

## Foreword

Clive Grinyer invited me to speak to design students at the Royal College of Art.

We talked about design and social usefulness, of designing for the social good of society. Then Clive threw me a question that I did not hesitate to answer:

“If you were going to redesign one thing in society what would that be?”

The answer fell out of my mouth unaided by reflection.

“I would redesign thinking.”

There was no thought or hesitation in my reply. I threw out my thought without thinking. I had been brought into an environment of designers and redesigners and it seemed natural to talk in their terms. In the same way if I had been brought into a group of police officers I would think in terms of law and order.

The expression “out of the mouths of babes oft times comes gems” springs to mind that afternoon when Clive made me think about thinking. I was the rather old babe who was forced to think by Clive. And by that make me think about thinking.

Having delivered my talk and answered Clive’s question I went home and sitting on the train reflected on my useful piece of evangelising about the social intervention work that I am involved in. My work in parliament, and my work in the street movement I have built around a street paper. My decade after decade of work in and around the crisis of poverty. And of the impediments that held back the work that I was doing.

My parliamentary work was like pulling teeth. Trying to get the government to assign more of its assets to preventing people falling into poverty. That once someone inherits poverty from their parents then they are rarely able to break the cycle, without tremendous levels of help and investment. That if government could muster its own efforts, and the efforts of business, charities and the community into helping break the inheritance of poverty, then we would live in a different world.

According to the British Medical Association (BMA), 50%<sup>1</sup> of people suffering from cardiac related illnesses were suffering from food poverty. That our hospitals were full of people destroyed by poverty. That our prisons were full of those who were born into poverty and need. That our schools were often impeded in delivering on education because inherited poverty got in the way of educational delivery.

That no doctor, teacher or police officer was trained to get people out of poverty, yet they were left to clean up the damage done by poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> “Health at price”, British Medical Association, June 2017.

My throwaway comment, got out of me by a genius of a question, suddenly made me think about the thinking I had encountered in government, in society, and in charities as a design issue. It was the thinking that needed redesigning. The reflecting on what the evidence was presenting itself in the day-to-day crisis of poverty I waded through.

What had I to do in my own life to get out of crime and poverty and rough sleeping and prison?

I had to redesign my thinking, to recalibrate my life by moving away from the survivalist, self-harming thinking that had kept me in poverty.

What Clive had asked me to do was reflect on the obstacles to my work by approaching it as a design issue. As a poorly designed design issue. His question elicited a level of thoughtfulness that now informs my ask of government. That informs my ability to think my way beyond the crisis to the crisis' solution.

This book is an essential read because the author brings together evidence as to what is the greatest design crisis in the world today: that thinking itself needs redesigning. For it is the current thinking that holds back our ability to create in an ever-changing world.

I went to speak to design students and in the process, I was redesigned, by a simple and now seemingly obvious challenging piece of thinking. Clive Grinyer did me a great favour: by helping me to see what needs to be done in the struggle to end poverty in people's lives – to rethink thinking itself. To redesign thinking so that we recalibrate our thinking to provide the answers to the most pressing questions of our day.

**The Lord Bird MBE,  
member of the House of Lords and founder of The Big Issue**