Theories and the Good: Toward Child-Centered Gifted Education

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ABSTRACT

Educators tend to look to theories for ideas on how to educate gifted children. Theories are, however, not value-neutral explanations, but complex attempts to serve human goals that contain values and ideas for action, as well as explanations. When there is a disjunction between a theory and ideas about what is good for gifted children, the latter should be our guide. The most important value in gifted education, we argue, should be child-centeredness. Theories can serve this value by helping us to understand the perspective of a gifted child. Most models and theories (Maslow's and Dabrowski's being the primary exceptions) address the conditions that promote gifted achievement and do not illuminate the inner life of gifted children. And yet, the pressure to achieve often has negative consequences for the emotional well-being of the child. Roeper's education for self-actualization and interdependence offers an approach to gifted education that respects the inner life of gifted children and assists them in finding their own way in life.

How Important are Theories in Gifted Education?

One of the assumptions in gifted education is that theories provide a rationale for practice, guide research, and offer answers to basic questions. Accordingly, it is believed that the field of gifted education cannot move ahead without better theories of the development of giftedness, the nature of intelligence, the social-emotional constitution of gifted students, and the many other phenomena studied in the field. Whether the field needs better theories to move ahead partly depends, of course, on what we mean by moving ahead. If moving ahead means that we will have better theories, better explanations, more organized and coherent research, more agreement on basic ideas (e.g., What is intelligence? How does creativity develop?), then of course theories, partly by definition, help. If moving ahead means that the lives of gifted children will be better, then better theories may or may not help. A good theory is one thing; a fulfilling, meaningful, or happy life is another.

A good theory is testable, generates predictions, organizes disparate information, avoids internal contradictions, makes phenomena intelligible, resolves puzzlement or confusion, stimulates new work to be done, and so forth. We refer here to *formal* theory, as distinct from both the everyday theories we use to cope with life and "theory" as a synonym for "idea" or "point of view." The good for children is a completely different matter. Here we are clearly in the moral and political realm where conceptions of the good life, the goal of schooling and education, the purpose of life, and such are addressed.

A number of people have called for better theories in gifted education (e.g., Cohen, 1988; Cohen & Ambrose,

PUTTING THE RESEARCH TO USE

Our paper rides two horses, but they complement each other. The first horse: By understanding the characteristics and limits of social science theories, we can become more thoughtful in our use of theories and more aware of the role of moral values in our work with gifted children. The most important question we can ask is: what is the good for children? The second horse: By pushing conventional success and achievement (e.g., good grades, high status, high paying jobs, stability), we push children away from who they are. What we need to do is simple: Stop pressuring children to perform and achieve on our terms, stop weighing children's worth in the currency of accomplishments, stop killing intrinsic motivation, and give up the fear that children will be unsuccessful. Allow children their own route to self-actualization, otherwise no self-actualization is possible.

1993; Feldman, 1980, 1982, 1997; Horowitz, 1991; Shore, 1987; Sternberg & Davidson, 1986). It is assumed that there is a link between better theories and better lives for children, which is not surprising. With the many examples of improvements to our quality of life brought by work in the hard sciences, we naturally think the same will happen in the human sciences. We think that better theories lead to better lives, that the truth about people fits hand in glove with the good for people. In practice, this is often true, not for anything deep about the nature of reality, but because we tend to pursue both together. We do not abandon our values when we do research and theoretical work. We are drawn to theories and lines of research that more or less fit our moral values. For example, if we have humanistic ideas about education and life, we are likely to reject Freud's theory. If we are religious fundamentalists who believe that children should not be thinking for themselves, we probably do not look kindly on Piaget's theory. If we see emotions as the main force in development, Sternberg's theory will not satisfy us. If we advocate psychological growth and creativity, we will not agree with most models of talent development.

Formal social science theories are not disinterested attempts to picture and explain aspects of human life. They are human creations that satisfy human goals. There is nothing in the nature of theories, or the nature of the universe, that compels our allegiance to a particular theory (see Kuhn, 1962; Rorty, 1982). It is, rather, far more likely that our values lead us to hold one theory rather than another. For example, Margolin (1994) argued that the entire field of gifted education, theories and all, is designed to preserve a certain social order. Coleman, Sanders, and Cross (1997) argued that perennial debates in gifted education are marked by irreconcilable assumptions regarding values and modes of inquiry.

