

Specificity and Desire

“You can do anything you want to do. What is rare is this actual wanting to do a specific thing: wanting it so much that you are practically blind to all other things, that nothing else will satisfy you.”

- Robert Henri



Photo by Patrick Hendry

People don't do what they want to do mostly because they haven't taken the time to get real clear and specific about just what that is. A general desire is almost useless, for it can only suggest action in a vague sense, a conceptual sense. What the real world always demands though is concrete, specifically defined and precise movement.

People talk about “wanting to be successful.” Well, just what does that mean? What can be done right now to further that aim? Is it possible to discern a logical first step even?

Specificity and great detail are the requirements of effective action. It all starts with self-knowledge and self-understanding. Knowing what you actually want, not in general but in particular. This simply has to be figured out first.

For anyone who comes to me looking for advice or help I always start here. I've got to know what kind of thinking

they've really done. And to be clear, there's nothing at all wrong with the general feeling of “wanting to be successful.” It's the inevitable starting place of almost all great action. But it's only that—a starting place. Once a feeling like this comes over you, you have to stay with it, explore it, understand it. “Know Thyself.” Depending on where you are in life this process can happen quickly or it can take a really long time. The timing is directly related to how well you've gotten to know and understand yourself.

If you cannot articulate in very specific terms what you want to do, you aren't ready for action. You have more work to do. The frightening truth: most people will never do this. And instead they will live a life as something other, something less than what they are. The tragedy of modern existence, with all its distractions and pre-defined paths, is that it enables this self-limiting being. There doesn't seem to be enough necessity, at least materially, to get people to wake-up to themselves.