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A woman with her hands held out, palms up, against a blurred background. The text "You are God's gift to the world!" is centered over her hands.

You are God's gift
to the world!

You and Your Genius

The Gift You Bring

Dick Richards

A unique spark supplies the energy for your contribution to life on earth. That spark attends you alone; it is duplicated nowhere. It is a God-given gift. It seeks expression in everything you do. You can learn to sense its presence and appreciate its longings. You can also recognize when and where giving it full rein might create good, and when and where reining it in might be the wiser choice. In order to do that you will have to consider two questions: What is your gift? and, Where is your gift needed?

Your gift can be thought of in a practical way as the exceptional power that comes most naturally to you, and as the business you are in as a person. It can also be thought of in a spiritual way as the energy of your soul. It is not your purpose; it serves your purpose. It is not your calling, but a power given to you to fulfill your calling. It is not your soul, but

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the energy of your soul. It is not out there somewhere in the future, but is present now. It has always been with you, and will always be with you. It will not change, though your knowledge of it may grow. You won't find it in the details of your resume or in any self-assessment questionnaire.

I will refer to your gift as genius, not using that term in the modern sense of high intellectual capacity, but in the ancient Latin sense of a divine gift offered to you for guidance and protection.

Your genius is the constructive and affirmative gift from the divine that you bring to life's events and situations.

Look For Clues

Because your genius is a divine gift, it bears a sense of mystery. But because it is alive in your dealings with the world, it can be recognized. Clues that can help you recognize your genius are abundant, but you have to know how and where to look for them. They lie in the actions, thoughts and emotions that feel most natural to you. Because these clues seem natural you probably do not notice them. So, begin to notice what you do when you are not noticing what you do. Yes, it sounds paradoxical and impossible, but it requires only that you pay attention to yourself in what might be

an unusual way. Pay attention with a heightened sense of awareness to the stream of actions, thoughts and emotions that run through you as you go about your moment-to-moment affairs.

For example, what is your first thought when a problem presents itself? When you are engaged in a pleasurable activity, what is it that you are actually doing? Is planting a flower bed actually about stimulating growth? Is writing a report actually about developing clarity about the subject matter? Is surfing the internet actually about looking for ideas, or about forging connections with others?

Your genius is probably active as you read this. Right now, what do you notice about yourself? Don't analyze. Just notice what you are doing with these words and thoughts.

As you continue in this way you will see a theme emerge. If planting a flower bed is actually about stimulating growth, and if that is your genius, then you will notice that you try to stimulate growth in your relationships, in your work and in your play. If writing a report is actually about developing clarity about the subject matter, and if that is your genius, you will notice that you try to develop clarity about your relationships, about your work and in your play.

Your genius is an undercurrent to the stream of your normal activity and will be called to the surface especially during circumstances in which you come to believe that it is needed. You attempt to offer it to others, and those who know you will seek it from you. So further clues to your genius can be found in answers to the questions: What is it that you consistently attempt to give to others? and, What is it that others seek when they come to you for help?

Continuing with the examples above, if your genius is about stimulating growth, you will consistently attempt to stimulate growth in others and they are likely to come to you when they need such stimulation. If your genius is about developing clarity in complex and chaotic situations, you will offer that clarity to others, and they will come to you seeking it when their lives seem complex and chaotic.

Do not be concerned if your genius seems hard to pin down. Most people take days, even weeks or months, to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of their genius. This spirit, although natural to you, might also be very elusive.

The Divine Gift

The notion of genius as a divine gift echoes everywhere the concept of genius is present. *Ka*, according to ancient Egyptians, represented

the receiving of capabilities from the gods. James Hillman summarized the idea of genius as a gift in his book, *The Soul's Code*, using the term character as a synonym for genius: "You are born with a character; it is given; a gift, as the old stories say, from the guardians upon your birth."

Akin to the idea that genius is distinct from the divine, the soul and the body, is that it represents the presence of the divine in you. In Hebrew, *neshama* is the presence of God in you. *Ka* is your expression of life's vital energy, your unique way of participating in what the Chinese would call ch'i, a Hindu *prana*, a Taoist tao.

