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Introduction

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When William (Bill) Damon, Mihaly (Mike) Csikszentmihalyi and I went to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in the fall of 1994, we had no intimation of the long–term consequences of our joint fellowship. On the personal side, Bill and his wife Anne soon moved from the northeast coast to Stanford University, and after a while, Mike and his wife Isabella moved from the shores of Lake Michigan to the Claremont Graduate University in southern California. (My wife Ellen and I stayed put in Cambridge, our home since we were college students). On the scholarly side, Mike, Bill, and I embarked on a collaboration that has lasted, in one form or another, since those days.

A number of factors, none of which could have been anticipated, catalyzed to yield this long–term ambitious collaboration. First of all, we liked one another, respected each other's work, and had applied jointly for the fellowship year. As a result, we began to meet regularly to discuss issues of creativity and morality, topics on which each of us

had worked separately in one way or another. At these meetings it became clear that our interests and methods were similar but also complementary. It also turned out that our writing styles supported one another in unexpected ways: As I once put it, Bill has an unerring sense of rhetoric and audience, Mike embraces the most lapidary of formulations; and I am obsessed with the ways in which to structure and arrange literary materials.

But external events also influenced us. Our fellowship took place in the year that, for the first time in forty years, the Republicans took control of the United States House of Representatives. Their leader was Congressman Newt Gingrich, a powerful Speaker who laid out a seductive "Contract with America.' Part of the contract was a belief that government activity was almost always counterproductive, and that except for the obvious exceptions (military, security), almost all functions were better carried out by private institutions and subjected to the operations of market forces. The three of us did not object to markets—far from it. Each of us were beneficiaries of the market, and our political opinions were all over the map. But we were each uneasy with the notion that all sectors and spheres of life are best left to forces of supply and demand.

In addition, we each had occasion to observe our own scholarly ideas as they spread, exerted influence on others, and could be manipulated and misapplied. Bill had developed the conception of a Youth Charter and had observed how difficult it was to implement such structures properly in a politicized community. Mike's influential ideas of 'flow' were often mistranslated as 'the untrammeled pursuit of happiness'. Numerous attempts were made to instruct people how to be in flow, rather than allow that state to emerge as a result of attaining skill in an area that matters to a person. I had seen my concept of multiple

intelligences give rise to many educational practices and even some schools; and while I learned from most of these implementations, a few had made me shudder.

Probably the worst experience involved an educational program, apparently adopted throughout a state in Australia, that had catalogued the various racial and ethnic groups in Australia in terms of the intelligences that each possessed and the intelligences that each lacked. In a rare moment of courage, I went on Australian television, denounced the educational intervention as pseudo–scientific, and was pleased to learn shortly thereafter that this perhaps well–intentioned but ill–considered intervention had been canceled.

At least one other factor impelled us in the direction of Good Work. That was the aging—or, if you prefer—the maturing of three psychologists. Each well into middle age, each established in our scholarly careers, each with children who had or were rapidly become adult, we found ourselves turning our attentions to the future, to the next generation, and, more specifically, to the ethical fiber of that cohort. Indeed, social scientists have often turned their attention in later life to ethical issues—and we certainly adhered to that trend.

Going from an idea to a research project, proceeding from seed money to full funding, assembling research teams, and, eventually, moving two of the laboratories across the country, the Project proved to be an enormous undertaking. Originally, we called our study "humane creativity"; but it gradually evolved into a study of how professions fare under market conditions, when few countervailing forces existed, and the name was changed to "Good Work." Originally, we sought funding from six foundations; five showed no interest, and we

received an initial grant from the one foundation—the California–based William and Flora Hewlett Foundation—with which we had no prior relationship. We eventually were fortunate enough to secure funding from over two dozen agencies and persons. And while we are tremendously grateful to each and every one of them, life would have been much easier—and perhaps we would have learned more with less sweat—had we originally been able to secure full funding from one or two sources.

