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Context to the nugget

Arun talks how we might not be feeding our “thinking slow” part of the brain enough (using the phrase made popular by Nobel Prize winning Economist - Daniel Kahneman). He talks about how people now have greater reach in connections but with often diminishing levels of richness. He quotes some recent studies where brains of children have shown to be influenced by this and how this is impacting several areas including how we feel about ourselves, our attitudes and empathy. He re-emphasizes the power of having reading as a habit to further build the muscle of “Thinking Slow”.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In the book you also talk about the parallel between Dan Kahneman and thinking slow and thinking fast and you sort of compare that to the listening talk to us a little bit about how that plays out and how we listen and what’s the lesson for us to be thoughtful listeners.

Arun Miara (AM): As Dan Kahneman says there’s a thinking fast part of the mind and then there is a thinking slow part of the mind which processes for reflection and thinking slow the thinking fast part of the mind exist in all beings animals, birds and so it is the part which enables you take signal from the environment and make quick judgment about whether there’s danger or like food opportunity and then you must move fast either you will be killed or you lose the opportunity so that’s the thinking fast part but human beings have more of than animals is the thinking slow part where you take data and the data gets stored and chewed upon like the cow chewing the cud and so you are trying to make sense of it and form a pattern out of it and get insights out of it. And you can’t thinking slow like, it takes time you must loud reflect, what has being observed with the social media is because of the nature of the technology which is giving you things in very short bursts and offering you many choices, should I take that lead? That hyper link? And being tempted to buy now and click into amazon and so the thinking fast part of minds is being used most and any muscle that you use more any part of your body you use more grow stronger and here’s the trade-off unfortunately because you time is being used than your mind and you are thinking fast and the overall capacity is one, the thinking slow part is not being used as much and its atrophying and tests on the shapes of brains young kids in the US have shown that they can already observe this shift. The earlier shift which is to do with the empathy part which is also the back part, the front part is danger no danger don’t judge about who the person is and feeling empathy for the person that in college students in the united states in ten years’ time this is after the social media has come they have observed the 40 to 50% decline in the empathy of college students to each other by standard psychological tests. Again they are attributing it to they are not spending time, deep time with each other just short shallow, connections with lots of people, you are getting the benefits of reach if you will and losing that richness and this is not the richness of your own mind and your own beings, so that’s one side

the other is this moral judgments that you are talking about, this is very large part of us which is built up through our histories and our conditioning and so which makes us value things which are like feeling loyal to family, feeling loyal to the community, feeling proud of my identity, respecting authority that enables us to survive as a family as a community, and so this is built in. for the sake of my survival and our goodness this doesn't sound rational to those who believe in let's say philosophy through calculations cause these things are so instinctual, you sort of grow and conditioned by society also so when you do like a Greek philosopher or like a Shankaracharya, by reason you can discover what's the right thing to do, and the large part of us tells us the right thing to do without a reasoning, it's just built into our systems, in fact they are finding it in their genes also, some parts of the genes have some of these desires to support others like yourselves that's where the selfish gene so it's a much deeper thing than that. So I do think we need to start understanding ourselves fully.

DJ: What are some of the tactical things you changed in your life to ensure that you keep that thinking slow part humming, if you will?

AM: Reading. Reading is a wonderful thing especially if it's a tough book, it makes you stop and reflect, and think about you know why do I disagree about this? And is this person going to explain it or not and if not let me go and find someone else who's going to explain. So it makes me think very slow and makes me reflect.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is a really interesting insight for me. I had somehow not really connected Dan Kahneman's Thinking Fast and Slow with Listening. I guess, it is critical for each one of us to create the space or silence or the cabin in the woods we could escape to, for us to reflect on things, mull over ideas and let things marinate for a while. I am reminded of work by Adam Grant in his book Originals. One of my takeaways from the book was that for path-breaking creative thought to happen, there is a sweet spot of procrastination. If you plot the quality of the thought in the y axis and elapse time on the x axis, it often looks like an inverted U curve. He says, if you take too much time and procrastinate, the market might have moved on by the time you come up with your innovation. But he also says that there is something such as too early. If you haven't considered things enough, listened adequately to multiple perspectives and let the idea marinate in your head for a while. By doing it too quickly, you are missing out on benefiting from the "thinking slow" part of the brain where you are being deliberate and thoughtful about things.

I guess what reading does that other forms of media don't do enough of I guess it gives you the ability to pause, reflect, think, ponder, come back and deal with the content at your pace rather than it being thrown at you. I guess the key is also, are we listening to ourselves enough as we go through our journeys.

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End of nugget transcription

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Arun Miara - Nuggets

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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