

The Humanity 3000 program is designed to bring together some of the world's most prominent thinkers to assess the current state of humanity and to identify the most significant factors that may affect the quality of life of the future people of the Earth. The program features a series of seminars and symposia to debate and discuss the critical factors that may have the most effect on the future of humanity. Humanity 3000 participants are asked to address the following:

In the context of Homo Sapiens' evolutionary past, present and thousand-year future:

- ***What are the threats to the survival of humanity?***
- ***What are the opportunities that offset/mitigate the threats?***
- ***What are the emergent priorities to ensure the survival of humanity?***

The Foundation for the Future shares the view that global participation is fundamental to the uniqueness and success of the program. Participants are chosen to represent different worldviews and various academic and professional disciplines.

(Earlier seminars have been reported in *Future News*.)

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Futures Foundation chair, Charles Brass, has been invited to participate in this year's *Humanity 3000* seminar hosted by the Foundation for the Future in Seattle. Here are extracts from one of the presentations he will offer to an audience of futurists, scientists, and scholars.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW to survive the next 1000 years?

Individual humans will almost certainly survive any planetary crisis that might occur during the next 1,000 years. However, whether those survivors know enough, or can learn quickly enough, to re-create what we call civilization or society depends critically on how information and knowledge are managed today.

The history of human information storage and transfer is an oral history. The capacity to semi-permanently record information spans less than 10 per cent of human history, though it has caused a phenomenal explosion in the quality and quantity of stored information.

In the past 100 years or so humans have begun to record their information in ways that require technologically mediated access. In some cases (e.g. celluloid film) this storage is in a format which can be directly comprehended, but most modern human information is stored in ways that can only be accessed by sophisticated technology using non-human senses.

Thus, any analysis of information needs in the year 3000 must include analysis of the technology needed to make sense of such information. Even if required information is available in pristine form, if the technology needed to access it isn't available, then the information is useless.

Archeologists and anthropologists are convinced that

there have been a number of cataclysms in human history which have resulted in a loss of what was relatively common knowledge. Many science fiction writers have similarly explored the consequences of knowledge lost through trauma, and the huge cost to society of re-acquiring this knowledge.

So, for me, the paramount thing we need to know in order to survive for the next 1,000 years is the scope of our present knowledge. That human beings once knew, for example, how to harness steam to produce power is critical to inspiring future generations, even if the actual technology to produce a steam engine (and its many derivatives) is lost. There is plenty of evidence throughout history of parallel discoveries or inventions, once a fundamental possibility had been revealed, but it is hard to conceive of something if one doesn't even know that it is possible.

The first thing we need to know is that we once knew.

Secondly, we need to continuously know some fundamental properties of matter, of ourselves and of our universe. Losing knowledge of the periodic table and the gross structure of matter, for example, would be disastrous for our capacity to shape our environment to meet our needs.



EDITORIAL

This month's theme turned out to be story-telling – not just the telling of constructive stories, like the ones that teach us how to manage our lives, but also the other kind, the cynical, manipulative stories of today.

We are who we are because of the stories we tell ourselves, the life stories we create for ourselves. Organisations, too, build their futures, and their relationships, on the way they create their stories and live them out. Our societies are built on stories that grow from ancient roots in mythology, as well as the stories we write for ourselves.

It is in our stories, and the way that they are lived out, that we win or lose the battle for trust. Stories can be fiction or fantasy and still not violate trust. Stories that are designed to mislead, like the ones we are seeing in politics and business today, will destroy trust. A growing number of commentators are reminding us, especially since the death of UK scientist David Kelly, that is a very high price for any society to pay.

The most powerful stories for the future will be stories that carry their own authenticity, stories that can withstand the most rigorous scrutiny. Whether it happens quickly, as in the UK right now, or slowly as in the USA, they'll certainly get that scrutiny.

