Dear Friend of The Good Project,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well! In this issue, we feature Howard Gardner’s January lecture series on Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. We also highlight a conference focused on cultivating a sense of purpose organized by Echoing Green. The Good Idea of the Month is "Quality."

If you have ideas for future newsletters or would like your own work to be highlighted, please email Danny Mucinskas at daniel_mucinskas@harvard.edu. Thank you, and we hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Sincerely,
The Good Team

Educating for the Virtues in the Age of "Truthiness" and Twitter: Howard Gardner on Truth, Beauty, and Goodness

By Ashim Shanker, M.Ed '15 candidate at HGSE
In January, Howard Gardner delivered a series of three lectures entitled "Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed" at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Based upon his 2011 book of the same title, Gardner articulated definitions for each of these virtues, explored their tendency to shift according to evolving norms, and outlined the threats posed to them by postmodern criticism and the proliferation of digital media.

Describing truth as being "about the accuracy of statements and propositions," Gardner contrasted the public trust once instilled in 20th century newscasters, such as Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, with the cynicism of 21st century audiences, who are more skeptical than previous generations and more likely to get their news from late night comedians, such as Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert. While audiences of an earlier era might have been satisfied by Cronkite’s nightly affirmation, "That's the way it is," audiences of today are more inclined to embrace a term popularized by Colbert to highlight the subjectivity behind political constructions of reality: truthiness. Further blurring the lines between truth and "truthiness" are online games, Wikipedia, and social media (such as Twitter), which offer platforms for the "viral" dissemination of information, which could well be misinformation. Acknowledging the importance of the truths accessible through the scholarly disciplines (such as science and mathematics) and the practical truths of professions (such engineering and medicine), Gardner highlighted the need for educators to focus students on the appropriate methods for converging as much as possible on the truths discovered by these pursuits.
Gardner characterized beauty as being "about experiences...primarily of nature and of the arts." A beautiful experience must meet three criteria: (1) it should evoke interest, (2) its form should be memorable, and (3) it should invite revisiting. This definition could apply to art and nature just as well as it might to the experience of a meaningful conversation, a pleasant walk, or a satisfying meal. Referring to the article "When is Art?" by Project Zero founder Nelson Goodman, Gardner reflected on the importance of context, placement, and timing in defining in what manner an object or experience might be perceived as beautiful. Since one's perceptions of how an object or phenomenon is beautiful can change over time, Gardner recommends that educators encourage the creation of an individualized portfolio of what one deems beautiful, "recording changing tastes and discrimination of differences."

Drawing on examples from recent world events, as well as from his work on the Good Project, Gardner conceptualized goodness as being "about the quality of relations among human beings, those near to us as well as those more remote from us." In view of the threats posed to our constructs of goodness by the proliferation of morally relativistic perspectives, it becomes more important than ever to find common ground between conflicting ethical paradigms. While "neighborly morality" remains an essential characteristic of goodness, the ethics associated with one's roles, as a citizen and worker, are also equally important in complex modern societies. As indicated by the 3 E's of the Good Project, a good citizen and worker must be ethically responsible, personally engaged, and technically excellent. In order for this to be possible, individuals require vertical support (from mentors, role models and paragons), horizontal support (from peers), and periodic booster shots (from reactions to the good, the bad, and the ugly).

Following each of the three lectures was a 90-minute discussion seminar facilitated by both Howard Gardner and Harvard graduate student Ashim Shanker. These sessions, in addition to addressing topics from the lectures, deeply integrated the philosophical treatises of Thomas S. Kuhn, Israel Scheffler, Kirk Varnedoe, Nelson Goodman, John Rawls, and Albert O. Hirschman. Seminar discussion topics ranged from the subjective selection of epistemological paradigms (frameworks of "truth") to the ethical tensions individuals might face as a consequence of situational roles and/or institutional groupthink.

