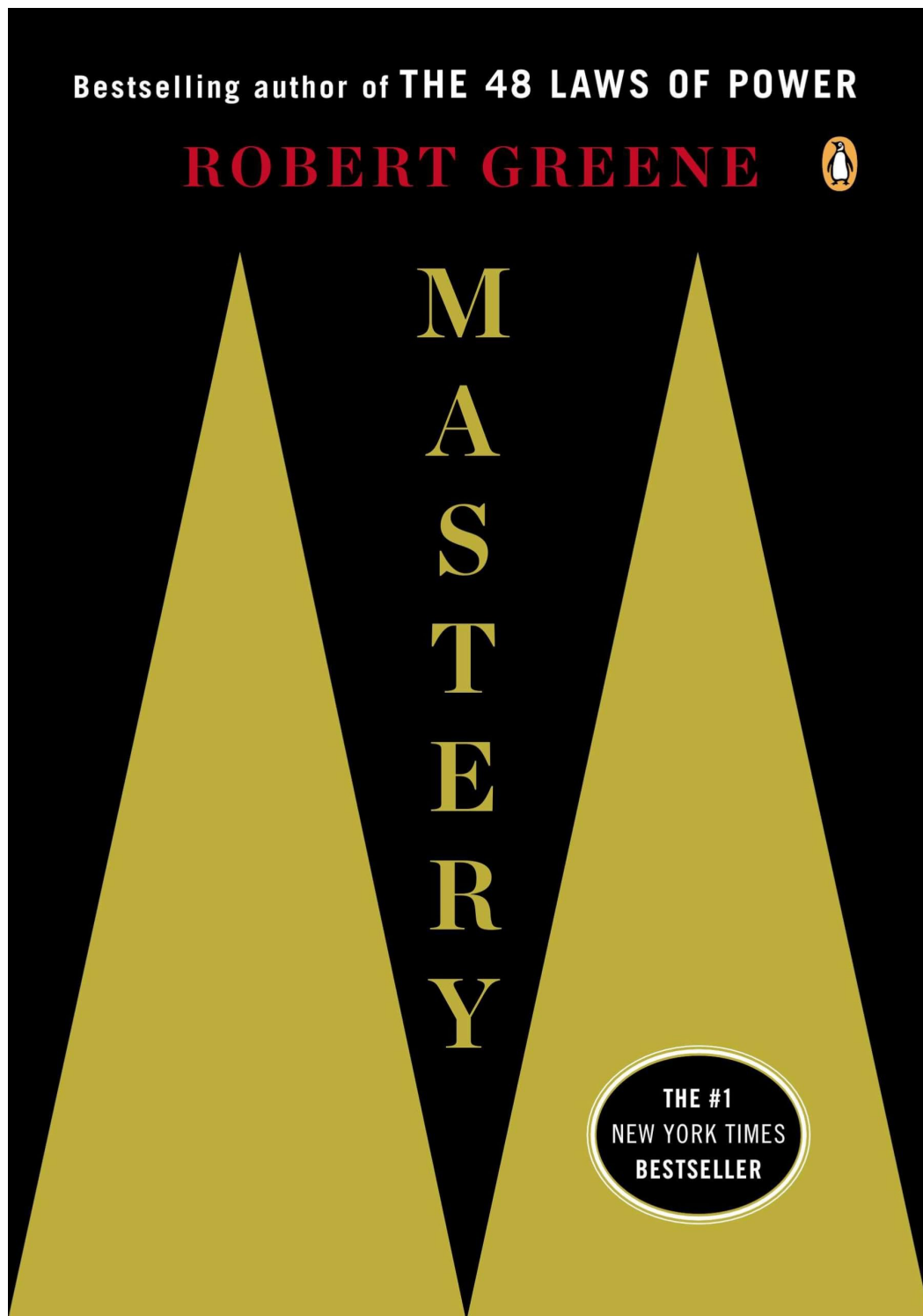


## Mastery (2012) - Robert Greene



### About Robert Greene

Author of the New York Times bestsellers *The 48 Laws of Power*, *The Art of Seduction*, *The 33 Strategies of War*, *The 50th Law*, *Mastery*, *The Laws of Human Nature*, and most recently of *The Daily Laws*. In addition to having a strong following within the business world and a deep following in Washington, DC, Greene's books are hailed by everyone from war historians to the biggest musicians in the industry (including Jay-Z, Drake, and 50 Cent). Greene

attended U.C. Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he received a degree in classical studies.

*[What follows are quotes from the book above. These quotes stood out to psychotherapist Emil Barna in his reading of the book. They are not meant to be exhaustive nor representative of the entire book. All quotes are to be read in this context and must not replace medical and/or other professional advice. Note: Any typographical errors occurred through the transcription process and do not reflect what may be found in the book.]*

## **Blurb**

**The ultimate form of power is mastery.** Robert Greene has spent a lifetime studying the laws of power: now he shares the secret path to greatness travelled by history's most powerful people. Each one of us has within us the potential to be a Master if we choose to follow them along a challenging but clear course that is described here for the first time. Learn the secrets of the field you have chosen, submit to a rigorous apprenticeship, absorb the hidden knowledge that comes from years of experience, forge past competitors to surpass them in brilliance and finally, blast established patterns of excellence open from within. Study the behaviours of Einstein, Darwin and the nine contemporary Masters interviewed for this book. Unlock the passion within you and become a Master

## **Introduction**

"We imagine that creativity and brilliance just appear out of nowhere, the fruit of natural talent, or perhaps of a good mood, or an alignment of the stars. [...] Let us call this sensation mastery-the feeling that we have a greater command of reality, other people, and ourselves. [...] at the root of this power is a simple process that leads to mastery-one that is accessible to all of us. [...] In the beginning, we are outsiders. [...] We are confused-the knowledge we need [...] is over our heads."

"The great danger is that we give in to feelings of boredom, impatience, fear, and confusion. We stop observing and learning. The process comes to a halt. If, on the other hand, we manage these emotions and allow time to take its course, something remarkable begins to take shape. As we continue to observe and follow the lead of others, we gain clarity, learning the rules and seeing how things work and fit together."

***[Read the following quote alongside Coelho's opening to The Alchemist where he says that our 'calling' gets beaten out of us as we age in preference to societal expectations ... and the only way to live your calling is to go back, in heart and mind, to earlier times. Here's the quote: "[...] we are told from childhood onwards that everything we want to do is impossible. We grow up with this idea, and as years accumulate, so too do***

***the layers of prejudice, fear and guilt [...] We know what we want to do, but are afraid of hurting those around us by abandoning everything in order to pursue our dream. [...] We who fight for our dream suffer far more when it doesn't work out, because we cannot fall back on the old excuse, "Oh, well, I didn't really want it anyway.""]***

As children we had some of this intuitive power and spontaneity, but it is generally drummed out of us by all of the information that overloads our minds over time. Masters return to this childlike state, their works displaying degrees of spontaneity and access to the unconscious, but at a much higher level than the child.

***[cf. Carol Dweck's work on fixed and closed mindsets]***

the brain that we possess is the work of six million years of development, and more than anything else, this evolution of the brain was designed to lead us to mastery, the latent power within us all.

***[Read alongside later commentary on vision and creativity—this survival instinct can be honed towards mastery.]***

Our ancestors' survival depended on the intensity of their attention. The longer and harder they looked, the more they could distinguish between an opportunity and a danger. [...] By looking long enough at any object and refusing to be distracted—even for a few seconds—they could momentarily detach themselves from their immediate surroundings. In this way they could notice patterns, make generalizations, and think ahead. They had the mental distance to think and reflect, even on the smallest scale. [...] Thinking on this level was the single greatest turning point in all of evolution—the emergence of the conscious, reasoning mind. [...] Through the elaboration of these two traits—the visual and the social—our primitive ancestors were able to invent and develop the complex skill of hunting some two to three million years ago. [...] their brains grew to virtually modern human size, some 200,000 years ago.

"mirror neurons [...] primates would experience a similar sensation in both doing and observing the same deed, allowing them to put themselves in the place of another and perceive its movements as if they were doing them. [...] A monkey or primate can see an action from the point of view of the performer and imagine its intentions, but we can take this further. Without any visual cues or any action on the part of others, we can place ourselves inside their minds and imagine what they might be thinking."

"After years of studying particular animals, they could identify with and think like them, anticipating behavioral patterns and heightening their ability to track and kill prey. This thinking inside could be applied to the inorganic as well. In fashioning a stone tool, expert toolmakers would feel as one with their instruments. The stone or wood they cut with became an extension of their

hand."

"Mastery at this level meant our ancestors could make decisions rapidly and effectively, having gained a complete understanding of their environment and their prey."

"For animals, time is their great enemy. If they are potential prey, wandering too long in a space can spell instant death. If they are predators, waiting too long will only mean the escape of their prey. Time for them also represents physical decay. To a remarkable extent, our hunting ancestors reversed this process. The longer they spent observing something, the deeper their understanding and connection to reality."

***[Don't be stupid...]***

"It is the height of stupidity to believe that in the course of your short life, your few decades of consciousness, you can somehow rewire the configurations of your brain through technology and wishful thinking, overcoming the effect of six million years of development."

"thousands of children display exceptional skill and talent in some field, yet relatively few of them ever amount to anything, whereas those who are less brilliant in their youth can often attain much more. Natural talent or a high IQ cannot explain future achievement."

"Darwin himself admitted, he was "a very ordinary boy, rather below the common standard in intellect.... I have no great quickness of apprehension... My power to follow a long and purely abstract train of thought is very limited.""

