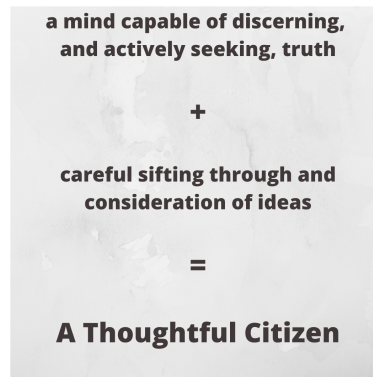


Quotes from **The Thoughtful Citizen: Mason's Wisdom For Today**
Presented at the 2022 Living Education Retreat by Dawn Duran



“[I]t cannot be too often said that information is not education.”
School Education, page 169

“Young people should leave school knowing that their thoughts are not their own; that what we think of other people is a matter of justice or injustice...They should know that truth, that is, justice in word, is their due and that of all other persons; *there are few better equipments for a citizen than a mind capable of discerning the truth*, and this just mind can be preserved only by those who take heed what they think.”
Towards a Philosophy of Education, pages 60-61

“We may gather three rules, then, as to an opinion that is worth the having. We must have thought about the subject and know something about it, as a gardener does about the weather; it must be our own opinion, and not caught up as a parrot catches up its phrases; and lastly, it must be disinterested, that is, it must not be influenced by our inclination. But, 'Why need we have opinions at all,' you are inclined to ask, 'if they mean such a lot of trouble?' Just because we are persons. Every person has many opinions, either his own, honestly thought out, or picked up from his pet newspaper, or from his favourite companion. *The person who thinks out his opinions modestly and carefully is doing his duty as truly as if he helped to save a life. There is no more or less about duty; and it is a great part of our work in life to do our duty in our thoughts and form just opinions.*”
Ourselves, Book I, pages 180-181

“[We] must listen and consider, being sure that one of the purposes we are in the world for is, *to form right opinions about all matters that come in our way.*”
Ourselves, Book I, page 185

“...we must avoid the short road to opinions; we must not pick them up ready made at any street-corner; and next, we must learn—and this is truly difficult, a matter that takes us all our lives—to recognise a *fallacy*, that is, *an argument which appears sound but does not bear examination*. But the question of fallacies is a big one, and all we need bear in mind now is, that popular cries, whether in the school or the country, very often rest upon fallacies or false judgments. *So we must look all round the notions we take up.*” *Ourselves*, Book I, page 185

"It is well that they should know, so early that they will seem to themselves always to have known, some of the laws of thought which govern their own minds. Let them know that, once an idea takes possession of them, it will pursue, so to speak, its own course, will establish its own place in the very substance of the brain, will draw its own train of ideas after it."

Parents and Children, page 45

"And you were dead in your offenses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air*, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."

Ephesians 2:1-2 (NASB)

Satan and "opinions in the air"

- the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)
- the god of this age (2nd Corinthians #)
- ruler of this world (John 12:31)
- father of lies (John 8:44)

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage battle according to the flesh, or the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and *we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...*"

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NASB)

"See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ."

Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

"But we need not go so far afield, we have a prophet of our own, and I will close this part of my subject by quoting certain of Mr. Fisher's words of wisdom:—

'Now let me say something about the content of education, about the things which should be actually taught in the schools, and I am only going to talk in the very broadest possible way. In my afternoon's reading I came upon another very apposite remark in the letters of John Stuart Mill. Let me read it to you:

'What the poor, as well as the rich, require is not to be taught other people's opinions, but to be induced and enabled to think for themselves.'

Towards a Philosophy of Education, page 126

“We must be sure of our facts before we speak, and avoid speaking about matters concerning which we have only the vaguest knowledge.” *Ourselves*, Book I, page 157

“Now, of all the errors that have hindered men and nations, this is perhaps the most unfortunate. A man picks up a notion, calls it his opinion, spreads it here and there, until in the end that foolish notion becomes a danger to society and a bondage to the individual.”
Ourselves, Book 2, page 56

“...a suggestion given by intent and supported by an outside personality has an added strength which few are able to resist, just because the choice has been made by another and not by ourselves, and our tendency is to accept this vicarious choice and follow the path of least resistance.”
Towards a Philosophy of Education, pages 129-130

“There are few better equipments for a citizen than a mind capable of discerning the Truth, whether it lie on the side of our party or on that of our opponents. But this just mind can only be preserved by those who take heed *what* they hear, and *how*.”
Ourselves, Book 1, page 154

“All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things build each other up.”
1 Corinthians 10:23 (NASB)

“Very likely a professional 'champion' gets used to bruises; certainly, a person who puts himself in the way of hearing and reading what is false learns to think untruly, and must of necessity speak falsely, even if he does not intentionally tell lies. Truth is in every Mansoul, waiting upon justice; but Truth is never violent, and there be many clamorous ones at hand to drown her voice. It rests with us to choose whom we shall hear.”
Ourselves, Book I, page 150

