

How to Be Deep and Wide

I realized today that my old content consumption pattern has been abandoned for the past several years. Time to return to it.

When I first awoke to the world of ideas I was about 16. I read *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis and it flipped a switch. I bought and read every single book by Lewis I could (I think I have read nearly everything he wrote). Then Aristotle. Then I found David Hume and Adam Smith and read most of their stuff. Then Milton Friedman, Frederic Bastiat, Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, and Henry Hazlitt. Again, I read just about everything they wrote.

This was my natural pattern. I'd read a book I liked, then proceed to read everything I could by the same thinker.

These days, I read totally different stuff all the time, and rarely read more than one book by an author. I realized that this reveals a weakness. **If I read a book and am not immediately compelled to read more from the author, the book probably wasn't good enough for me to read in the first place.**

The deep dive approach is so much more self-driven by interest, since you won't deep dive into weaksauce. The results are excellent too, as you can't forget a line of thought if you've read it from the thinker in many books and many different ways.

Think of music. The stuff you love best is usually from a band you know very well. When you hear a song so good you must listen to more from that band, it's the beginning of something great. When you know the whole body of work you begin to hear themes and notice things that deepen not just your love for the band, but your musical understanding in general.

Going deep into a single thinker doesn't mean you can't be a broad generalist. Think about it, if you read five books on one subject you will know more about it than 95% of the population and be able to converse with specialists. Yet it's only five books. You can repeat this tons of times for whatever topic/thinker strikes your fancy. It's so much more fruitful than a single book in passing.

If it doesn't make you want to read more, it might be time to put it down. That's the new rule I'm testing out anyway, hoping to return to my roots of multiple deep dives instead of tons of surface scratching.

James C. Scott currently on the docket!

**Indebted to TK Coleman for the analogy to musicians.*

The post [How to Be Deep and Wide](#) appeared first on [Isaac Morehouse](#).