

# GIFTED

The neglected segment

By

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## Disclaimer

- Please note that I am not a specialist in any of the areas where **opinion** is offered
- Everything in the following presentation is entirely my opinion and does not reflect the policies or opinions of any current or former employers of mine
- These opinions reflect my personal experience of the subject and of life and are bound to be biased. Please do your own checking
- If terminology has been used that you find insensitive, I assure you that it has been used without any intent to cause anyone to suffer and it only reflects my limited vocabulary. Please accept my unreserved apologies
- If anything here offends you in principle, such as politically or religiously, I am afraid that is tough. See it as a good opportunity to grow tolerance
- If you would like any further information, links, anecdotes or completely partial and biased advice, feel free to contact me and I will happily rant further

# 1. Have you been out of sync? Or know someone who is? Have you experienced the terror of realising you are smarter than your doctor?

- People are different, not the same, not equal in all domains
- We welcome and encourage diversity
- Unless the people in question are better at something than us
- Do you suspect there is something wrong with how you fit in?
- Someone said that lowly people discuss people, ordinary events and great people discuss ideas
- So, how is your social life?



## 2. A note on mental differences (low IQ, disturbed, high IQ, autism, other)

- What is the opposite word of disability?
- Some people have low IQ, we accept and accommodate their needs
- Some people are mentally ill, we may all go through this; have you noticed how differently they are treated to those with low IQ?
- Some people are on the Autistic spectrum. Cyber firms love them. We are all on that spectrum somewhere, it's ok.
- There are other mental differences that cause take away from average abilities. They are all respected and should be.

### 3. Why Gifted? Because just 'IQ' or 'intelligence' won't cut it. The Intelligence "Tree"

- What about those who are different because they can do some things better?
- The Intelligence Tree:
  - IQ was devised to assess mental disability
  - Its area of applicability stops after slightly above normal
  - After someone is 'very smart' their type of intelligence may branch off to specific gifts like mathematics, painting, dance, or emotional intelligence.
  - There are few Da Vinci people
  - So, your IQ may not be at 150 but your equivalent abilities may be well above that.

## 4. Who could be Gifted? Symptoms

- They often discuss ideas
- They seem to care in a non-self-promoting way
- They are passionate about something they enjoy
- They make others feel more intelligent (they can explain things)
- They are about as odd as the learning disabled
- They often have unusual life paths, some even go into crime
- More often than not, they do not enjoy happy lives



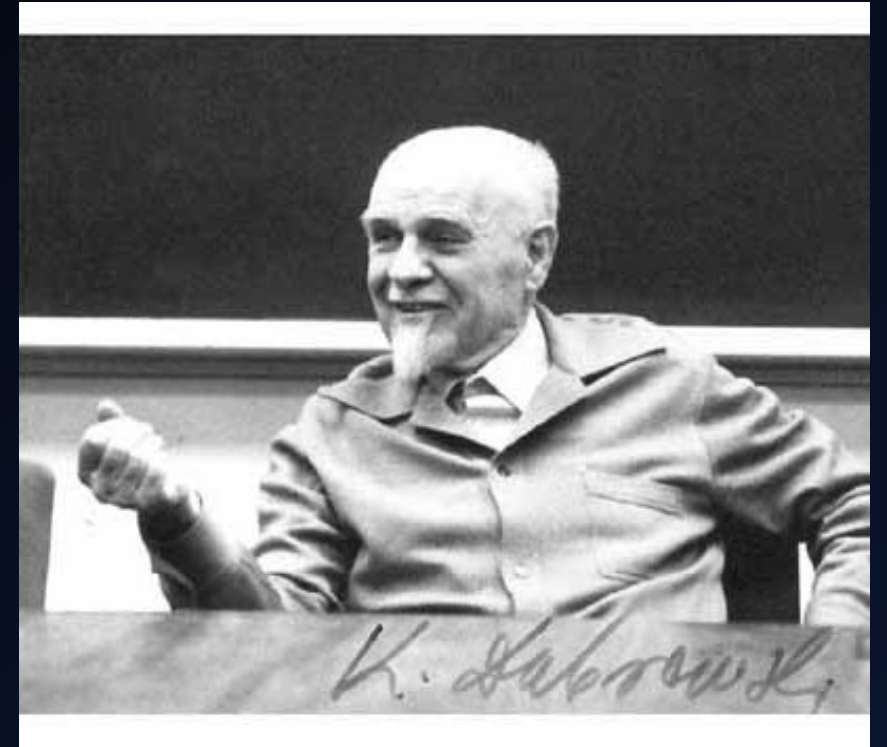
## 5. What this talk is about, Stimulus not results