***[To become a Master, one must have a powerful inclination towards a particular things, and often this stems from childhood. Find your inclination—or rediscover it—and you'll find your path towards mastery.]***

"The basic elements of this story are repeated in the lives of all of the great Masters in history: a youthful passion or predilection, a chance encounter that allows them to discover how to apply it, an apprenticeship in which they come alive with energy and focus. They excel by their ability to practice harder and move faster through the process. all of this stemming from the intensity of their desire to learn and from the deep connection they feel to their field of study. And at the core of this intensity of effort is in fact a quality that is genetic and inborn—not talent or brilliance, which is something that must be developed, but rather a deep and powerful inclination toward a particular subject. [...] genetically, every one of us is unique; our exact genetic makeup has never happened before and will never be repeated."

"In our culture we tend to equate thinking and intellectual powers with success and achievement. In many ways, however, it is an emotional quality that

separates those who master a field from the many who simply work at a job."

"A natural response when people feel overwhelmed is to retreat into various forms of passivity."

"If we can make it look like we are not really responsible for our fate, for what happens to us in life, then our apparent powerlessness is more palatable."

### **[A warning...]**

"passivity has even assumed a moral stance: "mastery and power are evil; they are the domain of patriarchal elites who oppress us; power is inherently bad; better to opt out of the system altogether," or at least make it look that way. If you are not careful, you will find this attitude infecting you in subtle ways. You will unconsciously lower your sights as to what you can accomplish in life. This can diminish your levels of effort and discipline below the Point of effectiveness. Conforming to social norms, you will listen more to others than to your own voice."

"people get the mind and quality of brain that they deserve through their actions in life."

"People who are passive create a mental landscape that is rather barren. Because of their limited experiences and action, all kinds of connections in the brain die off from lack of use."

*Do not talk about giftedness, inborn talents! One can name great men of all kinds who were very little gifted. [...] they allowed themselves time for it, because they took more pleasure in making the little, secondary things well than in the effect of a dazzling whole.*

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

## **I: Discovering Your Calling: The Life's Task**

"In childhood this force was clear to you. It directed you toward activities and subjects that fit your natural inclinations, that sparked a curiosity that was deep and primal. [...] The first move toward mastery is always inward-learning who you really are and reconnecting with that innate force."

"as a child Leonardo was left mostly to himself. He liked most of all to wander through the olive groves around Vinci or to follow a particular path that led to a much different part of the landscape—dense forests full of wild boar, waterfalls cascading over fast-moving streams, swans gliding through pools, strange wildflowers growing out of the sides of cliffs. [...] One day, sneaking into his father's office, he grabbed some sheets of paper [...] he began to sketch [...] He had no teachers, no paintings to look at; he did everything by eye, with nature as the model He noticed that in drawing things he had to observe them

much more closely and catch the details that made them come to life. [...] This was how his mind naturally worked—one idea flowed into another. [...] Leonardo could not read Latin and had little knowledge of the ancients. He had a more scientific bent to his nature. [...] He would be more than an artist. He would pursue all of the crafts and sciences that interested him—architecture, military engineering, hydraulics, anatomy, sculpture. For any prince or patron that wanted him, he could serve as an overall adviser and artist, for a nice stipend. His mind, he decided, worked best when he had several different projects at hand”

***[Past traumas can be formed into good ... and even be considered a blessing—on Leonardo Da Vinci]***

“Reflecting on his life in this way, he would have clearly detected the workings of some kind of hidden force within him. As a child this force had drawn him to the wildest part of the landscape, where he could observe the most intense and dramatic variety of life. This same force compelled him to steal paper from his father and devote his time to sketching. It pushed him to experiment while working for Verrocchio. It guided him away from the courts of Florence and the insecure egos that flourished among artists. It compelled him to an extreme of boldness—the gigantic sculptures, the attempt to fly, the dissection of hundreds of corpses for his anatomical studies—all to discover the essence of life itself. Seen from this vantage point, everything in his life made sense. It was in fact a blessing to have been born illegitimate—it allowed him to develop in his own way. [...] He had faithfully followed its guidance to the very end and, having completed his course, now it was time to die. Perhaps his own words, written years before in his notebook, would have come back to him in such a moment: “Just as a well-filled day brings blessed sleep, so a well-employed life brings a blessed death.””

“Many of the greatest Masters in history have confessed to experiencing some kind of force or voice or sense of destiny that has guided them forward For Napoleon Bonaparte it was his “star” that he always felt in ascendance when he made the right move. For Socrates, it was his daemon, a voice that he heard, perhaps from the gods, which inevitably spoke to him in the negative—telling him what to avoid. For Goethe, he also called it a daemon—a kind of spirit that dwelled within him and compelled him to fulfill his destiny. In more modern times, Albert Einstein talked of a kind of inner voice that shaped the direction of his speculations.”

“We are a one-time phenomenon in the universe—our exact genetic makeup has never occurred before nor will it ever be repeated.”

*[...] the majority of men devote themselves to silencing that voice of the vocation and refusing to hear it. They manage to make a noise within themselves... to distract their own attention in order not to hear it; and they defraud themselves by substituting for their genuine selves a false course of*

*life.* —JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

"Many of the greatest Masters in history have confessed to experiencing some kind of force or voice or sense of destiny that has guided them forward."

"For Napoleon Bonaparte it was his "star" that he always felt in ascendance when he made the right move. For Socrates, it was his daemon, a voice that he heard, perhaps from the gods, which inevitably spoke to him in the negative—telling him what to avoid. For Goethe, he also called it a daemon—a kind of spirit that dwelled within him and compelled him to fulfill his destiny. In more modern times, Albert Einstein talked of a kind of inner voice that shaped the direction of his speculations. All of these are variations on what Leonardo da Vinci experienced with his own sense of fate."

"We are a one-time phenomenon in the universe—our exact genetic makeup has never occurred before nor will it ever be repeated."

"We feel as if the words we write or the physical movements we perform come so quickly and easily that they are coming from outside us. We are literally "inspired," the Latin word meaning something from the outside breathing within us."

"counterforce can be very powerful."

"If these counterforces become strong enough, you can lose complete contact with your uniqueness, with who you really are. Your inclinations and desires become modeled on those of others."

"You come to see pleasure and fulfillment as something that comes from outside your work."

### ***[The Path Towards Mastery]***

The process of following your Life's Task all the way to mastery can essentially begin at any point in life. The hidden force within you is always there and ready to be engaged. The process of realizing your Life's Task comes in three stages: **First**, you must connect or reconnect with your inclinations, that sense of uniqueness. The first step then is always inward. You search the past for signs of that inner voice or force. You clear away the other voices that might confuse you—parents and peers. You look for an underlying pattern, a core to your character that you must understand as deeply as possible. **Second**, with this connection established, you must look at the career path you are already on or are about to begin. The choice of this path—or redirection of it—is critical. To help in this stage you will need to enlarge your concept of work itself. Too often we make a separation in our lives—there is work and there is life outside work, where we find real pleasure and fulfillment. Work is often seen as a means for making money so we can enjoy that second life that we lead. Even if we derive

some satisfaction from our careers we still tend to compartmentalize our lives in this way. This is a depressing attitude, because in the end we spend a substantial part of our waking life at work. If we experience this time as something to get through on the way to real pleasure, then our hours at work represent a tragic waste of the short time we have to live. Instead you want to see your work as something more inspiring, as part of your vocation. The word "vocation" comes from the Latin meaning to call or to be called. Its use in relation to work began in early Christianity when certain people were called to a life in the church; that was their vocation. They could recognize this literally by hearing a voice from God, who had chosen them for this profession. Over time, the word became secularized, referring to any work or study that a person felt was suited to his or her interests, particularly a manual craft. It is time, however, that we return to the original meaning of the word, for it comes much closer to the idea of a Life's Task and mastery. The voice in this case that is calling you is not necessarily coming from God, but from deep within. It emanates from your individuality: It tells you which activities suit your character. And at a certain point, it calls you to a particular form of work or career. Your work then is something connected deeply to who you are, not a separate compartment in your life. You develop then a sense of your vocation. **Finally**, you must see your career or vocational path more as a journey with twists and turns rather than a straight line. You begin by choosing a field or position that roughly corresponds to your inclinations. This initial position offers you room to maneuver and important skills to learn. You don't want to start with something too lofty, too ambitious—you need to make a living and establish some confidence. Once on this path you discover certain side routes that attract you, while other aspects of this field leave you cold. You adjust and perhaps move to a related field, continuing to learn more about yourself, but always expanding off your skill base.

"Eventually, you will hit upon a particular field, niche, or opportunity that suits you perfectly. You will recognize it when you find it because it will spark that childlike sense of wonder and excitement; it will feel right. [...] We are entering a world in which we can rely less and less upon the state, the corporation, or family or friends to help and protect us. [...] What we lack most in the modern world is a sense of a larger purpose to our lives. In the past, it was organized religion that often supplied this. But most of us now live in a secularized world. We human animals are unique—we must build our own world. [...] Our evolution as a species has depended on the creation of a tremendous diversity of kinds and ways of thinking. We thrive by the collective activity of people supplying their individual talents. Without such diversity, a culture dies."

***[cf. Irvin Yalom's idea of becoming who one is to become—something he attributed to Nietzsche. It appears, however, this goes way back. A good book of Yalom's that explores these themes is When Nietzsche Wept.]***

"Some 2,600 years ago the ancient Greek poet Pindar wrote, "Become who you are by learning who you are." What he meant is the following: You are born with



a particular makeup and tendencies that mark you as a piece of fate. It is who you are to the core. Some people never become who they are; they stop trusting in themselves; they conform to the tastes of others, and they end up wearing a mask that hides their true nature."

