

Where Are We Now?
A Summary of the Readings – March 25, 2016
A New Way of Seeing Everything

The right time to make up your mind about someone is ... never!

- Katherine Hepburn

Be the change you want to see in the world

- Mahatma Gandhi

A New Way of Seeing:

- You are the change. Pay attention to your desires, trust the process, be curious about the dynamics, don't succumb to fear, learn to listen to your heart, eschew judgment, be creative, rest, enjoy the gifts, and keep trying!

Jeremy Bentham: Pain and Pleasure

Bentham is the father of Utilitarianism, the idea that we can calculate the goodness of alternative actions through the summing of "pain" and "pleasure," as if "pain" and "pleasure" are objective attributes.

Aristotle:

Happiness is balance, "the complete life," and virtue

Adam Smith

Don't count money; rather count the value created.

Societies built around consumption do not engender productive workforces

Timothy Schroeder

A certain kind of desire is rewarding. Rewards create a neurological learning. Whether people (and animals) are aware of the learning or not. (Desire is the human engine – and it operates at many levels – motivational, hedonic, and reward-learning.

Martin Nowak

Humans are a cooperative species. Cooperation dominates. How does this happen when we are also so competitive, and competition plays such a large role in the world civilizations we have built? The five characteristics of sustainable cooperation: direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, spatial configuration-networking, multi-level selection, and kin selection.

Overall Outline:

What does it mean to be human?

- Desire driven (fear and attraction)
- Like to make things better: Competitive!
- Work together: ultra-social, imaginative, empathetic, cooperative
- We know more than we know we know; and we also know less!
- Our subconscious filters our conscious, and our conscious creates our subconscious. We indirectly form our subconscious through conscious strategies.

What kind of universe do we live in?

- An evolving universe
- Following principles of Pressure → Adaptation → Emergence → New Idea
- Flow is a general movement seen in organic and inorganic matter...
- Flow is relational, proportionate and sought
- Evolution and physical laws show order emerging from disorder and increasing complexity and order emerging from order

Where are we now?

- Humans have made and continue to make contributions to complexity and order
- There are also unintended consequences
- There is also the conundrum that seeking happiness doesn't make people happy and prioritizing comfort and security can make for uncomfortable and unstable situations.
- Desire – communicated as emotions and neurochemical pathways – is the human equivalent to the electromagnetic, gravitational, weak and strong forces of physics.
- Given the reality of different perspectives, together with the difficulty of “seeing oneself,” what are some strategies for sustainable forward momentum in this multi-cultural world in which we find ourselves?