Theories in social sciences are more than explanations. They are also tools or engines that help us do things, and they suggest goals to pursue and means to enact. We find it convenient to view theories as having three functions—depiction, application, and explicit or implicit statement of values. We have not encountered a social science theory that does not have these three functions.

Three Functions of Theories

1. *Depiction: Theory as picture.* Theories are pictures, accounts, explanations of some part or aspect of the world that try to make sense of it and satisfy our curiosity about what it is made of and how it works (Hanson, 1970). We call this *the realm of depiction*: theories as attempts to come up with the most accurate description and explanation of a phenomenon or class of phenomena: personality, self-concept, moral development, the nature of giftedness, and so forth. Theories in this sense are lenses, ways of organizing data, ways of making sense of experience. For example, Kohlberg described and explained something he called moral reasoning and how it develops; Dabrowski described and explained a developmental process that leads to what he believed is an integrated, highly moral personality. Depiction is a basic purpose of formal theory, the one people most often refer to when talking about theories. However, a *formal* theory may or may not have implications for practice.

2. *Application: Theory as engine.* Theories help us do things and give us new ideas for things to do. This is not theory as lens, but theory as tool; or, as we prefer, theory as engine. Theories are not passive devices for ordering information, but engines that can be harnessed to do work. In offering ideas about the way the world is, theories give approaches and suggest means for changing the world. For example, until Dabrowski created the idea of five levels of character development, it would not have occurred to us to design forms of counseling or programs that help people move toward the higher levels of development. One reviewer pointed out to us that "theory as engine presumes that theory assumes a life of its own ... such a premise conveys that it is the engine not the driver making the decisions." We believe this does happen and is known as mainstream research, what Einstein contemptuously referred to as drilling the board at its thinnest place.

3. *Statement of values: Theory as philosophy of life.* Values are ever present—in the assumptions underlying research, in the "objectively" established boundaries of normality, and so on. For example, Terman, in order to account for the differences between the most and the least successful adults with high IQs, invoked differences in personality traits and heredity, but ignored strong differences in the environment. In Terman's time, intelligence was believed to be mostly determined by heredity. The intelligence scale was believed to be a totally objective instrument. Consequently, IQ was assumed to measure hereditary differences between superior and inferior traits. This made Terman ancillary to hereditarian values (Borland, 1990a). Recognizing the value-ladenness of theory, Borland called for naturalistic inquiry that puts the researcher's values prominently on display.

Theories offer ideas on what is worth achieving and on what means are worth pursuing. Theories do not

just explain the world and give ideas about what to do; they contain values. In their accounts of the world (human development, self concept, etc.) they not only suggest means, they suggest new ends. Kohlberg and Dabrowski gave not only pictures and descriptions, they also gave us ideas on how, respectively, to promote moral development and higher personality development. They more or less explicitly stated what is worth and what is not worth doing. Consumers and producers of theories tend to ignore or not be aware of this aspect of theories. They tend to treat theories as value-neutral accounts of the way things are, or as attempts at such accounts. But social science theories are in many ways like philosophies of life—*world views* + *values* + *practical ideas*—presented as more or less testable propositions. We look to theories for answers to questions of meaning, purpose, and the good life, and we often find them there. Kohlberg and Dabrowski are not neutral as regards the value of the different levels of their schemes. Post-conventional moral reasoning is better than conventional moral reasoning. Saints are better than sociopaths.

The three functions of theory are independent, and theories differ in the aspects they emphasize. For example, theories driven by observables, such as behaviorism, or by cognition, such as Piaget's genetic epistemology, are thin on values. Theories driven by inner experience, such as Jung's and Dabrowski's, are heavy on values. But all have them. Paintings, music, novels, religions, and other kinds of human creations can also perform these functions. Theories differ from these creations in two important ways: 1) they are accounts of a class of phenomena and not of particulars; and 2) they are intended to be testable in some way.

This view of theories also has implications for the relative importance of theories to a particular educational enterprise. For some enterprises, theories may be fairly unimportant or completely irrelevant. Many problems in the education of gifted students are practical. They are solved with persuasive speech, more money, or by taking risks, not by making better theories.

It is in their very nature that theories can hold or imply different versions of the good. If we want our theories to cohere better with our values, then we must bring our theories more in line with our values. We put values before theory for the same reason most people choose better lives for children over better theories—children are obviously more important. (This is not to say that moral values cannot and do not change as a result of making theories and doing research, only that a good life is more important than a good theory.)

