohammad, how can anyone say that only they are God's people? Because we think something is true, does that not make it true for everyone? If we are wrong, shouldn't we try to find out? How do we find out?"

The other challenge these children face comes with their entrance into school. A young girl who paints the "spirit face" of animals and people discovers, with a jolt, that the other kids have no idea what she's doing. "You know," she explains, "there is the face that we see with our eyes and then there is the other one." She shows pictures of her cat on four different days with the second face painted over the first like an otherworldly being. There is no response. The child immediately senses the gulf between what she sees and intuits and the physical here-and-now world of her classmates. A mother called me one evening distressed by her son's preoccupation with life after death. He had always been curious about this subject, but even more so since his hamster passed away. He and his parents had buried the little animal in the backyard and planted a small fern right near it. "We wanted to give him a sense of life right there where his little 'Jimmy' was buried." But his endless questions about immortality and his need to know that the hamster lived on in some form were difficult for his parents who had little interest in religion or spirituality.

For these spiritually gifted children, metaphysics is a common preoccupation. The domain of the spirit affects their whole being—the way they learn, love, connect to the world, form relationships. It is a sad day when they discover that their peers don't stare out the window at the pigeons and wonder if being a bird would improve the feeling of life. They don't concern themselves with the concept of compassion for animals and how this relates to living in harmony with all life. They don't beg their parents to go to the art museum where they can disappear into the scenery of a Turner or Constable painting. They don't devour stories by people who had near-death experiences and wonder if they could "see" their deceased grandparents by changing their state of mind. When these children realize that those around them don't occupy the same spiritual domain as they do, they begin to doubt themselves.

The Sacrifice

In order to really *belong* to their families, friends and community, many spiritually gifted feel the need to make a choice between their heightened sensibilities and the more material sense of living and being that surrounds them. These "overexcitabilities," as Dabrowski has defined them (1979), make them "delicate, gentle, sensitive, empathic, nonaggressive, industrious, wise though unsophisticated, never brutal, often inhibited, likely to withdraw, into themselves rather than retaliate, having deep feelings, idealistic" (pp. 87-90). With these qualities, they have the potential to bring humanity to a higher moral and spiritual plane, but the aggressive, materialistic society of our time doesn't welcome them. They sense this and often withdraw from their own gifts in order to get along in the world.

But, becoming more like the rest of the world carries a high price: alienation from the most precious, spiritual part of themselves. Gifted children tend to do one of two things: they either pretend to be like everyone else and keep their pondering and questioning to themselves or they decide that the spiritual domain is unrealistic, a thing they must outgrow. Whatever the choice, most of these spiritually gifted people sense the loss at one time of their lives or another.

> As a child, I can remember feeling so close to nature, so close to my love for painting and for the divine—what Rachel Carson called the "sense of wonder." All of that dwindled away. I can't remember the day or the event that made this

happen and I rather doubt there was one. I think that, as a kid who performed well academically, I got pulled in other directions and bit by bit, the demands and concerns over grades and success and getting ahead chipped away at the spirit until I stopped valuing it and just let it go. Then I busied and distracted myself with the endless blaring of televisions, radios or computers so I wouldn't hear my own voice in the silence. Now, interestingly, I'm following that voice and returning to the earlier, more spirit-filled world of my childhood.

Keeping the Spiritual World Alive

There are ways to nurture this "spirit-filled world" and protect these children from feeling alienated and alone. *Awareness of their spiritual needs is the obvious first step.* Finding out what an individual child needs and how his/her need may show itself is the more difficult, next step. The best policy is to simply be open to all the different avenues where gifted children express themselves. When confronted with a new moral or spiritual quandary, some gifted children immediately bombard any adult or peer they find with questions and ideas. Others may think quietly to themselves or use an expressive art (such as painting or writing) to process a new thought.

