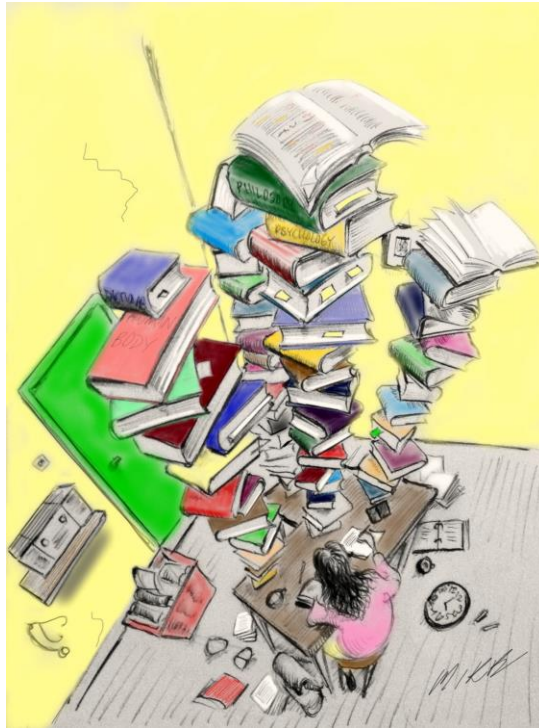


A Well-Made Self by Jacques Barzun



“... when the will to self-searching has you by the throat, there is immense value in being able to find a Self: that is to say, **a solid entity that you can trust, because you have made it yourself, and made it well. A well-made Self is not a haphazard collection of habits and prejudices, of notions and fancies: it is an ordered set of reflections, conclusions and convictions.** Now the task of continually bringing these elements together and putting some order among them requires an outside stimulus and a discipline. This stimulus may be of the regrettable kind, such as a grave illness or a great sorrow; or it may be a strong and sustained religious faith. **But for most people, the stimulus and discipline are deliberately chosen.** They take the form of getting outside one’s routine and filling the mind with vicarious experiences. **This is best done through reading.**”

Jacques Barzun, *An American Commencement* (1987), in *A Jacques Barzun Reader*, Harper Collins, 2002:511-2