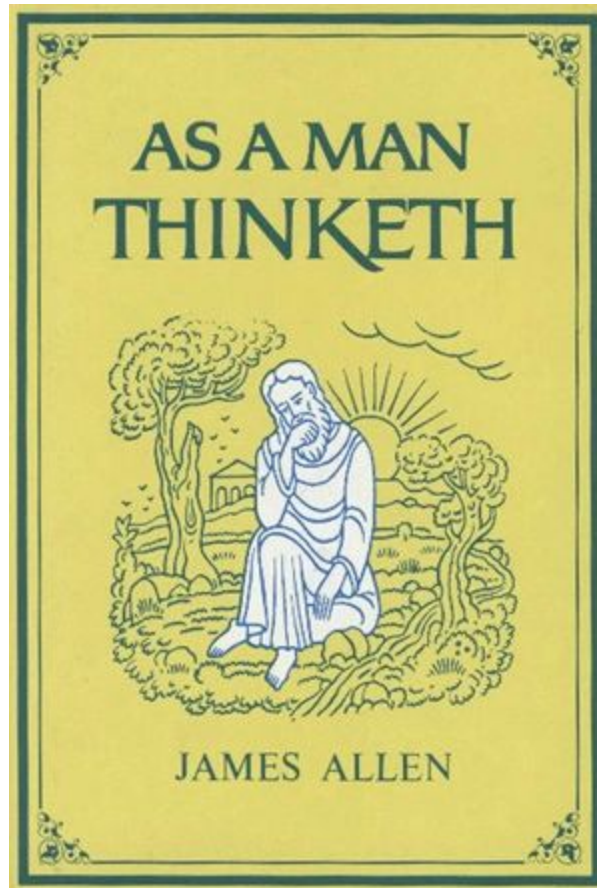


## Favorite Quote:

*“The soul attracts that which is secretly harbors; that which it loves, and also that which it fears; it reaches the height of its cherished aspirations; it falls to the level of its unchastened desires—and circumstances are the means by which the soul receives its own.”*



**Summary:** first published in 1902, *As a Man Thinketh* is a 72-page essay which explores how our lives are impacted by thought. In short, we are the makers of ourselves by virtue of the thoughts which we choose and encourage. Our character, circumstances, health, purpose and achievements are not due to chance—they are direct results of thought. As we “thinketh,” we are weaving the tapestry of our reality.

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## Foreword, Thought and Character

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**Overview:** we explore the philosophical underpinning of the author's beliefs along with his overall purpose for this book: so that we may achieve *enlightenment* and *happiness*. Yes, please.

*“Mind is the Master power that molds and makes,  
And Man is Mind, and evermore he takes  
The tool of Thought, and, shaping what he wills,  
Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills:—  
He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass:  
Environment is but his looking-glass.”*

### Favorite Quotes

- “They themselves are makers of themselves by virtue of the thoughts which they choose and encourage; that mind is the master weaver, both the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstance.”
- “Man is made or unmade by himself.”
- “He that seeketh findeth” [when coupled with patience, practice, and ceaseless **importunity**]
  - For folks not raised in 19th century England, **importunity** means the quality of being troublesomely urgent or overly persistent in request or demand. *Relentless*.

### Notes

- Evil thoughts = pain, suffering
- Pure thoughts = joy, meaning
- Just as a seed blossoms and bears fruit, thought (seed) is manifested in action (blossom) and bears fruit (joy or suffering).
- [Man] is the maker of his character, the molder of his life, and the builder of his destiny, he may unerringly prove, if he will watch, control, and alter his thoughts. . .

## Effect of Thought on Circumstances

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**Overview:** this chapter explores the relationship between thought and circumstance. It also contains my favorite quote in the whole book. From a wealth perspective, only 1 in every 583 people is a millionaire. This is indicative of how easy it is to read these words, but not execute on a plan toward an ideal.

### Favorite Quotes

- “The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors; that which it loves, and also that which it fears; it reaches the height of its cherished aspirations; it falls to the level of its unchastened desires—and circumstances are the means by which the soul receives its own.”
  - **This is my favorite quote in the whole book.**
- “His wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they harmonize with his thoughts and actions.”

