

The future belongs to those who learn more skills and combine them in creative ways.

In the future, the great division will be between those who have trained themselves to handle these complexities and those who are overwhelmed by them.

Introduction

Those who can acquire skills and discipline their minds and those who are irrevocably distracted by all the media around them and can never focus enough to learn.

Become who you are by learning who you are.

You possess a kind of inner force that seeks to guide you toward your Life's Task—what you are meant to accomplish in the time that you have to live. 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.

In the intervening years, the force tends to fade in and out as you listen more to parents and peers, to the daily anxieties that wear away at you. This can be the source of your unhappiness—your lack of connection to who you are and what makes you unique.

The first move toward mastery is always inward—learning who you really are and reconnecting with that innate force. Knowing it with clarity, you will find your way to the proper career path and everything else will fall into place.

It is never too late to start this process.

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.

Return to your origins—The primal inclination strategy

The game you want to play is different: to instead find a niche in the ecology that you can dominate. It is never a simple process to find such a niche. It requires patience and a particular strategy. In the beginning you choose a field that roughly corresponds to your interests (medicine, electrical engineering). From there you can go in one of two directions.

Discover Your Calling: The life's task

Strategies for finding your life's task:

Occupy the perfect niche—The Darwinian strategy

You are not tied to a particular position; your loyalty is not to a career or a company. You are committed to your Life's Task, to giving it full expression. It is up to you to find it and guide it correctly.

Let go of the past—The adaptation strategy

You don't want to abandon the skills and experience you have gained, but to find a new way to apply them. Your eye is on the future, not the past.

After your formal education, you enter the most critical phase in your life—a second, practical education known as The Apprenticeship.

Every time you change careers or acquire new skills, you reenter this phase of life. The dangers are many. If you are not careful, you will succumb to insecurities, become embroiled in emotional issues and conflicts that will dominate your thoughts; you will develop fears and learning disabilities that you will carry with you throughout your life.

Before it is too late you must learn the lessons and follow the path established by the greatest Masters, past and present—a kind of Ideal Apprenticeship that transcends all fields.

In the process you will master the necessary skills, discipline your mind, and transform yourself into an independent thinker, prepared for the creative challenges on the way to mastery.

You must value learning above everything else. This will lead you to all of the right choices. You will opt for the situation that will give you the most opportunities to learn, particularly with hands-on work. You will choose a place that has people and mentors who can inspire and teach you.

Value learning over money

A job with mediocre pay has the added benefit of training you to get by with less—a valuable life skill. If your apprenticeship is to be mostly on your own time, you will choose a place that pays the bills—perhaps one that keeps your mind sharp, but that also leaves you the time and mental space to do valuable work on your own.

The people in your field, in your immediate circle, are like worlds unto themselves—their stories and viewpoints will naturally expand your horizons and build up your social skills. Mingle with as many different types of people as possible.

Submit To Reality: The Ideal Apprenticeship

Keep expanding your horizons

Those circles will slowly widen. Any kind of outside schooling will add to the dynamic. Be relentless in your pursuit for expansion. Whenever you feel like you are settling into some circle, force yourself to shake things up and look for new challenges.

When it comes to mastering a skill, time is the magic ingredient. Assuming your practice proceeds at a steady level, over days and weeks certain elements of the skill become hardwired. Slowly, the entire skill becomes internalized, part of your nervous system. The mind is no longer mired in the details, but can see the larger picture.

Trust the process

It is a miraculous sensation and practice will lead you to that point, no matter the talent level you are born with. The only real impediment to this is yourself and your emotions—boredom, panic, frustration, insecurity. You cannot suppress such emotions—they are normal to the process and are experienced by everyone, including Masters.

To attain mastery, you must adopt what we shall call Resistance Practice. The principle is simple—you go in the opposite direction of all of your natural tendencies when it comes to practice. First, you resist the temptation to be nice to yourself. You become your own worst critic; you see your work as if through the eyes of others.