Rather than discount signs of a child's probing thought, ask questions. Explore the child's paintings, poems or stories with him/her; ask what he/she meant by certain comments or what made him/her ask a certain question. When a sudden change has occurred in the child's life (divorce, new baby, change of address, loss of a beloved relative or pet, etc.), assume that the child is processing this change at the deepest level. This also goes for national or international crises such as war, the tsunami and so forth. Express to the child your own interest in and openness to their thoughts and questions about any subject. Never discount subtle changes in mood or behavior or assume, because of the child's nonchalant attitude that he's really not so serious about the questions he's been asking.

A second grade girl whose parents had just divorced spent months worrying that they might suddenly stop loving her as well and shocked her father when she said "If I knew that people don't love forever before … before I was born, maybe I could've asked to be a dog instead and live with Boris [their Doberman Pinscher]!" The father laughed along with the child, but the child wasn't really joking. And though the father responded by hugging his daughter and affirming the love that both he and her mother would always have for her, this response did not address the questions in her mind. She continued to harbor troubled thoughts around the changing nature of human love. What is it, she thought, that

inspires love between people and what ends it or changes it into something else? What is love? Pursuing the nature of the child's need will bring out the deeper struggle so that you can address it.

Help these children feel safe. No child should lie in his bed at night afraid or overwhelmed by some larger-than-life thoughts. This may occur because the adults haven't picked up on the signs of his troubled mind or because they embrace religious or philosophical beliefs that he finds disturbing. Regardless of one's own personal convictions, it is important to give children hope. Even those of us who feel strongly about certain philosophies or religious views must admit that a great deal of the spiritual world remains to be discovered. Be careful about expressing any sense of finality or fatalism on a subject that the child finds troubling. Overly simple answers to complex subjects—the reason for criminal behavior, the possibilities of life beyond the grave, the lack of kindness in some kids at school, the meaning behind disasters like tsunamis—will only push him away. It's better to share spiritual convictions or philosophies in a sensitive and open way that allows the child to raise objections or ask further questions and that also helps him to understand the need for ongoing exploration. Ask yourself: What is this child really afraid of? Knowing the underlying concern will help you provide the kind of comfort and life-wisdom that this child needs.

Validate the child's ideas and questions even if you don't agree with them. Gifted children may challenge adult convictions or search for ways to verify them. The tendency may be to rush to the defense of whatever convictions we hold. The problem with this is that the child, being a sensitive and intuitive person, will detect that she's hit a nerve and either retreat from the adults or pretend to agree. As just mentioned, it's better to support the child's own process of discovery, sharing spiritual convictions and/or philosophies without trying to close down the questioning. When adults say, "I can see why you would think/feel that way, but here's another way to look at this question," the child feels that she has someone to talk to, someone who understands her quest for meaning.

Celebrate curiosity and discovery. Help gifted children engage in these larger-than-life issues with a sense of joy and adventure. Share insights, experiences and quotes from a

wide variety of thinkers, all speaking to the subject of what they have discovered about living and how they approach their challenges. Present the spiritual quest—whether this be a quest for beauty, artistry, philosophy of nature, the purpose for being in the world, compassion for animals, the wholeness of all life, and so forth—as a series of discoveries and insights, each leading to new questions which lead to further discoveries. Give them the hope of finding more answers. At the same time, instill a delight in the unknown as the place of future learning. Share your own "sense of wonder" over a phenomenon or a discovery that has brought you closer to a deeper understanding of life. Einstein has excellent advice here:

> The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.
> (see more quotes by Einstein at:
> www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/einstein.htm.)

The Importance of Hope and Resiliency
An important point to bear in mind when supporting a spiritually gifted child is that he needs practical tools for living in the world. Sometimes, he can become vulnerable to unhealthy preoccupations—worries about his future or the future of the world or imagining scenarios in which he may face frightening circumstances or difficulties. Having imagination and sensitivity can sometimes have a dark side.

