



ABN BOOKCLUB

INTELLECTUAL TOOLS FOR THE YEARS AHEAD

As the great seventeenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant saw it, there were three key questions that were central to all civilisations: What can we know? What should we do? And, for what might we hope? With the emphasis on the last word in each of these three questions, we can recognise three genres of management books: Books on theory or 'why it is so' texts, books on practice or 'how to' texts, and books about the future or 'envisioning' texts. Such is the fragmentary nature of the way we characteristically approach our world however, that rarely are these genres integrated with each other. Rarely therefore do we find books in which there is a balance between, and synthesis of, knowing and doing, doing and hoping, hoping and knowing, and least of all, all three. Even if they did exist, it is extremely improbable that they would capture the deeper essence of Immanuel Kant's insights, which focus not on simply on knowing but on what it is that we CAN know; not simply on doing but on the ethics of what it is that we SHOULD do; and not simply on hoping but on what it is for which we MIGHT hope.

Moreover, it is not just in management books that we find these deficiencies, but in the very way each of us approaches our lives and what we do as work, within them. The books simply reflect the way we are. So these second order questions are of supreme importance to us if we are to really improve the way things are: in our businesses, our schools, our governments, our nation, and the globe as a whole. We need to be questioning the way we are going about our knowing, as much as about what we know, just as we need to be investigating the ethical and aesthetic implications of all that we do. And certainly, and perhaps above all else, we should be explicitly expressing the hopes that we have for our futures; for it is these which we translate into our visions, missions, goals, and thence strategies for change. The challenge is to do all of this in as integrated a manner as possible. Our hopes and our practices must be as ethically defensible as they are apparently desirable, while we owe it both to ourselves and to those generations who will follow us on earth, to think seriously about the way we think, and to what extent thinking differently might make a difference to what we do and hope for.

Now is a most appropriate time to engage in this Kantian analysis as we reach that reflective stage which always happens whenever we approach what we take as a punctuation in time: The end of a century or even better, a millennium, and of course, as is now the case, every one thousand years we get to do the two together! In Australia, we have a third dimension looming too, and that is the centenary of our federation as a commonwealth. As a peoples then, we can be forgiven for some serious introspection at this time, and indeed would not be forgiven for not so indulging ourselves. Kant's questions, although posed two centuries back, remain exceedingly pertinent, and deserve our profound and urgent attention. Of particular importance is that we learn how to attend to them in an integrated way; in a manner which encourages us to think about the cans, shoulds, and mights of knowing, doing, and hoping, all at the same time. And this is where our seeming lack of ability or at least lack of motivation to approach our lives, our businesses and indeed our civilisation in an integrated or systemic way is such an impediment to progress.

Kant was speaking at the dawning of the industrial age, and over the succeeding two centuries, the intellectual framework, which we might refer to as the technoscientific perspective, came to dominate to such an extent that it has virtually captured or 'colonised' our collective minds. The irony is that with his critique of such 'pure reason', this is precisely what that German philosopher tried to warn us against!! From such an objective and fragmented perspective, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to include values and beliefs, passions and the human spirit into the process of decision making. And so it is proving, with technological innovation having hugely significant impacts, negative as well as positive, on both society and nature on a global scale never before experienced in the history of mankind, with little action being taking to ameliorate the damage being done.

Our two selections this month, in quite different ways and indeed representing two quite different genres, address some of these issues. In his *Imagined Worlds*, physicist Freeman Dwyer gets to the very heart of the technoscientific perspective, and explicitly provides us with an 'insider' view of what he believes needs to be done in providing an ethical framework for science and technology. Gill Ringland, on the other hand, in her book *Scenario Planning*, implicitly provides a heap of evidence in support of the need to think differently about the future, and how that is being attempted in practice through the scenario planning process as it is being conducted by numbers of players across the world.

