Can we afford to ignore the potential of our creative minds?

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Nikola Tesla is one of the undisputed geniuses of world history. He had more than 300 patents under his name all around the world. In his autobiography, he writes that he invented all the engines and devices under his name in less than two months in a burst of enormous inspiration. He was in the happiest state of mind of his life: ideas flowed into his mind and the only difficulty was holding on to them.

Wait, in less than two months?! That is a shocking statement we should stop at.

Tesla also writes he did not realize he was an inventor until as an adult. And that if he had realized it earlier, he could have given much more to humanity.

How can we bypass such information? We live in the midst of unprecedented problems, sudden changes and threats looming over the horizon. We need new ingenious ideas and smooth cooperation for the benefit of all humanity. We need more inventors and visionaries from many different fields.

Maybe you want to excuse yourself by thinking that “this doesn't apply to me or my own work community”. After all, Tesla was a unique genius and radical innovating is only possible for exceptional individuals. Unfortunately, research does not support this claim.

Professor Larisa Shavinina, who has extensively studied the thinking and high giftedness of Nobel laureates, distinguished inventors, and experts capable of exceeding the boundaries of prevailing knowledge, has discovered so-called extracognitive factors of high ability.

These refer to phenomena such as internally developed and highly subjective standards, persistence, high tolerance of loneliness and criticism, the pursuit of excellence in one's field, an open mind, the ability to combine contradictory information into a whole, challenging one's own thinking, the courage to wonder, and the use of intuition.

None of the features are exceptionally unique, mystical, or reserved to geniuses only. On the contrary, they are relatively ordinary abilities and they can be practiced – even with relatively simple methods.

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Shouldn't we direct our best resources to study the phenomenon? To support the development of the creative potential of the human mind? Instead, it seems that we direct resources to enhanced processing of data and the development of AI, even though machines have difficulties discerning traffic lights and palm trees from a landscape image, not to mention discerning relevant information.

Some time ago I interviewed an 83-year-old Finnish inventor who has invented hundreds of inventions and patented a large number of them. He explained that there is no path to the invention. You have to jump into it. But adults need a path from here to there. He sees hope in children. They are an exception, they don't need a path.

Why didn't Tesla realize he was an inventor until he was an adult? Because he was an obsessive-compulsive and neurotic child who only as an adult managed to turn his sensitivity into persistent willpower, which became the central asset of his work. He felt he inherited his inventiveness from his mother, who had a particularly strong intuition.

I wonder how many nikolateslas are sitting in various classrooms right now, being adjusted to standards, norms and rules alongside ever-increasing competition – trying to cram formulas and copy models that we want them to remember, repeat and apply. We don't need people to be better calculating machines or mechanical thinkers, do we? We need highly creative mathematicians, problem solvers, inventors, visionary thinkers, creative and empathetic fellow human beings. People who know how to act more and even more creatively together in the midst of rapid changes and crises.

The marginalization of the most ingenious aspects of our human mind could be compared to a situation where each of us lives in a skyscraper but is only allowed to use the first two floors. The processes of radical innovating have mostly been cut off in the human sciences, from psychology to neurosciences, as well as in different areas of society, from kindergartens to universities.

It's not just that some part of us remains hidden or some invention remains uninvented. Amputation of the dimensions of the creative mind prevents us from

discovering and developing our own potential and skills of perception and understanding. It may also lead to feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness; it breaks our wings. Thus, it is a loss to all mankind.

Therefore, perhaps the most relevant and beautiful thing that Tesla writes is the idea that *"Every effort under duress requires the sacrifice of life energy. I have never paid that price. On the contrary, I let my thoughts flourish."*
The integration of radical innovation and well-being is possible. And to promote such a harmony, we need bold steps on many different fronts. What kind of steps could you take?