What is the good for children? There is much difference of opinion about this, though little debate or discussion of it in our journals. Roeper (1996) argued that the field of gifted education lacks a vision beyond that of the rest of public education: good job, personal success, recognition, and stability. Though we see exceptions (e.g., Dabrowski-influenced thinking, or Betts's Autonomous Learner—a model developed not *for* the gifted but *with* the gifted—curiously dropped from the second edition of the *Handbook of Gifted Education* [Colangelo & Davis, 1996]) we think she is right on the whole. There cannot be one answer to the question of what form of education is best for children; but, in a democracy such as ours, there can be vigorous debate and creative experimentation in trying to realize competing versions of the good for gifted children.

Child-Centeredness: The Moral Responsibility of Gifted Educators

Some of us think the first step in designing education for the gifted is to identify them; that is, to distinguish them from everything else before our eyes. This is part of the theoretical task of making the world intelligible. There is another sense, a moral sense, in which we must recognize the gifted and anyone else we serve. To recognize also means to acknowledge, to accept what we have identified in its own right and on its own terms. This meaning tends to be overlooked. Yet, from the time of Comenius in the 17th century—and Quintilian 16 centuries before—through Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Tolstoy, and Montessori, we have had people who stressed recognizing children in their own right, attending to them according to their development, and making learning natural and enjoyable.

Significantly, these cultivators of children did not operate from the basis of a formal theory, but from close observation and profound caring. None of them presented their ideas as formal theories (i.e., as testable propositions), and none of us think of their work as formal theories. We know Locke's ideas on parenting (Boorstelman, 1983), but we do not refer to them as Locke's theory. We know Montessori's ideas on child development and education, but we do not call them Montessori's theory in the way we refer to Piaget's or Kohlberg's theories. In gifted education, this child-centered tradition is best exemplified by Hollingworth's pioneering special programs (Borland, 1990b; Silverman, 1990) and by Roeper's model of education of the whole person. The child-centered torch-bearers in the history of education are assembled in Table 1.

Table 1

Child-Centered Torchbearers in the History of Education

Torchbearer	Purpose of Education	Role of the Teacher
Quintilian (35–95)	To become a good person—excellent in knowledge, speech, and character	To know the child and understand his uniqueness; to use rewards along with amusement and play[1]
Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius) (1592–1670)	To relate instruction to children's natural growth and development; to contribute to peace and human understanding	To be a permissive facilitator of learning, to base instruction on child's stage of development[2]
John Locke (1632–1704)	To develop ideas in the mind based on sense perception; to educate individuals capable of self-government	To encourage sense experience; to base instruction on empirical method[2]
Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)	To create a learning environment that allows the child's innate natural goodness to flourish	To assist nature; not to impose social conventions on the child; stress on emotions as primary[2]
Johann H. Pestalozzi (1746–1827)	To develop the child's moral, mental, and physical powers harmoniously; use of sense perceptions in forming clear ideas	A loving facilitator of learning who creates a homelike school environment; skilled in using the special method[2]
Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852)	To bring out and develop the latent spiritual essence of the child in a prepared environment	To facilitate children's growth[2]
Maria Montessori (1870–1952)	To assist children's sensory, physical, and intellectual development in a prepared environment	To act as a facilitator or director of learning by using didactic materials[2]
Leta S. Hollingworth (1886–1939)	To assist gifted children's sensory, intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic development at appropriate mental level and pace of instruction	To act as a facilitator of learning and of emotional growth; to assist with the problems arising out of the disparities between mental and chronological age
Annemarie Roeper (1918–)	To assist gifted children in the growth and development of their selves toward self-actualization and interdependence	To be role models, in charge of their own destinies, aware of who they are: facilitators of learning and of the growth of the self; a good match between teacher and child is essential

[1] Adapted from L. G. Smith, & J. K. Smith (1994). *Lives in education: A narrative of people and ideas*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
[2] Adapted from A. C. Ornstein, & D. U. Levine (1989). *Foundations of education*, 4th ed., pp. 134–135. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

We believe, as they did, that first and foremost we have to be child-centered, not as lip service or an add-on to a teacher- or parent-determined curriculum, but wholeheartedly. Being child-centered means respecting children's autonomy, providing experiences that enable children to follow their passions and be self-actualizing, and seeking to understand things from the child's point of view. The strongest argument for child-centeredness is that it regards children as ends, not means. It provides conditions for children to flourish, become themselves, and it does not impose a way of being on them.

An understanding of the child's perspective and inner life aids us in assisting children in finding their own way in life. Theories can help when they direct us to understand things from the child's point of view. Piaget, Vygotski, Erikson, Bowlby, Ainsworth, and other theorists of cognitive and social development are useful in this regard.