- “Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are *unwilling to improve themselves*; they therefore remain bound.”
- “A man only begins to be a man when he ceases to whine and revile, and commences to search for the hidden justice which regulates his life.”

## Notes

- A man’s mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, *bring forth*.
- Two assertions I don’t necessarily agree with:
  - 1) Thought and character are one.
  - 2) The outer conditions of a person’s life will always be found to be harmoniously related to his inner state.
  - The author caveats these assertions with “*this does not mean that a man’s circumstances at any given time are an indication of his entire character. . .*” So. . .
- Following the inmost desires, aspirations, thoughts, by which he allows himself to be dominated, a man at last arrives at their fruition and fulfillment in the outer conditions of his life.
  - This quote may have contributed to Napoleon Hill’s landmark book *Think and Grow Rich* which was published 31 years later in 1937. The language is quite similar.
- A man does not come to the almshouse [poor house] or the jail by the tyranny of fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of groveling thoughts and base desires.
- Fighting against “circumstance” is fighting against the result/effect. The true cause resides in the heart in the form of a **conscious vice or an unconscious weakness**.
  - “He blames circumstances no knowing that he is the sole author of his condition.”
- Allen advocates that the whole point of suffering is “to purify, to burn out all that is useless and impure,” and that “indigence and indulgence are the two extremes of wretchedness.”

### Negative thought patterns go like this

Types of thoughts	Crystallize into habits of:	Solidify into circumstances of:
bestial, base	drunkenness, promiscuity	destitution, disease
fear, doubt, indecision	weakness, irresolution	failure, poverty, dependence
hate	accusation, violence	injury, persecution

### Positive thought patterns go like this

Types of thoughts	Crystallize into habits of:	Solidify into circumstances of:
beauty	grace, kindness	happiness, friendship
pure	temperance, self-control	restful tranquility, peace
courage, decision	decisiveness, conviction, discipline	success, freedom

loving	gratitude, affection	prosperity, fulfillment, true riches
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## Effect of Thought on Health and the Body

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**Overview:** similar to our character and circumstances, our health is rooted in thought. The body is the servant of the mind. Thoughts of envy, fear, malice and shame physically manifest themselves in our health and appearance. Avoid negative thought patterns, and you're doing your health a favor.

### Favorite Quotes

- "Make the fountain pure, and all will be pure."
- "With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful, and softly mellowed, like the setting sun."

## Thought and Purpose

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**Overview:** intelligent accomplishment is the marriage of thought and purpose. Conversely, aimlessness is a vice and leads to catastrophe and destruction (I've never heard it phrased this strongly before, but I like it). Strength can only be developed by effort and practice. Don't let great be the enemy of good: go all in. Go all in. Burn your boats. Go all in!

### Favorite Quotes

- "Thoughts of doubt and fear never accomplished anything, and never can. They always lead to failure."
- "Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge."
- "Thought allied fearlessly to purpose becomes creative force. . ."

If you want to take the island, then burn your boats. With absolute commitment come the insights that create real victory.

Tony Robbins

This quote is often attributed to Tony Robbins, but he is borrowing from the historical courage of Hernán Cortés who, in 1519, upon landing at present-day Veracruz, Mexico, instructed his fellow colonizers to burn their ships. Why? Retreat is easy when you have the option.

Cortés went on to lead the expedition which caused the fall of the Aztec Empire and colonized most of Mexico for the Spanish crown.

Thank you to [Travis Bryant](#) for this insight!