Strategies for completing the ideal Apprenticeship

Move toward resistance and pain

You recognize your weaknesses, precisely the elements you are not good at. Those are the aspects you give precedence to in your practice. You find a kind of perverse pleasure in moving past the pain this might bring. Second, you resist the lure of easing up on your focus. You train yourself to concentrate in practice with double the intensity, as if it were the real thing times two.

In devising your own routines, you become as creative as possible. You invent exercises that work upon your weaknesses.

Apprentice yourself in failure

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. You simply keep tinkering until you get it right.

The same should apply to an entrepreneurial venture. Mistakes and failures are precisely your means of education. They tell you about your own inadequacies.

You want to learn as many skills as possible, following the direction that circumstances lead you to, but only if they are related to your deepest interests. Like a hacker, you value the process of self-discovery and making things that are of the highest quality.

You avoid the trap of following one set career path. You are not sure where this will all lead, but you are taking full advantage of the openness of information, all of the knowledge about skills now at our disposal.

In this new age, those who follow a rigid, singular path in their youth often find themselves in a career

From within your chosen field, you look for side paths that particularly attract you

Once you have mastered your first field (robotics), you look for other subjects or skills that you can conquer (neuroscience), on your own time if necessary. You can now combine this added field of knowledge to the original one, perhaps creating a new field, or at least making novel connections between them.

