

THE CROWD

乌合之众

A Study of the Popular Mind

大众心理研究

〔法〕古斯塔夫·勒庞著 冯克利译

中央编译出版社

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英文版

THE CROWD

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乌合之众

大众心理研究

〔法〕古斯塔夫·勒庞（Gustave Le Bon）◎著 冯克利◎译

〔法〕古斯塔夫·多雷（Gustave Doré）◎插画

中英双语·典藏本

The Crowd

A Study of the
Popular
Mind

一幅人类性格未竟的肖像画

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民主直通独裁的心理机制——代译序

闻有吏虽乱而有独善之民，不闻有乱民而有独治之吏。

——《韩非子·外储说》

人们似乎热爱自由，其实只是痛恨主子。

——托克维尔：《旧制度与大革命》

世人受到乌托邦声音的迷惑，他们拼命挤进天堂的大门。但当大门在身后砰然关上之时，他们却发现自己是在地狱里。这样的时刻使我感到，历史是喜欢开怀大笑的。

——昆德拉：《玩笑》

英雄豪杰与民众在历史上的作用孰轻孰重，历来是史家津津乐道的一个话题，当然也是个非常不易于说清楚的问题。常言道，一个好汉三个帮，这句明白易懂的话让人觉得平实而中肯，可以省去我们作历史辩证法深思的不少麻烦。然而，这些历史中的好汉（或枭雄）与帮手的学术地位，却是非常不平衡的。研究英雄的著作或是给英雄出谋划策的各类宝鉴，千百年来不绝如缕。而就那些帮手们而言，在“群众社会”到来之前，操持着改变或维持历史方向的势力的并不是他们，而是遍布于这

个世界大大小小的帝王将相和各路神仙，因此鲜有人把他们作为一个实体进行研究。这种情况一直继续到民主时代的到来。曼海姆在他去世前一篇讨论世俗化过程中“作为一种生活方式的民主”的未竟稿中，根据中世纪晚期以来在民俗、艺术、建筑等方面的变化，对决定着后来政治民主化进程的民众生活态度和审美情趣的潜移默化，作了十分深入而生动的说明。当然，他认为这个过程最显著的结果之一，便是各种偶像与建立在血统基础上的世俗王权，逐渐被平等人权和参与扩大的主张所消解。它使权威合法性的来源产生了一个重大的转移——血统身份也罢，君权神授也罢，奉天承运也罢，此时都已不再可能，领袖要想号令天下，也唯有反求诸天下的“授权”才成，这时群众才真正成了前台的主角。

1. 被遗忘了的勒庞

然而，群众在社会生活的变迁中唱起主角，这种现象对近代政治制度的变迁带来的结果，并不全都令人欢欣鼓舞。正如近代中外历史已经告诉我们的，群众的民主权力就像一切个人权力一样，当它没有受到恰当的宪政约束时，也很容易转变为它的反面，成为一种暴虐的权力。因此自柏克以降，便有许多思想家对于各种群众领袖挟民意而行独裁的负面作用忧心忡忡。从这个角度讲，法国人勒庞（Gustav Le Bon，1841—1931）在两个世纪之交写下的一系列社会心理学著作，尤其是他写于上世纪末的《乌合之众——民众心态研究》一书，实在是不该受到我们忽视。

勒庞是何许人物？本来我们对这位当年法国的才子式人物不该完全陌生。他的《乌合之众》一书，包括汉语在内被翻译成17种语言。惜乎近代以来，国人长期面对内忧外患的时局，总是摆脱不了“保种图存”的国家主义意识，因此最有现实意义的学说，是民族主义和社会主义之类的集体主义意识形态，像《乌合之众》这种反集体主义的著作几乎没有机会进入人们的视野，当然也就不足为怪。

勒庞从1894年开始，写下过一系列社会心理学著作，鱼龙混杂，蔚为大观，除了上面提到的《乌合之众》外，还有《各民族进化的心理学规律》（1894）、《社会主义心理学》（1898）、《法国大革命和革命心理学》（1912）以及《战争心理学》（1916）。不过最成功的还要算《乌合之众》这本书，它在1895年出版后，以平均不到一年再版一次的速度，至1921年已印到第29版。今天我们在主要的网上书店，仍可看到此书的几个网页和读者针对此书的一些奇谈怪论（两个网上图书馆亦可免费下载英译本全文）。

