



The Richard Eckersley essay, 'Values and Visions: Youth and the failure of modern western culture', published in the March issue of YSA (vol. 14, no. 1) has provoked two critical responses which are published below along with a reply from Eckersley. If any readers wish to carry on the debate, short responses via letters to the editor are welcome. Send to: Editor, Youth Studies Australia, GPO Box 252C, Hobart Tas. 7001. Email address: Sheila.Allison@educ.utas.edu.au

Musings on the prospects of a lost generation

A possible conversation inspired by
Richard Eckersley's article Values & Vision:
Youth & the failure of modern Western culture

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Youth: So explain to me again why my generation reveals the fundamental failing of modern western culture.

Adult: Your generation has lost its sense of purpose. You are confused about who you are and where you're going.

Youth: And we're the first generation of young people to demonstrate this confusion?

Adult: Well no. All younger generations tend to be confused about who they are and where they're going. But your generation is different.

Youth: Why?

Adult: Previous generations had a vision, a set of shared values, which provided a moral framework within which the young person could work out who they were.

Youth: And we've lost these values?

Adult: Yes and they've been replaced by a different world view, which turned us all into sceptics who don't believe in anything.

Youth: So we shouldn't really question things that we don't understand; or choose not to place our trust in adults just because they're adults; or conform to a set of expectations that adults have for us?

Adult: Well no. That's not quite ...

Youth: But I still don't understand why my generation is so different.

Adult: Well you don't have the same

opportunity to develop a positive attitude towards the future that previous generations had.

Youth: Did your generation have that opportunity?

Adult: Of course. Mine was the luckiest generation of them all. We were the baby boomers. We grew our hair long, and played our music really loud; and, because we had guaranteed jobs, we could afford to indulge ourselves by "getting involved", by making a commitment. And now that we're grown up and mature, and we've got children of our own, we've earned the right to sit back and tell the young people of your generation where you're going wrong.

Youth: But how come you're so sure about this?

Adult: We do research, surveys, which enables us to know what you and your generation are thinking.

Youth: And who did these surveys? Adults?

Adult: Yes. Why?

Youth: In Society and Culture the other day the teacher told us about ethnocentricity which is where people who study other cultures often bring to that study their own cultural biases which affect their conclusions.

Adult: What has ethnocentricity got to do with ...

Youth: Well, it seems to me that we're

just like another culture and the people who try to study us might be guilty of ethnocentricity, except it would be based on age. And, as well, adults would have their own experiences of adolescence which would colour the way they study young people today.

Adult: What are you trying to say?

Youth: Well, kids don't like adults prying into our affairs. Cause we don't trust them. And, like at school, we learn to second guess the teacher, work out what she wants as an answer, and then regurgitate it back to her. You get really good at reading the way they ask the questions so you know what she's looking for and you say the right answer.

Adult: What are you implying?

Youth: Well, I reckon it would be the same with surveys and stuff. You'd work out what they wanted to know and give it back to them.

Adult: But we have evidence from young people directly. We have this book of poetry where young people like you tell us how despairing and hopeless they feel about the future.

Youth: So these kids sat down and spontaneously wrote a whole bunch of poems?

Adult: No they had an adult to help them. He facilitated the process.

Youth: What does facilitated mean?

.....

Adult: Well he probably would have sat the kids down and asked them to talk about the future and then got them to write about it.

Youth: But what if the kids didn't understand what he was on about?

Adult: Well the facilitator probably would have used examples of the future that the kids would have known about, like Space Demons and Terminator II and Aliens and Blade Runner to get them to think about the future.

Youth: But wouldn't that have influenced what they wrote?

Adult: Certainly not. We adults are very careful about not unduly influencing young people in our care.

Youth: But how do we know that what the kids wrote is what they really believe?

Adult: Because they wrote it. It represents what they think.

Youth: So does everything that an adult writes represent exactly what they think?

Adult: Of course not. When we create something we have artistic licence which means that we can amplify and augment what we think in order to make what we create more interesting and effective.

Youth: And young people aren't able to do this?

Adult: Of course not. Young people aren't artists in the same way that adults are.

(PAUSE)

Youth: Hang on a minute. You're the generation that knows all about commitment and involvement and

integrity cause you learnt all about that in the sixties right?

Adult: Correct.

Youth: But wasn't it your generation which was responsible for the 80s decade of greed?