Details of the development of the project, along with a timeline, have been recorded in various places—most prominently in the Overview section of our website (goodworkproject.org)—and so it is not necessary to record them here. Having evolved from a study of Humane Creativity to an examination of Good Work, we eventually designed and executed a large–scale empirical study. We carried out in–depth semi–structured interviews that usually lasted well over one hour with over 1200 professionals representing a range of ages, roles, and other demographic variables. These professionals were drawn from nine different domains (as we came to call them): genetics, theater, journalism, law, medicine, pre–collegiate education, tertiary education, philanthropy, and business. We also carried out more focused studies with several of the groups—for example, creating an exercise in which individuals were asked to prioritize their values, posing specific professional dilemmas to our interview subjects. The secured data were recorded, transcribed, and subjected to coding on several dimensions, including goals, missions, obstacles, strategies, mentoring, the changes that were occurring in the domain and whether these changes were seen as positive or problematic.

While we strove to interview people who were considered by colleagues to be good workers (initially undefined for the purposes of

research), we have never claimed that ours is a study of good workers per se. After all, we are not investigative journalists, and so we cannot determine whether a specific person deserves that accolade. Rather, by speaking to knowledgeable and reflective professionals, we sought knowledge about what it means to be a good worker. To use an analogy, however flawed their terms as Majority Leaders may have been, we could learn a great deal about "good work" in the United States Senate from speaking to one time leaders Lyndon Johnson, Everett Dirksen, Mike Mansfield, Howard Baker, Bob Dole, and Tom Daschle.

Having arrived at a general approach to the study, we developed a system for studying good work, and, eventually, a conception of good work. We see good work as the intercalation of three ingredients, each (as it happens) beginning with the letter E.

Good work is good in the Excellent, technical sense; the worker knows his stuff, is highly skilled, and keeps up with the latest knowledge and techniques. Good work is good in the phenomenal sense: it feels good, feels right, is personally Engaging, yields experiences of flow. Finally, good work is good in a moral sense: it is carried out Ethically, in a way that is responsible, and in a way that serves the wider good, even (indeed perhaps especially) when it goes against the immediate interests of the worker.

Borrowing imagery from genetics, we see Good Work as the integration of three strands, beginning with the letter E; and whimsically, we speak of ENA.

Excellence   Ethics   Engagement
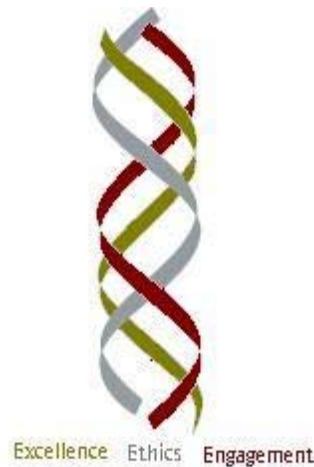
In one sense, one could say that this definition of Good Work is a priori. We did not need to interview 1200+ persons to arrive at this formulation of Good Work. And indeed, in a way that we did not anticipate, the three senses of good reflect our own previous research interest. As a student of intelligence, I was interested in Excellence; as a student of motivation, Mike was interested in Engagement; and as a student of moral development, Bill was interested in Ethics.

And yet, in my view, that is not how social science works. Social scientists have our hunches, our hypotheses, but we do not just think about them while we are alone or merely talk to a few friends and await their nodding agreement. Rather we collect data systematically and analyze it in as disinterested a way as possible. This procedure is even more likely to happen when one has three principal investigators and when, over the years, we have involved several dozen research managers, assistants, and students. To be sure, Excellence and Ethics emerged soon after Humane Creativity had transmogrified into a study of the professions; but Engagement was added near the end of the empirical study.

Moreover, even at the cost of further alliteration, the characterization of Good Work could continue to change. We began the study, with a critical attitude towards a 'markets–über–alles' Weltanschauung (if I can be permitted a shift in mid sentence to a Teutonic mode of expression). But, we could not have anticipated the growing skepticism about markets—beginning with the fall of Enron and Arthur Andersen at the start of the millennium and reaching feverish heights after the financial meltdown of Lehman Brothers, AIG, Citigroup et al in the autumn of 2008. In the wake of the latter events, many have urged the addition of a fourth E—that of Empathy. And indeed, in the work of our colleagues Lynn Barendsen and Jeff Solomon, we have noted the importance of Empathy—the capacity to put oneself in the place of those whom we serve as professionals. Certainly good work in medicine, teaching, social work is not possible without a powerful sense of empathy.