Jan Lee Martin

What do we need to know? *(cont'd)*

Similarly, losing fundamental knowledge of our biology would increase hugely the risks to life and longevity. And knowledge of our place in the universe is essential to ward off a return to the sorts of mythological interpretations which delayed societal development in the past.

Thirdly, I contend we need to continuously know how to harness energy for human use. As animals we lack the ability to directly convert sunlight, air and water into energy and regressing to harnessing only available plants and animals would be a survival disaster. Current human knowledge includes a variety of simple (and complex) ways of harnessing energy for our use – from lighting and sustaining fire to pumping ground water and harvesting seeds. Loss of this knowledge would greatly reduce our survival chances.

These then are the three broad categories of things we need to continuously know to the year 3000:

- **that we now know how to do marvellous and apparently magical things**
- **the fundamental structure of ourselves and our world**
- **how to harness the energy we need.**

On this we can re-create a viable civilization.

Which brings me to the last question – how do we ensure that we continuously know these things?

Again I believe there are three imperatives.

First, we need to be acutely aware of the importance of multiple redundancy – having the same information dispersed widely and in multiple forms. Under the influence of economics and business, the Western world has become very skeptical of anything that appears unnecessary or redundant. Modern business and government have streamlined into single lines of communication with a minimum of organizational layers.

Nature on the other hand recognizes the criticality of redundancy in ensuring survival, particularly after a crisis. Humans have two eyes, ears and kidneys where one is sufficient, and produce millions of sperm in a single ejaculation; and many biological pathways have at least two viable routes to achieving their outcomes. This apparent redundancy is critical in a crisis – natural

systems frequently demonstrate a resilience not often evident in systems created by humans.

Putting one's eggs in one basket is simply not a smart survival strategy. Concentrating information and knowledge in a few minds is not a successful survival strategy – every acorn and every sperm contains enough information to seed their next generation.

We can have no idea in advance of a crisis which particular individuals will survive. Distributing fundamental information to the widest possible number is the most intelligent survival strategy we can follow.

For human beings this means at very least ensuring that every adult is numerate and can read and write. It also means ensuring everyone knows where to access information critical to their survival.

But the third imperative is more problematical. Survival after a crisis requires being quickly able to re-create what was present (and desirable) prior to the crisis. Nature has created self-replicating molecules which achieve this task by ensuring that each generation contains within it the capacity to create its successors. And, fortunately, human beings are a product of nature, and each subsequent generation is virtually guaranteed the genetic pre-requisites for language, consciousness and intelligence. Human systems have some distance to go to achieve this level of self-replicability – though bio- and nano-technological developments hint at their future potential.

We will not guarantee our collective ability to survive until the self-replicability of environmental information is as reliable as its genetic cousins.

We already know all we need to know to ensure our survival as a species to the year 3000. Whether we can avoid self-destruction in the meantime is another question.

Our remaining challenges are the gaining of sufficient wisdom to recognize that each human is as important as any other with respect to survival of the species; and the development of information systems which are capable of self-replicating human created information.

What's the story?

The ability to create and share a strong story is a skill that distinguishes successful leaders. Now it is also being recognised in other areas of business, such as marketing, as a key tool for engaging the emotions of staff, customers and other stakeholders.

At a much deeper level, story-telling is the fundamental process through which we create meaning for ourselves in our lives. And it has for thousands of years been the way in which each generation has passed on its wisdom to future generations. That's one reason why anthropologists are so concerned about the loss of diversity in languages and cultural traditions around the world.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi points out in his book, *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*, that there is much knowledge -- or well-ordered information -- accumulated in culture, ready to help people extract patterns from the order achieved by past generations that will help them avoid disorder in their own minds and lives. Is a new collection of cultural stories, then, the way to address one of the issues raised by Charles Brass in his paper for the Humanity 3000 series? (The gaining of wisdom - see p2). This approach would seem more likely to produce cultural wisdom than the proliferation of facts and data that has characterised the information age and seems likely to continue.

