

Further, many books serve only to show how many wrong paths there are, and how widely a man may stray if he allows himself to be led by them. But he who is guided by his genius, that is to say, he who thinks for himself, who thinks voluntarily and rightly, possesses the compass wherewith to find the right course. A man, therefore, should only read when the source of his own thoughts stagnates; which is often the case with the best of minds.

It is sin against the Holy Spirit to frighten away one's own original thoughts by taking up a book. It is the same as a man flying from Nature to look at a museum of dried plants, or to study a beautiful landscape in copperplate. A man at times arrives at a truth or an idea after spending much time in thinking it out for himself, linking together his various thoughts, when he might have found the same thing in a book; it is a hundred times more valuable if he has acquired it by thinking it out for himself. For it is only by his thinking it out for himself that it enters as an integral part, as a living member into the whole system of his thought, and stands in complete and firm relation with it; that it is fundamentally understood with all its consequences, and carries the colour, the shade, the impress of his own way of thinking; and comes at the very moment, just as the necessity for it is felt, and stands fast and cannot be forgotten. This is the perfect application, nay, interpretation of Goethe's

"Was du ererbt von deinen V?tern hast
Erwirb es um es zu besitzen."