



Fire in the Crucible: The Alchemy of Creative Genius

By John Briggs

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"No work in recent years has so convincingly and compellingly portrayed the return of the study of creativity to center stage. The sense of adventure and high purpose is everywhere evident, as is the elusiveness of the prize. The fire in the crucible is approaching critical mass." -- David Henry Feldman, Tufts University, author of "Nature's Gamit".

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Fire in the Crucible: The Alchemy of Creative Genius By John Briggs Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2680420 in Books
- Published on: 1988-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 382 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Like a medieval alchemist, a genius is one who is driven to discover a new material form, a philosopher's stone, to capture some nonmaterial truth or essence. Alchemy is the guiding metaphor for Briggs's probe into the nature of genius, yet he is no mystic. Interviews with brain scientists, systems theorists, cognitive psychologists and physicists undergird his investigation. Briggs, coauthor of *Looking Glass Universe*, finds that geniuses are motivated by a drive to wholeness, a commitment to their gut feelings about how the world works or ought to. In sifting the creative processes of Einstein, Picasso, Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Nikola Tesla and many others, he resorts to wily concepts devised by his interviewees: omnivalence (an openness to ambivalence), simultaneous opposition (thinking in opposites rapidly), nuance and possibility clouds. His refreshingly open-ended approach brings us closer to the elusive nature of genius.

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From Library Journal

The alchemical metaphor, while not particularly edifying, does provide an entertaining framework for discussing the more lucid, yet still veiled, personal quest of creative genius. In an attempt to reveal the various promptings, strategies, and paradoxes of creative absorption, Briggs kaleidoscopes a wide sampling of high-level creators from many different fields and time periods. While he attempts little in the way of systematization, he does provide many inspiring examples of idiosyncratic tactics in accessing intuition and emphasizes the profundity of each crystallization of vision. A useful status report on recent research into the creative process. William Abrams, Portland State Univ. Lib., Ore.

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Margert Lewis:

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