Mastery
Robert Greene

<p>Life is short, and your time for learning and creativity is limited. Without any guidance, you can waste valuable years trying to gain knowledge and practice from various sources. Instead, you must follow the example set by Masters throughout the ages and find the proper mentor.</p> <p>The mentor-protégé relationship is the most efficient and productive form of learning.</p> <p>The right mentors know where to focus your attention and how to challenge you. Their knowledge and experience become yours. They provide immediate and realistic feedback on your work, so you can improve more rapidly.</p> <p>Through an intense person-to-person interaction, you absorb a way of thinking that contains great power and can be adapted to your individual spirit. Choose the mentor who best fits your needs and connects to your Life's Task.</p> <p>Once you have internalized their knowledge, you must move on and never remain in their shadow. Your goal is always to surpass your mentors in mastery and brilliance.</p>	<p>Advance through trail and error</p> <p>partly in when you're taken into apprenticeship as a latent dead end in their forties, or overwhelmed with boredom. The wide-ranging apprenticeship of your twenties will yield the opposite—expanding possibilities as you get older.</p>
<p>Absorb The Master's Power: The Mentor Dynamic</p>	<p>In selecting a mentor, you will want to keep in mind your inclinations and Life's Task, the future position you envision for yourself. The mentor you choose should be strategically aligned with this.</p> <p>Choose the mentor according to your needs and inclinations.</p> <p>Masters are those who by nature have suffered to get to where they are. They have experienced endless criticisms of their work, doubts about their progress, setbacks along the way. They know deep in their bones what is required to get to the creative phase and beyond.</p> <p>As mentors, they alone can gauge the extent of our progress, the weaknesses in our character, the ordeals we must go through to advance. In this day and age, you must get the sharpest dose of reality that is possible from your mentor. You must go in search of it and welcome it.</p>
<p>Strategies for deepening the mentor dynamic</p>	<p>Gaze deep into the mentor's mirror</p> <p>We must fall under their spell. But if we take this too far, we become so marked by their influence that we have no internal space to incubate and develop our own voice, and we spend our lives tied to ideas that are not our own.</p> <p>The solution, as Gould discovered, is subtle: Even as we listen and incorporate the ideas of our mentors, we must slowly cultivate some distance from them. We begin by gently adapting their ideas to our circumstances, altering them to fit our style and inclinations.</p> <p>As we progress we can become bolder, even focusing on faults or weaknesses in some of their ideas. We slowly mold their knowledge into our own shape. As we grow in confidence and contemplate our independence, we can even grow competitive with the mentor we once worshipped.</p> <p>As Leonardo da Vinci said, "Poor is the apprentice who does not surpass his Master.</p> <p>Transfigure their ideas</p> <p>Evolve a more interactive dynamic with the mentor. If they can adapt to some of your ideas, the relationship becomes more animated, feeling a growing openness on their part to your input, you are less resentful. You are revealing to them your own experiences and ideas, perhaps loosening them up so their principles don't harden into dogma.</p> <p>Create a back-and-forth dynamic</p>
<p>Often the greatest obstacle to our pursuit of mastery comes from the emotional drain we experience in dealing with the resistance and manipulations of the people around us. If we are not careful, our minds become absorbed in endless political intrigues and battles.</p> <p>The principal problem we face in the social arena is our naive tendency to project onto people our emotional needs and desires of the moment. We misread their intentions and react in ways that cause confusion or conflict. Social intelligence is the ability to see people in the most realistic light possible.</p> <p>By moving past our usual self-absorption, we can learn to focus deeply on others, reading their behavior in the moment, seeing what motivates them, and discerning any possible manipulative tendencies. Navigating smoothly the social environment, we have more time and energy to focus on learning and acquiring skills.</p> <p>Success attained without this intelligence is not true mastery, and will not last.</p>	<p>Your work is the single greatest means at your disposal for expressing your social intelligence. By being efficient and detail oriented in what you do, you demonstrate that you are thinking of the group at large and advancing its cause.</p> <p>By making what you write or present clear and easy to follow, you show your care for the audience or public at large. By involving other people in your projects and gracefully accepting their feedback, you reveal your comfort with the group dynamic.</p> <p>We sometimes have the experience of doing work that we consider to be quite brilliant, and then are rather shocked when we receive feedback from others who do not see it the same way at all.</p> <p>In such moments we are made aware of the discrepancy between our emotional and subjective relationship to our own work, and the response of others who view it with complete detachment, capable of pointing out flaws we could never see.</p> <p>The natural tendency with fools is to lower yourself to their level. They annoy you, get under your skin, and draw you into a battle. In the process, you feel petty and confused. You lose a sense of what is really important.</p> <p>You can't win an argument or get them to see your side or change their behavior, because rationality and results don't matter to them. You simply waste valuable time and emotional energy. 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.</p> <p>It is human nature. Seeing this foolishness within you, you can then accept it in others. This will allow you to smile at their antics, to tolerate their presence as you would a silly child, and to avoid the madness of trying to change them. It is all part of the human comedy, and it is nothing to get upset about or lose sleep over.</p>
<p>See People As They Are: Social Intelligence</p>	<p>Speak through your work</p> <p>See yourself as others see you</p> <p>Strategies for acquiring social intelligence</p> <p>Suffer fools gladly</p> <p>As you accumulate more skills and internalize the rules that govern your field, your mind will want to become more active, seeking to use this knowledge in ways that are more suited to your inclinations. What will impede this natural creative dynamic from flourishing is not a lack of talent, but your attitude.</p> <p>Feeling anxious and insecure, you will tend to turn conservative with your knowledge, preferring to fit into the group and sticking to the procedures you have learned. Instead, you must force yourself in the opposite direction.</p> <p>As you emerge from your apprenticeship, you must become increasingly bold. Instead of feeling complacent about what you know, you must expand</p>

your knowledge to related fields, giving your mind fuel to make new associations between different ideas. You must experiment and look at problems from all possible angles.

As your thinking grows more fluid your mind will become increasingly dimensional, seeing more and more aspects of reality. In the end, you will turn against the very rules you have internalized, shaping and reforming them to suit your spirit. Such originality will bring you to the heights of power.

Awaken The Dimensional Mind: The Creative-Active

The fact of great yield

The animal world can be divided into two types—specialists and opportunists. Specialists, like hawks or eagles, have one dominant skill upon which they depend for their survival.

When they are not hunting, they can go into a mode of complete relaxation. Opportunists, on the other hand, have no particular speciality. They depend instead on their skill to sniff out any kind of opportunity in the environment and seize upon it.

They are in states of constant tension and require continual stimulation. We humans are the ultimate opportunists in the animal world, the least specialized of all living creatures. Our entire brain and nervous system is geared toward looking for any kind of opening. Our most primitive ancestors did not begin with an idea in their heads for creating a tool to help them in scavenging and killing.