Adult: Well ... yes but ...

Youth: Isn't there a contradiction here? I mean it was your generation who learnt all about these high moral values in your youth, but it seems you didn't practise those values when there seemed to be a need for it.

Adult: But ...

Youth: I reckon that you're being hypocritical. You're saying "do as I say not as I do".

Adult: This is ridiculous. I won't sit here and listen to you ...

Youth: No. That's obvious.

.....

Hints of catastrophe:

Richard Eckersley, western civilisation and young people

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As the twentieth century approaches its end, the conviction grows that many other things are ending too. Storm warnings, portents, hints of catastrophe haunt our times. The "sense of an ending", which has given shape to so much of twentieth century literature, now pervades our popular imagination as well (Lasch 1991, p.3).

Cliches abound in the 1990s. Some intellectuals write of a "culture" characterised by hopelessness, despair and a fear of the future. In youth

studies circles, young people are represented variously as victims or threats as we Australians go through an "unprecedented" social, economic and cultural "crisis". Writers like Richard Eckersley argue that we are failing our young people because "western civilisation" has collapsed. Now it may be that western civilisation *has* collapsed. It may be as the children's story Henny Penny has it that "the sky is falling". But we doubt it.

These and similar claims are part of a broader pattern of cultural despair

that for some time now has shadowed the evolution of modernity. It is a collective lament for a past that we have allegedly lost. Historians simply call it a fairy story because this account of decline relies on a story about a past that historically never existed.

The prevalence of this kind of story reveals what the social sciences can become without an adequate historical memory. In the same way that a person suffering from amnesia cannot function without memory, so too social scientists and commentators become negligent, even dangerous when they forget what they most need to remember. There is no doubt that Eckersley is well intended. Good intentions however are not enough. The usual questions need to be asked: Is his account accurate? Do his claims rest on a secure grasp of our past? Furthermore, what forms of social action or solutions does he support? These are the issues we briefly address.

Eckersley's case

Eckersley has now published at least four pieces in the storm warnings and catastrophe haunting our times genre (1988; 1992; 1993 and 1995). Each of these offer in reiterative ways the same arguments, logic and a call to arms embedded in a general pessimism. His case rests on a series of claims and assumptions.

First, as revealed in a variety of opinion surveys (found in newspaper surveys, advertising agency reports and one PhD thesis, and/or a small body of research by psychologists) some, maybe many, young people are said to be despondent, negative, feel helpless, anguished and fearful about their society and the future. Eckersley too briefly acknowledges that other surveys reveal more optimistic outlooks, but he does not discuss them, presumably because they counter the case he is presenting. He also acknowledges in passing, that "we" don't know what all the negative surveys mean, before he goes on to tell us what they do mean.

Second, Eckersley argues that young people today are overwhelmed by the "challenges of adulthood". This is the case he claims because young people in contemporary society confront more intensive and extensive social change than ever before. They face greater instability and also have more knowledge of "problems". This according to Eckersley reflects the fact that "we" "are now more isolated and vulnerable as individuals", that we are "mentally unhealthy" and that our society is less cohesive. If this sounds familiar, it may be because you have read Durkheim's *Suicide* (1893).

Third, Eckersley claims we are experiencing "the absence of a shared ideal or vision of our society and its future, a vision that nourishes the individual and helps to hold a society together" (Eckersley 1995, p.15). This claim is based on "psychological data" from psychologists like McKay who has argued that "Australians believe society has lost its bearings" (ibid.,

p.16). Eckersley identifies this as a loss of faith in material "progress" which compounds the earlier and larger loss of faith in a transcendental belief system. In the 1990s we have social disorder and moral confusion which he summarises as a loss of faith in God, King and Country. A belief in material prosperity had replaced that earlier set of values and now even that faith has eroded. And, as if that were not enough, we have succumbed to anti-social values like:

... pride (self centredness) avarice, envy, lust, anger - while many traditional virtues such as faith, hope and charity and fortitude, for example are neglected (ibid., p.16).

Eckersley adds a potent caution that the symptoms of disorder and distress aren't all that "obvious". Eckersley, like most nostalgics have to admit that things are not as alarming and appalling as his discussion implies. He explains this by claiming that the horrific and large problems he identifies are subtle and not easily accessible to empirical investigation.