Imagined Worlds

Freeman Dyson. Harvard University Press Cambridge Mass 1997

Science and the technologies which it has spawned, have had enormous impacts on this planet over the past few hundred years. And yet, if we are to believe Freeman Dyson suggests, we ain't seen nuthin' yet. As he sees it, the golden age of science may be yet to come, as over the upcoming one thousand years or so, and through the application of the physical sciences, mankind will probably escape from planet earth and spread out into the universe beyond. And this extraordinary emigration will be facilitated by amazing changes to our species itself, made possible, through both natural selection in response to the new extra terrestrial environments in which we will find ourselves, and through deliberate manipulation of the human genome to achieve better fit with such environments. "Our one species will become many. There is no reason why a variety of intelligent species should not fill a variety of ecological niches in different physical environments, some adapted to heat, others to cold, some to zero gravity, others to strong gravity, some to huge pressure, others to living in the vacuum of space". In other words, within the next one thousand years, a variety of different human beings, different species of humans even, will be selected and/or designed in ways to fit them for different locations across space.

If one thousand years is too far out to concern you personally at the moment, then reflect on this: The seeds of the technologies necessary for such revolutionary developments are already with us, and it is probable that their momentum is already unstoppable. And this brings us to consider our more immediate futures, such as what might happen over the next ten rather than one thousand years, and what, if anything, we should be doing to influence present trends. As Dyson sees it, technologies are significantly implicated in "the unequal distribution of wealth and skill between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor segments of society". This situation, he contends, will be intensified, over upcoming years and result in escalating economic tensions. Yet to reverse it we shall need "new political institutions as well as new technologies", and these are not only not yet in sight, but they will take "longer than ten years to grow".

The basic message which Freeman Dyson wishes to share with us is that while "the marketplace judges technologies by their practical effectiveness" ethical questions lurk in the background; often unasked and unaddressed. Adjudging technologies by whether or not they succeed or fail to do the job they were designed for, begs the question of "whether the job the technology is designed to do is actually worth doing". With a commentary ranging from historical developments in science and the impact of their application as technology, to the dreams of science fiction, Dyson explores the "interplay of science and technology with evolution and ethics". Using the distinctly different technologies of airships and aeroplanes, and the distinctly different social 'forces' which shaped their respective developments, for instance, he develops the thesis that "successful technologies are pulled along by the needs of the buyers, not pushed along by the ideology of the sellers". The author provides further evidence for his proposition with both ice-ponds and nuclear power stations as examples of failed technologies which were ideologically driven; albeit failing for quite different reasons and with vastly different consequences. While Dyson uses the language of economic costs and benefits, the moral here, is beyond basic economic theory, for the arguments raise the increasingly common concern about the difference between what scientists and technologists consider to be risky, and that which the citizenry accept: Tensions between what have been called hazards and outrage respectively.

From stories about scientifically based technologies, Dyson switches to science itself, and to supercolliders, automata, and recombinant DNA. Again in a wide ranging discourse, he talks of what is being learned about nature through them, and he talks of the significance that technologies have on the conduct of science, and to the responsibilities of scientists. He is in no doubt about the latter: "It is true that the immediate causes of social disintegration are moral and economic rather than technical. [But] science must bear a larger share of responsibility for these evils than the majority of scientists are willing to admit".

Perhaps what scientists and technologists alike are most unwilling to admit however is that their way of knowing and doing does not - cannot - embrace questions about what it is that *should* be done next, and the argument can be made that scientists need to think much more seriously about this inadequacy in their paradigm. Freeman Dyson is one scientist who is at least posing the question. ●

Scenario Planning : Managing for the Future

Gill Ringland. John Wiley and Sons Chichester. 1998

This is more a resource or reference book for would-be scenarists and their champions, than it is an easy general read about scenario planning as a management process. However, that said, it should be emphasised that this is a rich resource indeed. It is written in the easily accessible style of the classic American textbook: An historical review cum conceptual framework for scenario planning is followed by a series of methods and examples. This is followed in turn by descriptions of a number of case studies, with a series of examples of different scenarios from different organisations as the concluding section. A central and most significant feature of the book are detailed descriptions of the logic, processes, methods and outcomes of the scenario planning process as conducted at the 'information technology based' organisation (ICL) for which the author has executive responsibility for strategy.

Gill Ringland starts her tale of ICL's experience of building scenarios for strategic planning with the very powerful device of citing the lessons learned from an initial scenario building project, carried in 1993, which was regarded as less successful than had been hoped. Six key factors were identified in hindsight as central to that outcome, including the lack of a focused question as the starting point, the lack of a framework or context into which results could be placed, the dangers of using three scenarios "in an industry where it can be assumed that people are reasonably numerate and literate, and the lack of challenge to the worldview which prevailed within the team which developed them. All of these issues were addressed during the second scenario planning project, which was launched in 1995, and which proved very much more successful; although difficulties were still encountered "in communicating the scenarios in a useful form, and in embedding scenarios into decision-making."

