# SYSTEM

HOW SYSTEMS
AND MECHANISMS
CONCEAL AND CULTIVATE
YOUR TALENTS

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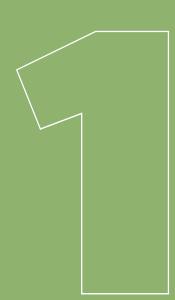
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# Talents as a Starting Point

If you were meant to be someone else, you would have been born as Someone Else t took me some time to realise that certain things I excelled at, things I handled effortlessly, were starting to work against me. Tasks like organising or helping others began to drain more energy than they once did. This prompted me to embark on an exploration, tracing energy leaks and uncovering causal connections. I discovered a subtle distinction between the skills I had acquired and the talents that came naturally to me.

In some Indigenous traditions, when a child is born, there is curiosity about the 'medicine' this child brings into the world, their unique gifts, seen as a form of healing or contribution. I love this perspective on embracing a child's uniqueness. The journey to recognising my own uniqueness, however, took various turns.

One of those turns came when I had to choose subjects halfway through high school to determine my future academic path. It was not my cup of tea. I had no idea what I wanted to do later in life, how could I? What were all the possibilities? When the time came to decide, I simply chose the subjects I was good at.

Another turning point was my experience in the workplace. In various organisations, I observed how efforts were often directed towards developing skills, especially when someone was deemed insufficient in a particular area. Energy and focus would be poured into improving weaknesses rather than strengthening natural abilities. For many, this approach seemed more like a struggle than a motivation for growth. Furthermore, I noticed that people often performed work that did not bring them satisfaction. Some saw their job as a necessity rather than a source of fulfilment. Occasionally, people would tell me exactly how many years remained until their retirement. I could not understand why someone would stay in a job they did not enjoy, counting down the years instead of making a change.

For me, doing what you are intrinsically good at significantly contributes to both health and a smooth flow of energy — not only in your personal life but equally within the organisation you work for I want to raise awareness of just how profound this impact is, on well-being, on life satisfaction — and on tangible results.

While the importance of recognising one's talents is acknowledged in education, upbringing, and the workplace, the distinction between intrinsic talents and acquired skills is often overlooked. Nor is the influence of various external factors always taken into account. Yet, family history, life experiences, individual journeys — they all shape the unique roadmap of every person. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, your choices, the skills you develop, and the path you take are influenced by your family system, other external systems, personal beliefs, loyalties, protective mechanisms — and maybe more.

I believe that recognising and using your intrinsic, unique talents is essential. Those talents want to be acknowledged, seen — and expressed. You were born with them for a reason. They connect you to your core, allowing you to step into your full power and remain there. Your unique roadmap contributes to your growth process, shaping the boundaries you set (or maintain), influencing the skills you acquire — and enabling the further development of your innate abilities.

In my view, when progress is slow, whether on an individual level, within a team, or across an organisation, there is work to be done. Every step in development has a ripple effect. Whether it's your personal growth or the evolution of a team or organisation, the impact extends further than what is immediately visible. Think of a pebble thrown into the water: the ripples spread outward, creating waves of influence far beyond the initial splash.

### **Talents in Organisations**

Organisational systems play a crucial role in shaping the talents and development of individuals. Creating space for employees to fully utilise their intrinsic talents, both individually and within teams, has a profound impact on energy levels, job satisfaction — and overall well-being. When people contribute from their core, from the heart, it fosters deeper engagement, creativity and a sense of personal responsibility. In addition, it strengthens teamwork and enhances the quality of work produced. As a natural consequence, absenteeism tends to decrease, though this should never be the primary objective. After all, absenteeism rarely exists in isolation.

In many organisations, process-driven or people-oriented changes often fail to address the core of underlying issues. When the essence of a challenge remains untouched, the impact of any transformation remains limited. True change requires confronting what truly matters. This applies not only to the organisation itself but equally to key influencers — often executives and management — who must cultivate awareness of their own intrinsic qualities. Understanding one's own core is essential, as it allows leaders to recognise what personal 'baggage' they carry, whether consciously or unconsciously. Some of this baggage may be carefully wrapped gifts inherited from family systems or ancestral lines. Yet, when these influences remain unexamined and unacknowledged, left metaphorically packed away in the trunk, they still shape the organisation's culture and dynamics.

