

THE PENDULUM

There is a very insightful book on the market titled [Pendulum \(Williams & Drew, 2012\)](#). I don't suspect it is going to be piled up at the entrance to Dymocks any time soon – but it is an important work – and does a very good job of identifying the meta-cycles in western society.

The article that follows could literally be worth millions of dollars to you. But it is going to require some effort.

What if I could tell you reliably how the next 20 years will pan out for you?

- What if I could tell you what it will take to be successful?
- What if I could tell you what will be frustrating you in the next 20 years?

I can't really. But if I stand on the shoulders of giants, I can give you a glimpse.

The giants are Roy Williams and Michael Drew. If you are serious about business and success and life – get the book yourself. (See Amazon link below). In particular, find Roy Williams (The Wizard of Ads) online and read his newsletter.

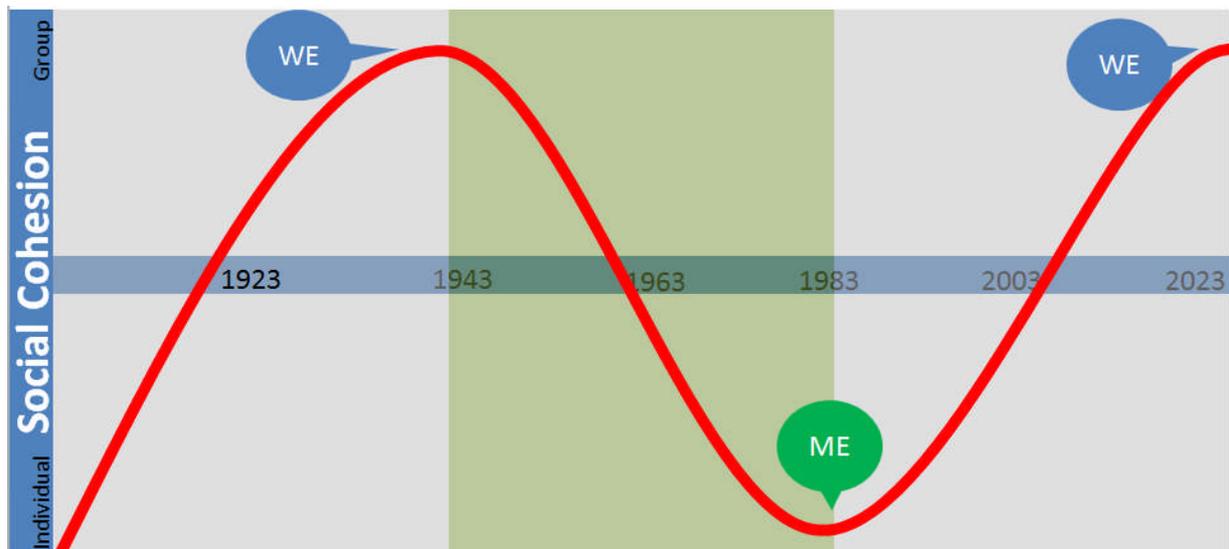
There is a very insightful book on the market titled Pendulum (Williams & Drew, 2012). I don't suspect it is going to be piled up at the entrance to Dymocks any time soon – but it is an important work – and this is no exaggeration; **it could be difference between success and failure in your business and your life.**

Like any type of research and particularly research of such a meta nature you will find many exceptions and you may find reasons to disagree. I will mention a few examples – and I am sure you will find many examples that will illustrate the opposite. The question is whether, on balance, the findings and interpretations are correct. When you are considering the behaviour of Society as a whole, you are bound to discard significant deviations from that norm, but that does not invalidate the norm. As a marketer and as an entrepreneur you may even choose to find those contrarian niches – which is a good thing – but you cannot do that without understanding how the 'mainstream' flows.

I am painting a delicate portrait with a roller brush – you will be better off to buy the book. But I feel compelled to try anyway, so here goes:

There are social patterns that exist. The cycle of these patterns are 80 years, which are divided into 4 equal 20 year quarters. The two peaks of cycle are the polar opposites where we get a ME- Society and a WE-Society.

Western society is currently experiencing the ups wing towards the peak of the WE Society. (Interestingly, the Asian cycle appears out of sync with the Western cycle – China shows evidence of entering a ME cycle with and what happens to Australia will be really interesting to see. Will we synchronise with Asia? Will we stay in tune with the West?)



The pendulum metaphor is apt as there are two distinct peaks in the rhythm of society – and they are polar opposites. (Remembering that there will always be instances of ANY type of behaviour in ANY era, we are focussing on the simple majority or predominance of certain types of behaviours, trends and factors.)