*Only some inner drive—pleasure, love—can help us overcome obstacles, prepare a path, and lift us out of the narrow circle in which others tread out their anguished, miserable existences!*

—JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

"When Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was five, his father gave him a compass as a present. Instantly, the boy was transfixed by the needle, which changed direction as he moved the compass about. The idea that there was some kind of magnetic force that operated on this needle, invisible to the eyes, touched him to the core. What if there were other forces in the world equally invisible yet equally powerful—ones that were undiscovered or not understood? For the rest of his life all of his interests and ideas would revolve around this simple question of hidden forces and fields, and he would often think back to the compass that had sparked the initial fascination."

"When the future film director Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007) was nine years old his parents gave his brother for Christmas a cinematograph—a moving picture machine with strips of film that projected simple scenes. He had to have it for himself. He traded his own toys to get it and once it was in his possession, he hurried into a large closet and watched the flickering images it projected on the wall"

"In order to master a field, you must love the subject and feel a profound connection to it. Your interest must transcend the field itself and border on the religious. [...] You must dig for signs of such inclinations in your earliest years. Look for its traces in visceral reactions to something simple; a desire to repeat an activity that you never tired of; a subject that stimulated an unusual degree of curiosity; feelings of power attached to particular actions."

"the Xenophora, an organism that collects discarded shells and uses them for camouflage. In a way, he was like the Xenophora—an anomaly. In nature, these anomalies often serve a larger evolutionary purpose they can lead to the occupation of new ecological niches, offering a greater chance of survival."

***[Ramachandran's story and its applicability to neuroplasticity was conveyed at length in Norman Doidge's book The Brains Way of Healing.]***

"[Ramachandran] became intrigued by the phenomenon of phantom limbs—people who have had an arm or leg amputated and yet still feel a paralyzing pain in the missing limb. He proceeded to conduct experiments on phantom limb subjects. These experiments led to some exciting discoveries about the

brain itself, as well as a novel way to relieve such patients of their pain. Suddenly the feeling of not fitting in, of restlessness, was gone. Studying anomalous neurological disorders would be the subject to which he could devote the rest of his life. It opened up questions that fascinated him about the evolution of consciousness, the origin of language, and so on. It was as if he had come full circle to the days of collecting the rarest forms of seashells."

"[Yoky] In Japan you had to choose a career that was generally quite specialized. Whatever she chose would require sacrificing her other interests, which depressed her to no end. One day she daydreamed about inventing a robot that could play tennis with her. [...] In practice, no one could beat her, but in competition she would often freeze up, overthink the situation, and lose to inferior players. [...] Ever since she was a child she had pondered her own hands while she was playing tennis or the piano or while scribbling out math equations. The human hand was a miracle of design. [...] she worked night and day on building a new kind of robotic limb, one that possessed as much as possible the delicate grasping power of the human hand. [...] Forging this field would bring her great success in science and put her in the ultimate position of power—the ability to freely combine all of her interests."

"The career world is like an ecological system: People occupy particular fields within which they must compete for resources and survival. [...] The game you want to play is different: to instead find a niche in the ecology that you can dominate."

"In 1760, at the age of four, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart took up the piano under his father's instruction. [...] Most strange for his age, the boy loved to practice; at night his parents had to drag him away from the piano. He began to compose his own pieces at the age of five. [...] He played with assurance and could improvise all kinds of clever melodies. [...] as he entered adolescence something else stirred within him. Was it playing the piano that he enjoyed, or simply attracting all of this attention? He felt confused. [...] he yearned for something else, to be on his own. With each passing year, Wolfgang felt increasingly stifled. [...] At one point, he wrote his father: "I am a composer.... I neither can nor ought to bury the talent for composition with which God in his goodness has so richly endowed me." [...] in a flash, it came to Wolfgang: it was never really the piano that was his love, nor even music per se. He did not enjoy performing before others like a puppet. It was composing that he was destined for; but more than that, he had an intense love for the theater. [...] It was his father who represented more than an obstacle; he was in fact ruining his life, his health, his confidence. It was not just about money; his father was actually jealous of his son's talents, and whether consciously or not, he was trying to stifle his progress."

***[If you've made the mistake of doing what others want you to, do this instead...]***

"realize as early as possible that you have chosen your career for the wrong reasons, before your confidence takes a hit. [...] actively rebel against those forces that have pushed you away from your true path. [...] Let your sense of rebellion fill you with energy and purpose. [...] your Life's Task is a living, breathing organism. The moment you rigidly follow a plan set in your youth, you lock yourself into a position, and the times will ruthlessly pass you by."

"[Buckminster Fuller] tried to fit into a world (business) in which he did not belong. [...] It struck him, as he looked around at row after row of apartment housing on his way back, that people suffered more from sameness, from the inability to think of doing things differently, than from non-conformity. [...] Whenever he thought of money first, disaster followed. He would take care of his family, but they would have to live frugally for the moment. [...] Financially, his] situation looked bleaker than ever. The family had been living well in Chicago on his salary, beyond its means. In those five years he had not managed to save anything. Winter was approaching and his prospects for work seemed very slim—his reputation was in tatters. One evening he walked along Lake Michigan and thought of his life up until then. He had disappointed his wife, and he had lost money for his father-in-law and his friends who had invested in the enterprise. He was useless at business and a burden to everyone. Finally he decided upon suicide as the best option. He would drown himself in the lake. He had a good insurance policy, and his wife's family would take better care of her than he had been able to. As he walked toward the water, he mentally prepared himself for death. Suddenly something stopped him in his tracks—what he would describe later as a voice, coming from nearby or perhaps from within him. It said, "From now on you need never await temporal attestation to your thought. You think the truth. You do not have the right to eliminate yourself. You do not belong to you. You belong to Universe. Your significance will remain forever obscure to you, but you may assume that you are fulfilling your role if you apply yourself to converting your experiences to the highest advantage of others." Never having heard voices before, Fuller could only imagine it as something real. Stunned by these words, he turned away from the water and headed home."

"No good can ever come from deviating from the path that you were destined to follow. [...] Even if your material needs are met, you will feel an emptiness inside that you will need to fill with any kind of belief system, drugs, or diversions. [...] The road to mastery requires patience. You will have to keep your focus on five or ten years down the road, when you will reap the rewards of your efforts. The process of getting there, however, is full of challenges and pleasures."

### ***[An autistic story of mastery...]***

Temple Grandin. In 1950, at the age of three, she was diagnosed with autism. She had yet to make any progress in learning language, and it was thought that

this would remain her condition—and that she would need to be institutionalized her entire life. But her mother wanted to try one last option before giving up: she sent Temple to a speech therapist, who miraculously, slowly managed to teach her language, which allowed her to attend school and begin to learn what other children were learning. [...] With animals, particularly horses, she had an uncanny ability to sense their feelings and thoughts. She became an expert horseback rider. Because she tended to think first in images, when it came to making things with her hands (like sewing or woodwork), she could envision the finished product in her mind and then easily put it together. [...] Throughout her childhood Temple had had the desire to be held tightly, but could not stand being held by an adult—she felt like she had no control in such a situation, and would panic. [...] In order to satisfy her curiosity, she had to develop reading and researching skills. Once she did, she found she had unusually high powers of concentration—she could read for hours on one subject without getting the slightest bit bored [...] She was not destined for a life in the university. She was a practical person who liked to build things and yet needed constant mental stimulation. She decided she would carve out her own peculiar career path. [...] Somehow she had managed to overcome all of the seemingly insurmountable obstructions in her path and find her way to the Life's Task that suited her to perfection. [...] like Temple Grandin, direct yourself toward the small things you are good at. Do not dream or make grand plans for the future, but instead concentrate on becoming proficient at these simple and immediate skills. [...] Your Life's Task does not always appear to you through some grand or promising inclination. It can appear in the guise of your deficiencies, making you focus on the one or two things that you are inevitably good at. [...] Do not envy those who seem to be naturally gifted; it is often a curse, as such types rarely learn the value of diligence and focus, and they pay for this later in life.

*[...] they are extraordinary because their calling comes through so clearly and they are so loyal to it.... Extraordinary people bear the better witness because they show what ordinary mortals simply can't. We seem to have less motivation and more distraction. Yet our destiny is driven by the same universal engine. Extraordinary people are not a different category; the workings of this engine in them are simply more transparent...*

— JAMES HILLMAN

## **II: Submit To Reality: The Ideal Apprenticeship**

"From early in his life, Charles Darwin (1809–82) felt the presence of his father bearing down on him. [...] One day, his father rebuked him with words Charles would never forget: "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family." [...] he noticed that no one grumbled about the food or the weather or the tasks at hand. They valued stoicism. He would try to adopt such an attitude. It seemed that FitzRoy was slightly insecure and needed constant validation about his authority and high position within the navy. Darwin would supply that to no end. Slowly, he

began to fit into the daily scheme of life. He even picked up some of the mannerisms of the sailors. All of this distracted him from his loneliness. [...] Darwin [...] used to find almost any kind of work boring, but now he could labor all hours of the day; in fact, with so much to explore and learn, he hated wasting a single minute of the voyage. He had cultivated an incredible eye for the flora and fauna of South America. [...] All of this information he could catalog and organize in an efficient manner. [...] Suddenly, as if the four years of this voyage and all of his observations had distilled in him a deeper way of thinking, a radical theory took shape in his mind [...] Over thousands of years, each creature adapted to the food and predators that were found there, changing their shape and appearance in the process. Animals that failed to adapt died out, like the fossils of those giant creatures Darwin had unearthed in Argentina. It was a ruthless struggle for survival. Life was not created on these islands at one time and for good by some divine being. The creatures here had ever so slowly evolved to their present form. And these islands represented a microcosm of the planet itself."