"Great music, architecture, art, poetry, drama, dance, philosophy and religion are there for anyone to see as examples of how harmony can be imposed on chaos," Csikszentmihalyi says. "Yet so many people ignore them, expecting to create meaning in their lives by their own devices."

He goes on to argue that to do so is like trying to build up material culture from scratch in each generation. "No one in his right mind would want to start reinventing the wheel, fire, electricity and the million objects and processes that we now take for granted as part of the human environment. Instead we learn how to make these things by receiving ordered information from teachers, from books, from models, so as to benefit from the knowledge of the past and eventually surpass it. To discard the hard-won information on how to live accumulated by our ancestors, or to expect to discover a viable set of goals all by oneself, is misguided hubris. The chances of success are about as good as in trying to build an electron microscope without the tools and knowledge of physics."

In the realm of direct experience, he and his colleagues have noted that people who as adults develop coherent life themes often recall that when they were very young, their parents told them stories and read from books. But they found that individuals who never focus on any goal, or accept one unquestioningly from the society around them, tend not to remember their parents having read or told stories to them as children.

Award-winning writer and movie director Robert McKee, who lectures on the art of storytelling to writers, directors, producers, actors and entertainment executives worldwide, believes executives can engage listeners on a whole new level if they

toss their PowerPoint slides and learn to tell good stories instead. He argues that stories "fulfil a profound human need to grasp the patterns of living not merely as an intellectual exercise, but within a very personal, emotional experience" (http://www.afrboss.com.au/magarticle.asp?doc_)

Stories are how we remember; we tend to forget lists and bullet points, he says. Business people not only have to understand their companies' past but they must also project the future. And how do you imagine the future? "As a story. You create scenarios in your head of possible future events to try to anticipate the life of your company or your own personal life. So, if a business person understands that his or her own mind naturally wants to frame experience in a story, the key to moving an audience is not to resist this impulse but to embrace it by telling a good story."

Of course, the ancient dilemma for listeners is how much of a story to believe. The same information revolution that is sharing stories so widely and well is also educating the audience -- sometimes educating it in cynicism -- at the same time as it enables those stories to be checked for accuracy and assessed for consistency. This is the driver of the communication revolution that, over the past 30 years, has seen leading organisations move from preoccupation with their corporate image to a new understanding that that image must be backed by substance -- that what they say must be matched by what they do. With social change and values shifts, scrutiny is increasingly moving upstream to examine, and if necessary challenge, the real intent of an organisation, and the goals and values that frame that intent.

"DEEP BRANDING"

When researchers and advertising agencies start talking about "trust equity", the "valuable life", and "seeking connection", it is clear that the social undercurrents we have been tracking are maturing into a sea change. The highly regarded Daniel Yankelovich Group, for example, talks of "the valuable life", people's need for a life with meaning, including a need to "be good and do good". Saatchi & Saatchi says the term "consumer" can be a misleading word. "People don't park their beliefs and values, their fears and dreams on a bench outside the marketplace before they buy something. These are always with them, providing the background for all their life choices."

A story in this month's *National Business Bulletin* quotes Jan Lee Martin on what she calls "deep branding", the kind of organisational branding that can withstand the closest scrutiny from internal and external stakeholders. She suggests that sustainable success for companies in the third millennium is most likely to come from taking the hero's journey.

"Perhaps, for organisations of the future," she says, "doing the right thing will be the right thing to do."

Same story, different response

Blair is pilloried while the US President is praised for his Iraq strategy. But if Americans continue dying, things could get tough for Bush, writes Robert Reich.

No weapons of mass destruction have yet been found and Saddam Hussein's putative links to al-Qaeda remain unverified. Moreover, there's reason to believe that intelligence agencies in Britain and the United States were pressured by both administrations into providing such evidence.