The **value drivers** of the respective era are:

WE	ME
Conformity Humility and thoughtfulness Social	Freedom of expression Dream big Personal liberty

The reason the pendulum swings back from each 'peak' is because we take things too far. The good and the beautiful of each era becomes nasty and oppressive when taken to the extreme. Even too much love can become an obsession...

In the table below you will see how the positive values of each era turn nasty at the point ends.

WE	
Responsibility →	Duty
Humility →	Obligation
Transparency →	Oppression
Authentic →	Self-righteous

ME	
Big dreams →	Hollow dreams
Freedom →	Posing
Being cool →	Self-centred
Achievement →	Guru worship

These four phases of the pendulum can be roughly labeled as per this table:

20 yrs towards WE	20 Years after WE	20 Years Before ME	20 YEARS after ME
I'm OK, you are not OK	I am OK you are OK	I am not OK, You are OK	I am not OK, You are not OK

The next 10 years (2013 – 2023) will take us towards the peak of the WE generation. It is no surprise that 'social media' is the driving force that it is because that technology has found fertile soil in the collective societal mindset.

If you want to understand what is going to drive social norms and popular culture over the next 10 years, then find the defining moments and attributes of 1933-1943 - the last time the pendulum was on the upswing towards the WE era.

If we turn back the clock 80 years we will find the defining technology in the US was radio. Vacuum tubes in the early 20's led to a proliferation of radio sets being sold and radio stations mushroomed in the late 20s and early thirties – paving the way for the mass communications – much like early chatrooms gave way to social media in the current upswing to a new collective 'WE'.

The last upswing era (20s-40s) were of course influenced by two world wars, which make it somewhat unique.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

There are several highlights of the Australian history that supports the thesis of these cyclical shifts. (I have dipped into Wikipedia more out of curiosity than attempting to be definitively accurate, but Australia does seem to follow the US cycle of the pendulum too.)

If you consider the mid 30s to mid 40s the equivalent period in history, then there are quite a few major events and decisions that seem to support the thesis.

At the 1937 elections, both political parties advocated increased defence spending – the arguments being that it was for the **common good**. At the same time a recruiting campaign in late 1938, led by

Major-General Thomas Blamey increased the reserve militia to almost 80,000 when there were only 3000 regular members of the Defence Force.

Much of what is currently seen as being a defining Australian characteristic – the ANZAC spirit - is a positive that emerged from this WE era.

In January 1942, the Manpower Directorate was set up "to ensure the organisation of Australians in the best possible way to meet all defence requirements. Minister for War Organisation of Industry, John Dedman introduced a degree of austerity and government control previously unknown, to such an extent that he was nicknamed "the man who killed Father Christmas." In May 1942 uniform tax laws were introduced in Australia, as state governments **relinquished their control** over income taxation.

All of these are prime examples of where individual freedom and needs are suppressed and even sacrificed for the 'common good' which defines the WE era.

Immigration was initially introduced to protect the collective: In 1945, Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell wrote "If the experience of the Pacific War has taught us one thing, it surely is that seven million Australians cannot hold three million square miles of this earth's surface indefinitely."

As luck would have it, the migration numbers swelled in conjunction with the swing away from 'WE' to 'ME'. During this downswing (with the renewed emphasis on the individual and personal freedoms) the foundation was laid for Australia's highly regarded **tolerance for individual differences and acceptance of diversity.**

(The current debate about boat people being denied access is exactly to be expected as we move towards an era where our identity will largely be defined by our membership of a particular group.)

The Vietnam War coincided with the downswing from the 'WE'. Authority was questioned. Previously unquestioned alliances with the US were questioned. Despite Holt's sentiments and his government's electoral success in 1966, the war became unpopular in Australia, as it did in the United States. The

movements to end Australia's involvement gathered strength after the Tet Offensive of early 1968 and compulsory national service (selected by ballot) became increasingly unpopular too.

Suddenly the 'WE' wasn't such a compelling cause any more.

In the lead up to the ME (1960s) about 60% of Australian manufacturing was protected by tariffs. Pressure from business interests and the union movement ensured these remained high. Historian Geoffrey Bolton suggests that this high tariff protection of the 1960s caused some industries to "lapse into lethargy," neglecting research and development and the search for new markets. Getting rid of those protectionist measures was liberal and progressive – very much in tune with the idea of 'freedom'. Of course the defining behaviours of the 60s were the hippy revolution and free love - typical ME values.

In 1983 Hawke and Keating abandoned traditional Labor support for tariffs to protect industry and jobs. They moved to deregulate Australia's financial system and 'floated' the Australian dollar. In 1987 the defining movie of this generation was Wall Street in which Michael Douglas famously quipped: **Greed is Good**.

