

Elevating and Extending Our Capacity to Appreciate the Appreciable World

Imagine what would happen to you if you had the ability to consistently see and connect with every strength in the universe— every one of the capacities inherent in a world of 10 billion galaxies and 6 billion people; or to see every positive potential in your son or daughter; or, like Michelangelo, the intellectual ability to “sense” the towering, historic figure of David “already existing” in the huge slab of marble—even before the reality.

Indeed, the appreciable world—the universe of strength, value, and life-generating potential all around us-- is so much larger than our normal appreciative capacity. Yet there are some—we all know them-- who seem to have a special knack for seeing, noticing, and connecting with ever-expanding domains of positive potential. There are great coaches who see extraordinary things in their players, hidden strengths no one has ever seen. There are grandparents who “know” the specialties of their grandchild, intuitively it seems, long before those potentials are nurtured or even recognized by others. Could such appreciative capacity explain, for example, the success of leaders who have ranked relatively low on traditional measures of IQ but have gone on to change human history or reshape entire industries?

A global team of scientists announced yesterday that researchers have generated a map of human genetic variations that will enable them to begin to explain for the first time a whole host of questions related to health, longevity, and aging. The new map, released in *Nature* just two years after the publication of the human genetic code, was catalogued by the HapMap Project involving scientists from Japan, USA, Canada, China and Nigeria. Francis Collins, director of the Human Genome Research Institute said, “I have dreamed of the day when we would be able to apply the tools of genetic analysis to the... prevention of common diseases”. This announcement, he said, “brings us a step closer to that dream” (Sternberg, Thursday, October 27, 2005). Speak to anyone involved in the human genome work and one thing is clear: the work is thrilling.

Something like this is happening in the field of IQ. Today we know with full clarity that there are multiple kinds of intelligence. While many in our culture continue to adhere to the assumption that intelligence is a single, general capacity that every human being possesses to a greater or lesser extent, and that however defined, it can be measured by standardized verbal instruments, such as short pencil and paper tests--today we know this is theoretically untenable and developmentally confining. In the introduction to the tenth anniversary edition of his classic *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Howard Gardner indicates that all the groundwork is now laid and that we stand poised at the early beginning of mapping the codebook for thinking about intelligence, including everything this implies from the creation of classrooms to the cultivation of leadership. Many have asked whether additional intelligences have been added—or original candidates deleted since the early work on multiple intelligence in 1983. And while Gardner himself has “chosen not to tamper *for now* with the original list” he states unequivocally his conviction: there are in fact others, from “intrapersonal intelligence” to some form of “spiritual intelligence” to a kind of meta-intelligence that can “yoke all the “intelligences together and mobilize them for constructive ends” (see, Gardner, 1993, p xi).

Appreciative Intelligence, I believe, is about this, the latter. It's about the kind of intelligence that not only can "yoke" but elevate and extend the intelligence of the wide variety of known intelligences: linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, spatial intelligence; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; and the types or forms of personal intelligence, one directed toward other persons, one directed toward oneself. The subtitle in this scholarly and captivating work by Tojo Thatchenkery and Carol Metzker says it all. Put in the most concise, metaphorical way Appreciative Intelligence is "the ability to see the mighty oak in the acorn", that is, it's all about the ability to perceive the positive *inherent generative potential* in the present. And as the reader will soon see, it's a powerful construct. Immediately upon turning the book's pages I began to understand things about my sons and daughter I had not noticed before and began to understand puzzles about tremendously successful leaders who literally had flunked out of grade school, yet today stand poised to change human history. Let me share a quick story, for as we all know sometimes a short anecdote can express more than many words. It is an unlikely story. But now I think I understand it.

At the time of this writing the situation in the Middle East appears more unstable, some say hopeless, than ever. It appears that nobody can find a solution to the bloody bombings, the conflicts and bitterness between Arabs and Jews and others, the suffering and distress, and the spreading of terror around the world. It's precarious. It's dangerous. And nobody sees an easy solution.

Nobody?

A few months ago I had the opportunity to speak as an invited guest at the dedication for the new Arison School of Management in Israel. During the talk I raised questions about "where is the peace going to come from"? From the lawyers? Not likely. From the military? Not likely. From governments? From the religious leaders—Muslim, Christian, Jewish, etc? My proposition, tentatively offered, was that it would be none of these. The best place to look, I argued, would be the world of business—that business could be the most important ground and force for peace. Forget about the major headlines of Enron and WorldCom I said, because the 21st century is going to be a time when we learn to unite the dynamism and entrepreneurial capacities of good business with the global issues of our day. I did not have many examples, but made the argument anyway.