Yet, at least for now, I hesitate to add a fourth E. And that is because in certain other professions, other considerations trump Empathy, as it is usually understood. The goal of journalism is to get the story right, not to be empathic to its subject. The goal of science is to understand the phenomenon, not to sympathize with it. It is possible, however, that others, or new data, or data re–analyzed, will persuade me that Empathy, properly defined, should be deemed as a characteristic of GoodWork. If so, the ENA helix will add a fourth dimension.

One other candidate E has been proposed—E for equity or egalitarianism. This E seems particularly pertinent when it comes to 'ordinary workers'—individuals like blue collar workers or those in the service industry. An important consideration for these workers is whether they are treated fairly by those in power and whether their

compensation seems reasonable or is completely dwarfed by the salaries received by management. Studies by the Work Foundation in England suggest that good work is far more likely to be achieved when a feeling of fairness pervades the workplace.

Current Efforts

What does one do when one has completed a study—or as any grant–seeking social scientist would automatically add "Phase I of a study?" First and foremost, one publishes one's results. The Good Work project has published at least eight books (Good Work, Making Good, Responsibility at Work, Good Mentoring, The Moral Advantage, Good Business, Taking Philanthropy Seriously, and Lessons from the Edge); and in 2005 we co–edited an issue of DAEDALUS devoted to the professions. In addition, we have published several dozen articles in scholarly journals. On our website goodworkproject.org we have posted several dozen technical reports that have emerged from our project, and a number of these constitute significant additions to the scholarly literature.

Second, the project has given rise to considerable teaching. Some of the teaching is done by 'graduates' of the project. For example, Jeanne Nakamura has taught a graduate seminar on "Good Work" at Claremont Graduate University; Susan Verducci has long taught a course on "Integration of Liberal Studies" at San Jose State University. I myself have taught or co–taught courses or seminar series on good work at Colby College, Amherst College, New York University, and Harvard College. Also colleagues at several high schools, colleges, and professional schools such as law and nursing have offered courses on the good work theme.

Third, we have initiated collaborations in places beyond the United States. Our longest and most important collaboration has been with Hans Henrik Knoop, who has spearheaded studies and writing about Good Work in Scandinavia, and who, with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Bill Damon, has forged ties between the Good Work study and the important new area of study called Positive Psychology. We have as well the beginnings of scholarly or applied collaboration in other countries as well. (These collaborations can be monitored on our websites, www.goodworkproject.org and www.goodworktoolkit.org)

Principal researchers have also launched a number of projects, that we've dubbed 'the offspring of good work.' At Stanford, with Seana Moran, Bill Damon has headed the Purpose Project—a study of a how a sense of purpose can be inculcated in the young. At Claremont, as part of their new Center for the Quality of Life, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura are developing models of a full life in various work and leisure settings. At Harvard, my colleagues and I are involved in such endeavors as the Good Play project, a study of ethics in the new digital media; the Trust and Trustworthiness Project; the Quality project, a study of the qualities of objects and experiences that individuals most value; and the Good Collaboration Project, a study of what makes for an effective collaboration in non–profit sectors, such as education and civil society.

Of great importance, particularly at the time of this writing, are practical applications that have grown out of the Good Work project. The first of these was a Traveling Curriculum in Journalism, a joint effort undertaken by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel of the Future of Journalism Project and Bill Damon. This ambitious undertaking involved the development and testing of a curriculum that has been

used in a significant percentage of print journalism outlets of the country. Our 2001 book Good Work called attention to the threats to the traditional values of journalism; and, alas, our concerns were prophetic. Nonetheless, participants have lauded the power of this good work–inspired–curriculum; it serves as well as a model of what can be achieved in other domains like secondary school education. For their part, as leaders of our higher education inquiry, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura have developed a series of good work workshops; these interventions allow the different stakeholders at colleges and universities to record their priorities and values, to compare them with one another, and to take steps to bring them into closer alignment. Similar efforts have been initiated in other domains, for example, in nursing, under the direction of Joan Miller of Bloomsburg State University in Pennsylvania.

