

bionic mosquito

Friday, October 15, 2021

Why Smart People Are Stupid

What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part.

- Hannah Arendt

Why is it that when you offer facts, even the most intelligent will look at you with a blank stare...

John Waters wrote a piece on Substack, [Covid Totalitarianism: The Deification of Error](#). In it, he examines the work of Belgian psychologist Dr. Mattias Desmet, who, as he describes, “may be the most articulate voice on the most clear and present danger facing us: the mob-baiting now being pursued by formerly democratic governments.” Desmet is a professor of Clinical Psychology at Ghent University in Belgium. He holds both a master’s degree and PhD in clinical psychology, and a master’s degree in statistics.

Waters’ piece is very long...and worth reading in its entirety. He also includes three videos of Desmet, of which he finds [the first most valuable](#) (and the only one I watched; it is also worthwhile). I will try not to make this post equally as long, only touching on some key points...I hope. All references are from the essay; none directly from the video.

Desmet describes that the majority of the world’s population has fallen under a kind of a spell – not literally a spell, but what he calls a “mass formation,” a term first used by French philosopher Gustave Le Bon late in the nineteenth century in his book *The Psychology of Crowds*.

Individual personality disappears, replaced by group sentiment; brain activity is replaced by reflex. These changes may produce better or worse outcomes, but usually worse – such groups are “generally disposed to destruction.”

‘The ascendancy of crowds,’ wrote Le Bon, ‘indicates the death throes of a civilisation.’ The upward climb to civilisation is an intellectual process driven by individuals; the descent is a herd in stampede. ‘Crowds are only useful for destruction.’

It is this that we see today – throughout the West certainly – in size and scope never before seen in recorded history. What is interesting is that Le Bon describes, over 125 years ago, that which he saw occurring in his time and that which is overtly obvious today. The causes are twofold: destruction of common religious, political, and social beliefs, and the creation of entirely new forms of existence due to modern discoveries.

Enough of Le Bon. What of Desmet? He sees the strange situation – people indifferent to their own suffering, and certainly to the suffering of their fellow man (talk of increased suicides, drug and alcohol addition, etc., and get a blank stare). Loss of freedoms, loss of work, loss of human contact. Everything is closed out and sacrificed except that which has attracted the group’s single focus.

Being educated in statistics as well as psychology, Desmet early on understood that the numbers don’t add up. His training and study in psychology led him to conclude that the whole point was to drive the crowd toward this phenomenon of mass formation. His fear wasn’t the virus. It was the inevitable move toward totalitarianism.

Four conditions must be met to enable this mass formation: a large presence of socially isolated individuals – this described as the most important; second, a large number of people who lack sense-making in their lives; third, lots of free-floating anxiety – anxiety not connected to a mental representation; fourth, free-floating psychological discontent – anger and frustration aimed at...they don't know what, exactly. And you need mass media. And, as Waters adds, the media must be corruptible.

These conditions were all in place prior to covid. All that was left was for these to be aimed at one specific event, one cause that would set the wheels in motion. As my own aside: the fear of terrorism was not personal enough; to make it more personal, we needed to be instilled with a fear of breathing.

Now mesmerized, the mass has meaning and purpose – that which they lacked is now offered to them. A new, bogus, solidarity is offered. It doesn't matter the absurdity of the narrative: Desmet offers, "The more absurd a narrative is the better it functions as a ritual."

Further, politicians once again can become true leaders – and the move toward totalitarianism, desired by the mass and the politicians, is in full form. This embrace by the masses is required for totalitarianism, unlike simple despotic dictatorships where the masses understand well the enemy.

These circumstances combine to ensure that people don't want to go back to the 'old normal'. This is important: *Many among the mesmerised do not want their prior meaningless lives back.*

But unless there is something else offered to fill their void, there is no possibility that they will let go of the narrative. In the meantime, camps quickly divide into friends and foes – friends cleaved to, and foes excoriated, banished, destroyed.

Desmet offers an interesting point: only 30 percent are hypnotized. About 40 percent are just going along with the crowd. The last 30 percent are those who are not hypnotized, who try to speak out, who resist; this group has some underlying ideological outlook. Unfortunately, this last group is heterogeneous and disunited. If they could unite, the whole thing would come to an end.