## The Thought-Factor in Achievement

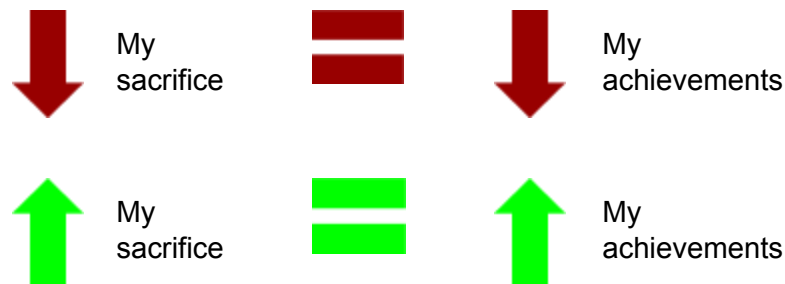
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**Overview:** we finally come to the hard part—effort, and sacrifice. Without these, we accomplish little. So the question becomes: how much effort can you sustain? How hard are you willing to work? What are you willing to sacrifice?

## Favorite Quotes

- “He who has conquered weakness, and has put away all selfish thoughts, belongs neither to oppressor nor oppressed. He is free. A man can only rise, conquer, and achieve by lifting up his thoughts [above slavish animal indulgence].”
- “There can be no progress, no achievement without sacrifice, and a man’s worldly success will be in the measure that he sacrifices his confused animal thoughts, and fixes his mind on the development of his plans, and the strengthening of his resolution and self-reliance.”
- “Achievement, of whatever kind, is the crown of effort, the **diadem** of thought.”
  - **Diadem:** that half crown headband that royal women wear
- “He [or she] who would accomplish little must sacrifice little; he who would achieve much must sacrifice much; he who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.”



## Notes

- There was a passage that was interesting but hard to reconcile with a century’s past:
  - “Many men are slaves because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor.” But what if we reversed the relationship: “One man is an oppressor because many are slaves; let us despise the slaves.”
- This chapter raises the uncomfortable topic of tradeoffs. If you subscribe to the [Four Burners Theory](#)—which is really a metaphor, not a theory—you’ll have to stack rank: family, friends, health, work. To be successful, you’ll have to deprioritize/cut off one burner. To be *really* successful, you’ll have to deprioritize/cut off two burners. This is where sacrifices come in.
- Virtues to help lift our thoughts above slavish animal indulgence:
  - Disciple
  - Temperance
  - Self-control, self-reliance
  - Chastity (Napoleon Hill refers to this as the transmutation of sexual desire)
- What’s most important after success or achievement? **Watchfulness**. Many give way when success is assured, and rapidly fall back into failure.

## Vision and Ideals

**Overview:** the author cites ambitious men—Columbus, Copernicus, Buddha—and how they achieved the beautiful vision they cherished. Think about it: the greatest achievements were, at one time, merely a dream. *Visions* and *Ideals* have transformative power: they pull us into a better future.

## Favorite Quotes

- “The dreamers are the saviors of the world.”
- “To desire is to obtain; to aspire is to achieve.”
- “Dreams are the seedlings of realities.”
- “You will always gravitate toward that which you, secretly, most love.”
- “In all human affairs there are *efforts*, and there are *results*, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Chance is not. Gifts, power, material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort. **They are thoughts completed**, objects accomplished, visions realized.”

## Notes

- The author describes a youth who is hard pressed by poverty and labor: confined long hours in an unhealthy workshop, uneducated and lacking refinement. But, he dream of intelligence, refinement, grace and beauty. **He conceives of an ideal condition of life.** It takes possession of him and unrest urges him to action: developing his “latent powers and resources.”
  - Result: The workshop can no longer hold him—**it has become so out of harmony with his mentality that it falls out of his life as a garment is cast aside.**
- Be wary of only seeing the apparent effects of things. Social media and the news showcase effects, not the working causes. It is not luck, fortune, and chance. It was the trials, failures, struggles and sacrifice. The undaunted effort. The faith to overcome the insurmountable to realize a Vision.

## Serenity

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**Overview:** we explore the value of inner peace—the calmness one feels after acquiring experience, knowledge, and living a life of truth.



## Favorite Quotes

- “How insignificant mere money-seeking looks in comparison with a serene life.”
- “The sunny shore of your ideal awaits your coming. Keep you hard firmly upon the helm of thought.”
- “Self-control is strength; Right Thought is mastery; Calmness is Power.”

## Notes

- The great majority of people run the risk of ruining their lives and happiness by lack of self-control.

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*“How few people we meet in life who are well-balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character!”*