At the Harvard site, our principal practical activities have used the GoodWork Toolkit. As developed by long time researchers Lynn Barendsen and Wendy Fischman, the Toolkit consists of several dozen bona fide cases, drawn from on our own research, of ethical dilemmas that arise in the course of work. Organized roughly in terms of the coding system mentioned above, the cases are presented as catalysts to encourage discussion of the myriad ethical dilemmas that individuals face, along with some of the possible resolutions of these dilemmas. Our goal here is not to provide the right answer— frequently we don't know what it is or whether a single correct answer exists. Rather, our goal is to raise consciousness about the kinds of dilemmas that arise in the work life of any reflective person, and to provide ways of thinking about these dilemmas that may not be intuitive or straightforward. In our experience, individuals of all ages and professions find these dilemmas engrossing. And while we can scarcely claim that the Toolkit solves the ethical dilemmas of our

time, we are secure in reporting that individuals find the exercises useful and helps them to be far more reflective about their own decisions.

Until recently, the Harvard group has served as the principal clearing house for all questions and responses directed to the GoodWork project. We have been pleased to do what we can to react to comments and to connect individuals or groups with one another. But in the era of the internet, such a boutique operation is neither necessary nor, as the demands grow larger, possible. And so we have set up an interactive website (goodworktoolkit.org). It is our hope that individuals all over the world who are concerned about the quality of work will visit the website and will, as appropriate, participate in online discussions about and offer examples of good work. We monitor the website, eavesdrop as appropriate, and participate via posting or responding whenever we feel that we can be constructive.

GoodWork in Contemporary American Society

Since the project began, we have monitored the extent to which our ideas are noticed and discussed and our recommendations implemented. We have had our share of media attention but the media attention in the US so far has been modest, far less than has occurred with respect to other, less expensive and less time consuming aspects of our individual research programs. Given the choice of funding to pursue our projects, or media attention, we unhesitatingly choose the funding. Nonetheless, we hoped that good work would become more a part of the public lexicon than it has to this point.

There were a number of times at which interest in the work might have increased. After the collapse of Enron and Arthur Andersen, we thought that the business and finance worlds might pay more attention to issues of ethics at the workplace. That did not happen. Similarly, after the attacks on the Twin Towers of 9/ll, we thought that there would be more serious attention to the importance of journalism; but neither 9/ll, nor the Iraq war, nor Hurricane Katrina, have heightened the interest in reporting to a discernible extent. Moreover, the corrosive attacks on print journalism—some intentional, some the unintentional consequences of the speed and ubiquity of the Internet—have left that sector struggling for its survival. Nor have the other major professions flourished in a time of market mania.

The fall of 2008 ushered in two events—perhaps related—that might constitute a tipping point, in the US, abroad, or perhaps both places. The financial meltdown consequent to the collapse of Lehman Brothers, AIG, and other financial giants, raised consciousness about the costs of severe ethical lacunae in the world of commercial banking, investments in finance, and various regulatory agencies. At the same time, the election of a candidate who appeared to have strong ethical fibers also raised the possibility that good work and good citizenship might be more on people's minds at the end of the decade than they had been at the beginning. Only time will tell whether the promise of 2008 bears more fruit than earlier failed openings like 2000, 2001, and 2005.

Without pretending to speak for others, I've put forth a simple mnemonic to describe the needed change in American society:

In the last two decades we have been dominated by the three Ms
Money
Markets
Me

We need to flip these three Ms on their side and valorize the three Es
Excellence
Engagement
Ethics

And then, we finish the job by flipping the image one more time to yield a W for
We

After the financial meltdown, many people said "How long will it take until we are back to where we were before?" My answer, from a GoodWork perspective: "We will never get back to where we were before—nor should we!" It is my most fervent hope that the ideas developed in the fifteen years of the GoodWork project can help our country, as well as others, find a new and better direction. And indeed, it is reassuring to note that the ideas of GoodWork—and, at times, the Project itself—are stimulating a good deal of interest around the planet.