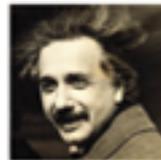




PLATO
 BRUNELLESCHI
 COLUMBUS
 COPERNICUS
 ELIZABETH I
 SHAKESPEARE
 JEFFERSON
 DARWIN
 GANDHI
 EINSTEIN

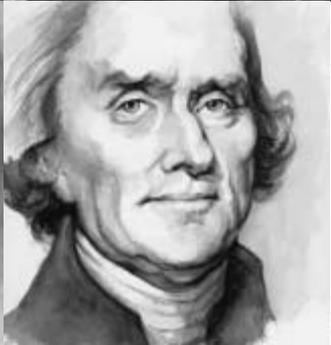
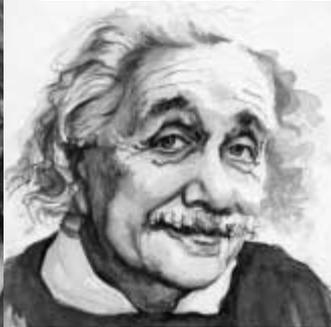


DISCOVER your GENIUS

HOW TO THINK LIKE
 HISTORY'S TEN MOST
 REVOLUTIONARY MINDS

MICHAEL J. GELB

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci



DISCOVER YOUR GENIUS

*How to Think Like History's
Ten Most Revolutionary Minds*

Michael J. Gelb

A free mini e-book excerpt from



To my parents, Joan and Sandy Gelb,
whose example brings to life these sacred words:

*Happy are those who find wisdom
She is more precious than jewels,
And nothing you desire can compare with her
Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*



The Talmud says, “In the world to come each of us will be called to account for all the good things God put on earth that we refused to enjoy.” My wish for you is that you will use the wisdom of these great characters to keep that session as brief as possible.

— MICHAEL J. GELB

C O N T E N T S

[FOREWORD](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#): On the Shoulders of Giants

▲ 1 ▲

[Plato](#)

Deepening Your Love of Wisdom

▲ 2 ▲

[Brunelleschi](#)

Expanding Your Perspective

▲ 3 ▲

[Columbus](#)

Going Perpendicular:
Strengthening Your Optimism, Vision, and Courage

▲ 4 ▲

[Copernicus](#)

Revolutionizing Your Worldview

▲ 5 ▲

Elizabeth I

Wielding Your Power with Balance and Effectiveness

▲ 6 ▲

Shakespeare

Cultivating Your Emotional Intelligence

▲ 7 ▲

Jefferson

Celebrating Your Freedom in the Pursuit of Happiness

▲ 8 ▲

Darwin

Developing Your Power of Observation and Opening Your Mind

▲ 9 ▲

Gandhi

Applying the Principles of Spiritual
Genius to Harmonize Spirit, Mind, and Body

▲ 10 ▲

Einstein

Unleashing Your Imagination and Combinatory Play

CONCLUSION: I Link, Therefore I Am

[PERFECTBOUND E-BOOK EXTRA: Genius Timelines](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[OTHER BOOKS BY MICHAEL J. GELB](#)

[CREDITS](#)

[ABOUT THE PUBLISHER](#)

[FRONT COVER IMAGE](#)

[COPYRIGHT](#)



DISCOVER YOUR GENIUS

F O R E W O R D

Michael Gelb invites us to explore and apply the essential qualities of ten geniuses in a uniquely engaging personal manner. These extraordinary individuals all changed the world, and Gelb guides us to use their inspiration and example to change the way we look at our lives. Each of the geniuses he introduces was driven by an unquenchable passion for their particular kinds of truth and beauty. Copernicus's act of remodeling the heavens, for example, was one of aesthetic cleansing, creating, as he claimed, a harmonious celestial body or perfect temple where the efforts to save the old theory had resulted in a monstrous structure.

We all have experienced the surprise at how different a street looks when we turn around and see it from another point of view. Most of history walks in one direction. Some geniuses have enabled us to turn around and look the other way, backwards or sideways. Leonardo, for example, noted how the so-called vanishing point toward which furrows in a ploughed field appear to converge seems to move with us as we walk beside the field. The genius not only alters our viewpoint, but also pulls our perspective into line with his or hers.

Through some magnificent act of insight, intuition, inspiration, brain wave, conviction, whatever we might call it, the genius sees or senses something from a different perspective. Their new perspective provides a view that ultimately proves so compelling that we can never see things in quite the same way again. What they see is often a bigger picture than we can readily grasp. And they can do this because they sense how the parts

fit into the whole, the deeper harmonic resonance of things that may seem on the surface to be unrelated.

Originally conceived as an external guardian spirit, the notion of genius (from the root *genare*, “to generate, or beget”) evolved by the Renaissance to represent an innate talent, or special kind of in-built virtue in a specific area of accomplishment. Some argue, however, that the notion of individual genius is fundamentally flawed, nothing more than a construct of the Romantic era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Romantics themselves captured the notion that there is something beyond reason in the supreme achievements of those who transcended the limitations that beset even their ablest contemporaries. Through the history of genius there runs a persistent strain, picked up by Shakespeare, that to be transformingly great you might, perhaps, need to be a bit mad.

There is a sense in which resorting to metaphors of the transcendent is inevitable in talking about genius. This might just be a matter of cliché. But I don’t think so. Understanding genius requires awareness of context, cultural milieu, history, and more, yet the individual component remains. We still can’t define it directly, pin it down by verbal formula. But, we can recognize it when we see or sense it (even though it may take centuries to do so), and can gain a grip on its elusive quality through creative imagination.

Is it daft to attempt to model our selves on the transcendent genius of a Copernicus, Brunelleschi, or Einstein? No, not if we consider that all these great minds applied essential principles of focus and purposefulness to the clarification of their core insights. Moreover, in the face of the monstrous structure of mass-media culture, the emphasis in these pages on a personal access to genius, beauty, and truth can enrich our lives aesthetically, intellectually, and morally.

Of course we will all be able to quibble with Michael Gelb’s choices while recognizing the exemplary nature of those he has included, not as exemplary human beings in all cases, but as exemplary of what humans can potentially achieve, if only we believe in what we can do.

—*Martin Kemp, Professor of the History of Art at the University of Oxford*

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The challenge of combining accessibility with accuracy in bringing these great figures to life for you could not have been met without the help of an extraordinary “genius board” of advisers. I am very grateful to these exceptional scholars for their critiques and contributions:

Professor Roger Paden
Professor Jacqueline Eales
Piero Sartogo
Professor Roy Ellzey
Professor Jill Shepherd
Professor Carole Fungaroli
Dr. Win Wenger
Grandmaster Raymond Keene, O.B.E.
Professor Martin Kemp

In addition to serving on the “genius board,” Grandmaster Raymond Keene, O.B.E., and Professor Jacqueline Eales of Canterbury University provided in-depth, comprehensive academic research support for this project.

Special thanks to Audrey Ellzey, who organized and integrated the work of the “genius exercise” teams.

I’m grateful to all who participated in and offered feedback on the exercises, including Bobbi Sims, Dr. Roy Ellzey, Dr. Sheri Philabaum, Laura Sitges, Paul Davis, Michele Dudro, Karen Denson, David Owen, D’jengo Saunders, Lin Kroeger, Annette Morgan, Bridget Belgrave, Roben Torosayn,

Jeannie Becker, Gwen Ellison, Katie Carey, Ron Gross, Stacy Forsythe, Virginia Kendall, Forrest Hainline, Jr., and Dr. Dale Schusterman.

This project also benefited from the critical reading and feedback generously offered by Jean Houston, Barbara Horowitz, Mark Levy, Merle Braun, Lyndsey Posner, Ken Adelman, Lisa Lesavoy, Stella Lin, Jaya Koilpiilai, Dr. Marvin Hyett, Alex Knox, Beret Arcaya, Lori Dechar, and Sir Brian Tovey.

Audrey Ellzey, Professor Roy Ellzey, Grandmaster Raymond Keene, and Professor Robert Greenberg served as brilliant sounding boards for the selection of the musical masterpieces designed to enhance your appreciation of the genius qualities.

“*Danke*” to Eileen Meier for helping me create the space to write. “*Grazie*” to Nina Lesavoy for making the right connections and nurturing the vision. And “*merci*” to my super office staff: Denise Lopez, Ellen Morin, and Mary Hogan.

My external editor, Tom Spain, who also edited *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci*, provided superb constructive feedback in the development and manifestation of these ideas. Thanks to former HarperCollins editor Joe Veltre for shepherding this book through its intermediate phases with a quiet confidence and to my current editor, Kelli Martin for her enthusiasm, thoroughness, and dedication in ushering this project into the world. I’m also very grateful to Trena Keating for championing this project in its early stages. I feel incredibly fortunate to have discovered Norma Miller, and am honored by her willingness to embrace this book and help bring the geniuses to life through her remarkable portraits.

And, as always, I’m grateful to Muriel Nellis and Jane Roberts of Literary and Creative Artists for pulling the right levers in the engine room of success.

Since 1978 I’ve had the privilege of working with many of the most creative leaders in business internationally, leaders who strive to apply the genius principles in their personal and professional lives. Some who were especially helpful in this project include Ed Bassett, Tim Podesta, David Chu, Dennis Ratner, Jim D’Agostino, Marcia Weider, Debbie Dunnam, Nina Lesavoy, Eddie Oliver, Ketan Patel, Marv Damsma, Tony Hayward, Gerry Kirk, Mark Hannum, Susan Greenburg, and Harold Montgomery.

INTRODUCTION

On the Shoulders of Giants

You were born with the potential for genius. We all were; just ask any mother.

In 1451, in the Italian seaport of Genoa, a new mother saw it in the eyes of her firstborn child, unaware that the scintillating power of the 100 billion neurons in his brain would one day redefine the shape of the planet on which she lived. Decades later, the wife of a prosperous Polish merchant saw it in the eyes of her baby, though she would never have dared to predict that the connections his adult mind would eventually make would effectively reorder the universe. Three centuries and an ocean away, a woman of land and privilege didn't know that what she saw in the eyes of her child was the dawn of the capacity to grasp and synthesize the essence of Classical, Renaissance, and Enlightenment thinking—and reinvent the notion of personal liberty for centuries to come.

Few of us may claim to be geniuses, but almost every parent will tell you of the spark of genius they saw the first moment they looked into their new baby's eyes. Your mother saw it too. And although she may not have realized it, the newborn brain she saw at work shared the same miraculous potential as the infant minds that would one day achieve the greatness described above.

Even if you have yet to revolutionize anyone’s ideas about the planet or its inhabitants, you came into the world with the same spark of genius beheld so long ago by the mothers of Christopher Columbus, Nicolaus Copernicus, and Thomas Jefferson. By its very design, the human brain harbors vast potential for memory, learning, and creativity. Yours does too—far more than you may think. The 100-billion-neuron tally is a simple fact of human physiology, according to the great neurologist Sir Charles Sherrington, who described the human brain as “an enchanted loom” ready to weave a unique tapestry of creative self-expression.