*One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself.*  
—LEONARDO DA VINCI

***[It typically takes an apprentice 5-10 years to master a task.]***

"The apprenticeship, by its very nature, must be conducted by each individual in his or her own way. To follow precisely the lead of others or advice from a book is self-defeating. This is the phase in life in which we finally declare our independence and establish who we are. [...] Practical knowledge is the ultimate commodity, and is what will pay you dividends for decades to come—far more than the paltry increase in pay you might receive at some seemingly lucrative position that offers fewer learning opportunities.

***[As an apprentice, do yourself a favour: do not show off.]***

"The greatest mistake you can make in the initial months of your apprenticeship is to imagine that you have to get attention, impress people, and prove yourself. These thoughts will dominate your mind and close it off from the reality around you."

"Emptying himself of any preconceptions about life and its origins, Darwin trained himself to see things as they are. He did not theorize or generalize about what he was seeing until he had amassed enough information."

"(the word "apprentice" itself comes from the Latin *prehendere*, meaning to grasp with the hand). Because resources such as textiles, wood, and metals were expensive and could not be wasted on practice runs, apprentices would spend most of their time working directly on materials that would be used for the final product. They had to learn how to focus deeply on their work and not make mistakes. If one added up the time that apprentices ended up working

directly on materials in those years, it would amount to more than 10,000 hours, enough to establish exceptional skill level at a craft."

"it is essential that you begin with one skill that you can master, and that serves as a foundation for acquiring others. [...] the initial stages of learning a skill invariably involve tedium. Yet rather than avoiding this inevitable tedium, you must accept and embrace it. [...] Much as with physical exercise, you can even get a kind of perverse pleasure out of this pain, knowing the benefits it will bring you. [...] If we were to take a look at the frontal cortex of those who have mastered something through repetition, it would be remarkably still and inactive as they performed the skill. All of their brain activity is occurring in areas that are lower down and require much less conscious control. This process of hardwiring cannot occur if you are constantly distracted, moving from one task to another. [...] gain as much feedback as possible from others, to have standards against which you can measure your progress so that you are aware of how far you have to go."

"What offers immediate pleasure comes to seem like a distraction, an empty entertainment to help pass the time. Real pleasure comes from overcoming challenges, feeling confidence in your abilities, gaining fluency in skills, and experiencing the power this brings. You develop patience. Boredom no longer signals the need for distraction, but rather the need for new challenges to conquer."

"As you gain in skill and confidence, you must make the move to a more active mode of experimentation. [...] taking on more responsibility, initiating a project of some sort, doing work that exposes you to the criticisms of peers or even the public. [...] gauge your progress and whether there are still gaps in your knowledge."

"You will know when your apprenticeship is over by the feeling that you have nothing left to learn in this environment."

"The future belongs to those who learn more skills and combine them in creative ways. [...] we live in a culture that generally values intellect and reasoning with words. We tend to think of working with the hands, of building something physical, as degraded skills for those who are less intelligent. [...] The human brain evolved in intimate conjunction with the hand. Many of our earliest survival skills depended on elaborate hand-eye coordination. To this day, a large portion of our brain is devoted to this relationship. [...] you should find a way to work with your hands, or to learn more about the inner workings of the machines and pieces of technology around you. [...] Thomas Jefferson, who himself was an avid tinkerer and inventor, believed that craftspeople made better citizens because they understood how things functioned and had practical common sense—all of which would serve them well in handling civic needs. Albert Einstein was an avid violinist."

*Do not think that what is hard for you to master is humanly impossible; and if it is humanly possible, consider it to be within your reach.*

—MARCUS AURELIUS

"After several months on the job, [Einstein] became so good at this mental game that he could finish his work in two or three hours, leaving him the rest of the day to engage in his own thought experiments. In 1905 he published his first theory of relativity, much of the work having been done while he was at his desk in the Patent Office."

"value learning above everything else. [...] A job with mediocre pay has the added benefit of training you to get by with less—a valuable life skill. [...] it is often the height of wisdom to find the perfect mentor and offer your services as an assistant for free. Happy to exploit your cheap and eager spirit, such mentors will often divulge more than the usual trade secrets."

"Whenever you feel like you are settling into some circle, force yourself to shake things up and look for new challenges"

***[Become like a child in your learning... Think about what Jesus said: "Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."]***

"What prevents people from learning [...] is [...] certain learning disabilities that tend to fester and grow in our minds as we get older. [...] These include a sense of smugness and superiority whenever we encounter something alien to our ways, as well as rigid ideas about what is real or true, often indoctrinated in us by schooling or family. If we feel like we know something, our minds close off to other possibilities. We see reflections of the truth we have already assumed. Such feelings of superiority are often unconscious and stem from a fear of what is different or unknown. [...] Children are generally free of these handicaps. [...] This sense of inferiority gives them a hunger to learn. Through learning, they can bridge the gap and not feel so helpless. Their minds are completely open; they pay greater attention. This is why children can learn so quickly and so deeply"

"When it comes to mastering a skill, time is the magic ingredient. [...] The only real impediment to this is yourself and your emotions—boredom, panic, frustration, insecurity. You cannot suppress such emotions"

"resist the temptation to be nice to yourself. [...] become your own worst critic; you see your work as if through the eyes of others."

"When a machine malfunctions you do not take it personally or grow despondent. It is in fact a blessing in disguise. Such malfunctions generally show you inherent flaws and means of improvement. [...] Repeated failure will

toughen your spirit and show you with absolute clarity how things must be done. In fact, it is a curse to have everything go right on your first attempt. You will fail to question the element of luck"

"Understand: we live in the world of a sad separation that began some five hundred years ago when art and science split apart. Scientists and technicians live in their own world, focusing mostly on the "how" of things. Others live in the world of appearances, using these things but not really understanding how they function. Just before this split occurred, it was the ideal of the Renaissance to combine these two forms of knowledge. This is why the work of Leonardo da Vinci continues to fascinate us, and why the Renaissance remains an ideal."

"Mozart [...] did not write an original and substantial piece of music until well after ten years of composing. [...] Einstein began his serious thought experiments at the age of sixteen. Ten years later he came up with his first revolutionary theory of relativity. [...] There are no shortcuts or ways to bypass the Apprenticeship Phase. It is the nature of the human brain to require such lengthy exposure to a field, which allows for complex skills to become deeply embedded and frees the mind up for real creative activity."

### **III: Absorb The Master's Power: The Mentor Dynamic**

*[Listen: You're not as smart as you think you are...]*

"To learn requires a sense of humility. We must admit that there are people out there who know our field much more deeply than we do. Their superiority is not a function of natural talent or privilege, but rather of time and experience. Their authority in the field is not based on politics or trickery. It is very real. But if we are not comfortable with this fact, if we feel in general mistrustful of any kind of authority, we will succumb to the belief that we can just as easily learn something on our own, that being self-taught is more authentic. [...] Your admission of need does not say anything essential about you, but only about your temporary condition of weakness, which your mentor will help you overcome."

"because of the emotional bond, mentors will tend to divulge more of their secrets than they would to others."

***[Give to others and you shall receive. Give to oneself and you can give to others. I recall a client who developed a deep sense of compassion for a part of herself who was struggling through her pregnancy. She showed up for this part, comforted her, showed her compassion. "You know what?" she said, "Once I did that I noticed I was able to see others differently. I realised their backstory isn't mine. And that I'm not responsible for everyone else."]***



"Almost all Masters and people of power suffer from too many demands on their time and too much information to absorb. If you can demonstrate the ability to help them organize themselves on these fronts to a degree that others cannot, it will be much easier to get their attention and interest them in the relationship. Do not shy away from anything menial or secretarial. You want person-to-person access, however you can get it. [...] Try to see the world through their eyes and ask the simple question of what it is they need most."

***[Books as mentors... C.S. Lewis advocated this—he considered books as some of his most powerful mentors. Books hold the wisdom of millennia. I feel it too. Like Lewis, I'm less interested in current affairs than words worn down many years ago. When I must learn, I turn to a book. People fall behind. Books keep me humble.]***

"books can serve as temporary mentors [...] you will want to convert such books and writers into living mentors as much as possible. You personalize their voice, interact with the material, taking notes or writing in the margins. You analyze what they write and try to make it come alive—the spirit and not just the letter of their work."

"As the relationship progresses, you can begin to slightly distance yourself from the mentor, perhaps taking note of some of his weaknesses or character flaws, or even finding fault with his most cherished beliefs. Establishing your differences with the mentor is an important part of your self-development, whether he is of the good or bad parent type."

"In Spanish they say *al maestro cuchillada*—to the Master goes the knife. It is a fencing expression, referring to the moment when the young and agile pupil becomes skillful enough to cut his Master. But this also refers to the fate of most mentors who inevitably experience the rebellion of their protégés, like the cut from a sword."

"Developing discipline through challenging situations and perhaps suffering along the way are no longer values that are promoted in our culture. People are increasingly reluctant to tell each other the truth about themselves—their weaknesses, their inadequacies, flaws in their work. Even the self-help books designed to set us straight tend to be soft and flattering, telling us what we want to hear—that we are basically good and can get what we want by following a few simple steps. It seems abusive or damaging to people's self-esteem to offer them stern, realistic criticism"

"indulgence and fear of hurting people's feelings is far more abusive in the long run. It makes it hard for people to gauge where they are or to develop self-discipline."

***[Pay heed to the following quote...]***

"Leonardo da Vinci said, "Poor is the apprentice who does not surpass his Master.""

