

THE IDEAS-INFORMED SOCIETY

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THE IDEAS-INFORMED SOCIETY

Why We Need It and How to Make It
Happen

EDITED BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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The Revd. Canon Helen Cameron is a presbyter of the Methodist Church. She was ordained in 1991. She currently serves as Chair of the Northampton and the Nottingham & Derby Districts as well as being Moderator of the Free Churches Group and is the Free Church President of Churches Together in England. Helen trained originally as a physiotherapist and after ordination served two churches in Birmingham. She then began a career in theological education and served as Director of Methodist Formation in the Queens Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Formation in Birmingham. Helen wrote 'Living in the Gaze of God' (SCM, 2018) which explores ideas of human and ministerial flourishing. Helen is married to Iain, a retired GP and they have three adult children.

John Castling is an archaeologist, researcher and curator who works to make archaeology engaging and accessible. He's been a field archaeologist, museum curator and educator, and now looks after archaeology on The Auckland Project's estate in Bishop Auckland – including a mediaeval castle and a Roman fort. He's also a PhD student at Durham University exploring Roman and

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Professor Sir Paul Collier is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University; a Director of the International Growth Centre and a Distinguished Invited Professor at the Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po. In *The Future of Capitalism: Facing the New Anxieties* (2017), he attacked the misdirection of public policy and private business that has caused avoidable polarisation and the decline of Britain's regions. Having grown up in South Yorkshire, now the poorest region in England, he advises local and national government on practical ways of regional renewal.

Katherine Crisp is the Founder of Social Innovation for All, a social enterprise on a mission to unleash the creative potential of children and young people to address social challenges through programmes such as the Young Green Briton Challenge and Primary Pioneers. She was previously global lead for youth innovation at UNICEF, scaling UPSHIFT (UNICEF's flagship youth social innovation programme) from 6 countries to its current footprint of 45, alongside designing and delivering global youth social entrepreneurship challenges. Katherine initially qualified as an engineer before working as a strategy consultant. Her work spans sustainable livelihood development in India to new service development and new financing models for disabled children and young people. Katherine is a Fellow of the RSA and Chair of Governors at the Windmills Junior School.

Alastair Donald is Associate Director at Academy of Ideas and co-convenor of Battle of Ideas festival. For the charity Ideas Matter, he organises Living Freedom to allow younger generations to explore the meaning and ideals of freedom. Alastair has worked in the United Kingdom and internationally to develop festivals, exhibitions and curated programmes. He is author of *Letter on Liberty*:

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Professor Sir Les Ebdon CBE DL, after a distinguished career as an award-winning Professor of Analytical Chemistry and University Vice Chancellor, was a highly successful Director of Fair Access to Higher Education. Consequently, he is recognised by the media as one of the leading voices in this country promoting the benefits of higher education and social mobility. Three times he has been cited as one of the 100 'most influential' people in Britain by *Debrett's* and *The Sunday Times*. He received both his BSc and PhD from Imperial College London and has taught in universities in Uganda, Sheffield and Plymouth. He is regarded as having transformed the University of Bedfordshire during his time as Vice Chancellor. He was awarded a CBE in 2009, appointed Her Majesty's Deputy Lieutenant for Bedfordshire in 2011 and knighted in 2018. Currently he chairs the Board of Spurgeon's College, London, a Baptist theological college with degree awarding powers.

Dr Benjamin Freud is an educator, advisor, writer and podcaster. He is the founder of Coconut Thinking, a educational consultancy that creates spaces for emergent learning that contributes to the welfare of the bio-collective – every life form that has an interest in the healthfulness of the planet. He is also the Head of Upper School at Green School Bali and has held several leadership and teaching roles in some of the world's most innovative schools. Benjamin began his career in consulting, where he worked in Silicon Valley, Europe and Japan across different industry sectors.