As the author then reveals, here is exemplary learning; not just as it was manifest by reflections on, and attention to, lessons from the 'errors' of the pioneering attempt, but as indicated in all aspects of the amended approach. Although not referred to as such, the account of ICL's second scenario project reveals it to have been 'critical' in the sense that nothing was left unquestioned: Not the logic, the process, the methods, the research findings, the outcome scenarios, nor the manner by which they were used in the strategic development process. Each receives due attention as Ringland relates why things were done the way they were the second time around, and what happened as a consequence. This attention to detail, with its pervasive emphasis on the 'whys' and 'whats' of actual experience, really does provide a wonderful resource of practical tips for those keen to improve their 'know how' of the process. But this is not all by any means, as the author also reveals a host of insights about the information technology industry and the trends and uncertainties which it faces in the business environments in which it has to operate. The focus question of 'what added value will we (ICL) provide to our customers in 2005' triggers a rigorous investigation which leads eventually to the emergence of two profoundly different (and not simply polar opposite) scenarios, which the ICL team label Coral Reef and Deep Sea respectively. These differ, both metaphorically and conceptually, in at least four different ways, and these variables are used to 'paint pictures' of what the two quite different worlds might mean to ICL and what strategic directions each might dictate.

Once again, six lessons are identified in hindsight, as the author reflects back on what was achieved in terms of the process of scenario generation, and once again these lessons provide invaluable insights for those reading the book.

Ringland next turns her attention to the vital matter of how the ICL scenarios in particular, and scenarios in general, are used in the strategic planning and development processes. She emphasises five different uses, and gives detailed examples of each: Sensitivity/Risk Assessment, Strategy Evaluation, Strategy Development, both with and without a "Planning Focus" Scenario, and Skills for reducing fear, uncertainty, and doubt. This final section of Part One of the book will be, for many, the most useful and powerful, as this represents some of the most compelling evidence yet compiled for what we might call 'scenarios in strategic action'. In addition to descriptions of the use to which the ICL scenarios have been put, the author also explores examples of where scenarios generated by others have been used both to influence "public attitudes" and for "learning".

The momentum established in the first part of the book does not slacken as Ringland proceeds to detail Methods and Examples, then Case Studies, and finally Scenario Examples including those from her ICL experiences.

This is a most valuable addition to the Scenario Planning literature, and the first, within the genre of 'doing', which really represents a detailed text of the logic, processes, methods, outcomes, and uses of scenarios across a range of different circumstances relevant to the world of business. ●

ABN BOOKCLUB PRICES

1994

- The Seven Cultures of Capitalism* by Charles Hampden-Turner & Fons Trompenaars (Piatkus - UK)\$21.20
- *Capitalism(s) in Competition* by Eric Bet (GBN).....\$17.00
- Global Change* by Keith Suter (Albatross Books).....\$21.25
- Where to From Here* by Leonie V Still (Business & Professional Publishing)\$23.75
- *The Structure of Entrapment* by Charles Hampden-Turner (GBN) ..\$17.50
- *White Eye* by Blanche d'Alpuget (Viking)\$16.95
- The Management Myth* by Richard David Hames (Business & Professional Publishing)\$33.95
- The Ecology of Commerce* by Paul Hawken (Allen & Unwin)\$29.75
- The Executive Compass* by James O'Toole (Oxford Press)\$33.95
- *Messengers of the Gods* by James Cowan (Random House)\$14.45
- *Values and the Corporation* by Jay Ogilvy et al (GBN).....\$17.00
- The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* by Peter Senge (Allen & Unwin)\$42.45
- *Turbulent Mirror* by John Briggs & F. David Peat (HarperCollins) \$26.95
- The Last Three Minutes* by Paul Davies (Allen & Unwin).....\$12.95
- Leadership and the New Science* by Margaret Wheatley (Woodslane).....\$25.45