But its power can be as elusive as it is awesome, and can be unlocked only with the knowledge of how to develop that potential, and put those hundreds of billions of fact-learning, connection-building neurons to work in the most effective, creative ways possible. It’s far from automatic. We must learn to make the most of what we have—even if that requires us to accept on faith the premise that we have more than we’re already using.

Fortunately, we don’t have to do it alone. History has produced enough intellectual giants to convince anyone of the potential power of the human brain. Familiar to all of us, their discoveries and innovations have shaped the world in which we live. But as indebted as we are to them for the fruits of their mental labor, we can also turn to the most revolutionary minds in history for guidance and inspiration on how to use our brains to realize our own unique gifts. For just as they have shown us the way in geography, astronomy, and government, these great minds can also show us the way to our own full potential. We needn’t aspire to the same incomparable heights to learn from their accomplishments; after all, they’ve already done their work. But who among us doesn’t have to restructure our universe, redefine our world, or renegotiate our relationships with others on an almost daily basis? Indeed, such are the dynamics by which our individuality is developed and expressed.

The full expression of our unique genius does not come without our concerted effort; it requires our embarking upon a deliberate plan for

We were all infant prodigies.

—THOMAS MANN

personal development. In a world that drives us down toward a lowest common denominator of taste, thought, and feeling, we all need all the help we can get in manifesting the best in ourselves. Think about it: your brain is the most powerful learning and creative problem-solving system in the world. But most of us know less about how our brains work than we do about our cars. Of course, cars come with instruction manuals and brains don't; even in school, most of us spend more time studying history, mathematics, literature, and other subjects than trying to understand and apply the most important subject of all, learning how to learn.

The individuals whom history recognizes as revolutionary geniuses have done a better job than most of harnessing the mind power with which they were born. Part of their success can be attributed to an intuitive understanding of how to learn. You can learn anything you want to, and you'll surprise yourself with what you can achieve when you know how to learn. In *Discover Your Genius* you'll develop that understanding for yourself. And as you apply the wisdom of history's great minds, you'll improve your mental abilities as you get older.

Imagine unleashing your creativity by enjoying the benefits of the mental play that helped inspire the theory of relativity. Or evaluating your business climate with the combination of keen observation and an open mind that yielded the theory of evolution. Or navigating your life path with the same love of knowledge and truth that spawned all of Western philosophy.

The individuals behind these revolutions of thought live on in our collective memory as models for tackling the challenges that lie ahead. The difference between your mind and theirs is smaller than you think, and is less determined by inborn capacity than by passion, focus, and strategy—all of which are yours to develop. Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson writes that the great minds of history “were obsessed; they burned within. But they also had an intuitive grasp of inborn human nature accurate enough to select commanding images from the mostly inferior thoughts that stream

*Study and in general the
pursuit of truth and beauty
is a sphere of activity in
which we are permitted to
remain children all our lives.*

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

For the first time in human history the genius of the human race is available for all to harvest.

—JEAN HOUSTON, PH.D.,
AUTHOR OF *THE POSSIBLE HUMAN* AND *JUMP TIME*

through the minds of all of us. The talent they wielded may have been only incrementally greater, but their creations appeared to others to be qualitatively new. They acquired enough influence and longevity to translate into lasting fame, not by magic, not by divine benefaction, but by a quantitative edge in powers shared in smaller degree with those less gifted. They gathered enough lifting speed to soar above the rest.”

In *Discover Your Genius* you’ll learn how ten of history’s greatest geniuses gained the “lifting speed” they needed to change the world. You’ll see how they identified and embraced the “commanding images” that led them to the revolutionary ideas we now know so well. Through practical exercises, you’ll discover how their breakthrough thinking principles can help you sharpen your edge for real-world results. And by getting to know these ten extraordinary individuals, you’ll glimpse the boundless range of human potential in ways that will ignite your own passion for growth and inspire you to soar to new heights of professional success and personal fulfillment. Most important, by studying the lives and minds of others, you will learn to be more fully and truly yourself.

You have been modeling yourself on others all your life. That potential genius into whose eyes your mother gazed was soon returning her look, mirroring her smile, discovering how to be a person by doing what other people did. Learning through imitation is central to the mental development of many species, humans included. But as we become adults, we gain a unique advantage: we can choose whom and what to imitate. We can also consciously select new models to replace the ones we outgrow. It makes sense, therefore, to choose the best role models to inspire and guide us to the realization of our potential.

Ever since I was a child I’ve been fascinated by the nature of genius, an interest that has evolved into my profession and life passion: guiding others to discover and realize their own potential for genius. As an exploration of that passion, I spent years immersed in studying the life and work of

Leonardo da Vinci, perhaps the greatest genius who ever lived. In addition to painting the eternally magnificent *Mona Lisa* and *Last Supper*, Leonardo designed ball bearings, gearshifts, underwater diving equipment, and, most incredibly, a parachute—long before anyone was able to fly (now that’s thinking ahead!). Leonardo’s amazing leaps of imagination and his ability to think far ahead of his time fired my passion for incorporating the lessons of genius into my own life and the lives of my students.

The expression of that passion, *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci*, has helped readers around the world claim this towering figure of history, a true giant of mind and spirit, as a personal guide to meeting the challenges of contemporary life. By approaching Leonardo’s unique genius as the sum of seven distinct principles that they can study and emulate, readers have been able to make this supreme genius a role model all their own.

Whom have you chosen to inspire and guide you in your life thus far? Who are your greatest heroes and heroines, your most inspirational role models? If you have already begun the process of mastering and implementing the seven da Vincian principles, you know firsthand the profound impact that your chosen role models can have on your life—and, in true da Vincian fashion, you are ready to discover what you can learn from other role models. There’s no need to limit yourself to Leonardo; after all, one hallmark of genius is the ability to internalize and integrate the thoughts and examples of previous great thinkers. Albert Einstein, for example, kept above his bed a portrait of Sir Isaac Newton, who himself advised that we can see farther if we “stand on the shoulders of giants.”

But on whose shoulders should we stand? This book arose from contemplation of the following three questions:

- ▲ In addition to Leonardo, who are the most revolutionary, breakthrough-thinking geniuses in human history?
- ▲ What is the essential lesson we can learn from each of these great minds?
- ▲ How can we apply the wisdom and experience of these great minds to bring more happiness, beauty, truth, and goodness to our lives, and the

lives of our children, in the midst of accelerating change, rampant materialism, and cultural chaos?

Discover Your Genius will bring you the incomparable power of ten of the most revolutionary, influential minds the world has known. If this pragmatic approach to history is new to you, you are in for a treat; immersing yourself in the life and work of history's greatest breakthrough thinkers provides rich nourishment for your mind and spirit. As you learn to "stand on their shoulders," you'll discover the truth of Mark Twain's statement: "Really great people make you feel that you, too, can become great."

YOUR GENIUS DREAM TEAM

In the pages that follow you will have the opportunity to get to know ten of the most amazing people who have ever lived. Each of these extraordinary individuals embodies a special "genius" characteristic that you are invited to emulate and integrate into your daily life.

Each genius is presented in a brief biography illustrating the role of the key principle in his or her life and work. We then explore how that principle can and does relate to you, including a self-assessment to measure its current impact, and a special highlight on the principle's potential application in the twenty-first-century world of work. Most important, you are offered an opportunity to enjoy a series of practical exercises to develop your mastery of each principle, and to implement its time-tested power in your own life today.

A reporter with whom I recently shared the principles of *Discover Your Genius* raised a concern that you may recognize. "I like basketball, but whatever I do I'll never be like Michael Jordan," he said. "So how can anyone even think of being like Leonardo, Einstein, or Elizabeth I?" I know how he feels; it's normal to feel humble when contemplating genius in any area of life. If

I simply compare myself to Michael Jordan, my sense of prowess on the courts is obliterated instantly. However, if instead of comparing I think about applying some of the individual components of Jordan's mastery—his focus, his awareness of his fellow players, the way he learned to move his feet on defense, and his commitment to developing his game at all levels throughout his career—then I'm inspired and better prepared to play my best.

Michael Jordan is to basketball what Leonardo da Vinci is to creativity. Leonardo had Leon Battista Alberti and Filippo Brunelleschi as his role models, Michael had Julius Erving and Elgin Baylor. A manual for aspiring hoopsters should start with Michael, but then it might move on to elucidate the special qualities of other legendary players. The fluid movement of Dr. J. and Elgin Baylor, the ball handling of Bob Cousy, the defense of Bill Russell, the passing of Magic Johnson, the body positioning of Karl Malone, the poise of Larry Bird, and the perfect shooting form of Cheryl Miller.

This book is your guide to learning from humanity's all-time/all-star breakthrough-thinking, revolutionary-genius dream team. To assemble this team I searched for the most world-shaking ideas, discoveries, and innovations in history. I looked for breakthroughs of thought, action, or creation that are stunningly original as well as being universally and eternally relevant and useful, that can be largely attributed to a particular individual. Of course, every great breakthrough is the result of a complex weaving of influences, effort, and serendipity. The most advanced, creative, and original thinking is always a product of historical context and the influences of previous geniuses, mentors, and collaborators on the mind of the originator. Nevertheless, although there is an undeniable aspect of subjectivity to the process, one can identify the most important threads in the tapestry of revolutionary genius.

Of course, your list of the ten most revolutionary minds might include different names. My aim is not to provide an "ultimate" list, but to inspire you to discover your own genius through the study of these archetypal figures. In discussing this project with people from all walks of life in the course of its development, I have invariably encountered enthusiastic, often

heated, debate about who should be included. I'm delighted when people make a strong case for someone I've left out; in fact, there is a great deal to be gained from making your own list of exceptional people and aiming to embody their best qualities.

But first allow me to introduce the dream team of geniuses from whom you'll be learning how to think. You've already met three as newborn babies; here's the full team, along with the principles we will explore for each.

Plato (CIRCA 428–348 B.C.): *Deepening Your Love of Wisdom*

The love of wisdom—philosophy—and its manifestation in the quest for truth, beauty, and goodness, is the thread that weaves through the lives of all the great minds you'll get to know in the pages that follow. Plato, our first genius, is the seminal figure in this grand tapestry. Whenever you ask for a definition of something, or wonder about the essence of things, you are expressing the influence of Plato. If you consider yourself an idealist, you are deeply indebted to him. If you are more of a skeptic, then you question idealism in terms that he pioneered. Plato's influence on our view of the world is difficult to overstate. The wisdom of Socrates, teacher of Plato, is known to us primarily through Plato's writings. And Aristotle, tutor of Alexander the Great and one of history's most powerful and influential thinkers, was Plato's student.

Plato raised fundamental questions that will inspire you to strengthen your ability to think for yourself, to learn, and to grow. The knowledge of learning how to learn is perhaps the most important knowledge we can possess, and Plato's timeless wisdom is an ideal starting point for its development.

Plato also beckons us to care about more than just personal growth, challenging us to think about making a better world. If you feel disturbed by the moral relativism of our culture and its leaders, if you care deeply about goodness and justice, if you feel that education should be a primary force in building a better society, then you are already thinking in the tradition of Plato.

Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446): *Expanding Your Perspective*

Architect of the dome of Florence’s cathedral, Brunelleschi engineered the structural embodiment of the shift of consciousness that we now call the Renaissance: the rebirth of the classical ideal of power and potentiality vested in the individual. Brunelleschi’s Duomo stands as an antidote to the worldview conveyed by Gothic cathedrals before it, which awed their visitors into accepting the premise that all power was invested above. As the effective inventor of visual perspective, Brunelleschi influenced the accomplishments of Alberti, Donatello, Masaccio, Michelangelo, and Leonardo. Brunelleschi had to expand and maintain his personal goal-oriented perspective as well; only by overcoming tremendous political and personal adversity and finding ingenious solutions to everyday problems was he able to complete his dome and change our understanding of space forever.

Brunelleschi’s genius can help you broaden your perspective to see a big picture no one else has visualized, and inspire you to keep your eyes on the prize to make that vision real. If you ever feel challenged to keep your perspective, if you find yourself getting caught up in the small stuff, then Filippo Brunelleschi is someone you must get to know.

Christopher Columbus (1451–1506): *Going Perpendicular: Strengthening Your Optimism, Vision, and Courage*

Where Plato and Brunelleschi ventured into metaphorical oceans of uncertainty, Columbus literally followed his genius across an unknown sea. In a time when most explorers sailed parallel to the coastline in their expeditions, hugging the land as closely as possible, Columbus set out at a direct right angle to the shore, straight out into the unknown, with results we all know well.

Columbus’s genius can inspire you to pursue your unfulfilled dream—be it a new career, a new way of being in relationship, a chance to develop

a hidden talent or to live in a different part of the world. If you ever feel restless, frustrated, or bored with the safe coastline of habit, then Columbus's uncanny optimism, compelling vision, and profound courage can help you navigate through life's unknown waters.

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543): *Revolutionizing Your Worldview*

The Polish astronomer Copernicus's publication of *The Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres* in 1530 led to the classic example of a paradigm shift—a major change in or reversal of a fundamental frame of reference for understanding the world. By offering a carefully presented theory that the earth orbits a stationary sun, Copernicus eclipsed the classical astronomy view of the universe centered around a still, flat earth that had dominated human consciousness for 1,400 years.

Copernicus's genius for conceptualizing a radically different universe could not be more timely than it is today. Paradigm shifts are happening faster and more dramatically than ever before, as radical developments in computer technology, communication, genetics, geopolitics, and the new economy promise to revolutionize our world, many times over, in the next few decades. If you are concerned about adapting gracefully to this time of change and transformation, then Copernicus and his genius will speak to you.

Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603): *Wielding Your Power with Balance and Effectiveness*

The most intimate paradigm shift of the last few decades has been driven by the expansion of women's rights and power—a process that can be traced to the remarkable rise and reign of England's Queen Elizabeth I. Combining skills that have been generally regarded as “masculine”—influencing her

environment, getting things done, and acting aggressively when necessary—and “feminine”—receptivity to counsel, empathy for her rivals, and sensitivity to her people—Elizabeth stands as an archetype of the balance and integration of traditional notions of masculine and feminine power.

Elizabeth is a reminder to us all of how to use our power wisely, at home or at work. If you are seeking somehow to increase your individual power, or are struggling with questions of the balance of masculine and feminine power in professional and personal relationships, then Elizabeth and her reign offer unique and inspiring lessons that resonate today.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616): *Cultivating Your Emotional Intelligence*

Just as most of Western philosophy flows from Plato, so can much of our drama, literature, and conception of ourselves be seen as a stream fed by Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth’s most illustrious subject. In his works he captures, as no one has done before or since, the broad spectrum of human experience and self-awareness, articulating elements of the psyche in a manner that is both universal and eternal. Central to his genius is his unique ability to appreciate the essence of human experience, a mission so many of his characters also embark upon (often with tragically less success). He does so (and his characters try to do so) by cultivating both intrapersonal (“To thine own self be true”) and interpersonal (“I know you all!”) intelligence.

Knowing oneself and knowing how to work effectively with others is even more important in “these most brisk and giddy-paced times.” If you strive to be true to yourself, if you wish to deepen your insight and understanding of others, if you’re fascinated by the drama of everyday life, and if you know that “all the world’s a stage” and you wish to play your roles with wit and grace, then the Bard is your indispensable ally.

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826): *Celebrating Your Freedom in the Pursuit of Happiness*

Almost three centuries passed before the rebirth of the ancient Greek ideal of individual power begun in the Italian Renaissance could be enshrined and protected by democratic, republican systems of government. Articulated by a succession of geniuses, many of them revolutionary in the most literal sense, the ideals of individual liberty, equality, and justice find their supreme expression in the birth of the United States of America. Of all the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, left liberty's greatest testament.

As the founder of the University of Virginia, Jefferson was a leader in helping others gain access to the inner freedom that comes from the power of education. He also pioneered the adoption of the first law establishing religious freedom. A multitalented model of the Renaissance man, the “sage of Monticello” inspires us to fulfill our potential and celebrate our freedom. If you strive to make the most of your “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness,” then you owe it to yourself to deepen your understanding of Thomas Jefferson.

Charles Darwin (1809–1882): *Developing Your Power of Observation and Opening Your Mind*

The recipient, like Jefferson, of a large inheritance that furthered his career, Darwin followed his university studies in medicine and theology with a five-year mission to study Pacific flora and fauna, most notably in the Galapagos Islands. Rather than reaffirming the prevailing worldview—that life on earth was an instantaneous and unchanging creation of an omnipotent Creator—Darwin reached a different conclusion, which he articulated in one of the most influential books ever written: *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

The comprehensive, painstaking, and detailed observations from which Darwin formulated the theory of evolution are testimony to the power of

seeing the world clearly, without prejudice or preconception. His is a marvelous example of the open mind, the consciousness that embraces change and creates the future. As we explore the process by which he made his discoveries, you'll learn to use his example to expand your consciousness, manage change, and create your future.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948): *Applying the Principles of Spiritual Genius to Harmonize Spirit, Mind, and Body*

The prime mover of Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi and his example of moral persuasion through nonviolent protest influenced the human rights movements led by Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and many others. For Gandhi political action and spiritual practice went hand-in-hand. Although he came from a Hindu background, Gandhi was a student of all the world's major spiritual traditions; his integration and practical application of the ideals of Christ, Buddha, and the Baghavad Gita is an expression of a profound gift of spiritual genius.

Gandhi once described his lifelong goal as simply “self-realization,” which to him meant “to see God face to face.” By all accounts, his tremendous charisma, or “soul force,” indicated that his relationship with God was a close one; in large part because he said what he believed and put into practice what he said, his spirit, mind, and body were in supreme harmony. Whatever your goals, his example of mental, physical, and spiritual harmony can help you be more true to your highest self.

Albert Einstein (1875–1955): *Unleashing Your Imagination and Combinatory Play*

Although Einstein began to achieve global renown after the publication of the special theory of relativity in 1905, his superstar status wasn't

conferred fully until a solar eclipse in 1919, when a British scientific expedition measuring the curve of light deflection found it was exactly consistent with Einstein's predictions. The president of Britain's Royal Society commented that Einstein's theory was "one of the greatest—perhaps the greatest—of achievements in the history of human thought." So profound were the implications that the *Times* of London called for nothing less than "a new philosophy of the universe . . . that will sweep away nearly all that has hitherto been accepted as the axiomatic basis of physical thought."

Einstein maintained that the secret of his genius was his ability to look at problems in a childlike, imaginative way. He called it "combinatory play." If you like to doodle and daydream, then you are already following in Einstein's footsteps. Perhaps you'd like to learn new ways to use your imagination to solve complex problems? Maybe you dream of bringing a more lighthearted and playful approach to managing the serious issues of daily life. If you want to bring more creativity to your life, at work and at home, then welcome Einstein to your arsenal of genius.

I encourage you to immerse yourself in the lives and teachings of the geniuses who inspire you most. My study of Leonardo has been one of the richest experiences of my life, as has been the research for *Discover Your Genius*. You'll find that all the people included become more fascinating the more you learn about them.

. . . what counts most in the long haul of history is semi-nality, not sentiment.

—EDWARD O. WILSON

You'll also find that none of them is perfect, as has been widely reported in our culture's drive to expose our leaders' every flaw. The revolutionary geniuses we will get to know aren't offered for wholesale consumption. Rather, we'll aim to extract the very best of their example, and their creations, to enrich our lives. My aim is to make the essence and archetype of each of these extremely complex individuals accessible to you. Einstein set the benchmark for this endeavor when he said that "things should be made as simple as possible, not simpler."

My hope is that you'll be inspired to read the full biographies and study the original works of the extraordinary individuals we'll explore. And, most importantly, that you will embody this timeless wisdom to bring more happiness, beauty, truth, and goodness to your life. Cicero wrote of Socrates: "[He] called down philosophy from the skies and implanted it in the cities and homes of men." Let's call down the wisdom of our revolutionary geniuses and implant it in our lives, today.



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION TO THE DREAM TEAM

UNIVERSALITY OF IMPACT. Although nine of ten of the geniuses selected are Western, they are nonetheless universal in their impact. Western culture* has proven thus far to be the dominant influence in the world, partly through the influence of the revolutionary minds profiled in the following pages. The need to logically define the criteria for selection in order for you to consider accepting this perspective, for example, can be traced back to Plato and his student Aristotle, and the fact that you're reading in English owes much to Elizabeth I.

ORIGINAL, REVOLUTIONARY BREAKTHROUGHS THAT ARE REASONABLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO AN INDIVIDUAL. Put yourself into the mind of an "Einstein" living about 6,000 years ago. One day you happen to see some boulders rolling down the side of an embankment. The next day you chance to observe

*Francis Bacon, a genius of the Enlightenment, a close runner-up to our top ten, observed that printing, gunpowder, and the magnetic compass, "changed the appearance of the whole world." These three revolutionary innovations (not to mention pasta!) all originated in China. If the Ming emperor hadn't called back his fleet in 1433 and instituted a policy of isolationism, this book might be written in Chinese with a very different cast of characters.

as a rotten tree trunk falls and rolls down the same slope. That night you dream of the boulder and the tree trunk, rolling, rolling, and rolling. You wake up with the ancient-language equivalent of “aha,” because you’ve had a vision: you can build a sacred shrine to your gods by using fallen tree trunks to roll giant slabs of stone along the surface of the earth. From ancient times through to the present, the creative individual makes connections that others don’t see, some of which are so original and powerful that they change the world forever.

Of course, we can’t know who first harnessed fire, rigged up a plow, or invented the wheel. And modern insights into cultural evolution and systems theory give us pause before trumpeting the glories of an individual outside the fabric of his *Zeitgeist*. Nevertheless, the ten figures in this book were clearly individuals of extraordinary originality, whose towering achievements and revolutionary breakthroughs changed the world. They stand as amazing individuals and enduring archetypes from whom we can draw inspiration and guidance.

UTILITY FOR YOU. Shakespeare noted that “there was never yet the philosopher that could endure the toothache patiently.” In other words, philosophy and inspiring ideas are fine, but how do they apply in actual practice? My most important criterion for selecting this genius roster is its practical value for you.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the incredible geniuses you’ll get to know better, organized the American Philosophical Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge. In this society’s charter we read: “Knowledge is of little use, when confined to mere speculation: But when speculative truths are reduced to practice, when theories, grounded upon experiments, are applied to the common purposes of life; and when, by these . . . the arts of living made more easy and comfortable, and, of course, the increase and happiness of mankind promoted; knowledge then becomes really useful.”