Dr Sam Fowles is a barrister and author specialising in constitutional law. He is a member of Cornerstone Barristers, Director of the Institute for Constitutional and Democratic Research and a Lecturer at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. Sam has acted in many of the leading matters in modern English constitutional law, including *Miller v The Prime Minister* (concerning the unlawful prorogation of parliament in 2019), *Hamilton v Post Office* (the

unlawful conviction of Post Office workers) and the parliamentary enquiry into the policing of the Clapham Common vigil for Sarah Everard. He is the author of *Overruled: Confronting Our Vanishing Democracy in 8 Cases* (Oneworld, 2022) and writes a regular column for *Perspective* magazine.

Stéphane Goldstein has been Executive Director of InformAll since 2015, which, through research, analysis and facilitation, promotes the relevance and importance of information literacy. He is the author of reports, articles and other material on the relevance and applicability of IL to a range of settings. As an advocate for IL, he brokers relationships between information professionals and other stakeholders, and facilitates joint projects. He is the coordinator of the Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA) and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). His prior roles included 10 years spent at the Research Information Network (RIN) with a focus on scholarly communications policy and practice. He previously worked in a range of science and research policy roles at the Medical Research Council and Research Councils, UK.

Charlotte Hankin is co-founder of Coconut Thinking and an international educator with over 23 years' experience in a variety of roles including teacher, leader, school-to-school consultant and education policy advisor for the UK government, working in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia and Thailand. Currently, Charlotte is a homeroom teacher of mixed-aged students, relishing the creativity, technology and collaboration that this community of learners bring. Working at the nexus of theory and practice, Charlotte is also pursuing her PhD in Education with Bath University, exploring how schools frame children's relationships with nature and the natural world.

Valerie Hannon is a global thought leader, inspiring systems to re-think what 'success' will mean in the 21st century, and the implications for education. The co-founder of the Innovation Unit, Valerie is a radical voice for change, whilst grounded in a deep understanding of how education systems currently work. She now works independently to support change programmes across the world. She has advised governments and worked with systems, schools and leaders in

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Paul Lindley OBE is Chancellor of the University of Reading and an award-winning British entrepreneur, social campaigner and author. Paul founded Ella's Kitchen. Built on a core social mission, it is now the UK's largest baby food brand. In 2017 his first book: *Little Wins: The Huge Power of Thinking like a Toddler* was published, and he second, *Raising the Nation* will be published in 2023. He is Chair of the Mayor of London's Child Obesity Taskforce and of Robert F Kennedy Human Rights UK and is a Trustee of Sesame Workshop, the creators of Sesame Street.

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Judith Mossman read Classics at Corpus Christi College Oxford. After a Junior Research Fellowship at Christ Church, Oxford, she taught at Trinity College, Dublin from 1991 until 2003, becoming a Senior Lecturer and a Fellow. She was Professor of Classics at Nottingham University until 2017, when she was appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Arts and Humanities at Coventry University. She works on Greek tragedy, mostly Euripides, and Greek literature under the Roman Empire, mostly Plutarch. She believes strongly in the power of the arts and humanities to change lives for the better.

Lesley Saunders has worked all her life in education, as teacher, researcher, policy adviser and independent consultant. Her main posts were as Principal Research Officer and Head of the School Improvement Research Centre at the National Foundation for Educational Research; and subsequently as Senior Policy Adviser for Research, General Teaching Council for England. Lesley is a visiting professor at UCL Institute of Education and her professorial lecture, given in 2004, was called 'Grounding the Democratic Imagination: Developing the Relationship between Research and Policy in Education'. She is also a published poet, with seven full collections.

Sir Anthony Seldon is one of Britain's leading contemporary historians, educationalists, commentators and political authors. He was Vice Chancellor of The University of Buckingham from 2015 to 2020 after being a transformative head teacher for 20 years of Brighton College and then Wellington College. He is author and editor of over 45 books on contemporary history, including the

inside view books on the last five Prime Ministers. Anthony's contribution to public life is extensive and wide ranging. This includes: the co-founder and first Director of the Institute of Contemporary British History; the co-founder of Action for Happiness; honorary historical adviser to 10 Downing Street for 10 years; the UK's Special Representative for Education to Saudi Arabia; Deputy Chair of The Times Education Commission; a member of the Government's First World War Culture Committee; Chair of the Comment Awards; Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company; President of the International Positive Education Network; Chair of the National Archives Trust; Patron & member of several charities; Founder of the Via Sacra Western Front Walk; and Executive Producer of the film *Journey's End*. Anthony appeared on Desert Island Discs in 2016. For the last 15 years he has given his money for writing and lecturing to charity. He has three children; his wife of 34 years, Joanna, died of cancer in December of 2016, and he married Sarah in 2022.