The threat is more insidious, more subtly destructive - a slow poisoning of the spirit, the gradual decay of civic life (ibid., p.17).

Finally, Eckersley's argument relies on his grounding assumption that "real" cultures express universal values which:

provide people with a sense of meaning, belonging and purpose and so a sense of personal identity, worth and security, a measure of confidence or certainty about what the future holds for them ... [and] a framework of moral values to guide their conduct. It is these basic qualities of culture that hold societies together and sustain their members through the strife and trouble of their personal lives (ibid., p.16).

It is the loss of this "real" culture that Eckersley believes explains the

current plight of young Australians. Analytically this account of cultural decline assumes first that certain values and practices that constituted a consensus once existed historically but no longer exist. These include a sense of "community" and a belief in God and in a transcendent reality. These factors according to Eckersley once were part of a social consensus that secured universal "mental health" and "social order" and constituted a "real culture" that we have now lost. Equally, contemporary society is now filled with "new" things that have never been around before. These include the novel and unprecedented rate of change which causes instability, personal distress and social disorder, as well as a whole raft of anti-social values already referred to.

If we take this seriously, and we believe we need to, not because it has credibility, but because it reflects a widely and firmly held point of view among some, perhaps many Australians, then we need to ask some critical questions.

Some issues

Why should we accept Eckersley's portrait of "failed community", "declining values" and "loss of moral vision"? This is not a portrait of Australia we can recognise. Is this not the first time we have had large numbers of people such as blacks, women, gays and lesbians being acknowledged as members of a social mainstream all of whom until recently were denied basic rights, protection from discrimination and who struggled to be part of the white male-dominated mainstream? Even in an era of "economic liberalism" this is a time of renewed concern to promote and to protect a social vision of citizenship. This is, for example, a time when after 204 years of "civilised" existence in Australia, the elected representatives of the white conquerors finally concede that the doctrine of *terra nullus* no longer applies and that indigenous Australians have land

rights. Belated as it is, and in spite of the white backlash, can Eckersley seriously suggest that a spirit of civic mindedness, conciliation and a commitment to healing wounds and major damage is dead in our political culture? This is also a time when a number of young Australians, contemptuously referred to as "ferals" by the press, go and live in the rain forests to argue for the preservation of these great natural assets.

In a more general sense the picture of historical decline is almost laughable. Ours is a time, lest we forget, when basic community resources and assets (such as housing, health-care, and education) are now more widely available than at any time in our past. Not only is ours a more "caring" society, it is a kinder, less violent society. It is a time when violence and crime have consistently declined in its incidence since the nineteenth century. As difficult as it may seem to Eckersley, there is value in seeing Australia in the late twentieth century as a relatively humane and more responsible society, particularly when comparing it with the 1930s or the 1890s.

What should we think of Eckersley's assertion of links between widespread "mental health" and cultural cohesion. He claims a link between the "fact" of social disorder and mental disease. (Fifteen per cent of adolescents are said to suffer from a recognisable psychiatric disorder!) There is also reference to our high rates of youth suicide. This is a difficult matter. The deaths of hundreds of young Australians by suicide annually are tragic. However, accepting the high personal and social costs of suicide, the question remains: why should we treat these deaths as problematic, and symptomatic of "the decline of western civilisation" when we remember the deaths of millions of mostly young men, who fought, and were killed for God, King and Country? This is where Eckersley's amnesia is a problem. Why should we

forget the slaughter of millions of young men on the Western front in the battles of the Somme (1916-17) when social consensus persuaded them to engage in suicidal and murderous behaviour, now often remembered as heroism?

One of the big questions for Eckersley's account of a past is whether it is founded in any actual historical period? Can a time be identified when the conditions of moral and practical diversity did not exist? Can Eckersley tell us in what epoch were there those exemplary practices and beliefs that embody the "real" culture whose "loss" he now laments? Exactly where and when were people kinder, less violent and more supportive of basic citizenship for all?

Surely given the reliance of Eckersley's case on the existence of this historical past, it is necessary that he be able to nominate that ideal society. Perhaps he has in mind Aztec society before the Spanish invasion, when transcendental values, social cohesion, a settled sense of meaning and a certainty about the future were conjoined with a regime of unprecedented savagery and cruelty when they sacrificed thousands of young people on the alter and in brutal wars (Clendinnen 1992)? Or possibly Elizabethan England with its wonderful intellectual culture, its poetry, music, plays and its belief in God, Queen and Country – and its bear pits where cultivated onlookers watched bears and dogs mutilate each other before they part-took an afternoons entertainment such as a public hanging or the burning of a heretic?