The approach of *Discover Your Genius* is based on practice, grounded in experience, in application to “the common purposes of life.” The primary focus of the book is to offer you a treasure trove of guidance in “the arts of living” and to increase your happiness.

*All the valuable things, material, spiritual, and moral,
which we receive from society can be traced back through
countless generations to certain creative individuals.*

—ALBERT EINSTEIN



A FEW QUESTIONS FROM THE LAST DINNER PARTY

Why only one woman and only one person of color?

Men and women and humans of every race are all equally gifted with the potential for genius. All groups haven't, of course, had equal access to the opportunity of developing that gift. And many women and minorities who managed to develop their gifts against the odds have been unfairly denied appropriate recognition. My wish is that the ideas and inspiration of the great minds profiled here will touch and empower all. In selecting the geniuses for inclusion in the book, gender and race were not used as criteria. Elizabeth I and Gandhi are included not as an expression of affirmative action, but purely on merit.

How could you leave out Sir Isaac Newton?

I consider Newton a revolutionary genius of equal stature to Einstein, and, Newton also manifested the same fundamental genius quality of imagination and combinatory play. Yet I chose Einstein based on the ultimate criterion of "utility for you" because he's more current and therefore easier to get to know.

It was, however, very hard to choose between them, just as it was difficult to choose Copernicus over Galileo and Thomas Jefferson over Benjamin Franklin. In the case of these close calls I've included a piece or sidebar about the runners-up, so Newton is profiled in the Einstein chapter, Galileo and Kepler are sidebars in the Copernicus chapter, and Benjamin Franklin is featured prominently in the chapter on Thomas Jefferson.

What about Christ and Buddha?

I decided to eliminate from consideration figures who are broadly viewed as divine inspirations for the formation of religions. Why? Well, I've got a lot of chutzpah, but not enough to write *How to Think Like the Son of God*.

Why no musicians? How could you leave out Beethoven and Mozart?

I love music, and consider Mozart, Beethoven, George Gershwin, and Ella Fitzgerald, among many others, to be geniuses. But in the vast scope of history, music serves more as a reflection, rather than a driver, of the changes in consciousness wrought by the likes of Copernicus, Jefferson, and Einstein. Beethoven captured the sound of freedom in his Ninth Symphony, but Jefferson did much more to make people actually free.

Nevertheless, music is so important that, with the help of a wonderful team of musical cognoscenti, I've chosen a piece of music that is evocative of the spirit and accomplishments of each of our breakthrough thinkers. I hope that you'll enjoy listening to the recommended selections in concert with your enjoyment of each great mind. (*Discover Your Genius* classical music CD available from 1-800-427-7680 and www.springhillmedia.com).

What about Leonardo da Vinci?

He got the last book all to himself!

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

The title *Discover Your Genius* has an intentional double meaning. The aim of the book is to help you discover and apply your own potential for genius, and at the same time to help you discover the “genius” or “geniuses” who inspire you the most.

Overview the Whole Book First

To get the most from this adventure in genius, begin by scanning the entire book. Spend some time musing on the genius portraits (see below) and develop a feel for the whole pantheon. Then, if you are more comfortable with a linear progression, read the chapters in order, which will give you a chronological presentation. Feel free, however, to skip around and approach the revolutionary geniuses in any order that appeals to you. You may wish to go straight to the genius who beckons you most strongly and immerse yourself in his or her life and wisdom as your point of departure.

CONTEMPLATE THE ILLUSTRATIONS

As you approach each genius chapter, spend a few minutes contemplating the portrait that goes with it. The images of the ten geniuses that appear in these pages were commissioned by the author from artist Norma Miller especially for this book. Miller’s portraits, which have graced the cover of *Time* magazine, are known for their numinous, soulful aliveness. The artist was challenged to capture the genius quality in each of these original watercolors and to bring it to life for you.

Norma’s comments on the process of creating the images are offered here in the hope that they will enhance your enjoyment and inspiration:

“Even though each portrait had its own particular set of challenges, there were similarities to the creative process for all of them. The first challenge was to lose self-consciousness—not to worry if the image I was painting was looking like the person; that is the sure route to a lifeless portrait. You might say that I worked from the inside of the person until eventually an image evolved. One of the fascinating aspects about portraiture is that it is the aura and ‘feel’ of a person that brings them to life, not the accuracy of the features.

“As a life-drawing teacher, I have often observed the student’s need to seek the security of wanting every mark that is put on paper to look like something recognizable. To have the drawing look like something as soon as possible, often the inclination is to do an outline and fill it in—to work from the outside in. In fact, just the reverse should happen—to draw from the inside; the outside always has a magical way of taking care of itself. I soon realized that there are no obvious facial characteristics that can depict particular traits of genius. In fact, it soon became apparent that genius had much to do with combining many traits, some which even seemed at odds with one another, such as playfulness and seriousness, optimism and fear, or freedom and responsibility. Through these seeming paradoxes a subtle sense of these unique, complex characters began to emerge. The emphasis became the ‘soul’ of the person, and doesn’t the soul emanate from the eyes? Indeed, the more I got to ‘know’ each genius, the more fascinated I became with not how we look at them, but rather, how they look at us and the world.”

Reflect on the Self-Assessments

However you arrive at a given chapter, take a few minutes to reflect on its self-assessment questions before proceeding to the exercise section. You needn’t formulate or write exact answers to the self-assessments; you may want to simply muse on the questions and allow them to percolate in

your mind. After you complete the exercises from a chapter, return to your self-assessment and note any changes in attitudes that the exercises may have brought to light.

Enjoy the Exercises

Some of the genius exercises are lighthearted and fun while others require profound self-reflection and inner work. Start with the ones that seem most appealing, and don't feel compelled to do them in the order in which they are presented. Find your own pace and rhythm for enjoying and exploring the exercises. One early reader compared the exercises to a big box of Belgian chocolates, commenting, "I can't eat them all at once but I look forward to unwrapping and enjoying one each day!"

Keep a Genius Notebook / Journal

In a classic study of mental traits of genius, Catherine Cox examined 300 of history's greatest minds. She found that geniuses in every field—from painting, literature, and music, to science, the military, and politics—tended to have certain common characteristics. Most notably, she discovered that geniuses enjoy recording their insights, observations, feelings, poems, and questions in personal notebooks or through letters to friends and family.

So, in the manner of all the geniuses whom we will explore, keep a notebook to express your insights, musings, and observations as you journey through these great minds. You can use the same notebook to record your reflections on the self-assessments and your responses to the exercises in the book.

If you are required to write for your job, or at school, you are probably asked to do so in a linear, orderly fashion; most bosses don't tell us to let

our minds go free and be creative when writing a business plan or filling out an expense report. But in your genius notebook you are encouraged to do just that. Scholars criticized Leonardo da Vinci for the seemingly random nature of his notebooks, to which he never provided either an index or a table of contents. Leonardo's notes feature sketches of birds in flight and water flowing, observations on the anatomy of a cat, jokes, dreams, and shopping lists, all appearing on the same page. Like most of the great minds you'll be exploring, Leonardo intuitively trusted the natural flow of his associative process—the combinatory play that Einstein advocates. Practice this free play in response to the inspiration of each revolutionary genius. As you record and reflect on the ideas and insights that inspire you, they will become imprinted in your psyche at a deeper level.

Form a Group to Explore the Genius Exercises

Many of the workshop attendees and others who have been introduced to the *Discover Your Genius* program have reported that they enjoy forming discussion and combinatory play groups to explore the geniuses further, and to compare notes on the exercises for embodying each principle. You'll find some suggestions for hosting your own "genius salons" and a few simple, delicious recipes to inspire your creativity and delight your friends. Feel free to use modern methods to access ancient truths; forming e-mail groups to explore the geniuses and mine their qualities can prevent geographical restrictions from limiting your creative potential, and the Internet can yield a wealth of important and interesting facts.

Practice Imaginary Dialogues with the Geniuses

You can deepen the impact of genius thinking in your life by creating an imaginary dialogue with great minds. "Conversing" with geniuses of the

past—or present—is great fun and usually quite enlightening. To get the most from your genius dialogues, record the “responses” in your notebook.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527), a strong candidate for inclusion in the list of history’s most revolutionary thinkers, developed many of his ideas through imaginary dialogues with great minds of the past. Adorned in his courtly robes, Machiavelli regularly retired to his private office where he engaged in questioning the great minds of history and recording their responses. As he noted:

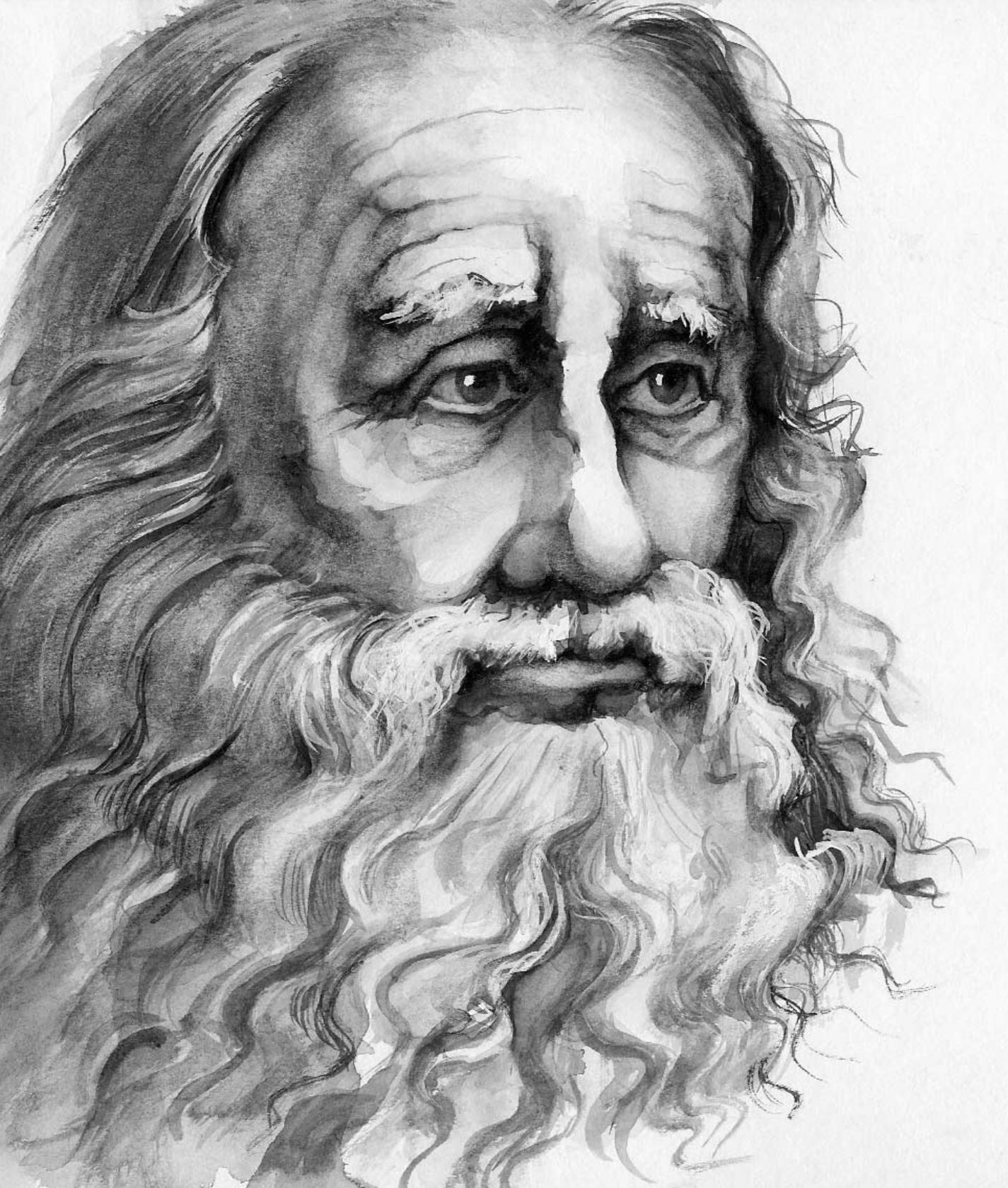
“Study the actions of illustrious men, to see how they have borne themselves, examine the causes of their victories and defeats, so as to imitate the former and avoid the latter.