Instead they came upon a rock, perhaps one that was unusually sharp or elongated (an anomaly), and saw in this a possibility. In picking it up and handling it, the idea came to them to use it as a tool.

This opportunistic bent of the human mind is the source and foundation of our creative powers, and it is in going with this bent of the brain that we maximize these powers.

whatever you are creating or designing, you must test and use it yourself. Separating out the work will make you lose touch with its functionality.

Through intense labor on your part, you gain a feel for what you are creating. In doing this work, you see and feel the flaws in the design. You do not look at the parts separately but at how they interact, experiencing what you produce as a whole.

What you are trying to create will not magically take off after a few creative bursts of inspiration, but must be slowly evolved through a step-by-step process as you correct the flaws.

Mechanical Intelligence

Our culture depends in many ways on the creation of standards and conventions that we all must adhere to. These conventions are often expressed in terms of opposites—good and evil, beautiful and ugly, painful and pleasurable, rational and irrational, intellectual and sensual.

Believing in these opposites gives our world a sense of cohesion and comfort. To imagine that something can be intellectual and sensual, pleasurable and painful, real and unreal, good and bad, masculine and feminine is too chaotic and disturbing for us. Life, however, is more fluid and complex; our desires and experiences do not fit neatly into these tidy categories.

By delving into the chaotic and fluid zone below the level of consciousness where opposites meet, you will be surprised at the exciting and fertile ideas that will come bubbling up to the surface.

Alchemical Creativity and the Unconscious

All of us have access to a higher form of intelligence, one that can allow us to see more of the world, to anticipate trends, to respond with speed and accuracy to any circumstance. This intelligence is cultivated by deeply immersing ourselves in a field of study and staying true to our inclinations, no matter how unconventional our approach might seem to others.

Through such intense immersion over many years we come to internalize and gain an intuitive feel for the complicated components of our field. When we fuse this intuitive feel with rational processes, we expand our minds to the outer limits of our potential and are able to see into the secret core of life itself. We then come to have powers that approximate the instinctive force and speed of animals, but with the added reach that our human consciousness brings us.

This power is what our brains were designed to attain, and we will be naturally led to this type of intelligence if we follow our inclinations to their ultimate ends.

Fuse The Intuitive With The Rationale: Mastery

Connect to your environment—Primal Powers

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. It applies equally well to the waters of Micronesia as it does to any modern field or office. 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.

If we are learning a complex skill, such as flying a jet in combat, we must master a series of simple skills, one on top of the other. Each time one skill becomes automatic, the mind is freed up to focus on the higher one.

At the very end of this process, when there are no more simple skills to learn, the brain has assimilated an incredible amount of information, all of which has become internalized, part of our nervous system. The whole complex skill is now inside us and at our fingertips. We are thinking, but in a different way—with the body and mind completely fused. We are transformed.

We possess a form of intelligence that allows us to approximate the instinctual power of animals, but only through a conscious, deliberate, and extended practice.

Transform yourself through practice—The Fingertip

Feel

Most people don't have the patience to absorb their minds in the fine points and minutiae that are intrinsically part of their work. They are in a hurry to create effects and make a splash; they think in large brush strokes.

Their work inevitably reveals their lack of attention to detail—it doesn't connect deeply with the public, and it feels flimsy. If it gets attention, the attention is momentary. You must see whatever you produce as something that has a life and presence of its own.

Internalize the details—The Life Force

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.

Widen your vision—the Global Perspective

We can never really experience what other people are experiencing. We always remain on the outside looking in, and this is the cause of so many misunderstandings and conflicts.

But the primal source of human intelligence comes

from the development of mirror neurons (see here), which gives us the ability to place ourselves in the skin of another and imagine their experience. Through continual exposure to people and by attempting to think inside them we can gain an increasing sense of their perspective, but this requires effort on our part.

Synthesize all forms of knowledge—The Universal Man/Woman

Our natural tendency is to project onto other people our own beliefs and value systems, in ways in which we are not even aware.