

--- In OGTOC@yahoogroups.com, "pollexfenyeats" <thomasgwest@...> wrote:

OGTOC Yahoo Group Online Seminar, March 23-25, 2007  
Opening Statement from Thomas G. West, Washington, DC, USA  
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March 23, 2007

Greetings:

I am Tom West (Thomas G. West) and I plan to field questions from the OGTOC Yahoo Group over the next few days. March 23-25, 2007. My intention is to be online from 8 to 9 pm each evening here in Washington, DC. However, I expect to check in several times a day, each day, to answer questions as they come in from different locations.

I have long been interested in the relationship between gifts and talents and various kinds of learning disabilities or learning difficulties, especially dyslexia. Although the general population and some professionals see these as polar opposites, I have always felt that these two were often closely intertwined in paradoxical and seemingly self-contradictory ways. I have written two books on the topic, *In the Mind's Eye* and *Thinking Like Einstein*. In my research for the books, I was pleased to be able to find an abundance of material to support my perspectives.

While I have no professional training in the relevant fields, I have a great deal of relevant life experience that seems to come out in the books. I am dyslexic and I am highly visual in my ways of thinking, coming from a long line of artists and engineers. I have decided that whatever success my books have achieved, especially the first book, probably is the result of my perspectives being rather different from that of an individual with a conventional professional training in psychology, neuroscience or some other related field. I am passionately interested in the deeper meaning of things--and I am a believer in the power of stories to help us to move toward insight and understanding.

My first book, *In the Minds Eye*, covers brain research, computer graphic technologies and profiles of 11 famous people who have shown evidence of great visual talents along with dyslexia or other learning difficulties. One of my main arguments in the book is that we need to better understand the great diversity of human brains--the hidden talents that

often coexist with various learning problems--as well as the hidden learning difficulties

that sometimes come along with superior talents and capabilities. The profiles include:

Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell. Albert Einstein, Rev. Charles L. Dodgson, Henri

Poincaré, Thomas Alva Edison, Nikola Tesla, Leonardo da Vinci, Winston S. Churchill, Gen.

George S. Patton and William Butler Yeats.

The book also points out that major advances in computer information visualization

technologies promise to transform education and the workplace--greatly increasing the

perceived value of visual talents for understanding patterns in complex systems in

business, the sciences and other fields. In doing my research, I found that many of those

who rely heavily on visual thinking (sometimes with dyslexia or other language difficulties)

are already leaders in areas of technological innovation as well as science and business--

as technological change makes their distinctive visual strengths more and more valuable

just as their academic and language weaknesses become less and less important.

The second book, *Thinking like Einstein*, is made up of a series of articles and columns

written for a publication of the international professional computer graphics association.

These columns explore what it means as we move from a world based mostly on words

and numbers to a world where information is manipulated and displayed in rich, multidimensional computer graphics and scientific visualizations. Albert

Einstein thought

visually and did all his most important work using his powerful visual imagination. My

columns partly explore what it may mean when large segments of the society shift to

thinking visually, using new and powerful computer graphic tools.

For context and greater clarity, I have provided here a biographical sketch providing some

history on the books and the way they have been received around the US and around the

world. I have also provided three short papers: (1) an overview I wrote for a Hong Kong

medical journal, (2) a commentary I wrote for an international LD research organization

(IARLD), making the case for looking at the special talents often seen among individuals

with dyslexia, and (3) a chapter from *Thinking Like Einstein* where I describe a family (with

many visual thinkers and many dyslexics over five generations) that also includes four

winners of the Nobel Prize. (I have just noted that some article formatting and reference

numbers have been lost in the versions sent to you, but I hope you will not have trouble reading them.) I think these articles will give you a sampling of my basic ideas, along with many useful references.

I might mention in passing that your group was suggested to me by Drs. Brock and Fernette Eide. They now have a new book and blog that you might want to have a look at: The Mislabeled Child and The Eide Neurolearning Blog. And many thanks to Sally Lyon for organizing the group and setting everything up on Yahoo.

I hope that some of what I have discovered over the years will be helpful to members of the OGTOC Group. I will be happy to try to answer your questions.

All best wishes,

Tom West

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