# Introduction

In January 2002, I was fortunate enough to be invited to give a series of lectures in Hong Kong. My exemplary hosts were Michelle Vosper, Director of the Asian Cultural Council in Hong Kong, and Dr. Leslie Lo, Professor at the Faculty of Education of The Chinese University of Hong Kong — and, as it happens, the husband of Michelle Vosper. Over five intensive days, I gave five lectures to as many different groups: "Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet in School" to The Chinese University of Hong Kong; "Multiple Intelligences: What does it *really* mean?" to the F.O.C.U.S. group gathered at the German Swiss International School; "Creativity and the Arts in Our Time" to the Hong Kong Arts Development Council; "Creativity and Leadership in Turbulent Times" to the Asian Cultural Council and the Harvard Club of Hong Kong; and "Leadership in our Turbulent Times" to the Asia Society. I also had the opportunity to meet and interact with many Hong Kong residents drawn from different sectors of this vibrant and vital community. Professor Lo was kind enough to offer to republish a set of four papers which cover the substance of my talks in Hong Kong. In this brief essay, I describe my background, provide some context for the papers, and also offer an impression gained during my five busy days in Hong Kong.

The son of refugees from Nazi Germany, I was born and raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania. As a young boy, I

was a serious student in school and also a classical pianist with some talent. While my childhood was pleasant and comfortable, I thought of my intellectual development as beginning in earnest when I arrived at Harvard College in September 1961. I studied psychology and other social sciences as an undergraduate and as a graduate student at Harvard; and I have remained in Cambridge ever since. While a graduate student, I became a founding member of Project Zero, a research group in arts education, and I co-directed Project Zero from 1972–2000. After the completion of my studies, I was a full-time researcher in developmental psychology and neuropsychology for 15 years; and then, in 1986 I joined the faculty as a Professor of Cognition and Education at the Graduate School of Education. Following the publication in 1983 of my book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, I became heavily involved in issues of education and school reform in the United States and abroad. In the 1980s, I also conducted a cross-cultural comparison of arts education in China. At that time, I came to know Michelle Vosper and Leslie Lo and also made a number of brief visits to Hong Kong. More recently, while remaining involved in educational research and reform, I have turned the bulk of my scholarly attention to issues of professional ethics. To complete the autobiographical tour, I am married to Ellen Winner, also a developmental psychologist interested in the arts; and I have four children, ranging in age from 16 to 33.

The four papers compiled here cover four topics that

have occupied me during the last quarter century. In "Who owns intelligence?" I introduce the main ideas from the theory of multiple intelligences (MI), which I developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This theory is a sustained critique of the standard view of intelligence: according to this received view, we all have a single intelligence, it is determined chiefly by heredity, and intelligence can be assessed by simple paper-and-pencil instruments like the IQ test. Instead, drawing on a range of disciplines, I argue that human beings are better described as having several relatively autonomous intelligences. Should this theory have validity (and I think that it does!), it contains significant educational implications. Rather than attempt to educate all children in the same "one-size-fits-all" fashion, we should attempt as much as possible to individualize education — that is, teach each child in the way in which he/she learns best and also assess children in ways that allow them to show their understanding. In addition to summarizing "MI theory," my essay raises the question of which sectors of society will in future years have the legitimacy to define and measure intelligences. I take the position that intelligence is too important to be left to the "test makers." Intelligence is better understood and fostered in light of what we know about human nature from a variety of disciplinary and cultural perspectives.

Just as I have sought to pluralize the concept of intelligence, I also believe that the concept of creativity needs to be rethought from a social scientific perspective.

To begin with, as described in the essay on "Creativity," there is not a single creativity, any more than there is a single intelligence. Individuals can be creative in many ways; and the creativity of an Einstein or a Mozart should not be confused with the creativity of Mahatma Gandhi or Virginia Woolf or Deng Xiaoping. Then, creativity should not be thought of as an exclusively psychological or biological trait. Rather, as proposed by my colleague Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, creativity emerges as a result of three interacting factors: the individual, with his or her profile of talents and motivations; the professional domain or sector in which an individual operates; and the social field, the set of gatekeepers and judges who determine which work gets noticed, which work gets ignored. Finally, creativity is thought of quite differently in different times and social contexts; at many points in history, individuals who are creative have been shunned or crucified; at some points and in some places, creativity has been highly prized.

Having entered the arena of educational practice some twenty years ago, I was struck by the dizzying variety of methods, approaches, programs, and slogans. In contrast, I found a paucity of discussion of the goals of education. Perhaps this silence is due to the fact that philosophical issues are less intoxicating than practical ones; perhaps it is due to the realization that individuals differ deeply about ends and it is thus prudent to avoid issues that can be divisive. Nonetheless, after a good deal of reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the chief educational

purpose of education, beyond the first years of school, is to help students achieve deep understanding of the major scholarly disciplines. Specifically, by the end of secondary school, all students should be able to think in the manner of a scientist, a historian, a mathematician, and an artist. On this view, the particular curricula are less important than the commitment to study certain topics or works in depth. Only through such in-depth study can students gain the experience of what it means to understand something. In "Multiple Approaches to Understanding," I describe how one can pitch an education toward understanding; and, combining the two approaches that I have favored, I show how our multiple intelligences can be mobilized to help foster understanding in the disciplines.

