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Essay 1

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Chapters 19 and 20 of The Design of Design discuss what makes a great design (they say it’s the designer) and what makes a great designer. While reading about what makes a great design, I was a bit confused by the nonspecific language he was using. He was saying that the development process typically gets in the way of a great designer and that the company/management should strive to create an environment that allows the designers to work uninterrupted by tedious work tasks. I kept wondering the whole time if this was an indictment for or against Agile. He wasn’t being specific about what he meant by the process. Is Agile the solution to the “bad” process or is it an example of a bad process? He also wasn’t specific about what exactly made certain products good (e.g. he seems to like the Mac) and other products less good (e.g. he doesn’t seem to be a fan of the PC). He just implied the Mac has a good design because it was created by a company that had genius designers and a process that didn’t impede their innovation, while other products less so.

The next chapter talks about what makes a great designer. This also wasn’t very specific as he didn’t give examples of traits good designers have versus traits bad designers have. Perhaps this was explained in the previous 18 chapters, but for now we’ll have to assume we know what he means. He also focused a lot on higher education being way to learn how to be a great designer. He gave an example of an employee at IBM who went on to get a PhD and invent relational databases. This seems to be a rare example of someone creating a new technology as opposed to the majority of software architects who create complex systems on top of existing technologies. There was little to no emphasis on on-the-job learning. Perhaps if he had been more specific about development processes in the previous chapter, he could have given more specific “best” practices such as code reviews and whiteboarding sessions that help developers grow in their experience and confidence.