

Where Are We Now?
A Summary of the Readings – March 18, 2016
A New Way of Seeing Everything

Alexis de Toqueville:

American self-interest: “daily small acts of denial” which are as good for the one doing as for the overall community. It is the “self-interest” of Americans to care for the whole community. De Toqueville writes:

I do not think, on the whole, that there is more selfishness among us than in America; the only difference is that there it is enlightened, here it is not. Each American knows when to sacrifice some of his private interests to save the rest; we want to save everything, and often we lose it all.

Thomas Jefferson:

Reflections on what makes morality and virtue, and why it may be different from one culture to another.

Jahred Diamond: *Collapse*

Diamond identifies five elements that are common to the maintenance or collapse of human civilizations, present and past:

1. The environment: keeping it resilient and flourishing, not treating it like “the goose that laid the golden egg”
2. Climate Change: This is not necessarily a man-made phenomenon, but it is one to which we must adapt.
3. Hostile neighbors. Hostile neighbors are always a challenge. Better to have friendly neighbors. Can we create friends from enemies?
4. Absence/Presence of Friendly Trade Partners
5. The civilization’s response

***Mayflower*: a short vignette on cooperation**

- People change
- Receiving unexpected kindness can be transforming
- Knowledge doesn’t change people. Experience can be vicarious.

Martin Nowak: *SuperCooperators*

- Cooperation underpins innovation and complexity
- “Man has no alternative but to evolve further”

Peter Senge: *The Fifth Discipline*

Learning is a powerful human desire. Requires discipline (i.e., practice)

The disciplines of learning organizations (including business, families, communities)

Personal accountability and empowerment within a greater community

1. Systems thinking (looking at the whole, including unintended consequences)
2. Personal mastery (this was also identified as part of “flow” and one of the three sources of intrinsic rewards)
3. Mental models – being aware of the ideas we are using as goals and values, picturing them allows us to see interconnectivity
4. Building shared visions: This is the basis of the human capacity for creative cooperation
5. Team learning: Learning is not just an intellectual activity. One doesn’t read a book on riding a bicycle and then say, “I learned to ride a bike.”

Andrew Newberg and Eugene D’Aquili, *Why God Won’t Go Away*

The idea of God is based on how parts of the brain experience reality. It is the sense of Absolute Unitary Being, which to those who experience it, feels more real than our daily existence.

Daniel Pink: *A Whole New Mind*

How we use both sides of our brain together, and why those who succeed in using more aspects of the right side of their brain are bringing sorely needed expertise to our culture, namely design, story, symphony, empathy, plan and meaning.

Roman Krznaric: *Empathy: Why It Matters and How to Get It*

Empathy is a collective force that can shift the contours of the social and political landscape. It has been spread through writing. It is the predominant force all around us.