#### **IV: See People As They Are: Social Intelligence**

***[I relate to the following... I can get wound up at times when it comes to managing people but when I focus on the subject, I focus well.]***

"[Benjamin] Franklin began to seriously wonder about himself. He seemed hopelessly naïve, constantly misreading the intentions of the people around him. [...] when it came to his work, he was supremely rational and realistic, always looking to improve himself. [...] But with people it was virtually the opposite: he would inevitably become swept up in his emotions and lose all contact with reality. [...] What was worse, he seemed incapable of changing this self-absorbed dynamic. [...] Determined to break this pattern and change his ways, he decided there was only one solution: in all of his future interactions with people, he would force himself to take an initial step backward and not get emotional. From this more detached position, he would focus completely on the people he was dealing with, cutting off his own insecurities and desires from the equation."

*To become indignant at [people's] conduct is as foolish as to be angry with a stone because it rolls into your path. And with many people the wisest thing you can do, is to resolve to make use of those whom you cannot alter.*  
—ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

***[Yes, yes, and YES!]***

"the Naïve Perspective [...] makes us feel sensitive and vulnerable. [...] We project our own feelings [...] we fail to see the source of their envy or the reason for their manipulations; our attempts at influencing them are based on the assumptions that they want the same things as ourselves. [...] We think we understand people, but we are viewing them through a distorted lens."

"To be truly charming and socially effective you have to understand people, and to understand them you have to get outside yourself and immerse your mind in *their* world. [...] Franklin himself was by nature a very emotional man. He did not repress this nature, but rather turned his emotions in the opposite direction."

***[Do not shy away from a challenge.]***

"begin with yourself—how you saw in others qualities they did not possess, or how you ignored signs of a dark side to their nature. In doing this, you will be able to clearly see the discrepancy between your illusions about who they are and the reality, and the role you played in creating this discrepancy. [...] You will realize how that you are operating in the dark, blind to people's motivations and

intentions, vulnerable to the same mistakes and patterns that occurred in the past. [...] You cannot change such people at their core, but must merely avoid becoming their victim."

***[Do not be a narcissist. I once heard it said that things as difficult to ensure as social anxiety and clinical depression are forms of narcissism. The idea—everybody is thinking about me, so much so that they are judging me ... to the point that it's becoming debilitating. A highly contrarian view. There is a point to this. People think of you much less than you think they do. And when they do, it's only for a second or two ... and then they go on with their day. Think less about how much people think about you. Because they don't.]***

"In our normal state we are often nervous, defensive, and self-absorbed, and our minds are turned inward. But in these moments of onnection, the internal monologue is shut off, and we pick up more cues and signals from the other person than usual. [...] We can imagine that our primitive ancestors, needing to cooperate on a high level yet not experiencing the kind of interior monologue that comes with words, possessed an incredibly powerful sensitivity to the moods and feelings of others within the group, bordering on telepathy. [...] train yourself to pay less attention to the words that people say and greater attention to their tone of voice, the look in their eye, their body language—all signals that might reveal a nervousness or excitement that is not expressed verbally. [...] Resist the temptation to interpret what they say or do as somehow implicitly involving you—this will cause you to turn your thoughts inward and close off the immediacy of the connection. [...] be sensitive to any kind of extreme behavior on their part—for instance, a blustery front, an overly friendly manner, a constant penchant for jokes. You will often notice that they wear this like a mask to hide the opposite, to distract others from the truth. They are blustery because they are inwardly very insecure; they are overly friendly because they are secretly ambitious and aggressive; or they joke to hide a mean-spiritedness."

"The choice of mate or partner can be quite eloquent too, particularly if it seems slightly inconsistent with the character they try to project. In this choice they can reveal unmet needs from childhood, a desire for power and control, a low self-image, and other qualities they normally seek to disguise. What might seem like small issues—chronically being late, insufficient attention to detail, not returning any favors on your part—are signs of something deeper about their character. These are patterns you must pay attention to. Nothing is too small to notice. [...] In your initial encounter you tend to be nervous, less open, and more inward. You are not really paying attention. Furthermore, people have trained themselves to appear a certain way ... Unless you are incredibly perceptive, you will tend to mistake the mask for the reality. [...] Often it is the quiet ones, those who give out less at first glance, who hide greater depths, and who secretly wield greater power. [...] people are in a state of continual flux. You must not let your ideas about them harden into a set impression. You

are continually observing them and bringing your readings of them up to date."

***[cf. Andrew Huberman: "Don't over-engage in any controversy unless you are willing to stake your entire reputation on it. Rather, keep focused on discovering new things and creating or else you will become known for the controversy and nothing else."]***

"If you are dealing with insecure types, you can display great interest in their work and even turn to them for advice. You must be careful not to boast of any success, and if necessary, to ascribe it to just good luck on your part. [...] never make people feel stupid in your presence. Intelligence is the most sensitive trigger point for envy. [...] If you have a rebellious or naturally eccentric streak [...] careful in displaying your difference [...] when it comes to matters of politics, morals, and values, make a show of adhering to the accepted standards of your environment. Think of the workplace as a kind of theater in which you are always wearing a mask."

"It is often against human nature, particularly as we get older, to consider alternative ways of thinking or doing things. [...] People do not advertise their rigidity. You will only trip up against it if you try to introduce a new idea or procedure. [...] It is useless to fight against people's rigid ways, or to argue against their irrational concepts. You will only waste time and make yourself rigid in the process. The best strategy is to simply accept rigidity in others, outwardly displaying deference to their need for order. [...] because being self-interested does not make us feel or appear noble, many people go out of their way to disguise their self-interest. [...] when it is time to ask such people for assistance, you will often appeal to their sense of gratitude, their seemingly charitable nature, or their friendly feelings. You are then frustrated and disappointed when they politely decline to help you, or put you off long enough that you give up."

***[Appeal to people's self interest. But don't fall for people using you. Because they often will in the guise of helping you ... especially true in business.]***

"think first of appealing to people's self-interest in some way. [...] give them something valuable in exchange for helping you—a return favor that will save them time, a contact they need, and so on. [...] Sometimes the chance to look good in doing you a favor or supporting a cause will suffice, but it is generally better to find something stronger than that [...] if you are not careful and talk too much, they will steal your best ideas and make them their own, saving themselves all of the mental effort that went into conceiving them. [...] They will engage you in a "collaboration" in which you do the bulk of the hard work but they share equally in the rewards. [...] Keep your ideas to yourself, or conceal enough of the details so that it is not possible to steal them. If you are doing work for a superior, be prepared for them to take full credit and leave your name out (this is a part of everyone's apprenticeship and must be accepted as

such), but do not let this happen with colleagues. [...] be wary of people who want to collaborate—they are often trying to find someone who will do the heavier lifting for them."

"do not lose your head and become consumed with all of the pettiness. By remaining focused and speaking socially through your work, you will both continue to raise your skill level and stand out among all the others who make a lot of noise but produce nothing."

"[Teresita Fernandez:] Sometimes, she reasoned, what you do not reveal to people is all the more eloquent and powerful. She decided to go along with the image that others had of her and her work. She would create an air of mystery around her, making sure not to talk about her process, keeping details of her life hidden, and allowing people to project onto her their own fantasies."

"Understand: people will tend to judge you based on your outward appearance. If you are not careful and simply assume that it is best to be yourself, they will begin to ascribe to you all kinds of qualities that have little to do with who you are but correspond to what they want to see. [...] At times you will find it appropriate to stand back and create some mystery around you, heightening your presence. At other times you will want to be more direct and impose a more specific appearance. In general, you never settle on one image or give people the power to completely figure you out."

"Temple Grandin [...] by the end of high school she had managed to transform herself—through keen desire and discipline—into a gifted student with a promising future in the sciences. She understood that her greatest weakness was in the social arena. With animals, she had almost most telepathic powers to read their moods and desires, but with humans it was the opposite. [...] She decided she would make herself so efficient in whatever job she had that her social handicap would not matter. [...] this was completely unrealistic. [...] Ever since she was a child, Grandin had the peculiar ability to see herself from the outside, as if she were looking at another person. [...] as an adult she realized she could use this gift for practical effect, by looking at her past mistakes as if watching another person in action. [...] she was making her coworkers feel insecure, useless, and inferior. She had injured their male egos and had paid a price. Her realization of what had gone wrong did not stem from empathy as it might have for other people—it was an intellectual exercise, like solving a puzzle or a design problem. But because her emotions were not so deeply involved, it was easier to go through the process and make the necessary corrections."

"we are quick to discern the mistakes and defects of others, but when it comes to ourselves we are generally too emotional and insecure to look squarely at our own. [...] people rarely tell us the truth about what it is that we do wrong. [...] People see our behavior from the outside, and their view of us is never what we imagine it to be. [...] To see ourselves objectively, we must follow the

example of Temple Grandin. We can begin this process by looking at negative events in our past [...] It is best to start with events that are at least several months old, and thus not so emotionally charged. In dissecting these occurrences, we must focus on what we did that either triggered or worsened the dynamic. [...] Seeing these events from the perspective of the other people involved will loosen the lock our emotions have on our self-image, and help us understand the role we play in our own mistakes."

***[Stop playing the fool. But when you eventually do, address (and heal) the fool in you.]***

"fools [...] place more importance on short-term matters—grabbing immediate money, getting attention from the public or media, and looking good. They are ruled by their ego and insecurities. They tend to enjoy drama and political intrigue for their own sake. When they criticize, they always emphasize matters that are irrelevant to the overall picture or argument. They are more interested in their career and position than in the truth. [...] They annoy you, get under your skin, and draw you into a battle. [...] rationality and results don't matter to them. [...] In dealing with fools you must adopt the following philosophy: they are simply a part of life, like rocks or furniture. All of us have foolish sides. moments in which we lose our heads and think more of our ego or short-term goals. It is human nature. Seeing this foolishness within you, you can then accept it in others."