Image of Sandro Botticello's *Calumny*:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/85/Sandro Botticelli 021.jpg/2048px-Sandro Botticelli 021.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/85/Sandro_Botticelli_021.jpg/2048px-Sandro_Botticelli_021.jpg)

Selection read while viewing the painting found In *Ourselves*, Book I, pages 151-152. It can be read online at the following link: https://amblesideonline.org/CM/vol4complete.html#4_3b

“It is not only by calumnious talk that Truth is wounded. Calumnious hearing or calumnious reading may do her to death; and a simple rule will help us to discern what manner of speaking and reading is calumnious. Truth is never violent; and the newspaper or magazine or book, the party or the public speech, which makes strong and bitter charges against the other side, we may be sure is, for the moment, calumnious; and, if we steep ourselves in such speaking or reading, the punishment that will come upon us is that we shall become incapable of discerning Truth and shall rejoice in evil speaking.” *Ourselves*, Book I, pages 153-154

“In the case of sickness, war, calamity, people are eager to make the most and the worst of what has happened, and the headlines of the newspaper showing the biggest number of casualties are most often quoted and most readily believed, though to-morrow may show how false they are. We cannot keep a delicate sense of Truth if we let ourselves listen to and carry rumours...”

Ourselves, Book I, page 158

“...Let us use our Common Sense to sift what we hear, and still more what we read, and wait for facts to be ascertained before we help to spread reports. Men have been ruined, the good name of a family destroyed, through the thoughtless carrying on of an idle rumour.”

Ourselves, Book I, page 158

“There is another form in which the magnanimous citizen of the future must be taught the sense of justice. Our opinions show our integrity of thought. Every person has many opinions whether his own honestly thought out, or notions picked up from his pet newspaper or his companions. The person who thinks out his opinions modestly and carefully is doing his duty as truly as if he saved a life because there is no more or less about duty.”

Towards a Philosophy of Education, pages 61-62

“But, once again, we may not be sluggish in this matter of opinion. It is the chief part of justice to think just thoughts about the matters that come before us, and the best and wisest men are those who have brought their minds to bear upon the largest number of subjects, and have learned to think just thoughts about them all. It is a comfort to know that Justice, that lord of the heart, is always at hand to weigh the opinions we allow ourselves to take up.”

Ourselves, Book I, pages 185-186

Principle 18: We teach children, too, not to 'lean (too confidently) to their own understanding'; because the function of reason is to give logical demonstration (a) of mathematical truth, (b) of an initial idea, accepted by the will. In the former case, reason is, practically, an infallible guide, but in the latter, it is not always a safe one; for, whether that idea be right or wrong, reason will confirm it by irrefragable proofs.

“A due recognition of the function of reason should be an enormous help to us all in days when the air is full of fallacies...it is something to recognise that probably no wrong thing has ever been done or said, no crime committed, but has been justified to the perpetrator by arguments coming to him involuntarily and produced with cumulative force by his own reason...For ourselves and our children it is enough to know that reason will put a good face on any matter we propose; and, that we can prove ourselves to be in the right is no justification for there is absolutely no theory we may receive, no action we may contemplate, which our reason will not affirm.”

Towards a Philosophy of Education, page 143

“In these days when *Reason* is deified by the unlearned and plays the part of the Lord of Misrule it is necessary that every child should be trained to recognize fallacious reasoning and above all to know that a man's reason is his servant and not his master; that there is no notion a man chooses to receive which his reason will not justify...”
Towards a Philosophy of Education page 55

"But what if from childhood they had been warned, 'Take care of your thoughts, and the rest will take care of itself; let a thought in, and it will stay; will come again tomorrow and the next day, will make a place for itself in your brain, and will bring many other thoughts like itself. Your business is to look at the thoughts as they come, to keep out the wrong thoughts, and let in the right. See that ye enter not into temptation.' “
Parents and Children, page 46

“exchange the truth of God for a lie”
Romans 1:25

“even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”
2 Corinthians 11:14

“We need no longer wonder that two men equally upright, equally virtuous, selected out of any company, will hold opposite views on almost any question; and each will support his views by logical argument. So we are at the mercy of the doctrinaire in religion, the demagogue in politics, and, dare we say, of the dreamer in science; and we think to save our souls by being in the front rank of opinion in one or the other. But not if we have grown up cognisant of the beauty and wonder of the act of reasoning, and also, of the limitations which attend it. We must be able to answer the arguments in the air, not so much by counter reasons as by exposing the fallacies in such arguments and proving *on our own part* the opposite position.”
Towards a Philosophy of Education, page 144

“We are told again that 'the Will is the man'; and yet most men go through life without a single definite act of willing...For this much at any rate we know about the will. Its function is to *choose*, to decide, and there seems to be no doubt that the greater becomes the effort of decision the weaker grows the general will. Opinions are provided for us, we take our principles at second or third hand, our habits are suitable, and convenient, and what more is necessary for a decent and orderly life?”
Towards a Philosophy of Education, pages 128-129

