

The distinction between matter and form, of which I am here speaking, is true also in regard to conversation. It is chiefly intelligence, judgment, wit, and vivacity that enable a man to converse; they give form to the conversation. However, the _matter_ of the conversation must soon come into notice--in other words, _that_ about which one can talk to the man, namely, his knowledge. If this is very small, it will only be his possessing the above-named formal qualities in a quite exceptionally high degree that will make his conversation of any value, for his matter will be restricted to things concerning humanity and nature, which are known generally. It is just the reverse if a man is wanting in these formal qualities, but has, on the other hand, knowledge of such a kind that it lends value to his conversation; this value, however, will then entirely rest on the matter of his conversation, for, according to the Spanish proverb, _mas sabe el necio en su casa, que el sabio en la agena_.

A thought only really lives until it has reached the boundary line of words; it then becomes petrified and dies immediately; yet it is as everlasting as the fossilised animals and plants of former ages. Its existence, which is really momentary, may be compared to a crystal the instant it becomes crystallised.

As soon as a thought has found words it no longer exists in us or is serious in its deepest sense.