1995

- Framing Technology* by Leila Green & Roger Guinery (Allen & Unwin) \$19.95
- Competing for the Future* by Gary Hamel & C K Prahalad (Harvard Business School Press) (PB) \$25.95..(HB)\$46.95
- The Future Eaters* by Tim Flannery (Reed Books) \$33.95
- Learning Unlimited* by Alastair Rylatt (Business & Professional Publishing)\$29.70
- Enterprising Nations: The Karpin Report* (Commonwealth of Australia)\$25.45
- Australian Civilisation* edited by Richard Nile (Oxford University Press)\$21.20
- Creative Compartments* by Gerard Fairtlough (Adamantine Press)\$25.50
- Challenge to Change* by Richard Eckersley and Kevin Jeans (CSIRO Publications)\$29.70
- The Death of Economics* by Paul Omerod (Penguin Books)\$14.50
- The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* by Christopher Lasch (Norton) \$33.95
- The Knowledge Creating Company* by Ikujiro Nonaka & Kiyotaka Takeuchi (Oxford University Press)\$46.95
- *Living Without a Goal* by James Ogilvy (Doubleday)\$34.95

1996

- Jihad vs McWorld* by Benjamin R Barber (Times Books)\$34.95
- *Lords of the Rim* by Sterling Seagrave (G P Putnam's Sons)\$43.95
- Trust* by Francis Fukuyama (The Free Press)\$39.95
- How are we to Live?* by Peter Singer (Mandarin Books)\$14.50

- An Intimate History of Humanity* by Theodore Zeldin (Minerva)\$16.95
- *Having Our Say about the Future* (ASTEC)Free
- Maximum Leadership* by Charles Farkas, Philippe de Backer and Allen Sheppard (Orion)\$16.95
- Leadership in a New Era* edited by John Renesch (New Leaders Press Sterling and Stone)\$42.95
- Scenarios: The Art of Strategic Conversation* by Kees van der Heijden (Wiley)\$42.95
- The State We're In* by Will Hutton (Vintage).....\$16.95

1997

- Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman (Bantam Books).....\$14.50
- The Dilbert Principle* by Scott Adams (Harper-Collins).....\$21.25
- The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Or der* by Samuel P. Huntington (Simon and Schuster)\$33.95
- The Future of Capitalism* by Lester Thurow (Allen and Unwin).....\$16.95
- The Foresight Principle* by Richard Slaughter (Adamantine Press) ...\$33.50
- Burying the 20th Century* by Richard Hames with Geraldine Callanan (Business and Professional Publishing)\$33.95
- Is Australia an Asian Countr y?* by Stephen Fitzgerald (Allen and Unwin)\$16.95
- Mastering the Infinite Game* by Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars, (Capstone)\$33.10
- The Living Company* by Arie de Gues (Harvard Business School Press).....\$33.95
- Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn* by Donald Michael (Miles River Press)\$35.95
- Tyranny of Fortune* by Reg Little and Warren Reed (Business and Professional Publishing)\$25.45
- Intelligent Leadership* by Alistair Mant (Allen & Unwin)\$21.25
- Factor 4: The new Report to the Club of Rome* by Weizsacker & Lovins (Allen & Unwin)\$21.25
- Cybercorp: the new business revolution* by Games Martin (Amacom).....\$42.45

1998

- Corporate Collapse: Regulation, Accounting and Ethical Failure* by F. L. Clarke, G W Dean & K. G. Oliver (Cambridge)\$25.45
- Japan: A Reinterpretation* by Patrick Smith (Pantheon Books)\$42.45
- Do Lunch or be Lunch* by Howard Stevenson with Jeffrey Cruikshank (Harvard Business School Press)\$49.95
- The Fourth Turning* by William Strauss and Neil Howe (Broadway Books).....\$26.95
- Imagined Worlds* by Freeman Dyson (Harvard University Press)\$40.50
- Scenario Planning: Managing for the Future* by Gill Ringland (John Wiley and Sons)\$51.80

*These books are currently unavailable

BOOKCLUB SELECTION ORDER FORM

YES! Please send me the following books (please tick your selection)

Please add 10% to your order to cover postage and handling

Please find enclosed my cheque for \$. made payable to ABN; or

Please debit my Bankcard / Mastercard / AMEX / Visa / Diners

Card No.:

Expiry date: / / Today's date: / /

Name of company:

Name of cardholder:

Signature:

Your delivery address:

.....

Additional copies of ABN BookClub titles are available while stocks last!

Tanya Bullock
ABN BookClub
 Level 1, 71-73 Lithgow St
 St Leonards NSW 2065
 Ph: (02) 9439 4255
 Fax: (02) 9439 4511