“Above all, do as illustrious men do, who take as their example, those who have been praised and famous before them, and whose achievements and deeds still live in the memory, as it is said Alexander the Great imitated Achilles and Caesar imitated Alexander.”

Machiavelli explains this practice further:

“I take off my work-day clothes, filled with dust and mud, and don royal and curial garments. Worthily dressed, I enter into the ancient courts of the men of antiquity, where warmly received, I feed on that which is my only food and which was meant for me. I am not ashamed to speak with them and ask them the reasons of their actions, and they, because of their humanity, answer me. Four hours can pass and I feel no weariness; my troubles forgotten, I neither fear poverty nor dread death. I give myself over entirely to them. And since Dante says that there can be no science [understanding] without retaining what has been understood, I have noted down the chief things in their conversation.”

Let’s begin our genius dialogue with Plato, the father of Western philosophy.



Plato

(CIRCA 428–328 B.C.)

[Plato's Timeline](#)

Deepening Your Love of Wisdom

Beauty is truth, truth beauty . . .

—JOHN KEATS

Think for a moment of the teachers who have had the most lasting and profound impact on you. Chances are, they helped you see the essence of something dear to you for the first time, or inspired you to cultivate a lasting love for that subject, or perhaps instilled in you ideals that are still with you today. If you were lucky enough to have had such influential teachers in your life, you know the feelings of warmth and gratitude their memories evoke, for they set you on the path toward becoming the person you want to be.

My visual inspiration was drawn from Raphael's depiction in his magnificent School of Athens of what he thought Plato must have looked like—legend has it that Raphael used Leonardo da Vinci as the model for Plato. I used this archetype of what a great philosopher looks like as my launching point. I wanted Plato to look as though he was observing and thinking at the same time, a process that embodies wisdom.—Norma Miller

Those teachers, and the fires they kindled in you, were also your first introduction to the tradition of teaching and learning that can be traced back to our first revolutionary genius. The personification of the ancient Greeks' cultural love of wisdom, Plato is one of a line of teachers and students of legendary intellectual prowess that begins with Socrates, teacher of Plato, who then passed on his wisdom to Aristotle, who became the tutor of Alexander the Great. But Plato stands tallest among these giants, exerting more influence on us today than you may realize: for example, so much of what the favorite teachers noted above are remembered for—the pursuit of the essence of something, the celebration of ideals, even the



love of learning—came to us from Plato. If, as Charles Freeman writes in *The Greek Achievement*, “the Greeks provided the chromosomes of Western Civilization,” then Plato sequenced the DNA.

Plato set the table for the feast of the Western intellectual dialogue; one twentieth-century philosopher went so far as to characterize the subsequent Western philosophical tradition as consisting “by and large of footnotes to Plato.” The underlying premise that informed the writing of this book—that each of us, yourself included, possesses a divine spark that can be awakened and nurtured into a full expression of our spiritual and creative gifts—is itself a neo-Platonic assumption. Even Leonardo da Vinci was expressing an essentially Platonic notion when he wrote in his notebook, “The desire to know is natural to good men,” and “For in truth great love is born of great knowledge of the thing loved.” In fact, Plato was the central influence of the classical wisdom whose rebirth marked the Renaissance that Leonardo personified.

*There is an eye of the soul which is
more precious than ten-thousand bodily eyes,
for by it alone is truth seen.*

—PLATO



TEACHER AND STUDENT

Plato's birth into a distinguished and politically well-connected Athenian family came near the onset of the Peloponnesian War. The war exacerbated an atmosphere of political turmoil in his homeland that lasted until he was in his early twenties. Originally oriented to a career in politics, Plato became disenchanted by the cutthroat struggle for power between the oligarchic and democratic factions in Athens. As he wrote, "I was disgusted and drew back from the wickedness of the times."

Plato's uncles and older brothers had studied with Socrates before his birth, so we can be reasonably sure that he was exposed as a child to the teachings of the master. And it is with Socrates that an appreciation of Plato must begin. Born in Athens in 469 B.C., Socrates dedicated his life primarily to the pursuit of moral goodness and the search for truth.

When one of his friends asked the Oracle at Delphi whether anyone was wiser than Socrates, the Oracle replied: "NO." Socrates overcame his embarrassment at being considered the wisest man of his time by interpreting the distinction as recognition of his most important knowledge: the knowledge of his own ignorance. He believed that the Oracle's intention was to bring him and others closer to goodness and truth by helping them realize their fundamental ignorance of these essentials. Rejecting

the mantle of “expert” or even “teacher,” Socrates practiced profound intellectual humility, describing himself as a “midwife of ideas.”

The process of the questing mind, critical and open, is the core of the Socratic approach. Socrates embodied the Delphic command to “know thyself.” His admonition, “The unexamined life is not worth living” is the point of departure for anyone who seeks wholeness and enlightenment. Socrates believed that happiness was to be achieved not through external achievement, material wealth, or status, but rather through living a life that nurtures one’s soul.

Socrates found his finest student in Plato, but their relationship was cut short when the Athenian democratic government sentenced Socrates to death in 399 B.C., on what Plato called “a monstrous charge, the last that could be made against him, the charge of impiety.” His disillusionment with Athens at its worst, Plato left for years of study abroad, seeking recourse through philosophy—literally, “the love of wisdom,” from the Greek roots *philein* meaning “loving” and *sophia* meaning “wise.” As “law and morality were deteriorating at an alarming rate,” he wrote, he was ultimately “forced . . . to the belief that the only hope of finding justice for society or for the individual lay in true philosophy.”

PLATO’S RENAISSANCE

In 1486, at the age of twenty-three, Pico della Mirandola asserted his stature as one of the high priests of Plato’s renaissance when he presented his remarkable “Oration on the Dignity of Man,” a neo-Platonic perspective on creation that is as inspiring to students of human potential today as it was when first presented more than 500 years ago. In it Pico proclaims that we humans, unlike other creatures, have unlimited potential to create our own stature in life. He writes:

“Neither an established place, nor a form belong to you alone, nor any special function we have given you, O Adam, and for this reason, that you have and possess, according to your desire and judgment, whatever place, whatever form, and whatever functions you shall desire. The nature of other creatures, which has been determined, is confined within the bounds prescribed by us. You, who are confined by no limits, shall determine for yourself your own nature, in accordance with your own free will, in whose hand I have placed you.

“I have set you at the center of the world, so that from there you may more easily survey whatever is in the world. We have made you neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal, so that, you may fashion yourself in whatever form you shall prefer. You should be able to descend among the lower forms of being, which are brute beasts; you shall be able to be reborn out of the judgment of your own soul into the higher beings, which are divine.”

A PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

Plato’s love of wisdom is best appreciated by considering his fundamental philosophy of knowledge on which his political, educational, and moral philosophy are all based. Of course, a full understanding of the ideas that Plato developed and expressed through his celebrated dialogues would require a lifetime of scholarly inquiry. Nevertheless, his most important idea, and the famous metaphor with which he chose to express it, reveal more than a glimpse of his genius.

In Plato’s view, the world we experience is a pale reflection of an ideal world, a permanent and unchanging realm he calls the world of Forms. Our everyday world is changing constantly, with everything in it a mere

According to the Neo-Platonists, since the self shares the same structure as the world, by knowing the self, one can know the world.

—PROFESSOR ROGER
PADEN ON THE NEO-
PLATONIC LOVE OF
WISDOM

impermanent expression of its true essence, which resides in the world of Forms. For example, in your hand you hold a book, but it is only because you know the eternal essence, or form, of “bookness” that you are able to recognize this particular book. Similarly, you recognize an apple or a cat as a manifestation of the ideal form of “apple-ness” or “catness.”

The world of Forms is hierarchically organized, with Beauty, Truth, and Goodness at the top of the hierarchy. Plato reasoned that before birth all human souls have access to the world of pure beauty, truth, and goodness but that when we are born, we forget. The philosopher’s mission is to lead the way back to the beauty, truth, and goodness we have forgotten.

Imagine a perfect circle.

We can conceive the form of a perfect circle and the circle can be formally defined as πr^2 .

Now draw a circle. As you draw you will introduce imperfections. Even Leonardo and Michelangelo drew imperfect circles. And a computer can’t draw a perfect circle either, because its pixels aren’t perfect.

Nevertheless, the ideal form of the perfect circle is known to us, Plato would say, from before birth.

In book seven of *The Republic* Plato introduces his most famous metaphor for the world of forms and its relation to our everyday experience: “I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or ignorance of our human condition somewhat as follows. Imagine an underground chamber, like a cave with an entrance open to the daylight and running a long way underground. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since



they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads.”

Plato goes on to describe the prisoners’ restricted view. Their “reality” is limited to the shadows reflected on the wall of the cave by a fire burning behind them. Plato then asks, “think what would naturally happen to them if they were released from their bonds and cured of their delusions.”

He describes the prisoners’ difficulty in adjusting to the brightness and overcoming the illusions of his former “shadow-reality”—a realm that the prisoners had not known was a mere shadow of the world of light, just as ours is a limited reflection of the world of Forms.

For Plato, it is the philosopher who overcomes his fear, breaks his chains, and ventures out of the cave to seek the light. And it is love, of wisdom, goodness, truth, and beauty, that is the philosopher’s driving force. Plato’s true philosopher, who escapes the cave and knows the light of the form of the Good, also returns to guide others to enlightenment.

THE POWER OF LOVE

*[Beauty] is eternal, unproduced, indestructible;
neither subject to increase or decay . . . All other things
are beautiful through a participation of it . . .
This is the divine and pure . . . the beautiful itself.*

—PLATO



The concept of love that Plato saw as so central to enlightenment is different from the love of which we speak so casually today. When Plato speaks of the “love of wisdom,” he really means it. For Plato, passionate love of beauty, truth, and goodness was the way out of the cave. This loving force, known to the Greeks as Eros, may begin with physical desire and personal affection but evolves to a more universal, spiritual plane. (Thus the contemporary phrase “Platonic relationship,” though typically used to suggest that a relationship is not carnal, actually refers to a friendship based on the pursuit and shared recognition of pure truth, beauty, and goodness.)