## **V: Awaken The Dimensional Mind: The Creative-Active**

"Sometimes when we visit a different country where we cannot rely upon everything being familiar, we become childlike again, struck by the oddness and newness of what we are seeing. But because our minds are not completely engaged in these activities, because they last only a short while, they are not rewarding in a deep sense. They are not creative. Masters and those who display a high level of creative energy are simply people who manage to retain a sizeable portion of their childhood spirit despite the pressures and demands of adulthood. This spirit manifests itself in their work and in their ways of thinking. Children are naturally creative. They actively transform everything around them, play with ideas and circumstances, and surprise us with the novel things they say or do."

"What kills the creative force is not age or a lack of talent, but our own spirit, our own attitude. We become too comfortable with the knowledge we have estions follow gained in our apprenticeships. We grow afraid of entertaining new ideas ement and the effort that this requires. To think more flexibly entails a risk—we could fail and be ridiculed."

***[The story of Mozart]***

"Look at the case of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. He is generally consid. ered

the epitome of the child prodigy and the inexplicable genius, a freak of nature. How else are we to explain his uncanny abilities at such a young age, and the ten-year burst of creative activity at the end of his life that culminated in so many innovations and universally loved works? In truth, his genius and creativity is eminently explicable, which does not at all diminish his achievements. Immersed in and enchanted by music from the very beginning of his life, he brought to his earliest studies a high level of focus and intensity. The mind of a four-year-old is even more open and impressionable than that of a child a few years older. Much of this powerful attention stemmed from his deep love of music. And so practicing the piano was not some kind of chore or duty, but an opportunity to expand his knowledge and to explore more musical possibilities. By the age of six, he had accumulated the hours of practice of someone twice his age. [...] he rebelled and reconnected with his childlike spirit—that original desire of his to transform the music into his own voice, to realize his dramatic urges in opera.”

“If you go at your work with half a heart, it will show in the lackluster results and in the laggard way in which you reach the end. If you are doing something primarily for money and without a real emotional commitment, it will translate into something that lacks a soul and that has no connection to you.”

“The knowledge and skills you have gained must be eminently suited to pulling it off. To reach your goal you may have to learn a few new things, but you must have mastered the basics and possess a solid enough grasp of the field [...] choose a task that is slightly above you, one that might be considered ambitious [...] the higher the goal, the more energy you will call up from deep within. [...] let go of your need for comfort and security. [...] If you are worried about what others might think and about how your position in the group might be jeopardized, then you will never really create anything.”

“let the mind absorb itself in what it experiences, without having to form a judgment on what it all means. The mind must be able to feel doubt and uncertainty for as long as possible. As it remains in this state and probes deeply into the mysteries of the universe, ideas will come that are more dimensional and real than if we had jumped to conclusions and formed judgments early on.”

“Truly creative people in all fields can temporarily suspend their ego and simply experience what they are seeing, without the need to assert a judgment, for as long as possible.”

***[A lesson for us all in the vein of Mozart— learn and master and develop your own voice in the process. This is the mission of the autodidact.]***

“Mozart never asserted any particular opinions about music. Instead, he absorbed the styles he heard around himself and incorporated them into his own voice. [...] let the mind absorb itself in what it experiences, without having

to form a judgment on what it all means. The mind must be able to feel doubt and uncertainty for as long as possible. As it remains in this state and probes deeply into the mysteries of the universe, ideas will come that are more dimensional and real than if we had jumped to conclusions and formed judgments early on. [...] Truly creative people in all fields can temporarily suspend their ego and simply experience what they are seeing, without the need to assert a judgment, for as long as possible."

***[A potential remedy for confirmation bias and the need for certainty]***

"confirmation bias [...] will find the experiments and data that confirm what you have already come to believe in. The uncertainty of not knowing the answers beforehand is too much [...] your thoughts will congeal around political dogma or predigested ways of looking at the world, and what you will often end up expressing is an opinion rather than a truthful observation about reality. [...] The need for certainty is the greatest disease the mind faces. [...] [Instead,] entertain viewpoints opposite to your own, seeing how they feel [...], observe a person or event for a length of time, deliberately holding yourself back from forming an opinion. [...] you must adopt a kind of humility toward knowledge."

"Many of the most interesting and profound discoveries in science occur when the thinker is not concentrating directly on the problem but is about to drift off to sleep, or get on a bus, or hears a joke—moments of unstrained attention, when something unexpected enters the mental sphere and triggers a new and fertile connection."

"keep a notebook with you at all times. [...] record any scrap of thought that occurs to you, and include drawings, quotes from other books, anything at all. In this way, you will have the freedom to try out the most absurd ideas. The juxtaposition of so many random bits will be enough to spark various associations."

"The theory of evolution as formulated by Charles Darwin represents one of the most astounding achievements of human creative thinking. and is a testament to the powers of the mind. Evolution is not something that can be seen with the eyes. It depends on a powerful use of the imagination [...] Darwin's theory could only have been deduced by looking at evidence and making connections in the mind about what his findings could mean."

***[Fear often masquerades as skepticism—worse still is cynicism; a supremely lazy disposition is that of a cynic, too lazy to see each idea by its own merit and instead trash all ideas.]***

"fear of speculation masquerades as skepticism. We see this in people who delight in shooting down any theory or explanation before it gets anywhere. They are trying to pass off skepticism as a sign of high intelligence, but in fact they are taking the easy route—it is quite simple to find arguments against any



idea and knock it down from the sidelines. Instead, you must follow the route of all creative thinkers and go in the opposite direction."

"anomalies themselves contain the richest information. They often reveal to us the flaws in our paradigms and open up new ways of looking at the world."

"In the Arthur Conan Doyle story "Silver Blaze," Sherlock Holmes solves a crime by paying attention to what did not happen—the family dog had not barked. This meant that the murderer must have been someone the dog knew. What this story illustrates is how the average person does not generally pay attention to what we shall call *negative cues*, what should have happened but did not."

"our most primitive ancestors developed various forms of intelligence that predated the invention of language, which aided them in the harsh struggle for survival. They thought mostly in terms of visual images, and became highly adept at noticing patterns and discerning important details in their environment."

### ***[The power of imagery/visualisation]***

"The list of great thinkers who relied upon images is enormous, and perhaps the greatest of them all was Albert Einstein, who once wrote, "The words of the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be voluntarily reproduced and combined." [...] Nikola Tesla could supposedly visualize in minute detail a machine and all of its working parts, which he would then proceed to invent according to what he had imagined. [...] The use of images to make sense of the world is perhaps our most primitive form of intelligence, and can help us conjure up ideas that we can later verbalize."

"To Leonardo da Vinci, drawing and thinking were synonymous."

"Albert Einstein liked to hold on to a rubber ball that he would periodically squeeze in tandem with the straining of his mind."

"Creative people do not simply think in words, but use all of their senses, their entire bodies in the process. They find sense cues that stimulate their thoughts on many levels—whether it be the smell of something strong, or the tactile feel of a rubber ball."

"Think of yourself as your own Zen Master. Such Masters would often beat their pupils and deliberately lead them to points of maximum doubt and inner tension, knowing such moments often precede enlightenment. [...] always try to work with deadlines, whether real or manufactured. Faced with the slenderest amount of time to reach the end, the mind rises to the level you require."

"Unknown to ourselves, the mind slowly narrows and tightens as complacency creeps into the soul, and although we may have achieved public acclaim for our past work, we stifle our own creativity and never get it back. Fight this downhill tendency as much as you can by upholding the value of active wonder. Constantly remind yourself of how little you truly know, and of how mysterious the world remains."

"as the creative spark leaves you, you will find yourself clutching even more forcefully to dead ideas, past successes, and the need to maintain your status. Make creativity rather than comfort your goal"

***[On grandiosity and praise...]***

"Praise generally does harm. Ever so slowly, the emphasis shifts from the joy of the creative process to the love of attention and to our ever-inflating ego. [...] There are always greater geniuses out there than your-self. Luck certainly played a role, as did the help of your mentor and all those in the past who paved the way. What must ultimately motivate you is the work itself and the process."

*Don't think about why you question, simply don't stop questioning. Don't worry about what you can't answer, and don't try to explain what you can't know. Curiosity is its own reason. Aren't you in awe when you contemplate the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure behind reality? And this is the miracle of the human mind—to use its constructions, concepts, and formulas as tools to explain what man sees, feels and touches. Try to comprehend a little more each day. Have holy curiosity.*

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

"the extreme paradox is that those who impress the most with their individuality [...] are the ones who first completely submerge their character in a long apprenticeship."

"Understand: the greatest impediment to creativity is your impatience, the almost inevitable desire to hurry up the process, express something, and make a splash."