After the talk a stranger came up to me. He said: "I'd like to invite you to meet me at my helicopter tomorrow morning at 8:00". I want you to see this thesis in action—"business as a force for peace". He went on: "it's a story of human imagination and the capacity to make something from nothing except hard work". Indeed we would fly in the morning to the Galilee region, across the desert to an area without any natural resources. It is called Tefen, and later I discovered that this unassuming man was perhaps the wealthiest person in Israel; his worth was estimated to be over four billion dollars and what he has created now accounts for over 10% of Israel's export GNP. His name is Stef Wertheimer. And for what he has accomplished, he honestly deserves to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

When I got out of the helicopter, I could not believe my eyes. Up until the mid-1980s Tefen was a barren hilltop grazed by local goat herds. Today the scope of industrial exports manufactured at Tefen equals that of the entire Jerusalem area. Beautiful homes and

neighborhoods surround what Wertheimer calls a “capitalist kibbutz”—with four Tefen Model Industrial Parks that have given birth to more than 160 new businesses and schools for all the children that now populate the area. Most surprising: the whole thing is based on the principle of co-existence, Arab and Jewish—living together, going into business together, building schools and art museums together, and dramatically transforming entrenched conflicts into collaborative energies for economic empowerment, development, and peace. The Israeli billionaire Stef Wertheimer is literally igniting a revolution in hope by harnessing the best in business to easily and rapidly melt frozen animosities, and in the process create islands of peace and shared prosperity. His theory: create 100 more of these islands— a distinct and special kind of entrepreneurial industrial park modeled after the “Tefen Miracle”— and strategically locate them throughout the eastern Mediterranean. It’s literally this region’s version of a Marshall Plan and one which growing numbers supporters from Turkey, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority, believe could lift the region out of poverty and take the biggest step toward finishing terrorism. It’s something all of us should take notice of. In his book on War and Anti-war: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century, the prolific Alvin Toffler cites Wertheimer’s example as one of the most important quiet revolutions in the world today.

Many are now calling the 79 year-old Wertheimer a genius but most do not know that this genius dropped out of grade-school. He couldn’t cut it. He failed in most classes. For survival he created his first business and the first two people hired were Arab and a Jewish respectively. A seed vision was born and was motivated, as he puts it, “by the metaphysical concept of survival” and his growing conviction that creativity and entrepreneurship *together* were the only things that could create conditions for lasting peace, dignified lives, and eradication of strife. “A booming industrial base will provide more security than any military outpost”. Today Wertheimer is working tirelessly to establish 100 of these industrial parks throughout the non-oil producing middle east—his version, as mentioned above, of a Marshall Plan for the region.

The most exciting part of my visit? I was sitting in on a class of Jewish and Arab 10 year old children—laughing and playing and singing—learning together in a region of the world most define as hopelessly entrenched in hatred. It’s a story which, with the click of the button, should be shared with everyone everywhere in the world.

Traditional IQ tests cannot explain—and never would have predicted- what I saw from the helicopter that day in Galilee. The present articulation of the concept of *Appreciative Intelligence* is indeed a cutting edge-work. It illuminates.

Stef Wertheimer could see the mighty oak in the acorn. Where there was desert, he could see vast neighborhoods. Where there was poverty he could see the unlimited human resource of collective imagination. He *reframed* everything, for example, Stef was ecstatic that there were no natural resources like oil: “the Arab world, alas, has been cursed with oil”—he told me. Along with such re-framing this genius selectively noticed everything of value worth valuing, *appreciating positive possibility* in every person and situation he was engaged with. He is proof that we can live with a positive love of life amid onslaughts of torment. And in part it is because he has a capacity to see the future-ideal interwoven in the texture of the actual—he *knows* peace will prevail and he sees a Marshall Plan for a whole region, simply from the demonstration of going beyond “what works” in Tefen. This is what Appreciative

Intelligence is all about, propose Thatchenkery and Metzker. Its code has three dimensions and can be mapped out clearly: the power of *reframing* (the capacity to see one's view of the world *as* a view is, perhaps for the first time, articulated as a signature mark of contemporary intelligence); *appreciation of positive possibility*; and seeing how *the future unfolds from the present*.

If it were up to you, how would you cultivate Appreciative Intelligence—with our young people and schools, in our leaders, our media, or perhaps most important, in yourself? To be sure a good place to start is right here with this volume. Tojo Thatchenkery, a brilliant colleague and former doctoral student from Case Western Reserve University where I continue to teach, and Carol Metzker have written a delightful book with insights that ring true and are deeply important. Drawing from disciplines such as the neurosciences to the breakthrough research in positive psychology and social construction, the authors make complicated ideas both accessible and applicable for every aspect of our lives. You will love this book and find it difficult to set aside. The book is lucid in its storytelling, pragmatic in its exercises, and rich in its intellectual integration. It's the kind of book you will want to share with family, colleagues, and friends.

I enjoyed reading Tojo's sharing of how he came up with the concept of appreciative intelligence and the role he acknowledges that the intellectual climate our department of Organizational Behavior has had in shaping his thinking. Tojo and many alumni like him continue to remind us that one thing we are good at in the organizational behavior department is in creating scholars who go on to plant the seeds for new ideas in their fields. I also remember Tojo saying that using the Appreciative Inquiry methodology for working with an exceptionally innovative organization called the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) for his doctoral dissertation opened up his horizon of thinking. The ICA was a unique organization gifted with appreciative intelligence. I recall Tojo calling me once in the middle of his data collection to say "David, everything is going so perfect here that I don't know what to do!"

See things differently—it's clearly a message for our times. May this daring book open new options for cultivating research, education, and practices for developing Appreciative Intelligence, and may it help us magnify our capacity to *appreciate the appreciable world* all around us. My son Matt came up the other day and asked me about our troubled world. He asked what to do. I suggested firstly, that he read this book, and then search for people like Stef Wertheimer and learn exactly how it is that they are able "to see the mighty oak in the acorn", in times of both trouble and success.

It's a learning journey with vast implications—and the domain of our own lives is an optimal venue for letting the journey begin!

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