

Townsville Bulletin

Dangerous ideas

07Apr07

WHAT IS YOUR DANGEROUS IDEA?

By John Brockman

Simon & Schuster, \$29.95

IN this special anthology, leading public thinkers _ scientists, writers and philosophers such as Richard Dawkins, Howard Gardner, Freeman Dyson, Jared Diamond and Ray Kurzweil _ respond to a question proposed by Stephen Pinker: 'What is your dangerous idea?'

John Brockman clarifies the question in his introduction: he wanted 'statements of fact or policy that are defended with evidence and argument by serious scientists and thinkers but which are felt to challenge the collective decency of an age.'

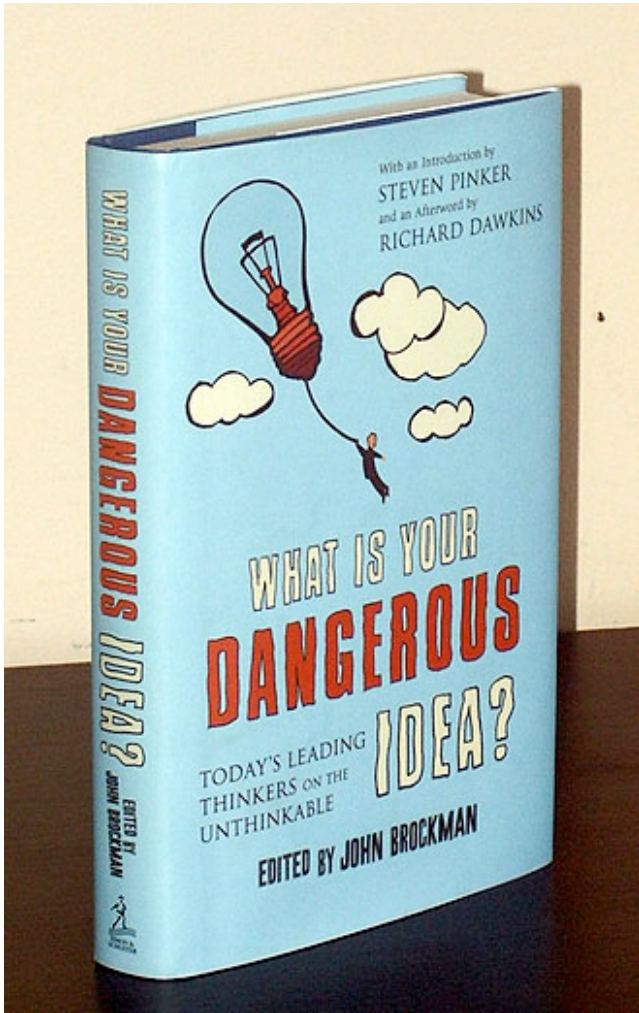
Good ideas really shouldn't be thought of as dangerous, so several writers shadow-box around the question a bit, but nearly all of them come up with something original and thought-provoking.

One of my own favourites was about the lab rats that learned to prefer Schoenberg to Mozart, but there is something here for every interest. Common topics are religion (especially its troubled relationship to science), psychology (especially free will), politics, and the impact of technological change (genetic engineering, and the clash between our instincts and our computer-dominated culture).

Contributions are all quite short, ranging from less than a page up to perhaps five pages, which makes it all too easy to give oneself mental indigestion. Other than that, however, it is a veritable feast of ideas.

In a word: Zesty.

_ MALCOLM TATTERSALL



[Print this story](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

The North Queensland Newspaper Company Pty Ltd Copyright © January 2007