

The author of a work of imagination is trying to effect us wholly, as human beings, whether he knows it or not; and we are affected by it, as human beings, whether we intend to be or not. I suppose that everything we eat has some effect upon us than merely the pleasure of taste and mastication; it affects us during the process of assimilation and digestion; and I believe that exactly the same is true of any thing we read.

The fact that what we read does not concern merely something called our literary taste, but that it affects directly, though only amongst many other influences, the whole of what we are, is best elicited, I think, by a conscientious examination of the history of our individual literary education. Consider the adolescent reading of any person with some literary sensibility. Everyone, I believe, who is at all sensible to the seductions of poetry, can remember some moment in youth when he or she was completely carried away by the work of one poet. Very likely he was carried away by several poets, one after the other. The reason for this passing infatuation is not merely that our sensibility to poetry is keener in adolescence than in maturity. What happens is a kind of inundation, or invasion of the undeveloped personality, the empty (swept and garnished) room, by the stronger personality of the poet. The same thing may happen at a later age to persons who have not done much reading. One author takes complete possession of us for a time; then another, and finally they begin to affect each other in our mind. We weigh one against another; we see that each has qualities absent from others, and qualities incompatible with the qualities of others: we begin to be, in fact, critical: and it is our growing critical power which protects us from excessive possession by anyone literary personality. The good critic- and we should all try to critics, and not leave criticism to the fellows who write reviews in the papers- is the man who, to a keen and abiding sensibility, joins wide and increasingly discriminating. Wide reading is not valuable as a kind of hoarding, and the accumulation of knowledge or what sometimes is meant by the term „a well-stocked mind.“ It is valuable because in the process of being affected by one powerful personality after another, we cease to be dominated by anyone, or by any small number. The very different views of life, cohabiting in our minds, affect each other, and our own personality asserts itself and gives each a place in some arrangement peculiar to our self.

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Role of reading in shaping personalities

Human beings are affected by the activities they perform, one of them is reading. While in their adulthood, they paint the work of their favourite poet with glowing colours. The reason is that the poet fulfills the vacuum in their under developed personality. On the contrary, when they reach maturity, they critically compare the authors and then decide their favourite. People who are exposed to a variety of literature tend to have a glimpse of their readings in their personality.

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