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Book Review: A Whole New Mind

Beware, times are changing. Done are the days where left brained thinkers triumphed over right brained thinkers claims Daniel H. Pink in *A Whole New Mind*, a non-fictional work published in 2005. In the first part, Pink describes an ongoing evolution from the information to conceptual age, where creative analysis, right brained thinking, is valued over mathematical analysis, left brained thinking. In the second part, six important right brained aptitudes/senses are explored. It was a pleasure to read this work, but the work includes a few incomplete arguments, which lead me to have an incomplete feeling after reading it.

There are three forces driving the evolution: automation, abundance, and Asia. Automation is the enemy of left brained people. Many left brained tasks that involve mathematics or logic can be automated; Garry Kasparov is the quintessential example of this (pg.41 – 43). Garry Kasparov is a chess grand master whom was famously stalemated by the IBM computer deep blue. The automation of this chess game, made the skills of Garry Kasparov obsolete. The game of chess can be a metaphor for many other left brained jobs/tasks. The abundance of products, with similar price and function, causes the consumer to look for features other than the essentials in deciding what to purchase. The design of a product, rather than cost and function, becomes the deciding factor for consumers (pg.30 – 35). Asia is another factor because many left brained jobs are being outsourced there; an example of this is the practice of software outsourcing (pg.36).

In the conceptual age, six right brained aptitudes, or senses, are valued above all aptitudes. The six senses are: design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning (Ch. 4-9). Each of these aptitudes is a creative process involving emotion and pattern/relation recognition that cannot be modeled by logic or mathematics. For example, the creation of a good story, one that conveys emotion and purpose, is a right brain task. It is not a left brain task because it cannot be subjected to the rigors of mathematics (Pg. 102). Jobs that require individuals with these senses include: designers, nurses, counselors, innovative software engineers, and inventors. Professions like these will be of high value and secure from outsourcing in the conceptual age.

I enjoyed reading this work as a left brained person. I felt this book was particularly written for left brained people. Pink expresses his ideas/findings in simple terms, which allowed me to understand his work effortlessly. On occasion I found that Pinks arguments were lacking in support. For example, on page 56, he states “The outsourcing of routine software work is putting a new premium on software engineers with high-concept abilities.” He does not mention why new premiums will be placed on software engineers with high-concept abilities and ignores the possibility for such jobs to be outsourced. In regard to his writing style, although this is not a work describing an epic adventure, it reads like one. The way he presented his research was as if he had been through a journey of ideas. He recognizes this in comparing his thesis to the hero’s journey (pg.102-104). In the beginning the left brainer is resistant to the change the conceptual age brings, but overtime he accepts it and faces this change by adapting. In the end he emerges utilizing the left and right brain producing a whole new mind.

In conclusion, I truly enjoyed reading this work and would recommend it to anyone in the technology sector. Throughout this book Pink explained that our society is changing from an information based society to a concept based society. This evolution is driven by three factors: abundance, automation, and Asia. In a concept society, six right brained aptitudes, design, story, symphony, empathy, play, will become more valuable than left brain aptitudes. Ultimately the message of this book is that we, the left brained, can utilize the right side of our brains in order to say competitive in the concept age.