Indeed, exploratory research and in-depth case studies build our knowledge of the gifted more readily than theories and models not rooted in naturalistic inquiry. It is the case material that is the test of a theory, not the other way around. For example, using four in-depth case studies of moral development, Grant (1988, 1990) showed that none of four applicable theories of moral development—Kohlberg, Gilligan, Blasi, and Dabrowski—could fully account for the moral compass of any one of the four cases. Not even a combination of the four theories could account for all the salient phenomena of moral development that each case presented. This is a limitation on the power and comprehensiveness of theories that we must always bear in mind.

Whitmore's (1980) study of underachievers; Feldman's (1986) study of prodigies; Hollingworth's (1942), Morelock's (1995; in press), and Gross's (1993) studies of the highly gifted; and Peterson's (1997a, 1997b) longitudinal studies of gifted students at risk, through naturalistic inquiry, bring a depth of understanding to the lives of gifted children. These studies form the ground on which every theory and model should be tested, honed, and have its limitations clearly identified. We firmly believe that no theory or model of giftedness ought to be proposed that is not first walked through appropriate case material.

Achievement or Understanding?

For some theorists and researchers, explaining giftedness means describing the conditions that produce gifted achievements. Trapped by the metaphor of "gifts," they believe that the most important aspect of being gifted is the ability to turn gifts into recognizable and valued accomplishments. The growing emphasis on talent development, though broadened to encompass a spectrum of talents as well as motivation, fosters an achievement orientation and with it the danger of excessive expectations (e.g., Gagné, 1995, Rimm, 1997). This is not to denigrate or belittle the satisfaction and fulfillment derived from making a talent flourish. We are questioning an emphasis on achievement and success, which leads to measuring a child's worth in terms of his or her accomplishments, rather than on the basis of the child's inherent worth. Gifted writers turning one novel after another for profit may be exemplars of achievement, but they fail to inspire as models of intrinsic worth of their art.

Emphasis on products rather than on discovery of the child's inner agenda hooks us back to evaluating children on externals. Tests may be replaced by portfolios, but nothing changes in our values—they are still yoked to externals rather than to the inherent worth of each person. Setting favorable conditions for the maximal development of talent runs on the expectation that the promise of accomplishment will be fulfilled as the end value. But as Kaufmann's (1992) longitudinal study of Presidential Scholars clearly shows, the eminently gifted are highly critical of the excessive emphasis on achievement. Furthermore, the shifts and zigzags in their life trajectories cannot be predicted. Expectations of continued productivity are ill-placed. Behind them lurks the model of scientific achievement, or professorial self-image—that is, a model of people with the most stable and consistent careers. Perhaps there is in it a longing for the security enjoyed by the privileged class whose children at the age of seven can recite the schools they will attend and the degrees they will earn. The BBC program *28–Up* showed that, in almost all cases, they do follow the pattern laid out for them, but the lives of the less privileged do not follow a predictable pattern.

The models and theories set to maximize giftedness regard gifted children much as farmers regard cows and pigs, with an eye to getting them to produce more. They do not describe how giftedness works—how the gifted think, feel, and experience. They address mostly what Tannenbaum (1997) called the static dimension of factors contributing to gifted achievement: assessment, group norms, and all manner of external criteria. In the latest version of his psychosocial model, Tannenbaum included a dynamic dimension for each cluster of factors to stress that it is important to know

how gifted minds and hearts work, how the gifted go about the business of life differently from everyone else. Yet it is the static dimension— assessment, group norms, external criteria of success—that dominates gifted education. This, however, only makes it clear that theories and models that were not designed to address giftedness from within the experience of being gifted simply are not equipped to help us understand it. Our current theories of intelligence do not do this either. As Shore (1987) pointed out, once we understand giftedness, we will understand intelligence, not the other way round.

Theories and models in gifted education differ in the degree to which they can accommodate self-actualization. Tannenbaum's (1997) latest model can be viewed either as positing the conditions for outward achievement or for self-actualization. If the conditions are seen as producing "gifted achievements," then it is a model of how the gifted produce more "milk." If, by stretching it, we see the conditions as those necessary to bring about the actualization of a person's potential through autonomous self-determining choices, then it can be viewed as a model of self-actualization. In his axiomatic theory of gifted education, Ward (1961) included axioms about self-determination of the gifted, but they are not central to his theory. In our view, they should be.

