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Ideas to engage and cherish



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DANGEROUS THOUGHTS: Some groups feel their dominance and ideology are threatened by contrary ideas

PEOPLE who discover, encounter and cherish powerful ideas face various challenges: social ostracism, emotional castration, danger and risk of torture to limb and life.

Contemporary civilisation has witnessed revolutions which create cultural year zero, prison and death sentences passed on writers, freedom fighters and teachers.

There are different classes, categories and levels of complexity of dangerous ideas. The degree to which dangerous ideas influence, impact upon and transform lives and societies are markers of the degrees of significance of dangerous ideas. Dangerous ideas can exist in politics, religion, economics, socio-cultural milieu or education.

But what makes ideas dangerous? Innocent and simple ideas can be regarded as dangerous by those in power who want to maintain and promote the status quo. Ideas become dangerous when those with vested interest in power want to hold on to and extend their powers.

Also, ideas are regarded as dangerous when the dominance of particular groups and their ideology can be threatened by contrary ideas and contrary imaginations.

The quest for dominance and the creation of the myth of superior race or culture or profession make any contrary ideas dangerous.

Dangerous ideas challenge the established mindsets, the habits of mind and the complacent or comfortable way of life of groups.

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Those who uphold the habits of mind of the notion "either you are with us or against us" regard contrary ideas as dangerous. Ideas become dangerous when they chart out alternative futures or unacceptable future scenarios.

Different sets and constellations of dangerous ideas can be identified and analysed. Dangerous ideas are ideas in Utopia or in Anarchy. Dangerous ideas always have their opposites in words, concepts or ideologies.

Fifteen dangerous ideas that are exciting to changemasters include the following:

TRANSPARENCY is a dangerous idea when information is hidden, misinformation is to be disseminated and covert action taken.

INTEGRITY nurtures a culture of noble character which cultivates consistent right intention and thoughts with conscience and piety against dishonesty.

ACCOUNTABILITY becomes dangerous when principles are upheld and the person takes personal or institutional responsibility for things that matter during their watch in schools, banks, hospitals, other institutions or life in general.

TRUTH is one of the most dangerous of ideas when people create distortion, twists and rhetoric, and conduct revisionist history and cover-up of all sorts. Truth is dangerous because it is against falsehood.

FREEDOM is dangerous because this idea is against oppression and suppression of the native pursuit of liberties.

HUMAN rights is dangerous because those who want control of others and assert denial of women's or children's rights or the rights of minorities. Righteousness and bigotry of various kinds are against the human rights ideal.

AUTONOMY or personal agency is dangerous because it erodes the reins and parameters of control of those with vested power interests.

EQUALITY, redistribution of wealth and philanthropy are dangerous because it cultivates the sharing of wealth widely and challenges the counter culture of the amassment of wealth by a few.

THE idea of a classless society and affirmative action, are dangerous because they are against feudalism, meritocracy, and cultural superiority

THE idea of the universal is dangerous because it challenges the parochial and celebrates humanity as a common species.

REVOLUTION has always been a dangerous idea because it invites comprehensive transformation of lives and societies.

THE idea of standards, standards of excellence and quality of life is dangerous because it is against sloth, inefficiencies and careless culture.

THE idea of fasting is dangerous because it liberates, it disciplines physically and it elevates spiritually and every person is equal in the pursuit, of piety.

THE idea of "Love thy Neighbour" is dangerous when groups forbid love and loyalty beyond the clutches of the groupthink and group traps.

CREATION and evolution are dangerous ideas for they challenge scientific and religious assumptions and beliefs, shifting mental paradigms.

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An individual can expand his own list of dangerous ideas at the personal, family or global levels. What are dangerous ideas that the body politic rejects or peers, subcultures or mainstream cultures pursue?

What are your dangerous ideas which put you at risk in your own society? And what are the exciting dangerous ideas which enhance the sense of existence and enrich life?

Leaders and enlightened citizens need to understand the origins, relationships and anatomy of dangerous ideas. As observed by Oscar Wilde "An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all."

Writer is a deputy vice-chancellor, INTI Laureate International University



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