Tony Blair is in trouble, yet George W. Bush is still riding high. On the face of it, this seems curious. Both men preside over legislative majorities, but Blair's is stronger than Bush's. Both are effective campaigners although Blair is more articulate. And Blair has done a better job than Bush delivering a good economy, making government more efficient, and improving school performance. Part of the answer, argues former US Secretary of State Robert Reich, might be found by comparing their news conferences, and the way they tell their stories.

"Since his election in 1997, Tony Blair has based much of his appeal on claims of integrity and sincerity, coupled with promises to improve domestic services. Now two-thirds of the British public doesn't trust him, and he's compelled to show how well he's done on domestic issues apart from the attention he's given to foreign affairs. But in an America that is still reeling from the terrorist attack of September 11, Bush's appeal has been based largely on his determination to fight back. Americans haven't cared very much about the details of Bush's strategy, as long as it's sufficiently bold. In fact, a large portion of the American public continues to believe that Saddam Hussein was somehow involved in the 9/11 attack. As long as the administration seems to be making 'progress' by tracking down or killing his key assistants, including his sons, and fighting the remnants of his forces, most Americans are satisfied."

Tony Blair has been in office a long time. This weekend he gains the distinction of being Britain's longest continuously-serving Labour Prime Minister. A politician in office this long naturally gathers enemies and courts disillusionment. But George W. Bush is still a relative newcomer. To be sure, he was elected in 2000 without a mandate to do much of anything. In fact, most Americans had voted for his opponent, Al Gore. Yet after 11 September he received the strongest mandate any American President has possessed since World War II.

Bush has been fighting a 'war on terrorism' for less than two years, and most Americans are still willing to forgive setbacks and overlook inconvenient facts, at least for the moment. But if a guerrilla war in Iraq continues into the autumn, with American soldiers dying and no clear sign the country is stabilizing, his honeymoon may be over.

Full story published on August 3, 2003 Observer/UK © Guardian Newspapers

Will Dr Kelly's death change the world?

Could the death of British scientist David Kelly mark a turning point in the tolerance of political "spin" in western societies? Some views:

Hugo Young, The Guardian UK 20/07/03

"...the tragedy of David Kelly, the British weapons expert who appears to have committed suicide, began with something utterly unworthy of such an outcome ... It was an extremely trivial point... could Saddam Hussein have launched weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes? The point that was stirred into turmoil... was even narrower: Whether Saddam could do this or not, who was the source of a BBC story saying some knowledgeable insiders did not believe it? "This is trifling stuff. In a normal political world, where top people had not taken leave of their senses, it would not produce a crisis. It certainly would not push anyone over the brink to suicide, if that's what happened to David Kelly."

Richard Butler, Australian Financial Review 21/07/03

"In my extensive dealings with David Kelly I found him to be a man of scrupulous honesty and integrity. For him, the truth of any matter, especially its scientific truth, was irreducible....He did not serve or abuse the policies and interests of any governments....The fundamental issue at stake is truth in public discourse and public policy formulation.... The need for consideration of the issue of truth in public and parliamentary discourse within democracies has been long overdue for examination."

Paul Daley, Sydney Morning Herald 26/07/03

"Officially, the death of the scientist David Kelly will be called suicide. But that won't absolve the politicians and media... In the end, it seems, nobody wanted to listen to David Kelly. Everyone involved agrees Kelly's suicide is a real human tragedy. But it is also a realpolitik catastrophe for Blair, whose credibility rests on proving the existence of WMD in Iraq. Blair's best chance of so doing probably died with Kelly."

Peter Robinson, Australian Financial Review 24/07/03

"Would it really have been so terrible if the Blair government had been open and frank from the very beginning and explained what it really thought about Hussein's weapons? Truth is usually the most powerful weapon of all. The sad fact is that it is more respected by the media than by those who would manipulate them."

Carolyn Douglas, undergraduate student at UTS, for Future News

"In democratic societies people expect that their leaders will act with honesty and integrity; that they will be accountable to the people who have elected them; and that they will use the immense power they have been granted with extreme caution....If people in democratic societies are to have trust in public discourse, both political parties and the media need to be scrupulously questioned and held accountable for their actions."

