

A man can apply himself of his own free will to reading and learning, while he cannot to thinking. Thinking must be kindled like a fire by a draught and sustained by some kind of interest in the subject. This interest may be either of a purely objective nature or it may be merely subjective. The latter exists in matters concerning us personally, but objective interest is only to be found in heads that think by nature, and to whom thinking is as natural as breathing; but they are very rare. This is why there is so little of it in most men of learning.

The difference between the effect that thinking for oneself and that reading has on the mind is incredibly great; hence it is continually developing that original difference in minds which induces one man to think and another to read. Reading forces thoughts upon the mind which are as foreign and heterogeneous to the bent and mood in which it may be for the moment, as the seal is to the wax on which it stamps its imprint. The mind thus suffers total compulsion from without; it has first this and first that to think about, for which it has at the time neither instinct nor liking.