- This subject cannot be thoroughly covered in an hour
- It touches many aspect of the human experience
- The purpose of this talk is to provide a stimulus for research and self-enquiry
- Some basic and broad directions will be given to enable you to be aware of the subject and know where to start
- And how to look ;-)

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## 6. Yes, you are crazy, dégénéré supérieur?

- The term was coined by Kazimierz Dabrowski
- Other crazy people:
  - Jack Parsons
  - Nikola Tesla
  - Jerome Lettvin
  - Ilya Ivanov
  - Arthur C. Clarke
  - James Lovelock
  - ...and many more.





## 7. Over-excitability! I cannot believe what I am seeing!

- My theory is that surrealism was born out of a need to express in art the apparent irrationality of the world
- There is something you may have to deal with and learn to control and channel.
  - Detail stands out
  - Things may be obvious to you but not others
  - Important things, urgent things
  - Amazing new knowledge
  - Principles!
- It is all about the inherent motivation that makes someone gifted

## 8. The Unbalanced Mind; Neurosis or Progress? - unstable (aero) dynamics

- Perfectly balanced people are indifferent
- Sometimes a healthy dose of neurosis is essential for excellence
- Awareness is the key to maintaining mental health
- Nobody has prepared you for this, you have to do it yourself
- A gifted mind is unbalanced and controlled
- Fighter jets are aerodynamically unbalanced and fly by constant computer control – this gives them the requisite agility
- Control requires discipline and actual advanced abilities and skills which have to be inherited and learned respectively
- This is not a necessity for most 'normal' people
- There is a fine line between genius and madness and the relationship is one-way unfortunately

## 9. Asynchronous emotional development

- Gifted people are often just big kids
- Or small adults and then big kids
- Or something else
- They do not pack the same gear, they do not grow at the same rate. They need special care growing up
- Reality does not solidify as early or completely as normal
- With discipline, this is a good thing as one needs a child's mind to be creative
- If they were not childish they would not watch and write sci-fi and they would not invent anything
- Beware of this, it cuts both ways




# 10. Coexisting problems: ADD/ADHD, autism, mood disorders. Finding a good specialist

- I have what used to be a severe learning difficulty 500 years ago – astigmatism
- Just because someone is smart, it does not mean they are perfect. As people, they may have other difficulties, being smart does not mean they are automatically overcome
- Overexcitability can border on ADD or ADHD
- Not all autistics are savants but many savants are on the spectrum. This is not a disability any more but some people still make fun of others with glasses
- If you are gifted and haven't experienced some form of mood disorder, please come and see me, I want to know how you did it
- Find a good specialist who understands giftedness – most “doctors” have a laminated card with what to prescribe
- Thankfully, medical school is difficult so there's lots of gifted doctors, find the ones who care

# 11. Isolation - guess which group is over-represented in prisons, the “loser” genius

- Clearly, there are no support networks for gifted people
- Except MENSA and some others but let's not get into that
- Isolation is a real problem, if you have a diagnosed disability, it is fine to seek support groups but if you are gifted, how do you go about seeking contacts without it going horribly wrong?
- My lesson is that there is no stereotype genius, look for it everywhere, develop a gifted-dar but be aware that gifted people live vastly diverse, weird and wonderful lives and may not have time for you
- You can also hang out with dead people by reading symbols that cause you to commune with them and hallucinate wildly (books)
- Also, any society of people who pursue difficult things for fun should contain some gifted ones