An organisation with centred, autonomous, and self-aware leadership fosters a work environment where individuals can, in turn, develop their own autonomy — within a healthy, supportive setting. When leaders are conscious of the systems and mechanisms that have shaped their decisions, the entire organisation benefits. Employees gain the freedom to use their natural talents and take true ownership of their roles. The resulting positive energy flows outward, extending beyond the organisation into the world around it.

Not everyone welcomes change immediately, even when that change is designed to ensure that processes genuinely serve the core of the organisation. However, when people are given the time and space to engage in meaningful work that aligns with their motivation and intrinsic talents, their engagement naturally deepens. Lean Management supports this by systematically eliminating what no longer serves the organisation. It is a methodology designed to bring organisations back to their true mission and vision, to optimise processes — and to clarify roles, responsibilities, and authority. This approach calls for shared responsibility and leadership, where processes are stripped of unnecessary elements to eliminate waste.

After all, how often is time lost on tasks that are irrelevant, redundant, or could have been prevented. By refining processes and redefining roles, Lean redirects focus to what truly matters, the essence of the organisation. However, this is not merely an exercise in efficiency, waste reduction, or profit maximisation. More importantly, it creates space for real growth, for both individuals and the organisation as a whole. When energy flows towards what matters — rather than being drained by what does not — progress becomes natural and sustainable.

The philosophy behind Lean resonates deeply with me. After the initial cleanup, the work does not stop. It remains a continuous process, as new baggage may accumulate, seemingly familiar patterns may resurface, or existing structures may no longer contribute. Maintaining alignment with the core requires ongoing commitment, honesty and openness from all involved.

Metaphorically, Lean can also be viewed as a methodology for personal development — a way of stripping away what no longer serves you. It invites you to focus on what truly matters, to recognise and embrace your essence, so your energy can flow more freely.

In any organisational change, the greatest impact comes from the people themselves. Both the organisation and its employees influence performance, collaboration — and outcomes. In the following chapters, I explore some of these key influences and pose reflective questions to deepen awareness and insight.

# Talents as a Source of Energy

A roly-poly toy always returns to its centre, no matter from which direction it's pushed. The same applies when you stand in your strength. Knowing and using your true talents is not the only factor at play — but it is an important one. The roly-poly toy is not a plaything that can be steered in any direction, it simply responds to external forces. It shows how storms or events, whether from within or without, may cause greater or lesser movements. And yet, through all those upheavals, it always returns to its centre.

That balance is easier to maintain when you are truly connected to yourself — with self-awareness playing a crucial role.

When you do what you truly love, results seem to follow naturally. Effortlessly. You may still dedicate considerable time and attention to your work, even when it stems from your passion and expertise — but it energises you. It feels as though you are tapping into a limitless source. The sense of fulfilment is fundamentally different from when you operate solely out of willpower. The latter arises from a different motivation, one that you may or may not be fully aware of.

If your intrinsic predisposition finds no outlet, it will eventually start to feel uncomfortable. A bumpy road can bring your talents to the surface. Your true potential often lies dormant until the moment you can no longer ignore it — or no longer wish to. An impactful life event can trigger this process in a way that suddenly places you on that bumpy road, through loss, illness, or some other major shift. But always through something that deeply affects you.

Ideally, learning to recognise what gives you energy and what drains it should be a natural part of your development, preferably as early in life as possible. Yet, it often happens that only much later in life do you gain real insight into what depletes your energy. At best, this realisation prompts you to question why you are doing what you are doing. At worst, after some rest and recovery, you carry on until the next (and often bigger) crash.

### **Learned or Innate**

You do drive your own development and change. If you find yourself out of balance for an extended period, one possible cause could be the underutilisation of your intrinsic talents. Perhaps a particular skill has been developed to such an extent that you now identify it as an innate talent. Yet, in reality, it may have emerged as a response to a protective strategy or coping mechanism.

Self-awareness is key to maintaining a solid foundation. Shedding light on potential inhibiting factors, such as limiting beliefs or ancestral influences that continue to shape your present, can play a crucial role in restoring balance. Addressing these factors allows you to build a stronger, more aligned foundation for yourself.

Over time, I became more aware of my acquired talents, which in turn deepened my understanding of my innate ones. I learned how these acquired skills related to my true gifts — and how I had unknowingly kept some of those gifts wrapped up. In others, I could often see their hidden potential more easily than I could recognise my own. There were times I wished I could tear off the wrappers around their hidden gifts, knowing full well that this was neither my place nor truly possible.

