

**Ask A Genius (or Two) 66 - Conversation on Genius (3)**  
**Scott Douglas Jacobsen, Rick Rosner, and Marco Ripà**  
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**Scott:** Maybe, there's a strong positive that might come from this greater collaboration or the need for greater collaboration among the high ability set because it is too hard, as in the Enrico Fermi example you gave, Marco, to know or do everything alone. There have been examples like the Unabomber. A very anti-social person. This greater need for collaboration might work against those antisocial tendencies more. Does that seem reasonable?

*Marco: I think being alone is a problem for everybody. If you're alone, as I said before, it is a big problem for everybody, including geniuses and regular people. On YouTube, you have to deal with different creators, not only people who go to YouTube to watch a video. We are doing a lot of angles and live-streaming, also to talk about YouTube itself or to speak about something that hasn't occurred on the platform. This is quite new for me, but I find this interesting with this period. We are working on a YouTube Italia, not only in YouTube. It is a little box, and it's fine with me. It is my true work.*

*(Laugh)*

*I can't speak for television or others, but, for me, these angles and live-streaming are a good way to skip these additional problems as a creator on the platform, not only in real life.*

**Scott:** Any thoughts, Rick?

Rick: In terms of the interactions among people, when I grew up in the 60s and 70s, it was assumed everybody was okay, and was pretty much well-served by things as they were, schools for instance. Everybody in my experience went to public school, and was assumed to be able to get a decent education and would be fine. People might have different roles in the school like jocks and nerds, and stoners, but everyone would pretty much turn out okay.

Now, I think that there's been certain aspects - like 80s high school movies deconstructed how schools work socially - with a certain deeper deconstruction and analysis of how people interact as part of the tech revolution, where you don't get things like Cortana or Siri without somebody trying to figure out how human interactions go on. I think we're served better by analysis of how people work well together and communicate with each other. I have done this on a personal level, where I have worked in a lot of bars or used to work in a bunch of bars.

I noticed that bars are good. They used to work as a place for people to meet people who couldn't normally easily meet people because bars make it hard for people to communicate in general. They are noisy. They are dark. Everybody's drunk. It makes it easier for everybody to think you're more attractive than you are. So, working in bars, I would analyze how effective my interactions were. Usually, it wasn't that great because A) I'm me and B) we're in bar, but the whole breaking down of social interactions to make them better is helpful.

I could bring it back to genius because, eventually, this deconstruction and reconstruction of how people work and apps based on how people and thinking work means that we're all being glued together into a more, I hope, smarter set of interactions that make better use of people and make people, or give people the potential to be happier.

**Scott: Any thoughts on that, Marco?**

*(Laugh)*

*Marco: I have no experience in a bar, but my mother owns a little shop. So, I have tried to relate to people through the little shop. Also, my point about YouTube is a lot of people are giving feedback and so on, but those people are very young, usually. My channel is about this, mathematics, and logics, and so on. It is not so accessible to younger people and boys, but the standard is young student, pupil. It's good to analyze which kind of people go to a given video and analyze their way of thinking. I know this issue. Also, you have a lot of analytics.*

*You can try to construct the ranking or the set of parameters that you want to analyze. You can find with a given video if it is good for a set of girls or boys, or a given culture. It helps you to develop a strategy. If you wanted to increase your views on a given topic, you can use a given set of targets to try to increase the watching time of a video that is also important to pick above other videos or names in your channel. It is interesting.*

*(Laugh)*

*You can find out a lot about people's interests and way of thinking, in a way. It is not as big of a platform, but it allows you to understand a lot of things about people.*

Rick: I agree. I use Twitter analytics in the same way. You are able to analyze the performance of each tweet minute-by-minute. For instance, I have driven a lot of people away by looking at my stuff by making too many jokes about Trump.

**Scott: People did vote for him.**

*(Laugh)*

*Marco: It is a topic on YouTube.*

**(Laugh)**

*Trump is the mirror of people's way of thinking in the more general way. The result was a shock for the rest of the world, for Europe, but not for myself. I think this period is going to finish this era of compromises. People are trying to see black-or-white now. Not only trying to look forward to a given house, to be sure about the future, to risk, to find something new. They are upset. They are also concerned about the future, but they want to try a different way to try and approach this future.*

Rick: To some extent, I think people are - we were talking about collaboration - given a huge amount of power via social media. That makes some people less collaborative or less wanting to make sacrifices. If you look back at WWII, every country pulled together and made sacrifices to fight in that war, crazy huge sacrifices with rationing and people putting their lives on the line. Now, it's 70 years later in America. You have Trump who represents himself as an individualist, as an individual success, versus a candidate whose slogan was "stronger together."

One of Trump's promises is to dismantle Obamacare, which is a huge cooperative structure where people are able to get insurance because everybody gets insurance together. A lot of the people behind Trump or behind Brexit, or behind some of these nationalistic movements, are representing individualistic forces like "I need to take care of myself. I don't need to look after other people. And I will be successful in doing that." One of the things that gives people the idea that they are strong individually is how much social reinforcement you get from social media.

Everybody's got this feed in their hand, where it's your friends telling you you're great and news stories agreeing with you if you're in your information bubble for as many hours of the day as you want to get this information. There was a study that just came out and said 1 out of 5 teenagers will wake up in the middle of the night to check social media. It is super attractive, this reinforcement. I remember 30 years ago when the *Rambo* movies came out. There were a lot of American men, including myself, who were strutting and thinking and feeling like we're Rambo. I think social media gives you that feeling of "I'm strong and know what I'm doing" – to some extent.

**Scott: Does that make people more exploitable if they aren't banding together?**

Rick: Then you get into the conservative think tanks, in America, for the last 30 or 40 years. They have studied how to move people, politically.

**Scott: Like the Cato Institute, for instance.**

Rick: Yes, they know how to label and brand things. Conservatives in America are much better at coming up with names for things. They came up with "Death Panels" for Obamacare and the "Death Tax" for the Estate Tax. The tax on inheritance - calling it the Death Tax makes it sound like you're being taxed for passing away and it's not fair. It sounds really negative. Pro-choice as opposed to anti-abortion. Conservatives are much better at doing that stuff, and much better at doing it.

I remember in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. They taught us how to resist TV advertising. They taught us 8 or 10 ways that TV advertising works. I think most people at this point have become pretty resistant to TV ads. They have been around long enough for us to figure out what they're about and to feel cynical about anything pitched on TV. New media, we're not as resistant to it. We fall for, now, the big topic of fake news. It takes a while for people to learn how to resist new forms of information, and, with the world moving as fast as it does now, there will always be new forms of information.

We can expect people to be manipulated either on purpose or by accident for the near future.

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