

(Download) Divine Fury: A History of Genius

## Divine Fury: A History of Genius

*Darrin M. McMahon*

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**Darrin M. McMahon : Divine Fury: A History of Genius** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Divine Fury: A History of Genius:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Contact with the Divine through GeniusBy Robert S. RobbinsI have joked that this is a history of my people, but it is really just a history of genius as a cultural concept. The author treats genius with reverence as something sacred. Therefore he never attempts a rational or scientific explanation for genius. Fair enough if you only intend to present the history of the concept but this means he ignores the history of

psychology's explanation for genius, as exceptional access to the unconscious mind. There is absolutely no mention of the unconscious mind anywhere in this book even though the discovery of the unconscious is of great importance to the history of genius as a concept. "Divine Fury: A History of Genius" considers genius both in terms of general intelligence and inspiration, with more of an emphasis on inspiration. The Wikipedia article on Artistic Inspiration also mentions the concept of divine fury; "In Greek thought, inspiration meant that the poet or artist would go into ecstasy or furor poeticus, the divine frenzy or poetic madness. He or she would be transported beyond his own mind and given the gods' or goddesses own thoughts to embody." I would argue that you can't really be transported beyond your own mind but you can go deeper into your own mind and this is probably what is happening. To be given the thoughts of someone outside yourself would be a state of possession and I would argue that you can only be possessed by your own inner demons (which are not necessarily demonic or negative). The field of comparative religion explores this subject in far greater depth since its great thinkers are not afraid to speculate on the nature of spirituality. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting view of genius By Batia Cohen McMahon narrates the history of the genius concept through different periods of time. The analysis is well written but sometimes redundant. As we progress through the book we get the sense of understanding the general idea. While contemplating different examples of eminent people like Socrates, Michelangelo, Napoleon, and Einstein, the author approaches the issue in a fresh, new way as he includes Hitler and the evil genius as well. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By chung hsieh excellent!

Genius. With hints of madness and mystery, moral license and visionary force, the word suggests an almost otherworldly power: the power to create, to divine the secrets of the universe, even to destroy. Yet the notion of genius has been diluted in recent times. Today, rock stars, football coaches, and entrepreneurs are labeled geniuses, and the word is applied so widely that it has obscured the sense of special election and superhuman authority that long accompanied it. As acclaimed historian Darrin M. McMahon explains, the concept of genius has roots in antiquity, when men of prodigious insight were thought to be possessed by demons and gods. Adapted in the centuries that followed and applied to a variety of religious figures, including prophets, apostles, sorcerers, and saints, abiding notions of transcendent human power were invoked at the time of the Renaissance to explain the miraculous creativity of men like Leonardo and Michelangelo. Yet it was only in the eighteenth century that the genius was truly born, idolized as a new model of the highest human type. Assuming prominence in figures as varied as Newton and Napoleon, the modern genius emerged in tension with a growing belief in human equality. Contesting the notion that all are created equal, geniuses served to dramatize the exception of extraordinary individuals not governed by ordinary laws. The phenomenon of genius drew scientific scrutiny and extensive public commentary into the 20th century, but it also drew religious and political longings that could be abused. In the genius cult of the Nazis and the outpouring of reverence for the redemptive figure of Einstein, genius achieved both its apotheosis and its Armageddon. The first comprehensive history of this elusive concept, *Divine Fury* follows the fortunes of genius and geniuses through the ages down to the present day, showing how despite its many permutations and recent democratization genius remains a potent force in our lives, reflecting modern needs, hopes, and fears.

From Booklist \*Starred\* The word genius used to be reserved for exceptional individuals on the order of Albert Einstein but is now used so casually that we may all have our 15 minutes of genius, according to McMahon. He traces the origins of the concept of genius to religious notions about the intermediation between individuals and God, with angels and demons seen as the source of genius delivered from on high or low. With the Reformation came new perspectives on nature versus nurture, and the culture of genius emerged as part of a reaction to a broader concept that God and angels are not directing every minute of human life. Ever since Socrates, philosophy, religion, and psychology have debated the source of genius, the timeless struggle to determine where the divine leaves off and the human begins. McMahon details scores of geniuses among poets, artists, philosophers, military strategists, scientists, industrialists, and tyrants as the concept of genius has been democratized. He raises important questions about the nature of genius and whether geniuses can and should be identified and lauded beyond the rest. A sweeping, completely engaging look at a subject that has fascinated humans through the ages. --Vanessa Bush New York Times Book