关于勒庞的思想倾向，当年芝加哥大学社会心理学的开山乔治·米德（George Mead）在《美国社会学杂志》中评论勒庞的思想时曾说，“勒庞是这样一批法国人中的一员，他对自己民族的文明几乎已经感到绝望，只有盎格鲁-萨克逊民族的个人主义，使他看到了未来社会的唯一希望。”我们从米德这段话可知，勒庞身处思想混乱、歧见纷呈的世纪末，是属于法国思想界中“亲英派”的边缘人物。当然，在他的著作里，我们随处可见他对“盎格鲁-萨克逊种族”的心理素质和政治制度的赞扬，不过要论系统与深刻，他较之自己同胞中的大师孟德斯鸠和托克维尔等人远远不及，甚至与比他年长一辈的希波莱特·泰纳相比，也逊色不少。因此只说他有盎格鲁-萨克逊情结，并不足以解释他的思想特色和对后世的持久影响。他的思想价值来自别处。

在《社会心理学手册》一书中，美国社会心理学领域的泰斗级人物奥尔波特（Gordon W. Allport）对勒庞有极高的评价，认为“在社会心理学这个领域已经写出的著作当中，最有影响者，也许非勒庞的《乌合之众》莫属。”罗伯特·默顿（Robert Merton）在为此书简装本所写的长篇序言中还说：“反对者可以驳斥勒庞的言论，但是他们不能对它视而不见，至少，假如他们不想放弃对社会心理学问题的关心，他们就不能这样做，因为那都是些基本的问题。这正是勒庞此书的主要

功绩所在：它几乎从头到尾表现出一种对重要问题的敏感性。……只有在极少数思想家中，才能看到这种不断发现有研究价值的问题的本领。对于社会心理学家以及所有思考自己社会的人，勒庞的著作所关注的问题，几乎无一例外地注定会成为十分重要的问题。”持论稳健而超脱的熊彼特在其著名的《资本主义、社会主义与民主》一书中，也曾特别强调了勒庞的社会心理学研究作为一个时代表征的重要意义，认为勒庞最早有效阐明了“个人在群体影响下，思想和感觉中道德约束与文明方式突然消失，原始冲动、幼稚行为和犯罪倾向的突然爆发”的实相，从而“给予作为古典民主学说和关于革命的民主神话基础的人性画面沉重一击”。我们当然不至于把这些话当作溢美之词，对于20世纪出现的许多成功或失败的民众革命以及由此造成的巨大灾难，我们如想对其寻求一点心理学上的理解，从勒庞那里的是可以学到很多东西的。

2. 研究的两个起点

勒庞对“群体心理”的研究在后世享有持久的影响，说起来不难理解，因为他在提出自己的见解时所针对的社会背景，至今不但没有消失，而且已经成为我们这个世纪人类政治生活中最重要的现象。勒庞虽然从学术角度讲经常表现得十分“外行”，却对这种现象具有一种出自直觉的深刻感受力。

他认为，有两个互为表里的基本因素，是引发传统社会进入现代转型的主要原因，即传统的宗教、政治及社会信仰的毁灭，和技术发明给工业生产带来的巨变。这一变化反映在西方各民族政治生活的层面，则是群众作为一种民主力量的崛起，而且在西方文明的发展过程中，这种“群众的崛起”有着“命运”一般无可逃避的特点。他断定，未来的社会不管根据什么加以组织，都必须考虑到一股新的、“至高无上的”力量，即“群体的力量”：“当我们悠久的信仰崩塌消亡之时，当古老的

社会柱石一根又一根倾倒之时，群体的势力便成为唯一无可匹敌的力量，而且它的声势还会不断壮大。”正是基于这一认识，勒庞认为，“我们就要进入的时代，千真万确将是一个群体的时代。”在勒庞看来，这个“群体的时代”表现在观念变迁上，最突出的特点就是民主和社会主义观念的广泛普及，它让持有保守主义和精英主义立场的勒庞深感恐惧，这一点我们下面还会谈到。

勒庞讨论群体心理的另一个出发点，说起来也许为今人所不齿，却是激发他在这个主题上不断著书立说的一个重要因素，而且我们也不能轻言它已完全成为过去。他强调，遗传赋予每个种族（race）中的每个人以某些共同特征，这些特征加在一起，便构成了这个种族的禀赋。勒庞对这种“种族特性”的强调，在一百多年前不但是西欧精神生活中的流行话，而且波及许多处在现代化过程边缘的地区，这在鲁迅先生的“国民性”（这正与勒庞喜欢用的“genius of race”一词含义相同）反省，以及我们至今余韵犹存的“民族生存”意识中，都有很明确的反映。这种源自19世纪“科学人类学”大发展的种族主义，其最极端的表现之一，当属勒庞的同胞戈宾诺（Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau）所发展出来的“灵肉统一论”，它力求在人种的生理解剖学特征与其精神现象之间找到某些一致性，继而把它扩展到用来解释不同民族的文化艺术和政治社会制度等各个方面的差异。勒庞身处当时的思想氛围，自不会不受到这方面的影响。他在一定程度上从戈宾诺等人的这种种族人类学的思想中，接受了决定着各民族命运的神秘主义种族概念，认为“遗传赋予每个种族中的每个人以某些共同特征，这些特征加在一起，便构成了这个种族的气质。”因此一些学者据此把他作为一个种族主义者看待，也不是完全没有道理。