Has any actual society passed the test of providing for people a sense of meaning, belonging and purpose as well as a sense of personal identity, worth and security, confidence and certainty about what the future holds for them, and has actually manifested the virtues he claims we have lost? In short, Eckersley presents a picture of Australia in the 1990s that we cannot

recognise, and a portrait of a past we cannot remember.

A further problem that strikes us relates to the concept central to Eckersley's account – his idea of "real culture"? Sociologists and anthropologists have given much attention to the idea of "culture" as a totalising entity. However, they have usually done this after listening to social elites whose interests have intersected with the claim that "their" values and ideals are the ones to be adhered to, and that their values and ideals constitute those which are vital to society. Monopolising the power of discourse, usually in monopolistic fashion (by controlling access to literacy, education and the media) has meant that social elites, until relatively recently, have faced little if any contest to their ability to shape normative and moral consensus.

Black history, gay history and women's history, which reclaim the experiences and voices of "minority" groups, have had a restorative effect, reminding many of us that "the past" is not a history of univocal social consensus and order shaped by a single cultural order, but rather that our past is a history of disorder and contest between different social movements and emergent forms of social creativity every bit like our own time and place.

The role of history

We encounter in the work of those like Eckersley a preoccupation with the erosion of social discipline represented by "the awesome spectre of crime and violence, perpetually spiralling upwards" (Pearson 1983, p.209). We ask the question: what are we to make of "this relentless history of decline"? It is an uncommonly complicated problem because we confront on the one hand:

a repetitious and rigidly immovable vocabulary of complaints and fears while at the same time this ages-old tapestry is held up as

something entirely new and unprecedented (Pearson 1983, p.211).

Common today is this powerful longing for the past, a bereavement for a world lost, a *gemeinschaft*, a lost home sadly mourned. Richard Sennett had a few insightful things to say about high capitalism's destruction and of an old order that we think are worth quoting at length:

... the destruction of the order did not mean it was forgotten. Quite the opposite. It was idealised, tarted up, made the subject for regret. The idiocy and harshness of rural life were put out of mind, and the countryside became the place of pastoral ease in which deep and open human relationships seemed to have once existed.

Everywhere in the 19th century the fragments of the old life which capitalism was shattering, were being picked up and treasured as objects all the more precious because they were so vulnerable, too delicate and sensitive to survive the onslaught of material progress. Just as the village was idealised as a community, the stable family, with the younger generations taking their places in the order custom dictated was idealised as the seat of virtue ...

The citizen was offered a pastiche as a landscape of authority. Images of a broken world were pasted upon a canvas, tinted, and then presented as what trust, security protection, safety ought to be. Forming a community; belonging to one another - this social need was met with "It once existed; we used to". To retain a sense of reality, the citizen had to penetrate the haze of regret ... (Sennett 1986, p.50-51).

The questioning, fragmentation and demise of traditional belief systems, combined with extreme anxiety about where we are going,

have meant we do not have the security of absolutes and certainties. For many this is difficult to deal with. According to pessimists like Eckersley a prime cause of "the crisis facing society" and particularly our young people is the decrepit state of our culture, the relaxation of standards, the deterioration of the underlying social values. "Western civilisation is in social and cultural turmoil" (Eckersley 1992). (One of Eckersley's texts is accompanied by a Hogarth engraving depicting a street of despair replete with drunkenness, poverty, social distress, madness and death. This he intends clearly to function as an iconic chorus, a commentary on today's predicament of "growing crime rates, increasing drug problems, rampant violence, and widespread depressive illness ... all signs of Western culture's deepening crisis" (Eckersley 1993, pp.8-12).

Solutions

Is not Eckersley's idea of a coherent society bonded around a consensus of shared values (about which we need to ask whose values?) the fantasy of all totalitarians and authoritarians? As frightening as are the images of "Western civilisation falling apart" with its abundant and "rampant violence", "fractured families", "widespread depressive illness" and Hogarthian visions of the West in decay, Eckersley's "solutions" may be little better.

