

Martin E. Marty
Response to Joshua Daniel

The linkage between “vulnerability” and “creativity” that gives spine to Joshua Daniel’s essay on “moral education” allows room for critics to elaborate on the themes, often by introducing their chosen parallels, as I shall. In his discussion of “risk,” the agent that occasions “trust,” he draws helpfully on Annette Baier, who is new to me, and George Herbert Mead, who is old to me. Both of them have much to teach us, as does Daniels on this subject. “No risk?” Then, no need for trust. “No trust?” Then humans can be stunned or shattered in the face of risk. “No vulnerability” in the child’s or other educatee’s experience? There is then little possibility for moral education. “No creativity” in the repertory of the child or other learners? That leads to stagnation and the death of the imagination. The question has been, how relate the two, vulnerability and creativity?

Daniel’s perceptive but genteel critique of my approach to trust, as I read it, sees me stressing dangers so much that the price of taking risks is too high to enable credible action and living. I have to confess that in my written discussions to date on this subject I have perhaps overstressed the dangers in a world of fragile and broken trust (as in *Baptism: A User’s Guide* and *The Mystery of the Child*) even though I wanted, and now want even more, to stress the motives for and value of providing creative care and community, both of which Daniel supports.

Near the end of his essay, Daniel draws on his “own religious tradition,” that of Christians and “especially Protestants.” I will draw on a version of my own Lutheran tradition, which focuses on a dialectic. Its terms may not be congenial to all, but its radical polarity will make sense. The human is *simul iustus et peccator*, always and at the same time “justified” and a “sinner.” In focusing on the “creativity” and “care” side, he

relates to the “free” individual in community. In beginning with concepts of “danger” and human “limits”, I keep in mind the constant need for trust.

Thus, in my *The Mystery of the Child*, I argue that the newborn and the young “must be touched, held, cradled, supported and carried,” since they have “at once entered the world of finitude, contingency and transience,” the world of risk. So the infant is “dependent” on those who give and can model the care which helps stimulate creativity. Daniel and I are not far apart. My “dialectic” stresses extremes in the potential of the one who is to be morally educated. His gentler approach is more moderate and transformative, and it also manifestly pays off.

[Note: *The Mystery of the Child* (2007) was published by Eerdmans, *Baptism: A User’s Guide* (2008) by Augsburg, and *Building Cultures of Trust* (2010) by Eerdmans. –
M.E.M.]