Love is expressed through rigorous work in Plato’s world; disciplined study and intensive training in reasoning are prerequisites for understanding true knowledge. Still, the process by which Plato suggests we experience a full realization of the form of the Good bears some resemblance to a romantic consummation. Describing oneness with the form of the Good, he writes: “If the lover is attuned to the object with which he would be united, the result is delight, pleasure and satisfaction. When the lover is united with the one he loves, he finds peace; relieved of his burden, he finds rest.” And speaking through Socrates’ voice in the Symposium, Plato emphasizes that “human nature will not easily find a better helper than love.”



THE PLATO OF THE EAST (551–479 B.C.)

Kung Fu Tse, known as Confucius, is the seminal figure of Chinese philosophy. His practice of the love of wisdom was so influential that his teachings were outlawed by the Communists more than two millennia after they were introduced. Like Plato, he was an idealist concerned with the nature of virtue, social order, and education. His formulation of the Golden Rule—“What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others”—represents a revolutionary development in human thought. Five hundred years before the birth of Christianity he taught: “Acknowledge benefits by the return of benefits, but refrain from revenging injuries,” and he urged Chinese citizens to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Confucius came to these principles not through revelation or mysticism, but rather through the power of reasoning.

THE GENIUS WITHIN

Plato returned to Athens for his crowning achievement: the creation in 379 B.C. of the Academy, the first university in the Western world. If Platonism were a religion, then learning and teaching would be its forms of worship, and the Academy would be its temple. Entrance to it was predicated on successful completion of what we now call elementary and secondary education. Although information about specialized subjects was included in the curriculum, the primary focus of a Platonic education was “reminding” the student of the knowledge inherent in the human soul.

Plato reasoned that the most important knowledge was already inside the student. Therefore, the role of the teacher was to facilitate the student’s

realization of this inner knowing through Socratic questioning leading to independent thought. In the Dialogue entitled “Meno,” for example, Plato’s Socrates quizzes a young slave boy about the Pythagorean theorem. The boy, who has no training of any kind in geometry, initially leaps to false answers. But Socrates’ stream of questioning soon brings the boy to realize that his conclusions are faulty. Eventually Socrates’ questions stimulate the boy to solve the problem correctly. Socrates then argues that the boy’s geometrical knowledge was innate, and that he was serving not as a teacher, but merely as a midwife of recollection. Just as the student’s discovery of the proofs of geometry can be drawn out by skilled questioning, so, Plato argues, can realization of virtue, justice, and beauty.

Plato emphasizes that “we must reject the conception of education professed by those who say that they can put into the mind knowledge that was not there before . . .” For Plato, anything worth knowing is already known, and must be remembered and reclaimed by the soul.

Plato’s conception of the soul involves three parts, organized hierarchically, from lowest to highest, as the physical (“the appetites”), the imaginative (“the passions”) and the intellectual (“reason”), and his ideal society is structured with three corresponding classes: manual laborers (physical), artisans and soldiers (imaginative), and the philosophers and guardians of society (intellectual). Here we see the basis for the modern world’s criticism of Plato, from the understandable objection to his rigid class system and his misguided suggestion that artists and poets be censored because of their potentially disruptive influence, to the charge that his notion of the ideal state, led by a benevolent king and elite “guardians,” has been misused to justify the absolutist and authoritarian tendencies of numerous corrupt governments through the ages.

Yet careful readers of Plato’s *Republic* cannot fail to recognize the emphasis he places on the thorough training, moral integrity, and self-denial required of his ideal society’s leaders. And, in contrast to the conventions of his time, Plato believed that women could qualify as “guardians” of society and as philosopher queens! Overall, the fairest criticism of *The*

Republic may be that, in advocating an ideal society, Plato is guilty of attempting the impossible. As Aristotle put it: “In framing an ideal we may assume what we wish, but we should avoid impossibilities.”

As the father of philosophy, Plato stands as an enduring archetype of the love of wisdom. Although Aristotle questioned the framing of an ideal society in *The Republic*, he nevertheless saw Plato as an ideal teacher. Aristotle wrote:

*Of that unique man whose name is not to come
from the lips of the wicked
Theirs is not the right to praise him—
Him who first revealed clearly
By word and by deed
That he who is virtuous is happy
Alas, not one of us can equal him.*



Summary of Achievements

- ▲ Plato is the seminal figure of Western philosophy.
- ▲ He introduced the logical concept of “definition.”
- ▲ He formulated the basis of the modern university, and the idea of primary and secondary education in preparation for the university.
- ▲ He championed the process of reasoning and independent thought and formulated the concept of education as drawing out the knowledge of the student, rather than stuffing it in.
- ▲ Despite his tough stance on artists in *The Republic*, Plato’s Dialogues qualify him as a great literary genius. As *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* points out, “Greek prose reached its peak in the writings of Plato. His flexibility, his rich vocabulary, his easy colloquialism and high rhetoric, his humor, irony, pathos, gravity, bluntness, delicacy and occasional ferocity, his mastery of metaphor, simile and myth, his swift delineation of character—his combination of these and other qualities puts him beyond rivalry.”
- ▲ He brought the teachings of Socrates to the world and taught Aristotle.



PLATO AND YOU

Chances are that you picked up this book as an expression of your own love of wisdom. It is the spirit that drives you to increase your knowledge and improve yourself, and your cultivation of it will reward you in the subsequent chapters and beyond. In the self-assessment and exercises that follow, you'll have the opportunity to examine your own life in the tradition of Socrates and Plato, but we'll proceed in the spirit of the Renaissance neo-Platonists, with a bit more emphasis on the ecstatic elements!

Before you begin, you may wish to consider Plato's delightfully ironic relevance to our world today. Plato reasoned that reality was unchanging and that it possessed a definitive structure. He argued that the "good life" was to be discovered in conforming to that structure. The crux of the change from ancient to modern thought is the shift of focus from a hierarchical, uniform, static world of absolutes to a "matrixed" world of diverse, dynamic, uncertain relativity. Quantum physics, most notably Nobel Prize-winner Werner Heisenberg's famous "uncertainty principle," is a symbol of a world that now easily dismisses "absolutes." But although the modern world has rejected many of Plato's answers, the fundamental questions he raised—"What is virtue and how can we cultivate it?" "How can we live in a way that nurtures the soul?"—are perhaps more important now than ever. And Werner Heisenberg himself was moved to write that one of his life goals was "To meditate in peace on the great questions Plato raised."

Please begin your own meditations by musing on the following self-assessment. Reflect on these Platonic themes and then, after you complete the exercises, return to the self-assessment and reflect again and note any shift in your responses:



PLATO:
DEEPENING YOUR LOVE OF WISDOM
SELF-ASSESSMENT

- My happiness is based on my success at work.
- My happiness is based on how others see me.
- My happiness is based on my financial success and material possessions.
- My happiness is based on nurturing my soul.
- I have a well-reasoned perspective on goodness and a strong code of ethics and moral behavior.
- I'm committed to moral, law-abiding behavior, even if I don't feel like it.
- I believe that virtue is its own reward
- I seek the essence of beauty every day.
- I ask probing, challenging questions of myself and others
- I have a rational, well-considered philosophy of life.
- I examine my life—my philosophy, values, and contribution to society—with a searching, critical eye.
- For which principles would I be willing to sacrifice my life?

EXERCISES
THINKING LIKE PLATO/
DEEPENING YOUR LOVE OF WISDOM

Life must be lived as play.

—PLATO



PRACTICE WONDER

In a world of “been there, done that” and “whatever . . .” wonder is often considered naïve and “unhip.” But “wonder” is the root of “wonderful” and the beginning of the philosophical quest. Webster offers the following synonyms: admiration, appreciation, astonishment, reverence, surprise, amazement, and awe.

In your notebook, make a list of ten wonderful things, memories, imaginings, observations, dreams, or experiences that fill you with amazement, reverence, and awe.

Appreciation of wonder, every day, is a marvelous way to invite your mind to stay open and increase your enjoyment of life. Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called wonder the “living power and prime agent of all human perception.” In the words of twentieth-century genius Buckminster Fuller, “Dare to be naïve!”

CONTEMPLATE BEAUTY

*. . . at last the vision . . . of a single science,
which is the science of beauty everywhere.*

— PLATO



The goal of the philosophical quest is direct apprehension of the universal creative intelligence through questioning, contemplation, and profound reflection. For Plato, truth, goodness, and beauty are woven together in a supreme tapestry of perfect form. Of these, beauty is the one most accessible to the senses.

As Plato wrote:

“For he who would proceed aright . . . should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms . . . out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another, and that beauty in every form is one and the same.”

- ▲ Explore the meaning of “the Beautiful” in your life by making a list of ten of the most beautiful things you’ve ever seen, touched, felt, tasted, thought, smelled, heard, or experienced in any way. Your list can include anything you perceive as beautiful: it might include, for example, a painting, a face, a piece of music, a sunset, a flower, a touch, a concept, or a cake!
- ▲ After you’ve made your list, jot down, in a phrase or two, your reflections on what makes each of those things beautiful.
- ▲ Then look for the common elements in your examples.
- ▲ Now experiment with expressing your own definition of the essence of beauty in a sentence or two, or perhaps in a few lines of poetry or haiku.

This is Emily Dickinson's expression of the Platonic quest for beauty:

*Beauty crowds me till I die,
Beauty, mercy have on me!
But if I expire today,
Let it be in sight of thee*

PLATONIC LOVE: BEAUTY AND ROMANCE

A wonderful way to deepen your appreciation of beauty while enhancing your love life is to reflect on and express your perceptions of the deep beauty you experience, or remember, in your partner. When most people fall in love they see straight through to the essence of beauty in their beloved. But then, as the pressures of making a life with someone grow, that original inspiration is obscured. True romance is remembering and celebrating that beauty, with a sense of wonder, in the midst of the mundane. Hold the image of someone you love in mind and then write down your experience of the way in which that person manifests the form of Beauty. Then, consolidate your reflections in a simple card and give it to your partner. As you refresh your ability to see the beauty in others you'll be rewarded by discovering that they can't help but see it in you.

MEDITATE ON LIGHT

For Plato the supreme form of the Good was represented by the sun. Both Socrates and Plato equated wisdom and goodness with light. Socrates tells us:

“In order that the mind should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can learn to contemplate reality and that supreme splendor which we have called the good.

Hence there may well be an art whose aim it would be to effect this very thing.”

Poet Ted Hughes practiced and taught a form of this art. He prepared his students to write poetry with this simple meditation on light that you may enjoy. Sit comfortably in a dark, quiet room. Place a single candle on a table, light it, and watch the flame. Keep your eyes soft but focused. When your mind wanders, return to the light of the flame. This is a wonderful practice to prepare yourself for any creative endeavor; try it before sketching, painting, drawing, or writing poetry.