Is storytelling a crime?....

George W. Bush has knowingly deceived the American people on the two overriding policy issues of his presidency — the invasion of Iraq and the deep tax cuts, writes Walter Williams in the *Seattle Times*.

"Other presidents have lied. Only Bush has repeatedly duped Congress and the public to thwart their exercise of informed consent. He is the first president to use propaganda as the main weapon in selling his policies. *Bush's unprecedented pattern of deception may constitute an impeachable offence.*

"To date, only the deception in Iraq has brought forth the 'I' word. The case for impeachment is materially strengthened, however, when Iraq is combined with Bush's 2001 and 2003 propaganda campaigns to convince the public that tax filers with lower levels of income benefited more from his tax cuts than the nation's richest families.

"Hoodwinking the public that Saddam posed a perilous immediate danger to the United States is Bush's greatest treachery, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman observed: 'If that claim was fraudulent, the selling of the war is arguably the worst scandal in American history.'

"Lacking hard facts, as evidenced by the much-discussed deception in his State of the Union address that Iraq sought to buy uranium in Africa, Bush mixed misinformation, distorted allegations and unsubstantiated rumors to persuade the public of the imminent danger posed by Saddam Hussein."

The experience with the promised "massive tax cuts for families and individuals" in both 2001 and 2003 shows how Bush used the same tactics over time, Williams says. But is it a high crime that warrants impeachment, as was the case with Watergate?

"In actuality, the president's purposeful duping of the public on the nation's most critical policy issues strikes at the heart of American constitutional democracy when it robs the electorate of informed consent. This fraudulent act makes a mockery of Abraham Lincoln's immortal words in the Gettysburg Address, 'that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth.'"

Full story published on August 1, 2003 © The Seattle Times

and in Australia?

Many Australians believe the government lied in the children overboard affair and has made misleading statements about the war in Iraq, but as Hugh Mackay reports (see p4) the PM's popularity remains strong. Is this a sign of frightening political apathy? Or a failure of credible opposition? Yet as Dr Carmen Lawrence told a Perth audience: "In Australia there appears to be a growing conviction that the fundamentals of the democratic contract have been corrupted. Despite the equality in voting power, many suspect that not all citizens are equally able to influence their representatives".

....or just "free speech"?

If big business hopes to regain the dwindling trust of Americans, demanding a right to lie is hardly the way to do it, say US activists Jeff Milchen and Jeffrey Kaplan. So perhaps the US Supreme Court helped save corporate America from itself a few weeks ago, when it declined to rule on the Nike Corporation's claim of a constitutional right to lie.

According to Milchen and Kaplan, Nike's lawyers hoped the Court would overturn a California Supreme Court decision that denied Nike the privilege of "pleading the First" (Amendment) when charged with violating state anti-fraud laws. But the Court unexpectedly dismissed Nike's appeal on technical grounds without issuing a substantive ruling. This allows the case to go to trial in California state court, where Nike's claims will be exposed to the scrutiny its managers so badly wanted to avoid.

"In the face of much unfavourable publicity in 1996-1997, Nike conducted a public relations blitz to convince people it had cleaned up its subcontractors' notorious 'sweatshop' labour practices in Asia.

"But California citizen Marc Kasky didn't buy it. He sued Nike under state consumer protection laws for allegedly making false assertions about wages, corporal punishment of workers, and other issues during that campaign. He wants to force Nike to take the estimated profits it gained in California as a result of its PR campaign and use those funds to correct the record publicly.

"Rather than attempting to refute Kasky's charges, Nike's lawyers challenged the legitimacy of the truth-in-advertising law itself. They argued that since Nike's communications partly addressed political issues, not just company practices, that the PR was fully-protected political speech, not less-protected commercial communication. To hold Nike to accuracy, they claimed, would unconstitutionally chill the company's 'speech'.

