

Ask A Genius (or Two) 65 - Conversation on Genius (2)
Scott Douglas Jacobsen, Rick Rosner, and Marco Ripà
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Scott: What were other aspects of being proactive?

Marco: I used to do a lot of weight lift training, but I stopped lifting weights. Karate is a good sport, a good way to fight.

Rick: I think we both did kind of the same thing. We realized being smart isn't the main thing, and you have to come to terms with the world and other people. There are two aspects. One in terms of modern implications, where there are more ways to connect with people than ever before, and more intimately with people via social media, I feel as if it is probably tougher to be socially isolated. I would hope that to some extent social media have reduced the stigmatization that any person with weird traits might feel. I know social media might contribute to bullying, but, on average, across the whole spectrum of kids it has led to less isolation and less teasing.

Marco: The world is changing really fast. My experience was in the late millennium, but I think Rick's experience was associated with a different era. Not the 2.0 era, social media, YouTube, Facebook, which are networks that connect people around the world and let you start a conversation with someone who you think is closer to your ideas. Also, social networks have an algorithm that let you see only what is relative to your interests, point of view. If you're into politics and of a given party, you'll find more posts within the bubble. I am Italian, but my English is really bad at times. I try to explain.

(Laugh)

Rick: It's really good.

Scott: Your English is fine.

Rick: Being a typical American, I know zero Italian.

Marco: English, you have to learn it on your own or practice on Skype.

Rick: In addition to social media, and the whole sphere of external computation, it means that genius will become less exceptional as everybody is made smarter by technology.

Scott: Is that apparent, though?

Rick: Well, no, because it looks like technology makes everybody stupider because they walk around in traffic and drives while on their phones, and everybody is distracted.

(Laugh)

At some point, it makes people smarter. There are ways, like the navigation aid and others, that are external computation. All of the sudden, you've become a navigation genius, you know all of the shortcuts, because of the device in your hand. There will be a bunch of devices that help people function better, smarter, based on external computation instead of doing everything in your head. I would rather live now as myself rather than 100 years ago as a king because all of the tech that we have means that we're rich informationally. We're only going to keep getting more so.

Scott: If we take the discussion about what genius is around the examples like Feynman with the humblebrag nature, as well as the Hollywood representation of things, as well as the social isolation and outright bullying in prior generations for those that are of exceptional intelligence, and that exceptional intelligence is becoming less exceptional, where does that leave the genius in terms of its definition now and into the future? Is that the proper term if it is becoming less rare and less exceptional, except in relation to prior definitions?

Marco: I think the results come with knowledge. You have to be good at knowledge searching in Google, not only knowing it by yourself and trying to develop something good, something new. Genius as a definition is relative to your era, your period. Now, as I said before, the world is changing so fast that you can't make a comparison between a genius in the late 20th century and a genius now. It depends on the field too. As far as I know, the last genius that had general knowledge of his field was Enrico Fermi. Now, you have to specialize your interests, applications, in a very specific topic and try to make the research towards achieving something new, something good, which can let that topic also be something started by other people.

Rick: I agree. The idea of genius and IQ have always been subject to misuse and misunderstanding since Galton. Galton, like 120 years or 150 years ago, came out with a book called *Genetic Studies of Genius* or something. It can't be genetic because he was before genetics. He was the guy who brought genius into the modern era, in the 19th century.

Genius and IQ have been used for bad things, in the 1930s for eugenic policies, which led to horrible immigration policies in the US. It led to people being sent back to Germany and killed based on IQ test scores. I remember growing up in the 60s. Kids got their IQs tested all of the time. There were a bunch of kids being told that their kids were geniuses, because they were told so in parent-teacher conferences. It is subject to all sorts of mischaracterization. Although, in terms of how actual genius functions, I agree with Marco that it is changing. I think that it is changing in the direction of collaboration.

If you think of the science of 100 years ago, and you have individual pioneers like Planck and Einstein and Dirac and de Broglie, everybody coming up with their own little additions to relativity and Quantum Mechanics, chunk-by-chunk and great person-by-great person. Now, you have science being pushed forward by CERN, which is the combined efforts of more than 10,000 scientists, and is more than 20km in diameter.

You see it in other endeavors, like Judd Apatow. He is one of the most successful comedy movie producers in America. He makes his comedy by doing table reads by inviting 20 funny friends to

read scripts with each of the 20 pitching in jokes at every point in the script. So, our technology and other factors mean that genius endeavors are less individual than they used to be, in some instances.

Marco: You have to develop social skills too, to try to work in a team rather than working by yourself without others. You have to focus on your part of the project. You can build a bigger project rather than working alone and trying to find sources on Google, and so on. My personal experience with dynamic IQ tests. I developed the first spatial dynamic IQ test. I developed the algorithm, but the implementation process was a joint issue, matter. I find also another high-IQ person that is good with software and computers. We are working as a team. We have achieved this great goal for me. It is a dream come true, but working together - not only by myself. We are 50-50 now. My friend is an expert in the field that I can't access myself...

(Laugh)

...working on Java and on these languages that I can't do by myself, at that level.

Rick: I've had some of my greatest working experiences working with other people. I've worked with you, Scott, for years now. It has been productive.

Scott: Right.

(Laugh)

Rick: When I had a writing partner for writing comedy on TV, he actually wasn't that great for me in terms of making my social skills better because he had great social skills and took over the social stuff and would say, "He's the weirdo." It was good for him to be socially smooth, but it was bad for me to be characterized as the weirdo.

But as part of a writing team on TV shows, that is an awesome collaborative experience. That's how TV shows are done. That's the model for a lot of shows, a lot of good shows, which is the writers' room where everybody shares their experience to share dialogue and jokes.

Marco: Television is the best for social skill development. You have to show something to others, to a wide number of people. You have to be smart and what can be good, or not, for others.

(Laugh)

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