

## You must become Critical with a 'middle C'

**The Mindful Manager is alert to the strengths, weaknesses and founding assumptions of the perspectives and arguments that dominate what is said/written about management and business in the academic and popular discourses. S/he is critical with a 'middle C'.**

It could be confidently claimed that most of those reading this would not have been born, or have survived long thereafter, if it had not have been for the victories of technology & science of the past 250 years – all themselves founded on the Enlightenment victories of Descartes & Bacon et al some 350 years ago. Human progress has not stopped, and has further accelerated, since the birth of the empirical scientific method, the technology driven industrial revolution, major innovations in mathematics, and Adam Smith's conceiving of capitalism in his seminal work 'The Wealth of Nations'.

These extraordinary and undeniable achievements have given scientists/the scientific community/mathematicians great power in the propagation of their beliefs, methods & belief justification systems. The emerging 20<sup>th</sup> Century subject of economics, born of the triumph of Adam Smith's thinking, clambered aboard this locomotive of progress, clothed in fancy mathematics & claims of a scientific endeavour, and laid claim to the heart of the discourse of business and management - ably assisted by Frederick Taylor of 'scientific management' fame.

All academic institutions in the arena quickly came to understand that being quantitative, and making a claim to being scientific, was the route to credibility and, more importantly, their survival and prosperity. Those in the area of social studies/philosophy read the runes – hence the birth of the so-called social sciences.

The natural sciences are engaged in observing & establishing correlations between phenomena in the material world and speculating as to their cause. The so-generated hypotheses are stress tested in further experiments where it is targeted that only certain conditions are changed, whilst the rest are maintained, and the effect observed in comparison to the prediction of the hypothesis. In essence this is what is called the scientific method, and its target is to identify causalities that are universal, global and timeless – so we can justifiably claim that 'if this happens, then this will then happen, everywhere and forever!

Is the world of the social amenable to study by such a method, and are such universal causalities likely to be available to us?

Did the economists and social 'scientists' take the business & management discourse off in a direction largely useless to practitioners?

After all, the constituents of the material world do not make choices, and their behaviour is not influenced by our theorising. The humans of the social world do make choices, and they do take notice of what we say about them!

Has this been a dangerous direction we might also ask – how could amoral theory ever be valuable to our choice making?

Given the aim of this course you might guess that the Mindful Manager is a serious sceptic of the so-called social sciences, and that s/he is doubtful that all the effects of the 'enlightenment' were positive!

The enlightenment could also be called a 'darkening' as this movement cast into the shadows the Aristotelian based Renaissance thinking that valued knowledge/understanding that was specific, timely, local & oral rather than universal, timeless, general and mathematical. Maybe the social 'scientists' and management educators concentrating on the former, would have done more good if they had focussed on enabling the making of better judgements in the wicked world – particularly about what is 'better' and would be 'for the best'!