There Are No Safe Books

My favorite thing on the Internet is when someone mentions a book they're reading and someone else issues a warning like "Hey, be careful when reading this particular author because his views on X are debatable."

It makes me wonder: Do these people believe there are books out there that you *don't* have to think carefully about when reading?

My favorite variation of this is "Hey, what should I do when I'm reading a book that has some good stuff in it, but I have issues with some of the other stuff?"

Wait… since when was this a special problem posed by a single category of books? Shouldn't we have a few issues with every single piece of content we ever consume? Does the reading experience sometimes *not* involve learning how to separate the wheat from the chaff?

Kafka said it best: "If the book we're reading doesn't wake us up with a blow on the head, what are we reading it for? A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us."

The problem is not that we put on our thinking caps when dealing with new, strange, or unorthodox sources of information. The problem is that we'd ever think to take off our thinking caps at all.

Every source of information is dangerous if you don't think critically and creatively about how you apply it in your life. Books are like fire: powerful, useful, nourishing, illuminating and utterly capable of destroying you if you turn your brain off and dive in.

From the New York Times bestsellers and the peer-reviewed academic titles to the self-published and the shoulda-never-been published, be careful with all the books. Nothing is safe… especially if it's good for you.