> I used to be really upset about the homeless people in our neighborhood. People would cross the street when they saw one and I would always give them any money I had. Last summer, I was all afraid about becoming homeless. My mom worked and we were ok, but I would look at these people and think, "that guy is someone's son," or "that lady had dreams once." And it would just make me sad and afraid. So I used to plan out what I would do to *not* be homeless. I made a list of all the people who would probably give me a job and then I thought about where I could get shelter if I couldn't afford an apartment right away. I just couldn't stop thinking about it. While other people in my neighborhood were seeing them as some other species, I saw myself as one of them.

This kind of thinking is common among spiritually sensitive children. They can get lost in their own heads and paralyze themselves with a sense of the starkness of the world or of life in general. It is up to adults to help them connect with the *present* and with their own

power as thinking, acting people. Thin-skinned gifted children rarely thrive well without developing inner strength throughout their childhoods.

Resiliency is priceless. It can determine whether a child succeeds or not. For some children, resiliency is inborn; regardless of what happens *to* them or around them, another power—hidden deep within—propels them onward. Few highly gifted students possess this quality naturally. Their high sensibilities prevent them from tuning out the complex sensations that strike them from every side. They feel intensely vulnerable and raw to every jibe (real or imagined), every change in the atmosphere, every assignment that confines or restricts. They react dramatically to their own and others' failings and are apt to abandon their most promising work over minor flaws. Over time, they become resigned.

As already mentioned, school is a shock for many such gifted students. A number of them describe how their lives were *before*—full of open time to work on things they loved and safe to just be themselves. As they attend school, they bring home stories of how bored, lonely and *unfree* they are, and their parents worry about the stifling of their gifts, the loss of their joy in learning, the loss of that special spirit that they always loved in their children. The parents' primary effort often focuses more on making the world of their child more responsive to his special needs, than on helping him to cope with the world. Both are necessary. Without an ability to cope, any number of special arrangements will not give the child the resiliency he needs to persist and progress over the long haul.

Cultivating resiliency is not so much about what to do, but *how to be.* The African-American author and highly gifted woman, bell hooks, refers to this when she writes about her grandmother's quilt making:

> Fascinated by the work of her hands, I wanted to know more, and she was eager to teach and instruct, to show me how one comes to know beauty and give oneself over to it. To her, quilt making was a spiritual process where one learned surrender. It was a form of meditation where the self was let go. This was the way she had learned to approach quilt making from her mother. To her it was an art of stillness and concentration, a work which renewed the spirit (1990, pp. 116).

hooks' grandmother cultivated her granddaughter's inner resources. Though she never became a quilt maker, she embraced the "art of stillness" in her own way and discovered a gift and a "work which renewed the spirit."

Nurturing the Ability to Cope
Parents of highly sensitive gifted children live under an enormous pressure to "fix" problems. Seeing their children's struggles impels them to take swift action and this is as it should be. But this focus should include the equally important need to nurture the child's *inner* resources. The following are several tried and true strategies that I've seen work well for families of gifted children.

1. **Focus on the present.** Both parents and children tend to feel overwhelmed by a problem that faces them because they're looking at the totality of it and projecting an endless future of pain and difficulty. A child comes home with stories of insensitive peers or of assignments that leave her/him empty and spiritless, and parents wonder if their child will ever survive in this kind of world. It's important for both parent and child to focus on coping only with what's in front of her/him right *now*—this day's difficulties, this day's responsibilities. To a child who says, "I'll never get through this year," a helpful response would be, "You only need to get through this one day; we can all survive one day." There is a remarkable freedom here. Staying focused on the present opens up the possibilities of the present in a way that looking to an imagined future does not. Fixating on the future is hypnotic for both parent and child. Ultimately, it's counterproductive because it keeps us out of the present moments, where there may be choices to make, and opportunities to explore.

2. **Highlight the good.** Because spiritually sensitive gifted children feel anything negative so deeply, they tend to dramatize it. This tendency prevents them from experiencing what is good about their lives and days. As teachers and parents, we need to clearly understand that these children cannot thrive on a deficit approach to their experience. Building a life on lack is like constructing a house without a foundation. We need to draw attention to all the qualities and situations that are good about these children and their lives. This is the foundation for tackling problems. Getting these children to focus on what was good for them—even if it's

only one moment where someone was kind to them or when an assignment inspired them in a new way—will give them strength. Some parents I know have their child do this in different ways—through daily lists, conversations, paintings, drawings or creative writing. Spiritually sensitive children are often introspective by nature and benefit from any exercise where they can explore their strengths, their needs, interests and learning styles.