不过平心而论，勒庞用来建立群体心理学理论的种族观念，却没有很多“科学人类学”中的生物学色彩。他更多地把种族看作一个“历史的”和“文化的”概念。

墨顿在给《乌合之众》写的长篇序言中认为，勒庞在历史科学性问题上的虚无主义态度，是他的一个幸运的自相矛盾之处，因为他在实践中并没有否定史实的作用。但是读过勒庞的书后，我们也许会倾向于认为，更堪当此论的应是勒庞有着种族主义倾向的文化立场，因为正是它有力地刺激了勒庞的群体心理学研究。1894年他出版第一本社会心理学著作《各民族进化的心理学规律》，便花费大量篇幅，探讨在不同种族之间无法做到“观念移植不走样”的原因——譬如英法两个“种族”，因其“国民性”使然，对“民主”、“自由”之类的相同观念，便会有非常不同甚至对立的解释。正是因为对群体特征差异造成的民族命运——尤其是他自己所属的法兰西民族的命运——有着一份强烈的关切，才促使他进而提出了自己带有“通论”性质的群体心理学理论。

3. 低劣的群体心态

每个种族虽然有相对于其他种族而言独特的天性，但是勒庞根据对若干重大历史事变（尤其是法国大革命）和发生在他周围的一些事实的观察，又认为不管是什么种族，当其中的个体为了行动的目的而聚集成一个“心理学的群体”时，“仅仅从他们聚在一起这个事实，我们就可以看到，除了原有的种族特征之外，他们还表现出一些新的心理特征，这些特征有时与种族特征颇为不同。”也正是对这些不同之处所作的研究，构成了勒庞对社会心理学领域的主要贡献。在他的笔下，这些聚集成群的个人最有意义的变化，就是其中个人的行为方式，会表现得与他们一人独处时有明显的差别。勒庞为证明这些差别所列举的证据，当然尚没有实验心理学的充分支持，但是正如后来在勒庞提供的研究基础上继续从事这项工作的弗洛伊德所言，勒庞过人的“问题意识”，使他的见识即使只从经验层面看，也没有人敢于断然否认其价值。的确，凡是读过《乌合之众》这本篇幅不大的小书的人，大概谁也不会否认，它虽然偏见多多，却是非常令人难忘的。

对于群体行为中的那些同个人行为心理学十分不同的特点，勒庞经常是以十分夸张的口吻，为我们描述了一幅十分可怕景象。按他的评价，进入了群体的个人，在“集体潜意识”机制的作用下，在心理上会产生一种本质性的变化。就像“动物、痴呆、社会主义者、幼儿和原始人”一样，这样的个人会不由自主地失去自我意识，完全变成另一种智力水平十分低下的生物。勒庞当然尚不具备发展出“权威主义人格”之类见解的能力，但是他明确指出，群体中个人的个性因为受到不同程度的压抑，即使在没有任何外力强制的情况下，他也会情愿让群体的精神代替自己的精神，更多地表现出人类通过遗传继承下来的一些原始本能。个人因为参与到群体中而表现出来的这些特征，概括起来说大体如下：

首先，群体中的个人会表现出明显的从众心理，勒庞称之为“群体精神统一性的心理学定律（law of the mentalunity of crowds）”，这种精神统一性的倾向，造成了一些重要后果，如教条主义、偏执、人多势众不可战胜的感觉，以及责任意识的放弃。用他的话说：“群体只知道简单而极端的感情；提供给他们各种意见、想法和信念，他们或者全盘接受，或者一概拒绝；将其视为绝对真理或绝对谬论。”勒庞认为，他这里所描述的其实也不完全是一种现代的现象，从古至今，与宗教或准宗教信仰有关的偏执“对人们的头脑实行的专制统治，早就为大家所知”，它甚至是一切伟大文明最基本的动力。