11. You have to be on the lookout for them

## 12. School - boring, boring, boring, the floor is on fire (I have no study skills) - the tragedy of the glimpse of genius with lack of discipline

- Tall people are terrible at basketball by default
- People who play basketball get good at it
- This is especially important if you have children
- If their learning environment is not challenging, they will not develop the necessary study skills and many other skills
- School is for skills not knowledge. You can learn a high school curriculum in a week but you cannot learn to manage learning and the world overnight
- Or learn about time management and hard work
- The No.1 cause of losers is lack of discipline
- The Dunning-Kruger effect is a blessing for most but having access to your inner genius and watching it go to waste while others, more disciplined are surpassing you is a frequent and avoidable tragedy

## 13. Work - it is not funny if the joke is on you

- The good news is you can change jobs and interviews work both ways
- Learn to recognise narcissists and psychopaths, treat the rest kindly



## 13. Work - it is not funny if the joke is on you

- Be aware of the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. It will help you fill the gaps
- Manage your own career
- Seek emotional intelligence skills and practice them
- If you haven't walked out yet, you probably know that being gifted is just a tool, the work does not do itself
- Learn patience and mindfulness. They are both skills that you have to keep practicing to maintain, not like riding a bike

## 14. Dating: when love dolls look like a viable option

- My prediction is that when they are perfected people will use them to do the housework more than anything else (like real husbands)
- Finding the right person for you is going to be hard. Do not settle!
- If they watch trash TV and read tabloids they will only do for a while do not lead people on, this is a time-bound game
- Most importantly, take the time to gain skills in dating. People who spent less time in the library are ahead of you
- Just being smart is like just being handsome / pretty – character is the most important thing to look for – but sort of equal intellect too
- This is going to come in handy when you have to talk to them or when you decide to pursue another PhD when you are 65

# 15. Gifted children - heredity, bot-teachers, bullying, stimulation resources

- Children of the gifted are often gifted, it is hereditary
- Gifted children achieve almost everything effortlessly, as a result, other children lose motivation, teachers get offended or jealous
- It is very hard dealing with people smarter than you, especially at your subject
- Gifted children are in grave danger of becoming arrogant
- They present prime targets for bullies
- There are special resources to help guide their development
- Like with anything else, don't take anything for granted, there are resources if you look for them and you need discipline to use them and gain skills

## 16. What now: Tune in, drop out, find the others - the problem is defined - responsibility

- The ball is in your court now. You have been alerted to the existence of gifted people. It is your responsibility to make a plan of action and carry it through
- You cannot expect some organization to hold your hand
- Accept your differences, the lost time, the missed opportunities and the bad habits and move on
- You do not have to fit in. The wider society is beginning to see this as unnecessary, other times and places would not be so forgiving
- Find other people like you. You may see them once or every week, most of them will not become your friends if you are an adult, it's ok, just spotting them and knowing they exist is enough
- Make sure your family understand you or that you know their limits

## 17. Tune in: Books, online resources, remarkable historical figures

- You will find links at the end of this presentation
- There are books out there that deal with the subject, you do not need to read all of them
- Even better, there are books written by gifted people; you will find those more comforting. Beware of the ghost-written entertainment “smart” books. Typically, reading the back cover is enough
- Learn about historical personalities that were weird and gifted and you will feel less isolated and crazy (they have the same crazy ideas)

# 18. Drop out: You are not part of this reality, learn to cope, don't try to fit in too much

- I have mentioned this before but it is important that I repeat myself for emphasis
- Nobody likes a nobody
- People can tell you are different but they will not tolerate you if you are not genuine and kind
- You cannot be genuine unless you find yourself. Travel! (outside of your own head)
- Actively learn about people and the world and then experience it first-hand. Have stories for your grandchildren
- When you test something, you give it a stimulus and read the response. Travel will give you inputs for :
  - Unit Testing – bits of yourself (beliefs, opinions), did you chose those?
  - Integration Testing – your personality – did you configure this? Or, was it formed by reactions?
  - System Testing – your body, mind, family and friends – are you coherent?
  - Acceptance Testing – Are the users going to be happy? Can you function in society for the results you want?

