

This Week's Citation Classic

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Hudson L. *Contrary imaginations*. New York: Schocken, 1966. 181 p. [King's College, Cambridge, England]

In an educational system that encourages early specialisation, clever young men with a 'convergent bias of ability move towards the physical sciences, while those with a 'divergent bias move towards the humanities. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*[®] (SSCI[™]) indicates that this book has been cited over 225 times since 1966.]

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"*Contrary Imaginations* was my first book, and was written very much in isolation. No one else in Cambridge in the mid-1960s was much interested in the problems of human intelligence, beyond the production of yet another IQ test, and my comrades in the psychological laboratory were persuaded, in any case, that it was a topic best suited to the second-rate. I worked on my own, too, from choice; Fenland winters being cold and damp, I often did so in bed.¹

"This isolation provided the research which *Contrary Imaginations* summarises with one of its redeeming virtues: beyond the freedom to be cheerfully rude about other, more august workers in the field, it enabled me to see that the statistical sand-castles they habitually built with their data had led them to overlook some very simple truths indeed. Chief among these was the fact that, in a classroom of fairly clever 16 year olds, the correlations between tests of different sorts of mental ability are close to zero. Students who are good at one sort of test are often relatively weak at others. This discovery,

made quite naively, was given special point when my professor, Oliver Zangwill, gave me Getzels and Jackson's courageous *Creativity and Intelligence* to review.² Trying out their open-ended tests for myself, I found to my surprise that they effected a neat separation, not so much between the creative and the non-creative, as between students specialising in the physical sciences and those specialising in the humanities. In the English school system at that time, 'convergers,' i.e., those with high IQs, but relatively little taste for tests of free association, were flowing into mathematics, physics, and chemistry, while 'divergers,' those with the reverse bias of ability, were gravitating towards disciplines like English literature and history. On the strength of this lucky find, I was able to build a more general account of the ways in which the two 'Two Cultures' of C.P. Snow were systematically recruiting young people with biases of ability and temperament that could only serve to widen and perpetuate the gulf that already existed between them. "When it came out in 1966, *Contrary Imaginations* was seen among the staid as mildly subversive. It contained, for example, the occasional joke. The Cambridge University Press declined to publish it; although fortunately for me, both Methuen and Penguin were happy to snap it up.^{3,4} It has been used since, I think, as a reference point by people who suspect that generalisations about human intelligence put about by experts are sometimes less dispassionate than they seem: that they are often motivated by a desire to foster the conventional (and readily measurable) academic virtues and to penalise the more antic. It is a text for pluralists, in other words. Also for those who are sceptical of statistical abstractions and who dislike jargon."

1. Hudson L. *The cult of the fact*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. 189 p.
2. Getzels J W & Jackson P W. *Creativity and intelligence*. New York: Wiley, 1962. 293 p.
3. Hudson L. *Contrary imaginations*. London: Methuen, 1966. 181 p.
4. *Contrary imaginations*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1967. 205 p.