Tim Slack is the founder and co-director of Appreciating People. He has worked in youth work and community based regeneration for over 35 years, holding several senior posts in local government, community engagement and arts organisations. Tim is an experienced Appreciative Inquiry trainer and facilitator and author of a number of practical Appreciative Inquiry resources including 'How to be more Awesome', a journal and workbook co-designed with young people supporting resilience and well-being. He has been the AI adviser on the Appreciating Church programme and the co-author of Appreciating Church resource and workbook. Currently with NHS partners he is co-create Appreciating Health and Care an Appreciative Inquiry guide to the health (published in late 2023).

For more information www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk.

The Revd, Fiona Thomas background includes agricultural botany, community work in India, international development, adult learning, theological education and pastoral ministry. She values appreciative enquiry as an approach which draws together theory and practice from all of these areas. After co-authoring the book *Appreciating Church* in 2017 she co-founded the organisation of

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Neil Thompson is an independent writer and educator. He has held full or honorary professorships at five UK universities and is currently a visiting professor at the Open University. He is a well-published author, sought-after international conference speaker and highly respected developer of online learning. His recent books include *Anti-racism for Beginners* and *The Managing People Practice* manual. His website, with his acclaimed Manifesto for Making a Difference, is at www.NeilThompson.info.

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heritage and arts organisations in supporting the creation and sustainable implementation of research-based, innovative approaches to learning.

Dr Raphael Wilkins started as a teacher before progressing to local authority educational administration, including 12 years at chief officer level. He had advisory and consultancy roles in Parliament and with the local authority associations, and other bodies, before joining the (then) University of London Institute of Education, as Pro Director (London), subsequently Pro Director (International Consultancy). He was President of the College of Teachers UK, in which capacity, with others, he enabled the creation of the Chartered College of Teaching. He has written five books and over 70 articles and book chapters, and is currently an independent scholar.

Lynn Wood is the Founder and Chief Idea Spy of IdeaSpies, an open innovation platform sharing ideas that do good. She has an MA (USYD) and an MBA (AGSM). Her executive career included senior marketing positions with American Express, Myer, Citicorp and Schroders. Lynn also has experience on many private, public and government boards, including as Chair. She was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001.

FOREWORD: ARE IDEAS ENOUGH?

This startling and opportune volume shines a vivid light on a little-studied or understood aspect of modern Britain.

Ideas.

Without ideas, no progress can be made.

With the wrong ideas, no progress can be made.

But with the right ideas, at the right time, anything is possible.

Ideas can be portmanteau, like capitalism or communism, feminism or wokeism. Or they can be micro, as with ideas which affect just a particular area, like the idea of creating vaccines to combat coronavirus, or a new style in architecture, like art deco. Many Prime Ministers try to define their premierships by having big ideas, like ‘Thatcherism’. But most fail to do so, whether John Major with his ‘citizens’ charter’, Tony Blair with his ‘Third Way’, David Cameron with his ‘big society’ or Boris Johnson with ‘levelling up’. Only rarely is it given to a prime minister to define their entire premiership with a wraparound idea. Most find it hard to deliver even micro ideas.

Why do ideas matter so much? And why are they never of themselves enough? This Foreword will explore both these questions.

Without ideas, sterility reigns. Without John Maynard Keynes, government economic policy would’ve remained rooted in the non-interventionist ideas of the early twentieth century. His advocacy of fiscal and monetary policy paved the way for governments managing aggregating demand, and mitigating the worst effects of economic depression. Without social reformer William Beveridge, the welfare state introduced by the Labour government of Clement Attlee from 1945, would not have emerged in the form it did. Ideas

are equally important in the world of art, with perspective, impressionism, expressionism and abstract art ushering in successive revolutions in art forms.