For most of my career as a psychologist, I have proceeded in a deliberate amoral (not immoral!) manner. That is, in studying intelligence, creativity, and leadership and other topics, I have deliberately developed explanations that apply to the full range of individuals whether or not I admire them. Both Goethe, the German poet and dramatist, and Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propagandist, had considerable linguistic intelligence. Goethe used his to write estimable words of art, Goebbels to foment hatred. Their intelligences were not different; it is the *uses* to which these men put their intelligences that differed. By the same token, Mao Zedong was clearly creative both in politics and in poetry. But the ends toward which he put his creativity were quite different, and, at least in the political

realm, they resulted in the deaths of innumerable individuals.

The decision to approach issues in an amoral way is defensible; indeed, from a scientific point of view, it is the proper way to proceed. And yet, I believe that at the end of the day, it is important to try to understand how individuals can use their talents in ways that are moral, ethical, and socially responsible. To pursue this interest, I combined forces with two close colleagues in psychology: William Damon and Mihaly Csikszentmihaly. Together we direct the GoodWork project. This project is an attempt to understand, and an attempt to foster, GoodWork — work that is at once excellent in quality and work that takes into account the need of the broader community in which the work is situated. Our study is an empirical one; through interviews and other forms of data that we collect, we are examining the nature and provenance of GoodWork in a number of different professions. And the overriding question addressed by the project — and by the paper "A Job Well Done" is this: "How do individuals who want to carry out GoodWork succeed or fail in doing so during our time: a time when conditions change with unprecedented rapidity, when our senses of time and space are being radically altered by technology, and when forces of the market are tremendously powerful, and there are few if any forces that can balance these market pressures?"

These, then, were the topics and concerns that I brought with me on my voyage to Hong Kong in early

2002. During my visit I found that individuals were particularly interested in issues of creativity: What is it? How can it be fostered? Is our educational system inimical to creativity, and if so, what can we do to heighten the creativity of our students? I have encountered such questions all over the world. They are prevalent in an East Asian context, and one hears them with special urgency in Japan, China, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

The answer that I give to this set of concerns surprises people. First of all, I am not sure that the fostering of creativity should be a purpose of school; from my view, the mastering of the literacies, the mastering of the disciplines, and a commitment to further learning and study seem burdens enough. Whether schools should dedicate much energy to fostering creativity also depends significantly on the messages that permeate the rest of society. If creativity is absent from other areas of society, then perhaps the schools have a responsibility to provide examples of creative work. In a place like the United States, however, messages and models of creativity pervade the media and the streets, and so creativity need not be a high educational goal. I believe that the situation in Hong Kong bears resemblance to that in the United States — namely, the territory of Hong Kong is replete with creative energy on every block. And so, the imperative for a "creative education" is less urgent than it might be in a less dynamic, more authoritarian society.

While individuals kept asking me about creativity, I

discerned a deeper concern that lurked somewhat beneath the surface. Many of my interlocutors seemed actually to be posing another question: What should the identity of Hong Kong be in the post-1997 era? In the decades before 1997, there was a great deal of excitement as well as apprehension about the turnover of the territory to China, and so longer-term issues of identity could be pushed aside. Now, however, the important date is five years in the past; and it is clear that neither utopia nor dystopia has arrived. Hong Kong residents are now having to face directly the question of what kind of a society theirs is to be; and yet there seems to be a reluctance to debate this issue openly, at least in the presence of a foreigner like me. Yet until issues of identity are openly addressed and various solutions put forth, it seems to me that more specific questions about educational and societal goals cannot be addressed in a meaningful fashion.

In my view Hong Kong has enviable resources from which to forge a powerful and unique identity. Situated breathtakingly in the heart of Asia and yet a harbor of Western influences for almost two centuries, it can serve as a powerful amalgam of different cultural traditions. Familiar with democratic practices and institutions, it can model ways in which these can thrive in Confucian and socialistic environments. Having a population of unique diversity, which has gotten along peacefully for many decades, Hong Kong represents a welcome contrast to the clashes of religious and ethnic groups that pervade so much of the rest of the world. The challenge to Hong

Kong is one that calls for a good deal of creativity: How to endure as a distinctive entity at a time when the surrounding national and corporate entities are gigantic? Perhaps, I suggest, issues about creativity and identity are really the same issue dressed in different conceptual garb.

Howard Gardner
Cambridge, Massachusetts
April 2002