3. Celebrate bravery and persistence. Adults should celebrate children whenever they cope with a difficult situation well. Some parents promise a special treat for their children in advance. They might take a child out for an ice cream as a reward for sticking up for himself in a difficult group project or take him to a nature museum after a week of controlling his temper in a class dominated by bullies. Treats and thoughtful attention definitely soften the hardship of a bad year or a difficult episode. They tell the child that the parents understand their challenge and they feel acknowledged and celebrated for the qualities that will help them survive and grow in this world. When a teacher I know saw one of her struggling gifted children comfort an unpopular child, even though this brought him a lot of grief from other students, she took him aside and thanked him in private. She would remind him of this incident whenever he became nervous or held himself back. Into his adulthood, he would remember her saying, "You're a brave soul, Jeremy and you can call on it whenever you need it." In this and many other ways, children gain strength by valuing what really matters to them and by living their most cherished ideals. "To thine own self be true" should be a constant guide to gifted children.

4. Create a sense of community. Despite their introspective nature, sensitive gifted children have the same need for community that everyone else has. A teacher once had a Mexican student whose writing was so in advance of the other students that she jokingly told her father that she expected to see her published any day. He smiled and said, "Isabel comes from a long line of great storytellers, you know; I always tell her that what's inside her is a whole family of people who walked their own path, telling stories to anyone who would listen." This highly gifted writer has a

strong sense of belonging; her gift connects her with other storytellers in her extended family and with a cultural community that values what she does.

It's important to help these children find a community of people with whom they can share interests, support, and true friendship. The friends may range from little children to adults from all walks and ways of life. They may form a close bond with the school custodian or with a younger child who has similar interests. They may enjoy a lasting correspondence with a researcher they met through the internet or a group of high-schoolers who belong to an ecology club. Anything that parents and teachers can do to help their children meet like minded people will buoy them up during difficult times.

5. Nurture humor. Light-heartedness is a powerful force. Highly sensitive gifted students often possess more than a usual amount of wit, but they need to awaken to it as a source of strength. They expect a great deal from themselves and others and consequently chafe against human failings. Many of them are such perfectionists and make such large demands on themselves that even a minor problem feels like a catastrophe. Parents can help their children see problems in a more humorous way by pointing out the ridiculous from time to time. I have known parents who had their distraught or exasperated child create a cartoon about what happened on a particular day, write a limerick about a grumpy principal, or do humorous imitations of a situation or a person that scared or frustrated them. Humor brings joy and joy will save these students from feeling victimized or defeated.

A Final Note
We have all met people whose extraordinary gifts are surpassed only by their extraordinary ability to wander through life like lost souls, who leave trails of unfinished projects and failed dreams behind them. They always have excuses—the various assaults on their sensibilities, the demands on their time, their disorganized and fragmented environments, their lack of support from family or friends. Their high sensitivity and perfectionism keep them from completing anything. Their self-doubt sends them into a tail spin every time someone seems less than understanding or compassionate.

These are gifted people who've never learned coping skills, never realized the power of hope and of resiliency. They've had little experience addressing their sensitivities and problems practically, either because the adults in their lives "fixed" all their problems for them or neglected their children's need for inner strength and power. Helping these unique gifted children—with all their intensities, sensibilities and complexities—navigate the world with hope and determination will take them far in life. No one has expressed this better than a highly gifted adult who wrote the following:

> To have plenty of opportunities for using your talents is a wonderful thing. To have people who support you when you're down is a blessing not to be forgotten. But to be shown how to survive, how to recognize and face the enemies of your finest qualities, and fight, fight, fight for what you believe in and what you would like to be and do is a priceless gift that no one and nothing can take away. This is the crowning glory.

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