Your genius, then, is your God-given guide, protector and link to the divine. It is the particular and unique energy emanating from the divine presence within you.

A Dangerous Abandonment

Ancient traditions and modern thought also contain the injunction that it is quite dangerous to ignore or abandon your genius. William Blake believed that if he shunned his genius he would not fulfill the purpose of his life. Jewish thought contains the notion that finding your *neshama*, what is sometimes also called your special treasure, is an obligation. The Dagara people of West Africa believe that failure

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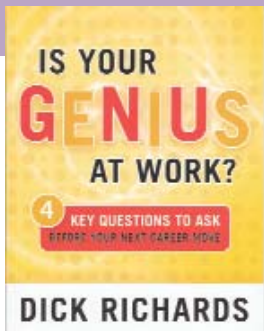
to find nurturance for your genius kills it and you.

Hillman, using the Greek term *daimon* rather than the Latin genius, said it most simply: "Don't 'dis the daimon."

Dare we ignore our genius? It may be thought of as a divine compulsion. A friend of mine, who is quite familiar with his genius, told me, "Whenever I feel that something is missing in my life, it is my genius that is missing."

A Gift to Your Community

I have used the words "your genius" as a linguistic convenience. There is a sense of genius in which it is not yours at all but belongs to everyone else. This is



Dick Richards's Is Your Genius at Work? can be bought by going to www.scienceofmind.com or by calling DeVorss and Company at 800-382-6121.

conveyed by the Bible in Corinthians, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good," and in Peter, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." In Jewish thought, every person has an obligation to share his special treasure. In the Tao Te Ching, *teh* refers to the power of each person to be uniquely whoever he is and to participate in the *tao*, the source of existence that nourishes and sustains everything. Lao Tzu wrote, "Possessing *teh* is to act out of love without ulterior motive."

One of the more eloquent expressions of genius-in-service-to-others comes from the Dagara. When a Dagara woman becomes pregnant, people in her village ask why the person is being sent to them and what gift the person brings that is needed in the community. Rituals are performed in which the life force of the fetus is asked what the child will bring.

And so it seems that your genius is not yours after all, and that you have not merely the option of recognizing your special treasure, but an obligation to discover it and point it toward the common good.

To help in your quest, ask those who will understand what you are

pursuing: What do you come to me for?

You can also try considering the second question that I posed at the beginning of this writing: Where is your gift needed? If, for example, your gift is stimulating growth, where is that needed in your work, your community, your family? If it is developing clarity, what is unclear to the people who matter to you or about a situation that captures and holds your attention?

The answer may be close at

hand in what is now being asked of you, or in events about which you feel some strong emotion. Or it may not have yet been asked, and you will have to wait and be alert for its appearance. The answer may also change over the course of your life. Whatever the current circumstance, have faith that you do have a genius and that you can come to know it. That knowing, coupled with sensing where your gift is needed, can bring about your very best contributions to life. •

Generating Words

ONE of the many techniques for recognizing your genius involves generating lists of words—sometimes a lot of words—until they begin to form a pattern. The purpose of this four-step exercise is to help you generate words that might offer clues to your genius. The exercise is a starting point; words that come to mind first will probably be the most obvious ones. Then, as you continue, patterns of words will begin to emerge. Grab a notebook and pen, or open up a new document on your computer, and start:

You are looking for at least two words. The first one must be a gerund, a word that ends with “*ing*” and indicates action.

Step 1 List as many words as you can that end in *ing* and describe activities that you enjoy.

Step 2 List as many nouns as you can that describe what you actually create around you. What do you “bring to the party?”

Step 3 Select one word from each of the prior two lists that attracts you the most. Write first the word from Step 1 and then write the word from Step 2.

Step 4 Say the phrase aloud. Using the two words that you chose in Step 3, say aloud, “My genius is _____.”

As you say the words, notice how you feel. Trust your felt sense of the rightness or wrongness of the words as a name for your genius.