Movies like Rambo, Rocky and the Chuck Norris genre was all about Lone Rangers conquering the world against all the odds. The #1 song for 1983 was Every Breath You Take by The Police. The theme of individuality in the song is powerful indicator enough, but the fact that a Pop Band could call themselves 'The Police' shows how far society had moved away from the respecting authority.

If you believe that pop culture reflects society – then consider the extreme individualism and excesses of Kiss and The Village People.

Today, as we head into the WE – **Rambo has made room for the Expendables** where all yesterday's heroes have seen the light and joined forces in a cozy collective.

WHERE WE ARE NOW?

Right now we are heading into the upswing towards WE. Remembering that at its peak the WE era will be self-righteous witch-hunting of all those non conformists.

John Steinbeck once observed that nothing good was created by collaboration: music, art, writing, poetry, mathematics and philosophy are all endeavours where the genius of one is apparent. That is not to say that individuals don't work with other people or even rely on other people – obviously we all do – but even in the best band there is always a leader, the resident genius around which all revolves and who is the creative force. Usually when there is more than one, the band splits up.

This runs counter to the current, universal, love affair with all things 'social' and all things 'crowd'.

Right now the world believes: I am OK, you are not OK. (And they seem hell-bent on converting all to their religion.)

Hitler was the poster child for the pinnacle of this obsession to make all conform to the 'group'. And if you think that is a coincidence, trawl through history and the same spot in the cycle also contains McCarthyism, American Civil War, Robespierre's Reign of Terror, Salem Witch Trials – to mention a few.

THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Here are broad-brush scenarios/value systems that are likely to play out and dominate our lives:

1. Giving up privacy for the common good
2. Crowd-sourced news: Twitter
3. If you want it to be private you have something to hide
4. Your reputation is your capital
5. There won't be an economic spike – the recession lingers
6. The positive is the purging of corrupt officials/ politicians etc. (Weiner, Gingrich, Berlusconi, News of the World)
7. The negative is that we will see witch hunts return (Alan Jones anyone?)
8. Intellectual Property is not valued because it is too 'individual'. (Besides with 3D printing, who is going to control who copies what?)

9. The 99% will rule. (It is not really 99% - in fact it is a large minority group of disaffected populists, but we won't let that stand in the way of truth.)
10. A new class system will emerge where there are no geographic boundaries – but groups who identify with each other and their situations (and status) will group together. The same may go for religious groups.

AND WE ARE GOING TO TAKE IT TOO FAR

Read this and weep I

IT'S NOT the first time that everyday people all over the world have decided to reclaim the streets, and it surely won't be the last. In the face of discontent and apathy about politics – in response to the democratic deficit between citizens, politicians and financial markets – citizens will always look for better alternatives to the existing political structure.

Global Noise is about making ourselves heard. In a democracy, the government should be by the people and for the people. The reality is that we are asked to cast a vote once every three years, watch our elected representatives change all their policies and just shut up. The world is facing a great variety of issues that perpetuate conflict, poverty and political apathy. We must identify those issues and propose alternatives. I think the three main areas that need to be addressed are democracy, economics and rights.

Read this and weep II

This is the story of how ONE reader sent **Victoria's Secret** scurrying for cover.

But because one person was particularly offended by this particular item, and found a ready echo chamber at a web site dedicated to issues relating to race, and then the online 'news' sites like Huffington Post and The Daily Mail reported it as a controversy, the product disappeared from Victoria Secret's site.

That's not evidence of peer-to-peer collaboration or effecting meaningful change in the world, is it? Most brands are realizing that there's someone out in the ethersphere who will be offended by something it does. Online tech gives everyone a soapbox (again, I'm all for it) and makes anyone a potential rabble-rouser. And then it stops...right there...since very few people are actually equipped to

propose real things, inspired to lead one another, or willing to take the time and effort effecting real change takes.

Still, so much marketing gets away with selling us impossible ideals of beauty, happiness, and success, even in 2012.

Corporations and governments should be scared shitless of the day when we of the huddled masses figure out that we can use the Internet to change the things they offer us.

These words are going to prove prophetic indeed. And all people (not only early adopters) will eventually realise the power they have.

Whilst we recognise in principle that power is being returned to the people – the wildcard in all of this is technology. It will amplify the trends and consequently the potential to do good and the potential to do harm. In our 30s-40s mirror period, the (radio) technology was controlled centrally but that does not apply any more.

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Transparency →	Oppression
Authentic →	Self-righteous



Dennis Price [DComm]

CHIEF IDEAS ARCHITECT