"But Nike is not, as its publicists imply, being sued for misleading people about corporate globalization. Kasky's allegations concern misinformation about specific conditions under which its products are made. Whining by Nike's supporters about businesses being 'silenced' by a ban on lying lacks credibility since corporations already are obliged by law to issue accurate statements to investors....

"Corporations need not be held to perfect accuracy, but allowing corporations to deliberately deceive is a recipe for disaster. The Supreme Court justices need to reverse the decades-long trend of granting greater legal powers to corporations and make clear that the Bill of Rights was written to protect human liberty, not to shield business from accountability."

More information at ReclaimDemocracy.org/nike.

Questioning the future

Futures Studies, Action Learning and Organizational Transformation

A recent book by Dr Sohail Inayatullah achieves the apparently impossible, combining scholarly depth and rich data with readable narrative (including story-telling) plus a wealth of practical explanations, “how-tos” and links to other resources. More information at www.metafuture.org

Futures studies is the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future. Futures studies has moved from external forces influencing the future -- astrology and prophecy -- to structure (historical patterns of change of the rise and fall of nations and systems) and agency (the study and creation of preferred images of the future). Futures studies has been eagerly adopted by planning departments in organizations and nations. Yet there are clear differences between the planning and futures framework. Planning seeks to control and close the future, while futures studies seeks to open up the future, moving from the 'likely' future to alternative futures. To understand the future, there are a **variety of exemplary methods**. These include, for example, **emerging issues analysis**, **age-cohort analysis**, **causal layered analysis** and **scenarios**. These methods derive from **different types of futures studies**. Four types are crucial. The first is **predictive**, based on empirical social sciences. The second is **interpretive**, based not on forecasting the future but on understanding images of the future. The third is **critical**, derived from poststructural thought. It is focused on asking both who benefits by the realization of certain futures and which methodologies privilege certain types of futures studies. The fourth is **participatory action learning/research**. This approach is far more democratic, being based on stakeholders developing their own future, using their foundational assumptions of the future (for example, whether the future is linear or cyclical). Ultimately, while futures studies is largely about the study of the future, at heart, the reasons behind the study are not only academic but about transforming the future, so that a more sustainable world can be created. (Page 1)

“...There are thus a range of ways one can construct scenarios. Besides having clarity in consistency of actors, one should ensure that contradictions within scenarios are not left out. Scenarios are not meant to be perfect places but possible places. However, these scenarios as outlined above remain committed to the model of governance that privileges nations before individuals, communities and people's associations. Using the notion of layers of reality, what is missing are the role of ideas, of the Earth itself, of women, of alternative ways of seeing the world and of non-statist nominations of reality. Scenarios then should not only find alternative routes out of the present, they need to configure the present differently, using radically foreign and unfamiliar notions of the future. The ability to reinterpret the past, contest the present and create alternative futures is what makes futures studies different from routine social science, planning or policy research. The task is not only, for example, to imagine alternative futures for the United Nations but to rethink governance, power and structure, to call into question current notions of how we organize our social and political life...” (p20)

FUTURES STUDIES SIMPLIFIED

- What *will* the future look like?
- What do we *want* the future to become like?
- What are the *alternatives*?
- What is *missing* from the future forecasted, desired?
- What is *feared*? (p187)

World civilizations and the West: fundamental differences

If we are to engage in anticipatory action learning in non-Western cultures, we need to be aware of some crucial differences, even as globalization homogenizes cultures.

| EAST | WEST |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (rise and fall) Cyclical | 1 Linear (endless expansion) |
| (perfection of self) Eupsychias | 2 Utopias (perfection of society) |
| Collective | 3 Individual |
| (extended family, dynasty, state) | |
| Moral leadership | 4 Representative democracy |
| (body to mind to spirit, subtle to causal) Reality layered | 5 Reality flat |
| Ideational | 6 Materialistic |
| (spiritual, women's, agricultural, efficient) Temporal ecology | 7 Scientific and technological time |
| Future generations | 8 21st century |
| Many lives | 9 One life |
| Collective consciousness | 10 Individual minds/souls |
| Contradictions | 11 Either/Or (p223) |

R U U? Or R U a "sital"?