Theories that Help Us Understand the Experience of Gifted Individuals

Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration

In contrast to the many theories that address the factors that lead to gifted productivity, Dabrowski's theory addresses the distinctive manner of experiencing of gifted and creative people (Nelson, 1989; Piirto, 1992; Silverman, 1993). Dabrowski focused on emotional development as being the most essential dimension of human life. He was fascinated by the extremes in human behavior: at one extreme, exploitation of others, ruthless self-advancement and self-preservation at any price, and at the other, altruism, compassion, and service to others. He viewed personality development as a composite sequence of all possible life trajectories from the lowest to the highest level. He gave particular attention to gifted and creative children and adults because they opened his eyes to the great richness and intensity of experiencing, inner searching, and refusing to compromise ideals—hence, Dabrowski's concept of developmental potential and the hypothesis that it is stronger in the gifted. His theory illuminates the experience of gifted persons from within in a way they enthusiastically recognize as their own. In this, it addresses the question of how the gifted think, feel, and experience.

Dabrowski's concept of developmental potential as the constellation of abilities powered by enhanced modes of experiencing (overexcitabilities) has been particularly helpful in understanding the ways in which the experience of gifted children is qualitatively different from those in whom these attributes are more modest. His concept of positive maladjustment as a moral clash with conformity to an ethically dubious status quo is another example of insight into the different nature of the potential for advanced development of many gifted young people (Piechowski, 1986, 1991, 1997).

Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization

Advanced development and self-actualization have much in common. One of the types of advanced personality development—described in Dabrowski's theory as level IV—shows a good fit with Maslow's concept of self-actualization. The two concepts were developed independently, yet they match (Piechowski, 1978). Rigorously examining correspondence between concepts of different theories is one of the ways of toiling in the theoretical topiary of gifted education. Unfortunately, theories and models are often set side by side on a superficial resemblance only. A common instance is the alignment of Freud's stages of psychosexual development with Erikson's stages of psychosocial development that graces the pages of many developmental textbooks, even though the concepts behind these two schemes have little in common. Erikson himself made this alignment out of his loyalty to Freud; this, however, does not make him theoretically right. Freud's psychosexual stages are couched in terms of drives and biological instincts, physical gratification or tension when the objects of desire are not immediately to be had. Erikson's psychosocial stages are couched in terms of affectional relationships (trust, intimacy), sense of competence (initiative, industry), and sense of self (autonomy, identity). None of these concepts are cast in terms of biological drives.

It is unfortunate that self-actualization has been misunderstood as an expression of individualism—a self-centered pursuit of individual fulfillment (Waterman, 1984). This is not what Maslow meant. The self-actualizing characteristics of lack of ego-involvement, problem centering ("focused on problems outside themselves"), Gemeinschaftsgefühl ("social interest," feeling of kinship

with others), democratic character structure, and unhostile sense of humor identify people who regard their fellow human beings with kindness and are genuinely concerned to serve them. Maslow (1970) sought out psychologically healthy human beings—individuals who realize their potential, their nature, or simply their design, analogous to the way athletes fulfill their design for what the human body can do.

Self-actualizing people are those who find fulfillment in what they do, not in outward signs of success such as recognition, fame, or status. When we emphasize achievement and outward success, we are pushing the gifted away from self-actualization.

A disconnection between outward achievement and emotional well-being is common among the gifted and creates a condition of self-alienation. Sanborn (1979) described a case of a high school student who was praised by his teachers for outstanding academic and athletic achievement. Ten years later, a follow-up interview found this young man adrift in an existential vacuum. In his high school years, no one recognized that what he most wanted was to be accepted for who he was, not for his achievements. Greg Louganis's spectacular athletic success and the anguish of his private life show a similar dynamic (Louganis, 1995). Miller (1981) explored in some depth the issue of self-alienation in the gifted. She showed that, because the gifted are often emotionally sensitive to the expectations of others, they feel obligated to meet them. Alas, they meet them at the cost of denial and suppression of their own passion, their own self. Though much praised, their achievements feel hollow to them.

If we are to serve the good of gifted children, then we must be particularly alert that we do not inadvertently bait them with rewards into choices that compromise their values. One high school student caught sharply the contradiction between competing and serving (Piechowski, 1997). When he was 15, he said about himself: "I feel that I am a person who is on the earth that is destined to use his abilities and talents to his fullest. This is simply what I think I really am." When he turned 17, he saw it differently, an example of what Dabrowski called *positive maladjustment:*

> A few years ago I was a person who wanted things for himself. Now I am trying to change that person to a person who wants to contribute to others and the world, not just himself. Obtaining this type of person in this world is not that easy. The one thing that is a roadblock is competition. Not necessarily losing to other people, but beating them. How can I compete to get into medical school when a doctor is supposed to build people's confidence and restore their sense of security? The process is self-defeating.