***[On Ramachandran's work on phantom limbs]***

"Phantom limbs represented an optical illusion on a much larger scale, with the brain supplying sensation where there could be none. Why would the brain send such signals? [...] Many patients with a severed limb experience an odd kind of paralysis that is highly painful. They feel the phantom limb, they want to move it but cannot, and they feel a cramping and sometimes an excruciating ache. Ramachandran speculated that before the limb had been amputated the brain had learned to experience the arm or leg as paralyzed, and once it had

been amputated it continued to feel it that way. Would it be possible, considering the plasticity of the brain, to unlearn this paralysis? [...] Pain, it seemed, was a kind of opinion the body rendered on what it was experiencing, on its own health. This opinion could be tricked or manipulated [...] The patient was experiencing that part of the limb as if it were too present, too intense, and this overactive sensation could only be done away with through amputation. In subsequent work he was able to locate neurological damage to the part of their brains that create and control our sense of body image. This damage had occurred at birth, or very early on. This meant that the brain could create a body image in a perfectly healthy person that was highly irrational. It seemed as well that our sense of self is far more subjective and fluid than we had thought. If our experience of our own body is something constructed in the brain and can go haywire, then perhaps our sense of self is also something of a construction or illusion"

***[The following is very important of you want to stand out in your mastered field...]***

"Although you are beginning within a particular field that you understand deeply, you must not allow your mind to become tethered to this discipline. Instead you must read journals and books from all different fields. Sometimes you will find an interesting anomaly in an unrelated discipline that may have implications for your own. You must keep your mind completely open—no item is too small or unimportant to escape your attention. If an apparent anomaly calls into question your own beliefs or assumptions, so much the better."

"it is essential to build into the creative process an initial period that is open-ended. You give yourself time to dream and wander [...] if you begin with a feeling of tightness and pressure, focusing on the funding, the competition, or people's opinions, you will stifle the associative powers of the brain and quickly turn the work into something without joy or life [...] Whenever your work begins to feel stale, you must return to the larger purpose and goal that impelled you in the first place. [...] By constantly reminding yourself of your purpose, you will prevent yourself from fetishizing certain techniques or from becoming overly obsessed with trivial details."

"Creativity [...] resembles a process known in nature as evolutionary hijacking. In evolution, accidents and contingencies play an enormous role. For instance, feathers evolved from reptilian scales, their purpose being to keep birds warm. (Birds evolved from reptiles.) But eventually, those existing feathers became adapted for the purpose of flying, transforming into wing feathers for our own primate ancestors living in trees, the form of the hand largely evolved out of the need to grasp branches with speed and agility. Our early hominid ancestors, walking on the ground, found this intricately developed hand quite useful for manipulating rocks, making tools, and gesturing in communication. Perhaps language itself developed as a strictly social tool and became hijacked as a means of reasoning, making human consciousness itself the product of an

accident."

"others were approaching decipherment as if it involved some kind of mathematical code. But Champollion [a French scholar, philologist (expert in languages), and decipherer of Egyptian hieroglyphics], who spoke dozens of languages and could read many dead languages, understood that languages evolve in a haphazard manner, influenced by the influx of new groups into a society and shaped by the passage of time. They are not mathematical formulas, but living, evolving organisms."

## **VI: Fuse The Intuitive With The Rational Mastery**

### ***[On the time required to become a Master.]***

"In warfare, we can point to the great German general Erwin Rommel, who was said to possess the highest form of the fingertip feel ever chronicled in the history of battle. He could sense exactly where the enemy was thinking of striking and foil their plans; he could launch an offensive at precisely the weak point in their lines of defense. He seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, and oracular powers for reading the future. He did all of this in the deserts of North Africa where it was nearly impossible to get any clear sense of the terrain. Rommel's power, however, was not occult in nature. He simply had a much deeper knowledge than other generals of all of the aspects of battle. He constantly flew over the desert in his own plane, gaining a bird's-eye feel for the terrain. He was a trained mechanic, and so had a complete knowledge of his tanks and what he could expect of them. He studied in depth the psychology of the opposing army and its generals. He interacted with almost all of his soldiers, and had a clear sense of how far he could push them. Whatever he studied, he did so with incredible intensity and depth. A point was reached where all of these details became internalized. They fused together in his brain, giving him a feel for the whole picture and a sense of this interactive *dynamic*. [...] The ability to have this intuitive grasp of the whole and feel this *dynamic* is simply a function of time. Since it has been shown that the brain is literally altered after approximately 10,000 hours of practice, these powers would be the result of a transformation that happens in the brain after some 20,000 hours and beyond. [...] The time that leads to mastery is dependent on the intensity of our focus. [...] We don't simply absorb information—we internalize it and make it our own by finding some way to put this knowledge to practical use. We look for connections between the various elements we are learning, hidden laws that we can perceive in the apprenticeship phase. If we experience any failures or setbacks, we do not quickly forget them because they offend our self-esteem. Instead we reflect on them deeply, trying to figure out what went wrong and discern whether there are any patterns to our mistakes."

"You must see every setback, failure, or hardship as a trial along the way, as seeds that are being planted for further cultivation"

***[On the application of intuition for mastery.]***

"Intuition, primitive or high level, is essentially driven by memory. When we take in information of any kind, we store it in mnemonic networks in the brain. The stability and durability of these networks depends on repetition, intensity of experience, and how deeply we pay attention. [...] When a particular network is sufficiently activated, we suddenly become conscious of a possible name for the face, or a phrase that might be appropriate. These are low-level forms of intuition that come to us in our everyday life; we cannot reconstruct the steps that went into recognizing a person's face and remembering their name. People who spend years studying a particular subject or field develop so many of these memory networks and pathways that their brains are constantly searching for and discovering connections between various pieces of information. When confronted with a high-level problem, the search goes in a hundred directions below conscious awareness, guided by an intuitive sense of where the answer might lie. All kinds of networks become activated, ideas and solutions suddenly rising to the surface. Those that seem particularly fruitful and appropriate stick in the memory and are acted upon. Instead of having to reason an answer through a step-by-step process, the answer comes to consciousness with a feeling of immediacy. [...] At first, our intuitions might be so faint that we do not pay attention to them or trust them. All Masters talk of this phenomenon. But over time they learn to notice these rapid ideas that come to them. They learn to act on them and verify their validity. Some lead nowhere, but others lead to tremendous insights."

***[There is something to be said about the added complexity of today's information age ... and the development of mastery]***

"What happens to many of us when faced with such complexity is that we feel subtly discouraged before we even try anything. More and more people in this overheated environment will be tempted to opt out. They will develop a greater taste for ease and comfort; they will increasingly settle on simplified ideas of reality and conventional ways of thinking; they will fall prey to seductive formulas that offer quick and easy knowledge. [...] We must learn how to quiet the anxiety we feel whenever we are confronted with anything that seems complex or chaotic. [...] The problem that technology presents us is that it increases the amount of information at our disposal, but slowly degrades the power of our memory to retain it. Tasks that used to exercise the brain—remembering phone numbers, doing simple calculations, navigating and remembering streets in a city—are now performed for us, and, like any muscle the brain can grow flabby from disuse."

"many Masters who come to possess this high-level intuitive power seem to become younger in mind and spirit with the passing years—something that should be encouraging to us all."

### ***[The magic of (evolutionary) reality]***

"People can argue endlessly about what constitutes reality, but let us start our definition with a simple, undeniable fact: some 4 billion years ago, life began on this planet in the shape of simple cells. These cells, perhaps even one cell in particular, were the common ancestors to all life forms that followed. From that single source, various branches of life emerged. Some 1.2 billion years ago there appeared the first multicellular creatures; 600 million years ago there emerged perhaps the greatest development of all—organisms with a central nervous system, the starting point that eventually led to the brains we now possess. From the Cambrian explosion of life some 500 million years ago came the first simple animals, followed by the first vertebrates. Some 360 million years ago we see the first traces on land of amphibious creatures, and 120 million years ago the first mammals. Branching off in a new mammalian direction about 60 million years ago, we see signs of the earliest primates from whom we are directly descended. The earliest human ancestors arrived some 6 million years ago, and 4 million years later our most recent ancestor, *Homo erectus*. And just 200,000 years ago the anatomically modern human emerged, with more or less the same brain size that we now possess. In this remarkably complex chain of circumstances, we can identify, at certain turning points, a single ancestor from whom we humans have evolved (the first cells, simple animals, mammals, then primates). Some archeologists have speculated about a single female ancestor from whom all modern humans have descended."

*The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant.  
We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.*  
—ALBERT EINSTEIN

"Masters have a strong inner guiding system and a high level of self-awareness. What has suited others in the past does not suit them, and they know that trying to fit into a conventional mold would only lead to a dampening of spirit, the reality they seek eluding them."

"Understand: the ability to connect deeply to your environment is the most primal and in many ways the most powerful form of mastery the brain can bring us. [...] We gain such power by first transforming ourselves into consummate observers. We see everything in our surroundings as a potential sign to interpret. Nothing is taken at face value. [...] You must see your environment as a physical entity and your connection to it as visceral. If there is any instrument you must fall in love with and fetishize, it is the human brain"

"[Einstein] was not a particularly good student. He hated having to memorize so many facts and numbers. He hated the stern authority of the teachers. His grades were mediocre and, concerned for his future, the parents decided to send their sixteen-year-old son to a more liberal-minded school [...] There were no drills or facts to memorize; instead, the method placed supreme importance

on visual forms of intelligence [...] the key to creative thinking. In this atmosphere, young Einstein suddenly thrived. He found the place intensely stimulating. The school encouraged students to learn on their own, wherever their inclinations would take them [...] Einstein entered the Zurich Polytechnic Institute, and once again his dislike for traditional schooling returned. He did not do particularly well at math. He disliked the way physics was taught, and he started taking many classes in totally unrelated fields. He was not a promising student, and had not attracted the attention of any important professor or mentor. He quickly developed a disdain for academia and the constrictions it placed on his thinking. [...] because of his natural disdain of authority and conventions, he could think in ways that were novel and flexible. This meant of course that he would never succeed in the slippery world of academia. He would have to blaze his own path, but this could be an advantage. He would not be burdened by the need to fit in or adhere to the standard paradigm. [...] As the years went by, it would seem to others that Einstein was a bit of a failure. He had graduated from the Polytechnic close to the bottom of his class. He could not find any kind of teaching job and had settled for a mediocre, low-paid position as an evaluator of inventions for the Swiss patent office in Bern. But free to continue on his own, he worked with unbelievable tenacity at this one problem. Even while apparently on the job at the patent office, he would focus for hours on the theory that was forming in his mind; even when out for a walk with friends, he would continue to ponder his ideas—he had the unusual ability to listen on one track and think on another. He carried with him a little notebook and filled it up with all kinds of ideas."