Another inspiring meditation on light is to watch the sunrise and sunset on the same day. Of course, the Light that Plato urges us to seek is ultimately within. As the Chandogya Upanishad expresses it: “There is a light that shines beyond all things on earth, beyond the highest, the very highest heavens. This is the light that shines in your heart.”

APPRECIATE AND NURTURE POTENTIAL

Aristotle, Plato’s greatest student, formulated the philosophical concept of potentiality. For Aristotle the motive force in the cosmos is the tendency of everything to become what it is meant to be. Aristotle remained true to his teacher (although he disagreed on many other points) by positing that all things develop true to their Form. Thus, human sperm and ovum are a potential baby and an acorn is a potential oak tree.

In early spring the great sunflower fields near Plato’s birthplace in Athens seem empty. The first-time visitor sees nothing. But the farmers have already planted millions of seeds. And the farmers foresee, with the right conditions of rain, soil, and sunshine, flowing fields of giant yellow sunflowers. For the farmer, the sunflowers “exist,” even before they can be seen, because he knows their potential and the necessary conditions for their full flowering.

What are the seeds within your own soul that have yet to flower fully? Shed some light on your unrealized potential by doing a ten-minute stream-of-consciousness writing exercise on one of the following topics.

- ▲ What are the “right conditions” necessary for the full flowering of my soul?
- ▲ What am I meant to be?
- ▲ My true potential is . . .
- ▲ My strongest undeveloped talent is . . .

HOW TO DO A STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS EXERCISE

Stream-of-consciousness writing is a marvelous tool for appreciating and nurturing your potential. You can use it to express your love of wisdom as you plumb the depths of any question you wish to explore. Stream of consciousness simply involves writing your thoughts and associations as they occur, without editing.

The secret of effective stream-of-consciousness writing is to *keep your pen moving*; don't lift it away from the paper or stop to correct your spelling and grammar, just write continuously.

Stream-of-consciousness writing yields lots of nonsense and redundancy, but can lead to profound insight and understanding. Don't worry if you seem to be writing pure gibberish; this is actually a sign that you are overriding the habitual, superficial aspects of your thought process. As you persevere, keeping your pen on the paper and moving it continuously, you'll eventually open a window through which your intuitive intelligence will shine. Bear in mind the poet's motto: “Write drunk, revise sober.”

You may wish to dedicate a special notebook just for stream-of-consciousness writing.

Dedicate a minimum time for each stream-of-consciousness session. You'll probably need at least five minutes to get your intuitive mind flowing.

Take a ten-minute break after each stream-of-consciousness session. Then go back to your notebook and read what you have written aloud. Highlight the words or phrases that speak to you most strongly. Look for themes, insights, the beginnings of poems, and more questions to explore.

In addition to appreciating and cultivating your own potential, strive to see and nurture the gifts of those around you. Do you appreciate and encourage the full potential of your spouse or significant other? Your children? Your colleagues at work? Your students? Hold the image of each significant person in your life, one at a time, and contemplate the emergence of their full potential and self-expression. Note your reflections on anything you could do, or perhaps something you could stop doing, that might facilitate their growth.

Our modern Olympic games are another aspect of the legacy of the ancient Greek achievement. When Olympic gold medals are awarded, winners are invariably asked the secret of their success. Almost without exception they answer, “I owe it to my [mom, dad, coach, teacher, brother, friend, priest, etc.] who always believed in me.” The best coaches, parents, and friends see the potential in the people around them and help them discover something inside that they might never have known without that external encouragement. Be the person whose belief in the potential of those around you inspires their best.

THE 100 QUESTIONS

For Plato and his teacher, Socrates, the process of questioning is the key to deepening wisdom. When Leonardo da Vinci emphasized that “The desire to know is natural to good men,” he was expressing the “rebirth” or “renaissance” of a fundamentally Platonic ideal. One of the most popular and powerful exercises from *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci* involves writing

out, in stream-of-consciousness style, 100 questions. This exercise goes right to the heart of deepening your love of wisdom and so it is “reborn” here. But now you’ll be guided through it by an excerpt from the “genius journal” of Roben Torosayn, Ph.D.

“I had the most interesting and strange experience last night. I thought I was hallucinating. It all started when I was reading *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci* and decided I wanted to try the Hundred Questions exercise. The instructions, which turned out to be very important, read as follows:

“In your notebook, make a list of a hundred questions that are important to you. Your list can include *any kind of question* as long as it’s something you deem significant: anything from “How can I save money?” or “How can I have more fun?” to “What is the meaning and purpose of my existence?” and “How can I best serve the Creator?”

“*Do the entire list in one sitting.* Write quickly; don’t worry about spelling, grammar, or repeating the same question in different words (recurring questions will alert you to emerging themes). Why a hundred questions? The first twenty or so will be off the top of your head. In the next thirty or forty, themes often begin to emerge. And in the latter part of the second half of the list you are likely to discover unexpected but profound material.’

“I was especially intrigued to see if I’d arrive at anything unexpected or profound at the end, as I felt sure I already knew my questions. Initially, I had questions like ‘How can I find what’s right for me?’ and ‘How can I not be distracted as easily?’ Many questions revolved around wanting to achieve more balance and harmony. Another theme was how to get beyond my own narcissism.

“After filling a page with twenty questions, I was already a little tired. It was late (about 11:20 P.M. when I began), and I had to get up at 7:10 A.M. for yoga. I felt, ‘I don’t HAVE to do it one sitting. Why should I?’ But I liked the idea of following the directions as best I could, even if only to see what would happen if I did exactly what was intended—like a mini-experiment. So I made a leap of faith, assumed the author may have really intended 100 questions for some reason, and kept going, hoping maybe I’d find out something in the end.

“By question 47, I had a deeper than usual flash: ‘How can I probe deep within me, to live like a genius, utterly unconcerned with others’ judgments, only interested in the problem at hand?’ Some nagging themes also repeated regularly, such as, ‘How can I respect myself enough to protect my time.’ It got hard again after question 60, after I had filled four pages. I was exhausted and felt like I couldn’t possibly go on. Again I reread the instructions, and looked for the part about what happens with the latter half of the 100. I decided that I knew I could stop if I wanted to, but that instead I WOULD stick it through—because, as I told myself, I really didn’t know WHAT would happen if I did it *all*. Part of me didn’t believe anything really profound or unexpected would come out of it.

“Sure enough, from question 88 to 89 there was a sudden and very marked shift. I went from, ‘What else matters besides the practical in life?’ to ‘Where is the light, the source of power and divinity—the source and inspiration for all?’ At the time I was writing this, I was also aware of a change in my bodily condition, as if I was tripping on a psychedelic drug or getting into some other state of mind. As I felt the pen press into the paper in my journal, it actually felt for a moment as if something or someone or some energy was driving the writing for me, moving my pen.

“I said to myself then in a blur, ‘This isn’t me, right now—something’s passing through me.’ I believe I may have had some form of an altered state of consciousness experience.

“On reflection, it is interesting how the quality and kind of questions changed; from egocentric preoccupations, and other concerns about what I or we can do, to eventually a mystical transcendental state of mind entirely. Interestingly, I was aware of and could have written some so-called profound questions earlier, but they felt contrived at that point, without my having gone through the process.

“For me, this all shows how incredibly important it is to let ourselves really get into any project, almost lose our self-consciousness and abashedness to get immersed in whatever we’re doing, whatever we’re exploring, to LET ourselves have each experience—beyond clichés, and breaking through detached

coolness or mindlessness—as fully as possible. THAT seems to be ‘living,’ no?”

Experiment with “deepening your love of wisdom” by doing the 100 questions exercise. Then, as Roben did, make notes in your journal about what you learn from the process.

Here are the instructions again:

In your notebook, make a list of a hundred questions that are important to you. Your list can include *any kind of question* as long as it’s something you deem significant: anything from “How can I save money?” or “How can I have more fun?” to “What is the meaning and purpose of my existence?” and “How can I best serve the Creator?”

Do the entire list in one sitting. Write quickly; don’t worry about spelling, grammar, or repeating the same question in different words (recurring questions will alert you to emerging themes). Why a hundred questions? The first twenty or so will be off the top of your head. In the next thirty or forty, themes often begin to emerge. And in the latter part of the second half of the list you are likely to discover unexpected but profound material.

LIVE THE EXAMINED LIFE

The Enlightenment philosopher John Stuart Mill made a pointed defense of the Platonic notion of the importance of living an examined life when he wrote: “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.”

In other words, from a Socratic/Platonic perspective ignorance isn’t bliss, and the quest for morality in our lives is the highest priority for our examination, even if it makes us uncomfortable.

Explore the state of your moral universe in the ways that follow.

EXAMINE THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY IMPLICIT IN THE MEDIA

I don't know who discovered water, but it definitely wasn't a fish. Just as fish are immersed in water, we are so surrounded by advertising, marketing, and media that we can become dulled to the effects they have on our moral awareness.

Ask Yourself

What role did advertising and marketing play in the formation and maintenance of my moral compass? How does it affect me now? How does it aim to shape my values and behaviors? How do advertising and marketing influence the moral development of my children? Experiment by flipping through a few of the channels on your television and getting a quick read on the

moral content or message of each channel.

Then write in your journal, or discuss with a friend, the underlying moral messages of any of the advertisements in the magazines you read, the billboards you pass on the road, or on the radio and television shows you enjoy.

How do these types of influences affect your soul?

Professor Paden emphasizes: "No random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty for Plato. For Plato, acts of kindness help make one kind, and exposure to beauty draws us toward the real. Both make us better people and should be systematically pursued."

EXAMINE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO VIRTUE

The word "ethics" comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means "character" or "habitual way of life." Plato and Aristotle reasoned that character must be cultivated through practice and exposure to positive role models. Both Plato and Aristotle thought that virtue was learned in a social setting. They argued that we must maintain a social context that encourages the development of a good character.

Consider the following questions to guide you in your quest for virtue:

What is your most significant virtue and how did you acquire it?

What is your most significant vice and how did you acquire it?

What should you read, listen to, and watch on TV to cultivate virtue?
Is it possible to be happy without being virtuous?
How can you help to cultivate virtue in your children?
Who are your role models for virtue?
What virtues of theirs do you most admire? Why?
Could you think of better role models?
Who are your anti–role models? What vices do they exemplify?
How could you change your milieu to lead you in the direction of greater virtue?

PUT ON A TOGA PARTY

Living the “examined life” is hard work, but both Socrates and Plato also knew how to have a good time. Try a Greek toga party in their honor, not the *Animal House* version, but rather, a modern expression of the original Platonic *The Symposium*. Invite your guests to come dressed as ancient Greeks and to bring their favorite poems or essays about love. Serve a variety of simple Greek delicacies (available in any Greek deli and now in most supermarkets), such as Kalamata olives, hummus, artichoke hearts, feta cheese, hot pita bread, dates, figs, honey, and yogurt.