Each of us walks our own path, encountering our own obstacles and revelations. The process of unwrapping and unfolding can only happen at its own pace. If you force open a caterpillar's cocoon before it is ready, the butterfly inside will not survive. The same applies to personal growth. When someone else tries to ease open the cocoon of a carefully wrapped mechanism or hidden talent before we are ready, the transformation cannot fully unfold. And the lesson, shaped by someone else's view, will simply return later, dressed in a new form, patiently waiting to be recognised.

As long as life moves along smoothly, we rarely question what we are doing and why. However, if a sense of fulfilment starts to fade, it may be time to examine the deeper layers. To reflect on what currently holds space in your life. Regularly reassessing whether you are still aligned with what you truly want is akin to preventive maintenance, it optimises both energy and direction.

Feelings of demotivation, burnout, physical symptoms, or an underlying sense of unhappiness are often signals. They ask not to be ignored but to be explored.

### For Consideration

Every day, you have the opportunity to choose what truly brings you joy. Even if you believe you cannot due to obligations you feel bound to, remember: every step, however small, is a beginning. If what brings you joy is an inherent part of who you are, it will eventually surface, unless you actively keep it buried. But do you really want to?

If a thought prevents you from doing what you truly desire, ask yourself: What is really underneath this thought?

Naturally, what brings you joy should not come at the expense of others. True joy stems from the heart and, by nature, does not harm. You may disappoint or unsettle others, or believe you will — but does that mean you should deny yourself what makes you come alive?

Embark on an honest exploration of what holds you back. Ask yourself what lies beneath that hesitation. And then, what lies beneath that. Keep going until you uncover the essence of what you truly desire.

If you do not yet know what that is, it is time to explore. Give yourself the time and space to reflect. Go into nature, into the forest, to the sea, a park, or any place that brings you peace.

If there was a place you loved as a child, return there. Let that space open the door to your own answers. To your true nature.



### **Talents in Systems, When Systems Crash**

Your body is like a vehicle that you navigate through life with every day, sometimes consciously, other times on autopilot. You move from A to B to Z, or anywhere in between. Until, one day, your vehicle becomes unbalanced. The wheel bearings wear down, perhaps from prolonged strain. Or you notice imbalance due to overinflated or deflated tyres. The signs go unnoticed, until the dashboard lights have burnt out — and you are brought to a complete standstill.

Whether brief or prolonged, that standstill forces you to navigate differently. It may offer new insight into patterns you have adopted over time. Those extinguished dashboard lights turn out to have been signalling the need for change — change that may be rooted in beliefs (as I will explore in the next chapter), in inherited forms and structures from your family system or other systems (topics I delve into further later in the book), or in mechanisms that no longer serve you. During the standstill you may want to uncover not only what caused the imbalance — but what caused you to ignore the signals in the first place.

At primary school, I loved gazing out of the window, drawn to the world beyond the classroom walls. I did not remember everything I was taught, nor was everything I learned necessary to shape my life. Each of us learns and develops in our own unique way.

Now imagine being taught from a young age how to stand firm and centred in your own power, with awareness of your strengths and respect for those of others. That would be like mining gold, would it not? I remember searching for gold during a childhood holiday to Denmark, in Legoland, to be precise. I used a sieve and water to wash away the sand, revealing a few tiny pieces of *popcorn gold*. I was around six years old — and absolutely thrilled. What if education worked that way too? Where discovering gold, your intrinsic talents, became part of the curriculum. Where young people learned not only to recognise their talents but to see how thoughts, beliefs — and other internal mechanisms might obscure them.

Systems get stuck. People get stuck. While we often adapt and learn to comply with the systems around us, those same systems can sometimes distance us from our core. Through upbringing, education, work — and society, we learn to balance our individuality and uniqueness with the norms we are given. Only to later stumble over those norms, combined with other hurdles along the way.

Thankfully, schools and organisations are beginning to dedicate more time and space to personal development. This development can — and I believe should, go deeper, into the heart of what makes us human: the power of the heart — and the influence of both mechanisms and systems. Consider, too, that shared joy is double joy — and shared sorrow, half the sorrow. When more people in a classroom, study group, or team engage in a development process, that shared journey can positively contribute to the individual's growth. Pain points and friction areas tend to surface more easily in relationship with others. And it is precisely in those relationships that people can begin to see how their uniqueness complements the uniqueness of others.

As for change in systems, we are currently in the midst of a global transition, across many levels and within many systems. Amid the fluctuation, bright spots appear. Directions begin to emerge. This points to a collective preparation for a new phase, even if that phase feels uncertain or multifaceted. Although it may not always seem that way, these processes are not just being directed externally, they are unfolding within us too. In many ways, the world outside mirrors our inner world.