Ideas matter because they break the hold of status quos. The status quo hates new ideas, and will try and discourage, disparage and snuff them out whenever they see them. They might succeed in the short term, but ideas will inevitably break through sooner or later. The absolutist monarchies of France and Russia were brought down by ideas of equality. The mighty coercive power of the Soviet Union was broken by the ideas of freedom. For each idea, a season. Millions of companies worldwide that flourished for years were brought down within a decade of the digital revolution arriving in their countries. High Streets are being revolutionised by the idea of online shopping.

Ideas matter because we live in a dynamic world. To stand still is to go backwards. Resisting ideas is as futile as baying at the rising sun snuffing out the despondent moon. Ideas embrace and enshrine new technologies, new mindsets and new frontiers. Humans cannot go anywhere but forward. Retro thinking is not about going backwards: it's about reimagining the past and serves it up nice and crisp in the modern era.

Finally, ideas matter because they refresh policy and politics. Britain has a partially broken democracy, a deeply flawed education and health system, and it has a culture which is heavily skewed towards the well-off. We still have to find solutions to combating climate change, the cost of social care, how to reduce inequality, have affordable green energy and address the concerns around artificial intelligence (AI). As the chapters in the book show, there are solutions on all these areas and many more.

No one argued more persuasively than the late Ken Robinson that creativity is as vital as it is undervalued. We have a school and university system which privileges regimentation and producing the 'right' answer over creativity. And we have an economy which has been historically weak at rewarding creative thinking and developing promising home-grown ideas into successful products in the market place.

So are ideas then our total salvation?

No. Ideas are necessary but not sufficient to securing future survival and flourishing.

Why aren't ideas then sufficient? First, as I argued in 'Ideas are not enough' [in the book I edited with David Marquand *The Ideas that Shaped Post-war Britain* (Fontana, 1996)], they are only effective if they are in a positive relationship with three other forces: individuals, interests and circumstances. Ideas need to be adopted and advocated by those in positions of power, with the finance, authority and the means to make them happen. Even then, they will be unsuccessful if there are powerful forces ranged against them: it could be the media, financial interests or popular opinion. Even if the ideas, interests and individuals are all positively aligned, it still requires the right circumstances for them to flourish. Disruptive change (e.g. war, economic downturn or natural disasters) has often been the friend to the blossoming of new ideas. World War I thus allowed nascent ideas, including popular democracy, the vote for women and scientific and medical advance to fructify, while World War II changed notions of the role of government and the size and responsibilities of the state.

Some ideas are bad. Eugenics is one such. Aryanism and Nazism equally ideas all reasonable people would find repugnant. Other ideas are more subjective. In the west, we celebrate democracy: most of the world lives in regimes that are autocratic. The idea that the Iraqis en masse would welcome the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and want to embrace democracy proved not to be the case. The majority of the world lives in states that refuse to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ideas can provide the solution when so many are diametrically opposed to each other. The rights of the unborn child versus the woman's right to choose, for example. The right of each individual to choose their gender versus the rights of others, including some parents, female athletes and women's groups, to argue that gender is not a choice. The European Union is an idea, but so is Brexit. Fervent supporters on both sides believe that the evidence supports their own case.

Ideas can easily be exaggerated in importance. Many of the most significant changes in history have been brought on by developments, which have nothing to do with ideas, including epidemics,

natural disasters and the changing climate. Elevating ideas to being all important can distort human agency.

Often people don't want governments with highfalutin ideas: they just want the potholes filled and for the trains to run on time.

Finally, we can elevate the importance of ideas forgetting that we have still to develop applicable ideas to save humankind from the biggest risks to its future, including weapons of mass destruction, rogue states with aggressive ambitions and AI out of control.

Relying on AI to solve the biggest problems we face might just be the most stupid idea of them all.

This volume is clever precisely because it elevates ideas while recognising their limitations.

Sir Anthony Seldon