For a toga party recipe, try this:

Symposium *Lamb Delight*

(Serves 4)

8 lamb sausages (d’Artagnan is an excellent and widely available brand)
2 shallots
8 cloves of garlic
One pound of boneless lamb loin
Sprinkles of dried oregano, salt, pepper and hot red pepper flakes
Half a pound of Greek feta cheese
8–12 artichoke hearts
16–20 pitted Kalamata olives

Cook the sausage in a frying pan and set it aside. Then sauté the shallots and garlic in some Greek olive oil. Cut the lamb loin into bite-size pieces and add it to the shallot-garlic mixture, on a low flame, stirring gently with the spirit of Platonic Love. Sprinkle in the salt, pepper, oregano, and hot red pepper flakes.

When the meat is cooked to your taste, add the sausage and stir in the crumbled feta cheese and then the olives and artichoke hearts.

Let it simmer for a few minutes and then serve over rice, orzo, or couscous.

Most important, keep the wine flowing. Plato invokes the timeless phrase “in vino veritas,” and in the original *Symposium* everyone invoked Bacchus—god of wine—by imbibing continuously. Socrates was renowned for his ability to drink more than anyone else without showing the effects. As the evening progresses, and the wine flows, ask each guest to recite his or her ode to love and give a prize for the most evocative, moving expression (a laurel wreath and a bottle of wine make great prizes).

Ron Gross, author of *Socrates’ Way* and leader of the Seminar on Creativity at Columbia University, comments on the value of this kind of informal philosophical exchange: “I encourage my students to elevate their conversations with friends by inviting a discussion of what people mean when they use some key term or phrase such as ‘love,’ ‘justice,’ ‘friendship,’ or ‘doing the right thing.’ It’s astonishing how differently people define such terms. Sharing different perspectives in a respectful and creative way enhances many social occasions that might otherwise glide along much closer to the ground.”

Gross adds, “Plato’s Dialogues are conversations among friends. *The Crito*, *The Timaeus*, *The Euthyphro* are all written in the style of a conversation that might take place at a dinner party. So if Plato could sit in on a great dialogue between your friends Dave and Ellen, he might turn it into ‘The Dave’ or ‘The Ellen!’”

THEME EXPLORATION: ESCAPE FROM THE CAVE

The twentieth-century philosopher Georges Gurdjieff noted that many people are living in a “shadow realm,” like the one described in Plato’s metaphor of the cave. He wrote, “Man is asleep,” and he advocated a practice called “self-remembering.”

One of Gurdjieff’s tools for encouraging self-remembering was working with a theme to encourage greater awareness. Theme work is a powerful tool for awakening your inner genius. Choose a theme for the day and record observations in your notebook. You can jot down your thoughts throughout the day, or just make mental notes to be recorded in your notebook at a quiet time before sleep. Aim to make accurate, nonevaluative observations. Speculation, opinion, and theory are fine, but actual observation offers the richest resource.

Begin your theme work by exploring the metaphor of the cave in everyday life. Ask yourself: What are the habits and influences that dull my awareness on a daily basis? And how is that “dulling” manifest in my body?

APPEARANCE AND REALITY

What is real? What is mere appearance? How can we know the difference? These three questions gave birth to philosophy. Before Plato and Socrates, the “pre-Socratic” philosophers argued that reality was fundamentally different from appearances. Parmenides posited that reality was “one” and unchanging, while Heraclitus proposed that it was “flux.” For Pythagoras reality was “music,” for Thales it was “water,” and for Democritus it was composed of “atoms.”

Plato’s laurels as the father of philosophy rest partly on his organization and integration of the multiplicity of pre-Socratic ideas with the teachings of his teacher. As Roger Paden, professor of the philosophy of ethics at the George Mason University, explains:

“For the Greeks, one who knows only appearances is fundamentally ignorant . . . The first step in philosophy, as in life, is to realize that appearances are somehow illusory—not completely, but generally. The second step is to realize that there is a reality behind them. The third is to know that reality. The last is to understand appearances in terms of that underlying reality. Connect that to the cave story and you will see that, for Plato, the stable reality behind appearances are the forms, united by the single form of the Good. Appearances are a shadow of the forms and need to be understood in terms of the forms.”

Learning to distinguish between appearance and reality is the basis of wisdom in everyday life as well as the essence of the philosophical quest. Take “appearance and reality” as a theme for a day and record your observations of the most notable discrepancies between them. The appearance/reality distinction is a powerful lens through which to view everything, from a suit of clothes to a smile.

For Plato, anything worth knowing is already known, and must be remembered and reclaimed by the soul. This Platonic notion is expressed poetically in these lines from T. S. Eliot’s “The Four Quartets.”

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

PLATO AT WORK

In his classic study of leadership entitled *On Becoming a Leader*, Warren Bennis reports that outstanding leaders share a fundamental commitment to personal growth. In other words, they are committed to deepening their love of wisdom, to living the examined life that Socrates urges. The finest leaders build “learning organizations” by modeling an openness to learning in their own behavior.

Although Plato’s ideal of a philosopher king or queen doesn’t align with our modern democratic philosophy of government, it is a marvelous metaphor for business leadership. Leaders in rapidly changing organizations must be guardians of the essence of core competencies and champions of the ideals, or forms, of corporate vision and moral integrity. And they must empower people through Socratic questioning to make those ideals real. The most effective leaders make wise decisions by encouraging a democracy of ideas, mining the intellectual capital at every level of the organization.

The way to invest in the intellectual capital around you is, of course, to ask questions. The Socratic method is an extremely effective technique for leaders and an essential practice in the art of empowerment. Effective leaders are skilled at asking carefully worded questions, guiding people to greater understanding of issues and problems until appropriate solutions became obvious. They praise helpful ideas and correct faulty ones by continuing to ask carefully chosen questions. They rarely appear to be directing the discussion or to have all the answers, yet that is often the case. By guiding people to think things through for themselves, the Platonic leader encourages shared pride and ownership of the solutions generated.

Ed Bassett, senior vice president at Du Pont, comments on Plato’s relevance to his work: “The secret of leading in a rapidly changing environment is to be committed to living the examined life oneself. Our

organization has evolved dramatically in the course of the last twenty years, but our core values have remained constant. Our workplace had become far more diverse, our technologies have changed almost beyond recognition, but the essence of what we do—solving our customers’ most important business problems—remains the same. Leaders must learn to be flexible and creative in tactics, and adaptable to shifts in culture and style, while holding to guiding principles of vision and ethics as though they were Platonic ideals.”

PLATO’S MUSIC: THE SOUNDS OF TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Plato set the tone of the Western philosophical tradition with his dialogues on questions of truth, beauty and goodness. Through their development of four-part counterpoint, four voices that share the melody back and forth almost like a verbal dialogue, composers of the Baroque period—most notably Johann Sebastian Bach—provide a supreme expression of this tradition. Listen, for example, to Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos, his “Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello” or the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, and thrill to these powerful musical discourses on the centrality of order and beauty in creation.

Plato’s highly structured perfect society remains an unattainable ideal, but that ideal lives in Bach’s highly structured exquisite music. Six years after Bach’s death, Mozart was born, and by the time he was six years old, this incredible prodigy had already written and performed a number of sublime compositions. Indeed, Mozart’s music seems to have been transcribed directly from Plato’s realm of pure beauty. Mozart’s Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, for example, is a wonderful musical expression of the Platonic quest for wisdom. As you listen to the compelling dialogue

between the clarinet and the orchestra you cannot help but feel closer to the essence of truth and beauty.



ONWARD TO BRUNELLESCHI

The Greeks manifested their profound love of wisdom through their architecture. The Parthenon in Athens, designed and built by Phidias, the supreme architectural genius of his day, was a monument to the patron goddess of Athens, Pallas Athena. Born, according to Greek myth, from the head of Zeus, she represents supreme godlike wisdom.

The Plato principle of deepening your love of wisdom is the well-spring of your journey through the breakthrough thinkers in this book. Plato's influence pervades all the geniuses you are about to encounter. The Platonic quest for wisdom, goodness, truth, and beauty is the vital force of our civilization and the personal secret of a fulfilling life and enduring youth.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Europe endured a thousand years in which the love of wisdom was severely constrained by dogma. Our next revolutionary genius is, for many, the least familiar of our luminaries. Yet he changed the world forever by designing and constructing a temple of wisdom that became the locus of the transformation of consciousness known as the Renaissance.

PERFECTBOUND E-BOOK EXTRA:
Genius Timelines

Plato

WORKS AND DAYS: TIMELINES OF GENIUS

PLATO

- 428 B.C.: Born: Athens, Greece.
- 409-404: In military service during the Peloponnesian War.
- 407: Begins friendship and study with Socrates.
- 403: Democracy returns to Athens; Plato considers politics.
- 399: Mentor Socrates sentenced to death.
- 388-87: First of three trips to southern Italy.
- 379: Creation of the "Academy."
- 367: Second trip to southern Italy: At Dion's request, tutors Dionysius II in the ways of the Philosopher King.

- 362: Third trip to southern Italy: Tutors
Dionysius II.
- 348: Dies: Athens, Greece.
- 529 A.D.: Academy shut down by Christian Emperor
Justinian.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael J. Gelb, a renowned innovator in the fields of creative thinking and leadership development. He is the best selling author of HOW TO THINK LIKE LEONARDO DA VINCI, BODY LEARNING, SAMUAI CHESS, and PRESENT YOURSELF! Michael Gelb's clients include BP, DuPont, IBM, Merck and Microsoft. He lives in Edgewater, N.J.

ALSO BY MICHAEL J. GELB

How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day

*How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci Workbook and Notebook:
Your Personal Companion to How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci*

Thinking for Change: Discovering the Power to Create, Communicate, and Lead

*Lessons from the Art of Juggling: How to Achieve
Your Full Potential in Business, Learning, and Life*

Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique

Samurai Chess: Mastering Strategy Through the Martial Art of the Mind

*Present Yourself: Captivate Your Audience
with Great Presentation Skills*

The New Mind Map

Credits

Declaration of Independence: detail by Steve Essig/IndexStock

Gandhi: AP/Wide World Photos

Elizabeth I: Archivo Iconographico/Corbis

Plato: CORBIS

Florence: Bettmann/Corbis

Ship of Columbus: Historical Picture Archive/Corbis

Dodo Bird: Bettmann/Corbis

Einstein: Underwood & Underwood/Corbis

Copernicus: Stapleton Collection/CORBIS

Shakespeare: Nathan Benn/Corbis

Designed by Lindgren/Fuller Design



If you enjoyed reading this excerpt, please visit HarperCollins Publishers to find out where to buy this and other PerfectBound e-books.

AUSTRALIA

<http://www.harpercollins.com.au>

CANADA

<http://www.harpercanada.com>

NEW ZEALAND

<http://www.harpercollins.co.nz>

UNITED KINGDOM

<http://www.fireandwater.com>

UNITED STATES

<http://www.perfectbound.com>

This book presents nutrition and exercise information that may or may not be right for you. In view of the complex, individual, and specific nature of health and fitness problems, this book is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Every individual is different. Before starting any diet or exercise program, get your doctor's approval. The publisher and the author expressly disclaim any responsibility for any loss or risk incurred as a consequence of the application of the contents of this book.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Norma Miller for her portraits of the ten geniuses found in this book.

DISCOVER YOUR GENIUS. Copyright © 2002 by Michael J. Gelb. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of PerfectBound™.

PerfectBound™ and the PerfectBound™ logo are trademarks of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Print edition first published in 2002 by HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.