The problems according to Eckersley are a fragmented society, the absence of a coherent future vision and the loss of a sense of cohesiveness augmented by debased values. We are witness to:

... the creation of a culture that gives them [young people] little more than themselves to believe in - and no cause for hope or optimism (Eckersley 1993, p.11).

With the "youth problem" and the more fundamental uncertainties related to the nature of Western

societies and our "social sicknesses" so clearly defined, the solution becomes apparent. The answer lies in creating a more harmonious society and building community cohesion. We need to "forge a new system of values and beliefs".

Under the conditions of modernity, fantasies of "community" and the alleged security, safety, and moral uniformity that "community" sustained, have long been tirelessly promoted. Prevalent is that powerful ache for the past, bereavement for a world, a life never known, that beautiful Arcadia, a lost home sadly mourned. Many people do seem certain that an Arcadian epoch existed even if no one is too sure about when it actually existed. It is characterised as a time of social order, when standards were high, society was cohesive, peaceful and prosperous, and most importantly, it was a period when morality and values were clearly defined and strong.

Addressing our problems says Eckersley, requires vision and good management, clarity of direction and strength (Eckersley 1994, p.20). To remake our future, to create "the ideal harmonious society", Eckersley proposes attractively simple and apparently sensible solutions. We need a moral-normative consensus including agreement about our values, and common aspirations, shared heroes and stories to tell our children.

But whose stories are we to tell and whose heroes are we to admire? Women's stories, gay heroes, black stories of resistance to invasion, or Turkish heroes at Gallipoli? Our national heroes have tended to be anglo-Irish males (from Ned Kelly through Kingsford Smith and Don Bradman to Fred Hollingworth). The slow acknowledgment of our diversity with figures of women and non-anglo portraits is surely an applaudable sign of a growing maturity and a more inclusive society.

Although the solution of creating social consensus may be well intend-

ed and attractive, it is potentially dangerous. Is not the promise of univocal values and absence of choice and diversity in a context of a multicultural, divergent, highly complex, post-industrial society in which citizenship rights are being advanced to more and more people problematic? In nature bio-diversity is a good thing; in the field of culture, ethics and morality we continue to encounter those like Eckersley who would trade away diversity for uniformity.

This dream (or is it a nightmare?) of a society that pursues and achieves a moral consensus sounds suspiciously like the fantasies of terror-inspired conformity that totalitarian regimes set about building in the 1930s – with horrifying results and certainly no place for young people. Indeed any critical reader of Eckersley should want to ask him to specify his views about social plurality and the value of divergent views and tolerance, especially in this International Year of Tolerance.

Conclusion

There is a fairy story called *Henny Penny*. It is a simple story about a frightened little hen who, thinking the

sky is falling, persuades a number of other animals to join her crusade to give the King the news. She and her followers are tricked by the fox into his den as he offers to help find a short cut to the Kings' palace. Henny Penny and her friends, however, disappear for ever. Perhaps this is a story we need to tell a little more often.

Some may object that we have over emphasised the positives. We know that many Australians, including many young people, do not live in a heaven. The world we live in can and must be made better. There are many issues to be addressed by demanding greater social justice and more equality of access to basic resources. A larger, more civic-minded public sector and less emphasis on the values of the marketplace would be a good thing too. But calling for a single value system is not part of the process of making a better world for our young people.

Eckersley's account of the collapse of "western civilisation" belongs to a broader tradition of pessimistic and reactionary visions struggling to be at ease with difference and plurality. Yet ours is a society characterised by its

difference. Our multicultural society is more than a salad bowl of multiple ethnicities. In the late twentieth century our collective survival relies on both accepting difference, and expanding tolerance of other people's way of seeing and being.

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Richard Eckersley replies:

I would like to be persuaded that I am mistaken about the failings of modern western culture. It is not a comfortable issue to deal with, and I worry more about being right than I do about being wrong.

Yet I find the responses to my article unconvincing. Both depend largely on, at best, questionable assumptions about my case, and disregard most of the data on which it is based. They also neglect the bigger picture of the cultural requirements for an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable society.

Barney Langford represents me as a baby-boomer (which I am) hypocritically lecturing youth about their values; I argued that earlier generations, including mine, have created a deeply flawed culture that is reflected in young people's outlook on life and is exacting a growing toll among today's youth. (His own fictional young person exhibits two of the attitudes I mention – cynicism and mistrust.)

