

Lasting Contribution: How to Think, Plan, and Act to Accomplish Meaningful Work

Tad Waddington

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“The world is not only a dynamic system; it is an open dynamic system” the author writes. “...new things can enter the picture to change the nature of the equation.” Tad Waddington co-author of *Return on Learning* strives in his new book *Lasting Contribution* to show that Aristotle was right about how to analyze the causes behind action change and meaningful contribution to the world in which we live.

Aristotle identified four factors which cause change: the material cause the efficient cause the formal cause and the final cause. Waddington focuses his efforts on arguing the worth of this system of analysis and in the process illustrates how people’s actions fit this mold.

Little that Waddington says is strikingly original but all of it is meaningful and useful. While discussing opportunity he notes “Opportunity cost...is that which you give up by choosing what you choose.” And in regard to problem solving “Bridge the gap between your circle of competence and the demands of the world by trading problems with people who have the skills to solve the problems you can’t.”

The book’s most powerful and original ideas usually come in the form of quotations from experts such as Hans Georg Gadamer who is quoted by Waddington in the section on understanding: “meaning arises from an interplay or dialectic between the reader and the text....You do not find the text’s “true meaning” because it does not exist. Instead you achieve understanding which is the ability to apply the text to new situations.”

The “How to” promised in the book’s subtitle is lacking; the end of the book leaves readers wondering how to get beyond the place where they seem stuck in the routine. Most self-help books use the last chapters to describe how to take action and a challenge to do so. In *Lasting Contribution* the action-oriented section of the book comes at the beginning in “The Efficient Cause.” A reordering of the chapters to conform to common patterns of thought would improve the book’s organization.

Lasting Contribution reads like a collection of maxims like this thought paraphrased from Eric Heller “Be careful how you interpret the world...’ The idea that texts or facts speak for themselves... is weapons grade stupidity.” Waddington helpfully provides a list of references and a ten-page index. These solid ideas are supported by the opinions and examples of experts who have influenced our world and many readers will find inspiration in its pages as well as practical direction about making a lasting contribution.

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