

Thinking on the job

It started out innocently enough...

I began to think at parties now and then just to loosen up. Inevitably though, one thought led to another, and soon I was more than just a social thinker.

I began to think alone - "to relax," I told myself - but I knew it wasn't true. Thinking became more and more important to me, and finally I was thinking all the time.

I began to think on the job. I knew that thinking and employment don't mix, but I couldn't stop myself. I began to avoid friends at lunchtime so I could read Thoreau and Kafka. I would return to the office dizzied and confused, asking, "What is it exactly we are doing here?"

Things weren't going so great at home either. One evening I had turned off the TV and asked my wife about the meaning of life. She spent that night at her mother's.

I soon had a reputation as a heavy thinker. One day the boss called me in. He said, "I like you, and it hurts me to say this, but your thinking has become a real problem. If you don't stop thinking on the job, you'll have to find another job." This gave me a lot to think about.

I came home early after my conversation with the boss. "Honey," I confessed, "I've been thinking..." "I know you've been thinking," she said, "and I want a divorce!" "But Honey, surely it's not that serious." "It is serious," she said, lower lip aquiver. "You think as much as college professors, and college professors don't make any money, so if you keep on thinking we won't have any money!" "That's a faulty syllogism," I said impatiently, and she began to cry. I'd had enough. "I'm going to the library," I snarled as I stomped out the door.

I headed for the library, in the mood for some Nietzsche. I roared into the parking lot and ran up to the big glass doors... they didn't open. The library was closed. As I sank to the ground clawing at the unfeeling glass, whimpering for Zarathustra, a poster caught my eye. "Friend, is heavy thinking ruining your life?"

You probably recognize that line. It comes from the standard Thinkers Anonymous (TA) poster. Which is why I am what I am today: a recovering thinker. I never miss a TA meeting. At each meeting we watch a non-educational video; last week it was "Porkey's." Then we share experiences about how we avoided thinking since the last meeting. I still have my job, and things are a lot better at home. Life just seemed... easier, somehow, as soon as I stopped thinking.