Increasingly, our lives are given meaning through our consumption, says the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies. Continuing the proposition of futurist Rolf Jensen in *The Dream Society*, the Institute argues that we satisfy our aesthetic needs by buying designer products; we satisfy our emotional needs through entertainment, travel and other types of experiences; and now we can also satisfy existential needs with commercial products.

Part of this continuing trend to outsource more and more of the living of our lives is the commercialisation of emotions.

"It is no longer enough to produce a useful product: a story or legend must be built into it, a story that embodies values beyond utility," the Institute says. This imperative is already occurring with more and more products. People buy blue jeans, for instance, only partly to cover their bodies: most of the money they pay is for the story that goes with the product - a story of independence, youth, power, and perhaps traditional (or nontraditional) values. Similarly, when they buy eggs laid by free-range hens, much of the money they pay is for the hen's lifestyle.

"Storytelling, the telling of stories, isn't anything new, quite the contrary. Telling stories is probably one of the oldest human forms of communication. What is new is that it no longer is the religious or political stories through which we seek the meaning of our lives, but the stories of companies and products."

The Institute has coined the word "sital" to describe the modern human being who seeks the meaning of life in the stories of companies and products.

"We present the sital as opposed to the individual. The individual is what it is. It has its own, inherent meaning. Individuals demand self-realisation. As an individual, you have an unchangeable core. The individual is its own source for finding the meaning of its life. The sital isn't the source of its own meaning; the meaning is derived from the situations and connections it is a part of. A sital isn't something specific and unchangeable, it is what is most suitable for the present situation. Instead of saying like the individual "I am what I am", it says "I am where I am". This is why there is a demand for everyday situations to be meaningful. I am my work, so my work should be meaningful. I am what I consume, so the products I buy should be meaningful.

"The point for the sital is not to find itself, but to place itself - where the best and most attractive stories are. The sital prefers to work somewhere where the work has some kind of 'higher' meaning, and prefers to buy products that signal meaning and values over products that are neutral in meaning and values.

"Our need for stories that provide meaning is thus primarily satisfied in the commercial sphere. We are in demand of aesthetics, emotions and meaning - both in our workplace and on the market."

It's a new take on a very old story: do we look inwards or outwards for meaning?

"We live downstream from you in time.."

What if future generations themselves were able to speak to us? What would they say? If they had a voice today, what would they ask us to do for them? Canadian futurist Allen Tough takes a guess.

You are alive at a pivotal moment in humanity's development. You are making some of the most important choices in human history. Your era is marked by positive and negative potentials of such newness and magnitude that you can hardly understand them. Through your public policies and daily lives, the people of your era have tremendous power to influence the future course of humanity's story. We strongly care about your choices, of course, since we benefit or suffer from them quite directly. We live downstream from you in time; whatever you put into the stream flows on to our era. We will be very grateful if you devote your best efforts to four particular changes....

Adopt a long-term perspective: In all of your major decisions and actions, please consider our perspective and wellbeing along with your own. Take our needs as seriously as your own. Care about our welfare as well as your own. Our needs and rights are not inferior to yours. Please regard your generation and ours as equals. This is the principle of intergenerational equity -- equal opportunities across the generations.

Future-relevant research: The amount of effort going into creating knowledge that is profoundly significant to the long-term future is only about one third of what it should be. The gap between the optimum effort and your current level is foolish and poignant. Your aim should be to multiply your future-oriented inquiry threefold over the next few years. The long-term benefits will far outweigh the costs.

Future relevant education: You cannot achieve a positive future without far-reaching learning and changes by individuals around the world.... Any path to a positive future will require deep changes in individual perspectives, values and behaviour.... Educational institutions should provide courses in futures studies, with some emphasis on the perspective of future generations, using approaches that affect the head, heart, soul and hands of people of all ages.