Some of his comments about youth surveys are wrong or dubious. It is true we should not necessarily take

them at face value, but this does not mean their findings are not relevant to my case. I discussed this question in *Casualties of Change* (Eckersley 1988, pp.33-39).

Judith Bessant and Megan Evans claim my case depends heavily on the existence of some past ideal society whose loss I am lamenting, and say I must identify that society. Does it? Why must I? My case is based mainly on an analysis of contemporary social trends and values, which suggests we have lost cultural features that are fundamental to humans needs and

which exist or existed in other societies. They need not be ideal societies; they may have achieved cultural objectives in ways we consider unacceptable today, or abused them.

We can appreciate the Aborigines' deep spiritual ties to the land without admiring all other aspects of Aboriginal culture. Recognising the cultural achievements of the ancient Greeks does not mean endorsing the slavery on which their society depended.

Bessant and Evans say my idea of a coherent society with a clear vision and shared values is the fantasy of totalitarians. I believe the opposite is the case – that societies that lack these things become vulnerable to totalitarianism.

Hitler rose to power on the strength of the demoralisation, disaffection and confusion of the German people, and their sense that democracy had failed them. We see in the world today widespread disillusionment and uncertainty – an environment in which fanaticism, ultra-nationalism and religious fundamentalism is thriving.

In the US, this "foul mood", as the respected American public opinion analyst Daniel Yankelovich, has described it, is being directed increasingly against government. Yankelovich has warned that it could lead to social and political instability as "we careen from one over-simplistic solution to another".

Bessant and Evans suggest my cultural ideal is incompatible with cultural diversity. Again I believe the opposite is true – that diversity can only thrive in today's world if at another level there is cultural consensus and unity.

Management literature today has a lot to say about culture. As we move away from hierarchical, "command-and-control" structures to more flexible, "networked" operations,

successful corporations recognise there is a clear link between long-term economic success and strong cultures – a clear vision, a sense of mission and shared values and goals.

This just as true for nations. As societies become looser, more pluralistic and multicultural and change more rapidly, it is important that they, too, have a clear vision, a sense of mission and shared values if they are to meet the challenges ahead.

The President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, who has devoted his life to opposing totalitarianism, recently spoke of the importance of transcendental, spiritual beliefs in looking for what unites us and what gives meaning to the world (Havel, 1995). The perceived crisis of authority in the western world, he said, was "only one of a thousand consequences of the general crisis of spirituality in the world at present".

In questioning my perception of decline and deterioration, Bessant and Evans list the gains in social justice and equity. I acknowledged the improvements in these areas. But if these developments are the benchmarks of human well-being and fulfilment that they seem to imply, why do indicators of psychological health show such disturbing trends?

Why, for example, despite the significant improvement in women's rights and opportunities and the promises of further gains, do more young women contemplate and attempt suicide, abuse alcohol and other drugs, and suffer depression and eating disorders?

Why do opinion polls reveal such widespread frustration, resentment and disenchantment? (The optimism revealed in other polls is about personal futures, which is a different issue, one I have also discussed in *Casualties of Change* (ibid., p.33-39).

I could mention some developments Bessant and Evans don't: the

ratcheting up of unemployment; the widening gulf between rich and poor; the family disintegration and dysfunction. But, as I argued, the root causes may lie deeper – in human psychic needs that modern western culture is not satisfying.

This is why liberals are wrong to ignore the moral and spiritual crisis in our lives, and why I argued the task ahead goes beyond the usual goals of social justice: equal rights for gays and lesbians, or anyone else, won't solve the environmental crisis, or address our economic vulnerability and social problems.

This is what is perhaps most disappointing in Bessant and Evans' critique: their failure to address most of the research data on which I have built my case, and to offer alternative explanations for what these data reveal. The data are not as limited or as suspect as they imply; they are drawn from over 100 scientific papers and books (in psychology, psychiatry, sociology, history and anthropology) and attitude and opinion surveys (many carried out by the most reputable analysts in Australia).

We need to bear in mind three points: this century has been one of unprecedented technological, economic, social and cultural change – much of it unplanned and unmanaged; we have effectively handed control of our culture to the commercial mass media, without demanding of them the ethical responsibilities that should go with such power; and, finally, societies and civilisations do decline and fall often because they ignore the evidence that it is happening.

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