Roeper's Education for Self-Actualization and Interdependence

The model of gifted education that clearly places the whole person in the center is Roeper's model of education for self-actualization and interdependence (Roeper, 1990). Roeper recognized that while the gifted may be "our most important resource," we should not base theories of education or development on this idea. Roeper (pp. 19–20) argued that education for success neglects the self of the young person, while education for life makes the growth of the self the focus of a program of self-actualization and interdependence. Key elements of Roeper's program are:

1. Creating opportunities for children to participate in their destinies to the extent they are developmentally able.
2. Seeing children as valid members of the community and respecting their rights and responsibilities, perceptions, and thoughts.
3. Making education the opportunity to grow, rather than the necessity to fit into preconceived expectations; a program that allows freedom of exploration.
4. Creating rich opportunities for all kinds of growth—academic, creative, physical, social, moral, and opportunities for joy; a program that combines who we are with what we can do.

Roeper's model of education is supported by the concept of connected knowing, which echoes John Stuart Mill's notion of understanding from within and Bruner's depiction of the narrative mode of thought (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Connected knowing proceeds by receptive and empathic listening, by striving to understand the other person's—or nation's—ideas, experience, and worldview in the other's terms, rather than in one's own. Connected knowing is what anthropologists do when they go native in order to understand from within the mind and soul of an unknown people. Education for interdependence is the living realization of the maxim "nothing human is alien to me."

Rather than education for college and conventional success, education should be for life. Roeper said it most eloquently:

> Education should also deal with ethical questions. It should be focused on the emotional, moral, and ethical development of the student rather than on preparation for success in the work world. It should be centered on the development of the self, assisting the student through the normal developmental phases. This developmental process is *often hindered by the expectations of adults*. Success in traditional terms is likely to be a natural byproduct of an education based on the individ-

> ual needs of the child. Educators must forget about preparing children for the next step; rather, *the next step should adapt to the child.*
>
> Gifted children are like other children in most respects. They need acceptance, guidance, support, respect, love, protection, and the opportunity to grow without artificial distortions of their innate needs.... They need to grow in an educational environment that prepares them to make sense of the world and gives them the tools to change it. The difference is that gifted children know this, and can articulate it, while others just accept it. However, despite their awareness, the gifted are influenced by the artificial values of the educational system nonetheless. I have learned from them that *education* has become a *one-sided* instrument. It relates to academic learning but does not stress the development and *the growth of the self.* Yet it is this inner self, the unique self of each human being, that is the central point of their lives. (Roeper, 1995, p. 142, emphasis added)

Roeper's conception of education places the autonomous self-development of the child at the center. It is based on a true identification of the gifted learner—acknowledgment and acceptance of the child on his or her own terms. *Achievement*, as Roeper saw it, is a *by-product* of education, *not the goal* of education. Once children are accepted on their own terms and given love, guidance, and support, they can achieve as an expression of who they are, not at the cost of who they are.

Roeper's educational model is clearly based on a value stance. No theory of creativity or development can negate or disprove its particular version of the good life for children. Theories can, as we have argued, facilitate the type of growth Roeper advocated by helping educators to better understand the inner life of the gifted child and thus become better able to facilitate the child's unique path toward wholeness and interdependence.

Summary

Models and theories, being human creations that serve human purposes, contain values and propose means. Most models and programs in gifted education regard giftedness as capital that can be rendered productive under the right conditions. We reject the current emphasis on achievement and productivity. Stress on achievement breaks the gifted individual into an outer achiever and a hidden, often neglected and stunted or injured, inner self.

Gifted education needs instead models and theories that help us understand giftedness from the inside. In order to develop these sorts of theories, we need rich, well-developed accounts of how gifted children think, feel, and experience, and of their self-defined interests and goals. Dabrowski's and Maslow's theories point in this direction. These theories help us carry on and develop the centuries-old tradition of child-centered education. In gifted education, this tradition is best exemplified by Roeper, who focuses on the education and development of the whole person. Roeper's model of education for self-actualization and interdependence stands on the shoulders of giants of the child-centered tradition.

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