My observation: this explains why the forces of the state want to crush every move of joining together in dissent. Who dares attend a political rally against the current narratives? Yet feel free to march in a pride parade, loot downtown Portland, or fire the unvaxxed. Even speaking out at local school board meetings is now considered domestic terrorism.

Returning to Desmet. Intelligence is no guarantor of resistance to this hypnosis: "In mass formation, highly intelligent, highly educated people become exactly as intelligent as everybody else in the masses — everybody becomes equally intelligent, which usually means extremely stupid, in the masses."

We each have had this experience. We are dumbfounded by the stupidity of our highly intelligent and (normally) rational friends, colleagues, and family members in the face of facts and counter-arguments.

We ought not to approach our fellows in this condition with the mindset that we might change their minds. That is folly indeed.

Yet, Desmet offers, we must continue to speak out – but be careful to choose our moments. This is the only way to break the link to free-floating anxiety – in this case, regarding the virus. Certainly, there is also the middle 40 percent – those who are just going along with the crowd. They may just need to hear that there is a counter-narrative.

Waters, through Desmet, continues with some examination of the work of German philosopher Hannah Arendt and her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. These comments – like the entire piece – are worth reviewing.

Now we may be at or approaching the most difficult phase of the totalitarian thinking process: when the mob, like an attack dog, awaits the instruction to go for its designated enemy.

The mass requires an enemy. First it was the virus; now it is those who don't buy into the entire narrative – from the virus, to the masks, to the jab. This bonds the mass further, adding to their newfound meaning in life.

This, says Desmet, gives rise to a 'mental intoxication', providing a 'new deeply fundamental type of satisfaction for a human being'. Under mass formation, people become 'radically intolerant of dissonant voices', while at the same time being 'radically tolerant' of their lying leaders.

This usually only stops after much destruction – crowds are always “intrinsically self-destructive.” The only way this comes to a positive end is if those in the mass discover the underlying reasons for their dissatisfactions and find a new, positive, meaning. But once the mass emerges, people are not easily moved to take on such a search.

When a society reaches the point of transgressing all ethical limits, there are no longer any guarantees. We must not be in any doubt as to the suggestibility of our neighbours. If we doubt that it could go much further, he warns, we should consider how far it has gone already.

The objective for those who are outside of this mass hypnosis is to find a way for the story to survive and to find a way to survive outside the system “for a few years.” At some point, the masses will wake up. Then what?

“Then they kill their leaders.”

I think they will also want to kill those who, all along, have been telling them that the narrative is bogus – that they lived a deadly lie. They won't want to be reminded of this, and every time they see you – even if you never say “I told you so” – you will be a reminder to them of this.

Conclusion

Society, he says, was being prepared for such a narrative for a long time. For centuries, the dominant view of man has been a mechanistic-materialist view: Man is a machine, a little part of the larger machine of the universe — ‘that is the ideology that has prepared the world for mass formation, and for connecting all our anxiety to a mechanistic-materialist organism such as a virus.’

While it is barely touched on in the essay or video, it is clear that the root cause is the death of God in the Western mind. There is no higher purpose or meaning to our being, because we are nothing more than the product of random atoms smashing together randomly.

Epilogue

Desmet has so far emerged as the most interesting voice on the Covid totalitarian play, discoursing brilliantly on mass psychology and how it might be manipulated. [Jordan] Peterson has adhered to the continuing Combine-enforced *omertà*.

The best way to describe *omertà*:

You must never betray the secrets of this society, observing the ancient tradition of omertà. The penalty for violating this law is death.

- Michael Corleone

This is quite true about Peterson. Yet, he finally came out with [a video](#) on this topic, a discussion with John Anderson from Australia – a place with as draconian a set of tyrannical abuses as anywhere on earth. In other words, a place more than any other that should open the eyes of those truly interested in answering the question.

I give Peterson, at best, a grade of “C” for his performance: no one should be forced to take the vaccine; there has been a forceful clamp-down on dialogue; Biden’s 80-million-person so-called mandate might cause some real pushback. But none of this forcefully questioned.

Beyond this, the conversation addressed or questioned nothing of importance, and when it strayed in that direction, the answers were mainstream narrative. And Peterson’s obligatory “we shouldn’t fall into conspiracy theories” was thrown in several times, for effect.

Maybe I will change the grade to a “D.”