

Perspectives on the SELF of the Gifted

Guest Editors Sharon Lind and Annemarie Roeper

When we volunteered to be co-editors of this special issue "Perspectives on the Self of the Gifted," we began with a clear agenda: to concentrate attention on, and create an ongoing dialogue about the Self and its role in the growth and development of gifted individuals. *Our intent was to emphasize the need for educators, parents and mental health professionals to attend to the entire gifted individual — to help refocus gifted education on the inner agenda of the gifted individual and psychology on the unique needs and attributes of gifted individuals.*

We were rewarded with a variety of different approaches which focused on the whole Self, facets of the Self, and strategies for understanding and nurturing the Self. We are pleased that manuscripts included in this special issue represent many divergent opinions which are often contradictory to each other. They are all earnest attempts to understand the elusive Self. We hope the differing opinions expressed will lead to constructive and continued dialogue.

In the reviewing and editing process, we discovered that the gifted Self is not unique as a category since all Selves are unique. The difference lies in the intensity of the gifted individual's inner agenda and in the influences on the Self of innate characteristics like high creativity, intellectual giftedness, or supersensitivity. This special issue, then, is dedicated to the concept that gifted individuals are unique in expression of their Selves (whether one prefers a Jungian, Freudian, sociological or even a metaphysical perspective) and we need to be cognizant of that uniqueness as we educate, parent, and serve those individuals.

Sharon Lind
Annemarie Roeper

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Descriptions of the Self

The I of the Beholder: An Essay on the Self, Its Existence, and Its Power

Annemarie Roeper

Whether life will continue on this world now depends on us. And whether we survive, and preserve a life worth living, depends on the kind of selves we are able to create, and on the social forms that we succeed in building.

— Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
The Evolving Self (p. 24)

This article about the Self of the human being has been ripening in me for many, many years. Its pressure to be born was almost unbearable. I needed to share my vision, my experiences, and my perception of this wonderful and terrible world and the strange phenomenon of who we are and how strongly we impact our lives and those around us.

Yet, this article almost died before it could see the light of day. Why is this? The answer finally came to me. I have been trying to define the Self in cognitive terms. Therefore,

the essence of what I was about to describe eluded me again and again.

Something was missing in my descriptions. It was as though something kept knocking at my door saying, "Don't leave me out; I am essential." And, I finally opened the door, and there was the human Self.

It said, "May I introduce myself? I am the I of the beholder, the inside that looks out at the outside. I am the missing link to your understanding of the human being. I am the passion, the power, the creative force which looks out of those eyes of children, and I have been standing out in the cold for a long time. My stomach is empty. My growth has been stunted. My existence has been ignored. You must stop speaking about me and speak with me and include me in your plans and your thinking.

Stop judging me, evaluating me, categorizing me. I am an enigma and will remain one. If you include me, we can dance together. If not, I will shrink and be crippled and crouch in the corner. However, the strength of my feelings will be undiminished, but if my feelings have no outlet, they might burst out in destructive ways.