Extending beyond the ideas developed in his 2011 book, Gardner addressed in both the lecture and seminar sessions the ways in which truth, beauty, and goodness can be pursued and cultivated throughout one's lifelong learning. He hopes to develop these
Howard Gardner Attends Interdisciplinary Conference focused on "Purpose"

Echoing Green is a non-profit organization that provides support and funding for social entrepreneurs in an effort to solve broad societal problems. Through its fellowship programs, Echoing Green will provide over $4 million to grantees this year, which in the past have included the founders of institutions such as Teach for America, City Year, College Summit, and Citizen Schools.

From January 29-31, 2015, Howard Gardner attended Echoing Green's "Purpose 360" conference in New York City, a gathering of over 80 prominent leaders drawn from various fields, including business, academia, religion, and the non-profit sector, to discuss the idea of "purpose." Bill Damon, one of the co-founders of the Good Work Project and a scholar whose subsequent research has centered on the development of purpose in adolescence, was key to the organization and themes of the conference. The keynote presentation was given by New York Times journalist Nicholas Kristof.

In accordance with Echoing Green's mission of solving problems and improving lives on a large scale, participants explored the question of how to create an environment in which a sense of purpose encourages people to do what gives them personal happiness yet also contributes to the greater good of the world as a whole.

We look forward to seeing how the ideas from the conference will be incorporated into Echoing Green's programs and into the diverse work of the attendees. We hope that the connections made at the conference will continue and expand and that the Good Project will be able to contribute to the collective efforts stemming from the conference. We see "Purpose 360" as an exciting step towards promoting a meaningful vision of an ethical future.

ideas in future publications.
Good Idea of the Month: Quality

The concept of "Quality" is one that drives our decisions as workers, consumers, and people. We look for quality in every aspect of life, from the tools we use, to the garments we wear, to the healthcare we seek. Even app developers have jumped into the quality game, providing means for us to see which restaurants, companies, and even tourist attractions are well-rated by others.

Through the Quality Project, Good Project researchers sought to understand what underlying connotations of quality matter to individuals and reported their findings in "Quality Survey: A Global Study of Quality." They surveyed approximately 1000 people in Brazil, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and the United States on their perceptions of quality in the areas of service, paid work, durable and non-durable goods, and leisure time, and the factors that influence these perceptions across professional and personal realms. Participants' views differed on what affects a company's reputation, what values (such as aesthetics and utility) contributed to an object's quality, what excellent work means, and how technology impacts quality.

However, a definition of quality that resounded with most participants was that of "time well spent." Often time well spent was related to spending time with family and friends but was also discussed in terms of personal leisure time and time spent on work. Time appears to be the "currency" for our understanding of quality; for instance, we may purchase certain items because of the time they save us in completing certain tasks, and we may invest in certain experiences because we view them as optimizing the way we use our time. Our quality of work may also be valued by its relation with time: an operations manager may be assessed...
by the way he maps out processes to be more efficient with time, while the musician's performance is a product of the time they spent practicing.

Other projects under the Good Project, such as The Family Dinner Project and the Good Collaboration Project, focus on aspects of quality in terms of time spent with families and professional terms. Ultimately, the question of "What is quality?", even as it's understanding differ across cultures and in areas of professional and personal life, may essentially be a question of "What is time well spent?"

Recent Blog

**Reflections on "Good" Teaching**
By Victoria Nichols, January 21, 2015

Victoria Nichols, a Boston University School of Education Master's student and former PZer, discusses how teachers are deemed "good" by different facets of their professional role.

Links of Interest

**A New Year, a New Approach**
By Bari Walsh, Usable Knowledge, December 24, 2014

**A Hush Falls Over the Crowd? Diminished Online Civic Expression Among Young Civic Actors**
By Emily C. Weinstein, Margaret Rundle, and Carrie James, *International Journal of Communication* (9), 2015

**Truth vs. 'truthiness'**

**Gardner Receives Brock International Prize, Announces New Study**

"Beauty," Embodied

**Better Not Say: How Young People Quiet Their Online Expressions of Civic Engagement Over Time**
By Bari Walsh, Usable Knowledge, January 22, 2015

**Education Expert: Students Who Have True Grit Will Make a Difference**
By Jeffrey Beard, *Education World*, January 2015