“We chase opinions and ideas with the same restlessness and uncertainty; any fad, any notion in the newspapers, we pick up with eagerness. Once again, the will is the man. The business of the will is to choose. There are many ways to get out of the task of choosing but it is always,— 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.' ...if we serve God and our neighbour, we have to be always on the watch to choose between the ideas that present themselves.”
Towards a Philosophy of Education, pages 134-135

“Our claim to free will is a righteous claim; will can only be free, whether its object be right or wrong; it is a matter of choice and there is no choice but free choice. *But we are apt to translate free will into free thought. We allow ourselves to sanction intellectual anarchism and forget that it rests with the will to order the thoughts of the mind fully as much as the feelings of the heart or the lusts of the flesh. Our thoughts are not our own and we are not free to think as we choose. The injunction,—‘Choose ye this day,’ applies to the thoughts which we allow ourselves to receive.* Will is the one free agent of Mansoul, will alone may accept or reject; and will is therefore responsible for every intellectual problem which has proved too much for a man's sanity or for his moral probity. *We may not think what we please on shallow matters or profound.* The instructed conscience and trained reason support the will in those things, little and great, by which men live.”

Towards a Philosophy of Education, pages 136-8

“The ideas we admit become our opinions; the opinions upon which we take action become our principles; our principles and our opinions are ourselves, our character, the whole of us for which we are responsible.”

Ourselves, Book II, page 150

Principle 19: Therefore, children should be taught, as they become mature enough to understand such teaching, that the chief responsibility which rests on them *as persons* is the acceptance or rejection of ideas. To help them in this choice we give them principles of conduct, and a wide range of the knowledge fitted to them. These principles should save children from some of the loose thinking and heedless action which cause most of us to live at a lower level than we need.

“It is...disastrous when child or man learns to think in a groove, and shivers like an unaccustomed bather on the steps of a new notion. This danger is perhaps averted by giving children as their daily diet the wise thoughts of great minds, and of many great minds; so that they may gradually and unconsciously get the courage of their opinions. If we fail in this duty, so soon as the young people get their 'liberty' they will run after the first fad that presents itself, try it for a while and then take up another to be discarded in its turn, and remain uncertain and ill-guided for the rest of their days.”

Towards a Philosophy of Education, page 104

“To be a ‘member’—a living part or a living organism – implies and entails *the duty of careful thought.*”

Essex Cholmondeley, *Recipe versus Thought, Parents' Review* (1925)

“[L]ast, but not least, the fact that the story *does not turn on children, and does not foster that self-consciousness, the dawn of which in the child is, perhaps, the individual ‘Fall of Man.’*”
Formation of Character, pages 215-216

“One has to be careful not to allow opinions to be formed on too little knowledge; it is an opportunity to show children how dangerous such carelessly formed opinions can be.”
Helen Wix, *Some Thoughts on Narration, Parents’ Review* (1957)

“We consider all sides, balance what has been done, and find truth, perhaps in the mean, perhaps as a side issue which did not make itself plain to original thinkers of either school.”
School Education, page 49

“They must feel our large faith in them, our boundless love and our never-failing forgiveness. And that they may truly learn to feel and understand these things helps more than to encourage great liberty of discussion and the free expression of opinions (remembering, as Miss Sewell has said, that it is an excellent thing to have an opinion of your own, however wrong it may be, provided you are not bent on sticking to it), differing as much as we like, but without the suspicion of a ‘snub’ or a ‘set down’...”
M.F. Jerrold, *The Atmosphere of Home, Parents’ Review* (1897)

“But...young people run away with such wild notions: it is really necessary to teach them what to think about men and movements, books and art, about the questions of the day.’ To teach them what to think is an easy role, easy for them and for us; and that is how we get stereotyped classes instead of individual persons, and how we and the children fail to perform the most important function of life – *the function of right thinking....The importance of thinking and of right thinking cannot be overstated...Our real concern is that children should have a good and regular supply of mind-stuff to think upon; that they should have large converse with books as well as with things; that they should become intimate with great men through the books and works of art they have left us, the best part of themselves. Thought breeds thought; children familiar with great thoughts take as naturally to thinking for themselves as the well-nourished body takes to growing; and we must bear in mind that growth, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is the sole end of education. Children, who have been made free of the Republic of Letters, are not carried away by the *dernier cri*, are not, in fact, the slaves of other people’s opinions, but do their fair share of *that thinking which is their due service to the State.*”
Charlotte Mason, *Considering Children as Persons**

“We have only room to mention one more point in which all of us, who have the care of young people, would do well to practise a wise ‘letting alone.’ There are burning questions in the air, seething opinions in men’s minds...we are all disposed to hold strenuous opinions...*It is our duty to form opinions carefully, and to hold them tenaciously in so far as the original grounds of our conclusions remain unshaken. But what we have no right to do, is to pass these opinions on to our children.* We all know that nothing is easier than to make vehement partisans of young people...”
School Education, page 42

“Now personal delight, joy in living, is a chief object of education...”
Towards a Philosophy of Education, page 302

“See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ.”

Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

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