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Introduction

by
Marc Allen

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can,
begin it —
Boldness has genius, power, and magic
in it.*

— GOETHE



There is genius, power, and magic in this book. *As You Think* has proven to be one of the world's most enduring and best "self-help" books, in the best sense of the term. "Self-empowerment" is a better term — or "self-actualization." This little book shows us that we are capable of greatness, and gives us the tools to achieve it.

The truth can always be stated simply. And when it is stated, it can have a powerful effect. It can change our lives, in fact. The truth can literally make us free — free from the limitations we have imposed upon ourselves. James Allen shows us so clearly that the key to our personal power is in our minds, and he shows us how to use that key to unlock the greatest success and

fulfillment we can imagine.

I discovered *As You Think* about twenty years ago, and it has been my constant companion ever since. It is the single most powerful book I have ever read, and it has changed my life. I have read it dozens of times; I often pick it up and open it at random when I feel a need for inspiration. As the simple yet brilliant words of James Allen have seeped slowly into my subconscious, my life has steadily changed for the better. I no longer do the things I don't want to do in life; I spend my time doing what I love. I have discovered my vocation, mission, and purpose in life. I have dreamed of my success and fulfillment and I have realized my dreams.

The words of James Allen (who is no relation to me, incidentally) have been a powerful guiding force in my life, and I am grateful to be able to share them with you.

I have edited the book only slightly, changing words here and there that have become obsolete or have come to mean something different. The original title is *As a Man Thinketh*.

Of course, the author meant women as well as men — for the principles he points out to us so clearly are universal, applying to everyone regardless of sex, age, race, beliefs, social standing, or education.

I don't know if James Allen was aware of Buddhist tradition or not — though by the content of his thinking, it is very possible he had studied Eastern as well as Western wisdom. Buddha taught 2500 years ago that there are eight great paths to liberation and serenity, to — as James Allen puts it on page 76 — “a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace.” The paths are right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right aspiration, right mindfulness, and right meditation. *As You Think* is a brilliant summary of the path of right thinking, and certainly touches on several of the other paths as well.

Of course, it is certainly possible that James Allen came to his great level of understanding entirely through the Western traditions and

through his own meditation. Very little is known about him; as far as I know, no one knows the sources of his tremendous insight and guidance.

The book opens with a short poem, *Mind is the master power that molds and makes*. . . . In Tibetan Buddhism, books always open with a short poem, and the tradition is if you can understand the poem, you don't need to read the book, because the poem contains all the wisdom within the book. It is true as well with *As You Think*: Understand the opening poem, and you have grasped the essence of the book — and found the key to fulfillment, a key that can unlock your genius, power, and magic.

Enjoy the gift James Allen has given us. In a small package, he has wrapped a timeless, immeasurable treasure.

— MARC ALLEN
NOVATO, CALIFORNIA

As You Think

*Mind is the master power that molds and makes,
And we are Mind, and evermore we take
The tool of thought, and shaping what we will,
Bring forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills.
We think in secret, and it comes to pass —
Our world is but our looking glass.*

— JAMES ALLEN

Foreword



This little volume — the result of meditation and experience — is not intended as an exhaustive treatise on the much-written-upon subject of the power of thought. It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its object being to stimulate men and women to the discovery and perception of the truth that “they themselves are makers of themselves” by virtue of the thoughts they choose and encourage; that mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of their circumstances; and that, as they may have previously woven in ignorance and pain they may now weave in enlightenment and happiness.

— JAMES ALLEN
ILFRACOMBE, ENGLAND

One



Thought
&
Character



*As a being of power, intelligence, and love
... you hold the key to every situation, and
contain within yourself that transforming
and regenerative agency by which you may
make yourself what you will.*



The aphorism, “As we think in our hearts so are we,” not only embraces the whole of our being, but it is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of our lives. We are literally *what we think*, our character being the complete sum of all our thoughts.

As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every one of our acts springs from the hidden seeds of our thoughts, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called “spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” as to those that are deliberately executed.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; thus do we gather in the sweet and bitter fruits of our own planting.

What we are was designed and built by our own thoughts in our minds. If we nurture ignorant or evil thoughts, pain will soon follow. If our thoughts are healthy and beneficial, joy will follow us as surely as our shadows follow us on a sunny day.

A man or a woman is a growth by law, not a creation by artifice, and such cause-and-effect is as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble and Godlike character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with Godlike thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of groveling thoughts.

We are made or unmade by ourselves; in the armory of thought we forge the weapons we use to destroy ourselves, and we also fashion the tools we use to build for ourselves heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace. By the right

choices and true applications of our thoughts, we ascend to divine perfection; by the abuses and wrong applications of our thoughts, we descend below the level of the beast. Between these two extremes are all grades of character, and we are their makers and masters.

Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul that have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this — that you are the master of your thought, the molder of your character, and the maker and shaper of your condition, environment, and destiny.

As a being of power, intelligence, and love, and the lord of your own thoughts, you hold the key to every situation, and contain within yourself that transforming and regenerative agency by which you may make yourself what you will.

You are always the master, even in your weakest and most abandoned state; but in your weakness and degradation you are the foolish master who misgoverns your household. When

you begin to reflect upon your condition, and to search diligently for the law upon which your being is established, you then become the wise master, directing your energies with intelligence, and fashioning your thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is the *conscious* master, and you can only become a conscious master by discovering *within yourself* the laws of thought. This discovery is totally a matter of application, self-analysis, and experience.

Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and you can find every truth connected with your being, if you will dig deep into the mine of your soul. The fact that you are the maker of your character, the molder of your life, and the builder of your destiny, you may unerringly prove, if you will watch, control, and alter your thoughts, tracing their effects upon yourself, upon others, and upon your life and circumstances, linking cause and effect by patient practice and investigation, and utilizing your every experience — even the most trivial, everyday occurrence — as a means of

obtaining that knowledge of yourself that leads to understanding, wisdom, and power.

In this direction, as in no other, is the law absolute that “Those that seek shall find; to those that knock the door shall be opened,” for only by patience, practice, and ceaseless impor-tunity can you enter the door of the temple of knowledge.