"[Temple Grandin, often] alone, she naturally gravitated toward animals [...] As far back as she could remember, she had always been trying to wrap herself in blankets or bury herself under cushions and pillows to somehow feel squeezed. As with the cows, any sort of gradual compression would relax her. (As is common for autistic children, being hugged by humans was overstimulating for her and induced anxiety; she had no control over the experience. [...] Grandin had always done much of her thinking in visual terms, often having to translate words into images before she could understand them. Perhaps this was the result of the unique wiring of her brain. As part of the fieldwork for her major, she visited a couple of cattle feedlots in the state, and she was appalled by what she saw. It suddenly became clear to her that her propensity to think in visual terms was not shared by most others. [...] When she used to ride horses as a girl, she often could sense the mood of the horse just by the contact with her legs and hands. She began to experience the same with the cattle, as she would press her hands on their sides and feel their relaxing response. She noticed that when she was calm, they would react to her in a calmer manner. Slowly, she was getting a sense of their perspective, and how so much of their behavior was guided by perceived threats that we could not necessarily notice. [...] Whenever the animals would become instinctively frightened by something and react, the fieldworkers would grow irritated and hurry them along, which only exacerbated the cattle's fear. The number of injuries and deaths was rather appalling [...] In the case of the dip vat, the cowboys and fieldworkers

would stare at her as if she were from Mars. They secretly mocked her "touchy-feely" approach to farm animals. But when her design was finished, they would watch in amazement as the cattle would blithely approach the dip vat and plop into it with hardly a sound or a complaint. There were no injuries or deaths, and no time lost with pileups or group panic. Such an increase in efficiency would occur in all of her other designs, and this would win her begrudging respect from the skeptical men on the job. [...] She determined [...] that animals' memory and thinking is largely driven by images and other sense traces. Animals are more than capable of learning, but their reasoning process cycles through images. Although we might find it hard to imagine such thinking, before the invention of language we reasoned in a similar way [...] With cattle, she could read their moods by the movement of their ears, the look in their eyes, the tension she could feel through their skin. In studying the brain dynamics of cattle, she had the strange feeling that they resembled people with autism in many ways. A scan of her own brain revealed that she possessed fear centers that were three times larger than normal. [...] Perhaps her own enlarged fear center, she reasoned, was a throwback to the deep past, when humans were prey as well. These reactions are now largely blocked or hidden to us, but because of her autism, her brain had retained this ancient trait. She noticed other similarities between cattle and people with autism, such as the dependence on habit and routine."

### ***[Visual thinking in the context of dyslexia.]***

"Empathy plays an enormous role in learning and knowledge. Even scientists, renowned for their objectivity, regularly engage in thinking in which they momentarily identify with their subject. Other qualities we might possess, such as a penchant for visual forms of thinking, represent other possible strengths, not weaknesses. The problem is that we humans are deep conformists. Those qualities that separate us are often ridiculed by others, or criticized by teachers. People with a high visual sense are often labeled as dyslexic, for example. Because of these judgments, we might see our strengths as disabilities and try to work around them in order to fit in. But anything that is peculiar to our makeup is precisely what we must pay the deepest attention to and lean on in our rise to mastery. Mastery is like swimming—it is too difficult to move forward when we are creating our own resistance or swimming against the current. Know your strengths and move with them."

***[In therapy there is the temptation to get people to 'think' about their bodies more than to live inside them. Bear with me on this... For those cut off from their bodies, it's important to teach them about sensory experience and emotion. To teach them to pay attention inside to whatever comes up cf. thinking about these things. This is the head and the heart distinction—one must create a bridge if he is to heal. However, teaching one to sit with sensations returns dividends. Not just because they can feel deeper, but because this happens both in the positive and negative sphere—to feel the good and the bad. To integrate. This is why***



***journaling is so important—think, feel, do; these three factors must be journaled about if one seeks consolidation of the day. Now, if one has a negativity bias (as we all do, but some much more than others), one must learn to sit with the good (smelling roses, sitting with a smile, accepting a compliment, enjoying a laugh, etc) much more than the negative. Negativity writes itself into our nervous systems much quicker than positivity. Makes sense: it keeps us alive. So creating a 'balanced realism' (as positive psychologists call it) must be a primary goal for the negative ... then topping the scales more towards the 'real' positive to correct for the years of negative gearing. This requires us to feel. And to feel deeply. Now, check out the following quote...]***

"In our daily, conscious activity we generally experience a separation between the mind and the body. We *think* about our bodies and our physical actions. Animals do not experience this division, When we start to learn any skill that has a physical component, this separation becomes even more apparent. We have to think about the various actions involved, the steps we have to follow. We are aware of our slowness and of how our bodies respond in an awkward way. At certain points, as we improve, we have glimpses of how this process could function differently, of how it might feel to practice the skill fluidly, with the mind not getting in the way of the body. With such glimpses, we know what to aim for. If we take our practice far enough the skill becomes automatic, and we have the sensation that the mind and the body are operating as one."

"In any competitive environment in which there are winners or losers, the person who has the wider, more global perspective will inevitably prevail. The reason is simple: such a person will be able to think beyond the moment and control the overall dynamic through careful strategizing. Most people are perpetually locked in the present. Their decisions are overly influenced by the most immediate event; they easily become emotional and ascribe greater significance to a problem than it should have in reality. Moving toward mastery will naturally bring you a more global outlook, but it is always wise to expedite the process by training yourself early on to continually enlarge your perspective. You can do so by always reminding yourself of the overall purpose of the work you are presently engaged in and how this meshes with your long-term goals. In dealing with any problem, you must train yourself to look at how it inevitably connects to a larger picture. If your work is not having the desired effect, you must look at it from all angles until you find the source of the problem. You must not merely observe the rivals in your field, but dissect and uncover their weaknesses. "Look wider and think further ahead" must be your motto. Through such mental training you will smooth the path to mastery while separating yourself ever further from the competition."

***[On the story of Daniel Everett, the linguist and Bible translator]***

"The deeper he immersed himself into Piraha culture, the more it changed him. He not only grew disenchanted with the top-down form of research in

linguistics and the ideas it led to, but also with his work as a missionary. These were both attempts to impose on the Pirahã alien ideas and values. He could only imagine that spreading the Gospel and converting them to Christianity would completely ruin their culture, which had shaped itself so perfectly to their circumstances and made them so content. With these ideas, he lost his faith in Christianity itself, and finally left the church. Learning an alien culture from so deeply inside it, he could no longer accept the superiority of one particular belief or value system. To hold such an opinion, he determined, is merely an illusion that comes from remaining on the outside."

***[You will get more from the following quote of you think of it in the context of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in terms of the evil Laurent in every man's being, and Dr Schwartz's IFS (what I prefer to call 'parts therapy') in terms of 'legacy burdens']***

"As he emerged from his illness, young Goethe felt like a different person. He was struck now by two ideas that would remain with him for the rest of his life. First, he had the sensation that he possessed a type of inner spirit that he named his *daemon*. This spirit was an incarnation of all of his intense, restless, demonic energy. It could turn destructive, as it had done in Leipzig. Or he could master it and channel it into something productive. This energy was so powerful that it made him swing from one mood or idea to the opposite—from spirituality to sensuality, from naïveté to craftiness. This daemon, he decided, was a spirit implanted in him at birth and it encompassed his whole being. How he managed this daemon would determine the length of his life and the success of his endeavors. [...] If life exists as an organic whole and cannot be separated into parts without losing a sense of the whole, then thinking should make itself equal to the whole. [...] Your false self is the accumulation of all the voices you have internalized from other people—parents and friends who want you to conform to their ideas of what you should be like and what you should do, as well as societal pressures to adhere to certain values that can easily seduce you. It also includes the voice of your own ego, which constantly tries to protect you from unflattering truths. This self talks to you in clear words, and when it comes to mastery, it says things like, "Mastery is for the geniuses, the exceptionally talented, the freaks of nature. I was simply not born that way." Or it says, "Mastery is ugly and immoral. It is for those who are ambitious and egotistical. Better to accept my lot in life and to work to help other people instead of enriching myself." [...] these voices do not speak the truth."

"Alienating yourself from your inclinations can only lead to pain and disappointment in the long run, and a sense that you have wasted something unique. This pain will be expressed in bitterness and envy, and you will not recognize the true source of your depression."

*[...] the activity of the genius seems in no way fundamentally different from the activity of the inventor of machines, the scholar of astronomy or history, the master of tactics. All these activities are explicable if one pictures to oneself*

*people whose thinking is active in one direction, who employ everything as material, who always zealously observe their own inner life and that of others, who perceive everywhere models and incentives, who never tire of combining together the means available to them.*

*Genius too does nothing but learn first how to lay bricks then how to build, and continually seek for material and continually form itself around it.*

*Every activity of man is amazingly complicated, not only that of the genius: but none is a miracle.*

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

***[Genius lies within each of us ... if we only choose to embrace it.]***

*These notes were collected by psychotherapist and author Emil Barna in 2025 in his efforts to assist with professional development and further education for himself and those who read them. You can find out more about Emil by visiting [www.barnacc.com](http://www.barnacc.com)*