

The Unhinging of the World Mind

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Dr. Mattias Desmet, of the University of Ghent, teaches Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895) and how crowd psychology explains totalitarian movements.

But even he didn't see, right away, how "mass-formation" (his Le Bonian theory) explains the madness of the coronavirus pandemic.

I am still processing Desmet's ideas, having caught parts of his Pandemic Podcast interview, but judge them important enough to pass on.

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Le Bon's main conjecture was that crowds, in certain conditions, form a "group mind," the "psychological crowd" quite distinct from the individuals inside it in their normal course of life. Desmet, expanding on this, says that when key conditions are met, alarming developments can occur. When people suffer from

1. social isolation, with
2. lack of 'sense making,'



3. free-floating anxiety, and
 4. and general discontent,
- they can become unhinged.

Into this situation comes the hinge to hang it all on: a demagogue, a revolutionary political party, or . . . news purveyors pressing one theme relentlessly. In the current pandemic, politicians, bureaucrats, and mainstream media offered a focusing issue and a means of alleviating it: mask-wearing, lockdowns, and subsidized, rushed-to-market vaccines.

And then mandates galore.

This sort of crowd can get really ugly, lashing out at newly created "enemies" (the unvaccinated!) to set up a social system easily exploited by the unscrupulous, the connected, and the fanatical.

Desmet has been studying socialism and fascism, and has a book in the works. He says that about a third of today's population is caught up in this "mass hypnosis."

Hitler used Le Bon's book as a how-to. We should use it as a how-not-to.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.