The choices we make in life, in family, in organisations, in friendships, they all matter. We contribute more to the world around us than we often realise. On a small scale — and on a larger one. That is one more reason why I encourage you to bring your true talents to the surface. And if needed, to gently begin by uncovering them first.

### The Skill of Reason, the Mastery of the Heart

For decades, arguably centuries, reason has reigned supreme in the human mind, while heart intelligence was quietly relegated to the background. In recent years, however, interest in the role of the heart has grown, along with the recognition of the importance of restoring balance between heart and reason.

In 2020, I was introduced to a methodology developed by the scientific institute HeartMath. Using a sensor and an app, it allows the coherence between your heart and mind to be made visible. This visibility helps to strengthen a conscious connection with the heart, and with that — a deeper awareness of your true self.

It makes a difference whether information sprouts from the head, or the heart. And when it comes to those bigger questions, such as what you truly want, you can not only visualise this connection — you can sense in your body where the answer comes from as well. Is the answer driven by thought, or does it rise from the heart? This awareness supports a greater balance between mind and heart, it contributes to making decisions that are aligned with your inner truth. When you are led by heart intelligence, your choices tend to feel clearer, lighter, less clouded by overthinking.

Striking the right balance between heart and reason has a powerful, positive impact on your health and on your life. In Chapter 5, I will share more about this methodology and how it can support you on your journey.

# **Unlocking the Potential**

You were born with your own unique potential, meant to be nurtured and lived. If you choose, you can continue developing this potential throughout your life. At least, that is how I see it. And I believe there is a good chance that your potential is far greater than what you are currently putting into practice.

Is there a skill in someone else that sparks something in you? Do you see something you would love to apply or learn yourself? If so, let me ask you this: are you aware of the extent to which you may be experiencing a mirroring effect?

If you admire a quality in someone else, it is often because that quality already exists in you. Likewise, when you are triggered by something in another person, there is often a part of you that struggles with the same thing, or perhaps they are touching a bruise that has not yet healed. It may sound like a simplification — but this is the heart of it: we meet ourselves in others. In their words, in their silences, in their expressions and body language. Just as I meet myself in others, others meet themselves in me, and in you.

If you find yourself drawn to a particular skill or trait, try to observe how that person expresses it. Watch closely: their facial expressions, their posture, their choice of words. By paying attention to the fine details and feeling into what resonates with you, you might begin to uncover that same skill within yourself, like gently brushing away the autumn leaves that have covered it.

This is not about imitation. It's about recognition. About uncovering something that was always there and allowing it to grow into your own unique expression. Similarly, when a wound is touched, it invites healing, not by turning away — but by acknowledging where it began.

Sometimes, it is easier to walk a stretch of an existing path before confidently forging your own. And if someone along that path serves as an example, they may help you move closer to the direction you long for. Temporary collaborations, meaningful conversations, or moments of support can bring insight and strength, gradually guiding you back to your core.

So, how would it feel to channel your energy into what you truly want?

### Where Answers Breathe Between the Lines

Whether or not you are navigating an organisation, you're always the navigator of your own life. More than you might realise, even when unforeseer circumstances cross your path.

In this chapter, I asked some questions. What if you were to take a moment to write down the first thoughts or answers that come to mind? The next page of this book offers space for your reflections — though you might prefer your own notebook or journal.

Personally, whenever I want to create clarity, remember something, shape a strategy, or gain insight, writing by hand helps me see, truly *see*. Perhaps it works that way for you as well. If space helps your reflections take form — walk, gaze, cycle, sit. Do whatever allows your insights to come through.

And whichever form you choose, writing, drawing, mapping — let your answers flow freely — no need to edit or restrict.

After noting your first impressions of the questions in this chapter, is there an early conclusion forming — the first green shoot of clarity beginning to emerge?

To what extent are you currently making use of your true talents? How much space are you giving your full potential to flourish?

Every day, you have the possibility to do what genuinely brings you joy. Would you like to combine what you love with what you are already doing? Everything begins with a single step.

I encourage you to move towards what you truly want. I promise to do the same — even when at times it may feel daunting.

With this book — and by following my own path — I hope to contribute to the positive transition taking place in the world. By leading through action — by practicing what I share.

### Notes

# If you can imagine it, you can achieve it

- William Arthur Ward