Learning, Caring and Meaningfulness: Your society should do much more to help people feel a deep bonding or connectedness with all of humankind, with the planet and its diverse forms of life, and with future generations.

Your society should also focus much more attention and support on the individual's desire for a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Signals in the noise

The business time tunnel

You can't go on believing the same things forever, writes Richard Neville in this special feature. The speed of change, the disappearance of time, the mounting threats to stability on earth -- as well as to the sanity of its occupants -- are among factors compelling a sweeping overhaul of our ideas. Are we ready for it? Or will most of us sing the same old tune and turn up the volume? Three key forces shaping the future are globalisation, the information revolution and the quest for sustainability.

CA Charter August 2003 1142

Old values clock off

The dynamics of the 21st century workplace are not a simple split of 'them and us', nor is talent at war with capital, writes David James. Only half of Australia's workers are full-time; 25% are casuals and the rest are on contract or self-employed. Only 18% of the private sector workforce is unionised, yet union-based industry superannuation funds have become heavy accumulators of capital.

BRW July 31-August 6 2003 1143

Small screen, big trouble

For centuries Bhutan was a Buddhist idyll - cut off from the world and crime-free. Then, four years ago, came television. Two journalists report on their visit to a country crash-landing in the 21st century. In June 1999 Bhutan became the last nation in the world to turn on television. By April 2002 the country was in the grip of its first crime wave.

Good Weekend 26 07 03 1144

The scepticism of a believer

An interview with futurist Ziauddin Sardar when he was in Adelaide last month quotes some of his writing, including an early response to September 11: "Islam cannot explain the actions of the suicide hijackers, just as Christianity cannot explain the gas chambers, or Catholicism the bombing at Omagh". Sardar is fiercely critical of both east and west: "There is no question that criticism must start with the self. I am a Muslim, so I critique Islam. I am a Westerner; I critique the West."

SMH Spectrum 26/27 07 03 1145

Out of the blue: the teachable moment

What do professors of foresight say to their students when events of such significance as September 11 shake the foundations of the arrogant "knowledge society"? asks Canadian futurist Lynn Elen Burton. Is academic political discourse as vacuous as it seems always to have been on the eve of revolutions, the French and Russian being famous examples? Or will the event become a valuable teaching moment where students are engaged in the discussions of some of the basics of the philosophy of knowledge and the roots of our values as humans?

Futures Research Quarterly Spring 2003 1146

The case against lawyers

How Lawyers, Politicians and Bureaucrats Have Turned the Law into an Instrument of Tyranny -- and What We as Citizens Have to Do About It reads the subtitle of this book by Catherine Crier, former lawyer and judge from Dallas, news anchor at CNN and correspondent on ABC's 2020 program. She bemoans the "profoundly unfair US legal system that produces results and profits for the few, and frustration and injustice for the many," and quotes de Tocqueville's prediction that "if we lost our communal bond, authority and social control would arise elsewhere".

Futures Survey June 2003 1147

Stealing the internet

The crackdown by the music industry on illegal downloading tells just part of the story, writes Tom Paine. From Congress to Silicon Valley, the nation's largest communication and entertainment conglomerates -- and software firms that want their business -- are seeking to restructure the internet, to charge people for high-speed uses that are now free and to monitor content in an unprecedented manner.

CommonDreams News Centre 04 08 03 1148

Don't just get even - get very mad

"Was anyone really surprised by the recent Newspoll findings that although two-thirds of Australians believe they were misled over the reasons for the invasion of Iraq, the Prime Minister's standing with voters remains strong? Or that, despite the fact that 36 per cent of us believe we were deliberately lied to... the government has increased its lead over Labor?" asks Hugh Mackay. Such findings are further proof...that this electorate is disengaged from the political, social and economic agenda. When the national mood is like this, governments can get away with murder."

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