

Dangerous thinking

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Thinking is not just a private act – it shapes the world we live in. Right now, powerful voices are framing our politics with paranoia:

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War paranoia – pundits talk calmly about conflict with China.

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Migration paranoia – a tiny minority problem inflamed into a crisis.

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Fiscal paranoia – false fears about debt used to justify austerity.

These distortions threaten to distract us from the real crises: poverty, underfunded services, the housing shortage, and climate change.

But as Viktor Frankl once reminded us, we always retain the power to choose how we frame the world. The question is: will we give in to paranoia, or think differently?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eUszOzhd84?si=ZIKAj4XpX6FJJv-Y>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=q9fhe-19635fb-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

I think.

That's not why I am, as Descartes might have said, but it is certainly what I do, pretty much to the exclusion of all else.

And thinking is a pretty time-consuming activity, which is why I don't and can't do other things, even though people often ask me to do so.

I am dedicated to thinking, and there's a good reason for that. I believe that thinking changes the world.

I was reminded of this when I was reading a Substack by a person called Aurelien, who is a political commentator who, for good reason, writes under a pseudonym, and I would strongly recommend his analysis. It's deep and thoughtful.

His suggestion in a very recent post was that we are facing an increasing climate of fear around the world. Not just fear, in fact, but fear, bellicosity and apocalyptic anticipation that has overtaken Western pundits and politicians. Mix this, he says, with pundits talking quite calmly about a war with China, and we are dangerously close to suffering a war psychosis.

In other words, thinking about war can itself change the world by changing the prospect of war. The idea, in that case, that our thoughts and actions are independent of each other, is quite absurd. They're not. They can't be, and they never will be. And that's why thinking matters.

Now, throw in another form of distorted thinking, and that is the paranoia about migrants into the UK. Maybe half the UK population at present thinks that migrants are the biggest problem that we face, when in reality, just over 10,000 people a year attempt to enter the UK without any entitlement to do so, and most of them are returned.

The fact is, majority opinion is being inflamed by a tiny minority problem, at huge cost to everyone now because this paranoia - and that is what it is properly described as - is distorting everything about our politics.

And then there's something else to mention, and that is our fiscal paranoia because we are supposedly facing a fiscal crisis. If you look at the heavyweight newspapers, like the Financial Times, they're saying that we are in trouble as a country, interest rates are rising, the government may have unsustainable debt, and we are going to, therefore, go to hell in a handcart. Not quite the phrase they use, but that's what they imply.

And the fact is that all of that is complete and utter nonsense. The only reason why the UK is in trouble is because Rachel Reeves has, wholly inappropriately, adopted a fiscal rule that she now cannot meet, and which was always glaringly obviously going to be unachievable. City thinking is, however, being totally distorted by this.

But the fact is that the resulting cost of their paranoia is going to be enormous if they feed that back into the thinking of Rachel Reeves, who does, as a consequence, deliver austerity by cutting the spending on public services that the City is now demanding.

Thinking can be dangerous if it's wrong. And that's my point.

What we are seeing here is the power of thinking. And the power of thinking can be a force for good, and it can create harm.

When it creates collective paranoia, the danger of real harm to society is very high. And that's what we're seeing right now.

War paranoia.

Migration paranoia.

Fiscal paranoia.

All of these are significant distractions from the real issues that we face.

People going without because of poverty.

Services being underfunded.

Children being denied the education that they need.

Climate change being ignored.

Houses not being built.

And all of that is happening because powerful people are framing the political issues of the day inappropriately, with their ability to frame the world in their way of thinking.

We need to be reminded of somebody called Viktor Frankl. He was an Austrian Holocaust survivor. As he put it, the last thing we ever have is our inalienable right to determine how we view the world. He used this to literally survive Nazi camps, out of which he came as a survivor.

We have the choice to decide how we frame things, he said.

We can succumb, or we can choose to survive.

We can choose evil, and we can choose good.

We have the right and the power to think.

We do, as a consequence, have the power to frame the way we look at the world.

This is not the moment to give up on that power.

We do not need to think that war is inevitable.

We do not need to victimise migrants.

We do not need to believe austerity is required.

We can frame the world differently.

That, as Viktor Frankl said, is our right, our choice, and as I would suggest, our duty.

We have to fight back against negative thinking. And if we do, we can win against the forces that are lining up against us and which threaten us all.

Taking further action

If you want to write a letter to your MP on the issues raised in this blog post, there is a ChatGPT prompt to assist you in doing so, with full instructions, [**here**](#).

One word of warning, though: please ensure you have the correct MP. ChatGPT can get it wrong.

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