

# Things Fall Apart

**M**y working life seems to have been a steady progression from a position of relative certainty towards one of increasing ignorance. I think this is partly a result of growing up, and partly a matter of historical circumstance. I was a child in the 1950s – an era that now seems to me to be misunderstood. We now characterize this era as one of social conformity and intolerance. In the areas of gender and race it is hard to argue with this view, but I am not so sure that this view stands up to broader scrutiny. For instance, I seem to remember eccentric behavior and economic non-participation as unremarkable in my small-town childhood; whereas there is much more pressure for economic conformity these days.

The 1950s marked the rise of Big Science. We felt that the solutions to all the world's ills were just about within reach. It felt like a time of belief and optimism. This certainty was the background to my school and university education and later, to my business school training. For me, it was not until later – until some time in the 1980s – that doubt and confusion really set in.