## 19. Find the others: friends, love, my first flash-mob

- My first flash-mob, possibly the first one in Greece
- You always used to find like-minded but diverse people on a BBS – what is your BBS now without the posers?
- By all means love. Spouses, children, friends, pets, books etc. There's hundreds of books on motivation but it is simpler than that.
- Be aware that not everyone has the same depth of experience. Some see the moon, some just the finger that points to it.
- In both cases, there is no need to explain.
- Do not wish for a world that everyone is like you, there you would be normal and some others would again be gifted.
- Avoid must-turbation. Just because you know better...

## 20. Positive disintegration and Dabrowski's levels of personality (image stolen from the internet)

Level 5	Individuals with personalities
Level 4	
Level 3	Psychoneurotics
Level 2	Neuroses, mental illness
	Average person and psychoneurotic
	Average person
	Psychopaths and average person
Level 1	Psychopaths/psychopath-like individuals



## 20. Positive disintegration and Dabrowski's levels of personality

- The inevitable breakdown is necessary in order to reconstitute yourself in accordance to your will
- This is because you get the same data as everyone else but more meaning
- My only warning is: be humble and cautious designing the new self because your current self isn't as wise as the future one
- Allow for more iterations, it doesn't stop, you just get good at it

## 21. Too late? - remember 10 years ago when you thought it was too late? Time travel

- There is a paradox in our thinking, that it is too late
- For some things, it is. But for more than we think, it is not
- In order to survive you need to keep learning more than normal life demands and it is never too late for that
- Everyone wishes they could travel back in time and change that little thing and things now would be so great
- The fact is, you are not much smarter now than you were then and you could most likely simulate what the best advice would have been. You just chose not to go that way

## 21. Too late? - remember 10 years ago when you thought it was too late? Time travel

- Bear in mind that now is 10, 20 or 50 years in the past from a future point of view
- What could you do now that your future self would thank you for
- Remember, they will be too old to do what you can do now
- Set them up for health, happiness and success
- Try simulating your future self and write a letter to your current one, what would they write to you? Do this in small paragraphs first thing in the morning for a month

## 22. How to survive: humility, mindfulness, kindness

- These are not touchy-feely points
- Humility will get you out of more trouble than you can imagine
- The greatest obstacle to any success is success
- Learn and practice mindfulness, don't be a spectator
- Kindness makes friends and is good for your health. So when you feel most unkind, that's when you need it most, do something kind and break the cycle
- What does the above have to do with being gifted? It has to do with being challenged

## 23. What if you are not gifted? What I learned from autism and learning disabled people

- This advice applies to all, if you are not smarter than the average person, you are still a lot smarter than a lot of people and your life is not that different in the basics
- And if you are a certified genius, there are still people to whom you are an amoeba
- I learned that IQ has nothing to do with moral character
- I have been humbled by the tenacity of some learning disabled people and appalled by the sloth and arrogance of “misunderstood” geniuses
- Autism taught me that you can repurpose your resources to overcome your shortcomings and find purpose for your “shortcomings” that makes them talents

## In Conclusion

- I hope to have succeeded in making you aware of the existence of gifted people
- Of their need for tailored education and career management
- That they can't figure it out themselves since they are so smart
- That a deviation from the norm causes difficulties
- That it is not ok to envy them, or taller, or stronger, or prettier people. Imagine being them in this world
- That if you are or know one, there is help, it's just not on the curriculum

# References and Links

- <http://www.positivedisintegration.com/>
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- <https://web.northeastern.edu/slavovlab/blog/2014/08/15/papers-that-triumphed-over-their-rejections/>
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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-I03ZmhovQ>
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# References and Links

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- <https://medium.com/@ElfMachine/what-are-the-signs-of-a-highly-gifted-adults-and-children-7942e2105879>

Some Links that have been shared with me since the talk:

- <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Succeed-Employment-Specific-Learning-Difficulties/dp/0285642464>
- <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Employers-Managing-Professionals-Autism-Spectrum-ebook/dp/B0746TDCFB>
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