

Reading is thinking with some one else's head instead of one's own.

But to think for oneself is to endeavour to develop a coherent whole, a system, even if it is not a strictly complete one. Nothing is more harmful than, by dint of continual reading, to strengthen the current of other people's thoughts. These thoughts, springing from different minds, belonging to different systems, bearing different colours, never flow together of themselves into a unity of thought, knowledge, insight, or conviction, but rather cram the head with a Babylonian confusion of tongues; consequently the mind becomes overcharged with them and is deprived of all clear insight and almost disorganised. This condition of things may often be discerned in many men of learning, and it makes them inferior in sound understanding, correct judgment, and practical tact to many illiterate men, who, by the aid of experience, conversation, and a little reading, have acquired a little knowledge from without, and made it always subordinate to and incorporated it with their own thoughts.

The scientific _thinker_ also does this to a much greater extent.

Although he requires much knowledge and must read a great deal, his mind is nevertheless strong enough to overcome it all, to assimilate it, to incorporate it with the system of his thoughts, and to subordinate it to the organic relative unity of his insight, which is vast and ever-growing. By this means his own thought, like the bass in an organ, always takes the lead in everything, and is never deadened by other sounds, as is the case with purely antiquarian minds; where all sorts of musical passages, as it were, run into each other, and the fundamental tone is entirely lost.

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