由于这种简单化的思维方式，群体并不认为真理，尤其是“社会真理”，是只能“在讨论中成长”的，它总是倾向于把十分复杂的问题转化为口号式的简单观念。在群情激奋的气氛中的个人，又会清楚地感到自己人多势众，因此，他们总是倾向于给自己的理想和偏执赋予十分专横的性质。“个人可以接受矛盾，进行讨论，群体是绝对不会这样做的。在公众集会上，演说者哪怕作出最轻微的反驳，立刻就会招来怒吼和粗野的叫骂。在一片嘘声和驱逐声中，演说者很快就会败下阵

来。当然，假如现场缺少当权者的代表这种约束性因素，反驳者往往会被打死。”出现这种情况的一个主要原因，是勒庞观察到的另一条群体心理学规律：约束个人的道德和社会机制在狂热的群体中失去了效力：“孤立的个人很清楚，在孤身一人时，他不能焚烧宫殿或洗劫商店，即使受到这样做的诱惑，他也很容易抵制这种诱惑。但是在成为群体的一员时，他就会意识到人数赋予他的力量，这足以让他生出杀人劫掠的念头，并且会立刻屈从于这种诱惑。出乎预料的障碍会被狂暴地摧毁。”当然，从以个人责任为基础的法治立场上说，这种在群体中消失了个人利益和目标的人会变成一个“无名氏”，而以个人责任为基础的法律，对这样的无名氏是不起作用的。所谓“法不责众”的经验使他意识到，他不必为自己的行为承担责任：“群体感情的狂暴，尤其是在异质的群体中间，又会因责任感的彻底消失而强化”。意识到肯定不会受到惩罚——而且人数越多，这一点就越是肯定——以及因为人多势众而一时产生的力量感。在群体中间，就像“傻瓜、低能儿和心怀妒忌的人”一样，在摆脱了自己卑微无能的感觉之后，会产生出一种暴烈、短暂但又巨大的能量。

勒庞这些思想所提出的最大挑战，便是18世纪以后启蒙哲学中有关理性人的假设。在他看来，“是幻觉引起的激情和愚顽，激励着人类走上了文明之路，在这方面人类的理性没有多大用处。”因此在同人类的各种作为文明动力的感情——“譬如尊严、自我牺牲、宗教信仰、爱国主义以及对荣誉的爱”——的对抗中，理性在大多数时候都不是赢家。这也是那些高深莫测的哲学或科学观念在面对群体（不管其中的个人有多么高的智力水平）时，必须使它们低俗化和简单化的原因。在这一点上，勒庞是可做乔治·奥维尔的老师的，他不但知道在“政治和语言的堕落”之间有着密切的关系，而且指出“说理与论证战胜不了一些词语和套话”，并不全是宣传者的过错，因为这些东西是“和群体一起隆重上市的”。这些在群体中产生了广泛

影响的观念，其威力只同它所唤醒的形象而不是它们的真实含义有关。只有这些避免了分析和批判的观念，才能在群体眼里具有自然甚至是超自然的力量，让群体“肃然起敬，俯首而立”，“它们在人们心中唤起宏伟壮丽的幻象，也正是它们含糊不清，使它们有了神秘的力量。它们是藏在圣坛背后的神灵，信众只能诚惶诚恐地来到它们面前”。因此，那些详加分析便会歧义纷呈的观念——例如民主、社会主义、平等、自由等等——所以具有神奇的威力，只是因为它们已经变成了空洞的政治口号——各种极不相同的潜意识中的抱负及其实现的希望，好像全被它们集于一身。

于此，我们也许更容易理解像韦伯和罗素这些曾经有志于参政的大思想家为何失败了。在观念简单化效应的作用下，凡是有抱着怀疑的精神、相信在政治和社会问题上极不易发现“确定性真理”的人，尤其是一个习惯于用推理和讨论的方式说明问题的人，在群体中是没有地位的；当面对群情激奋时，他尤其会生出苍白无力的感觉：因为他意识到他要与之作对的，不仅仅是一种错误的行为，而且还有“多数的力量”，还有贯彻这种行为时的偏执态度。我们更能理解，所谓专业精英，不管他智力多么高强，他陈明利害得失的理性努力，面对被空洞的观念冲昏了头脑的群体，反而会产生一种自己十分迂腐的无聊感觉。更为可悲的是，面对群众的荒谬与狂热，明智之士更有可能根本不会作出这样的努力，而是同群体一起陷入其中，事后又惊叹于自己连常识都已忘却的愚蠢。弗洛姆曾从个人在社会共同体中的边缘化或受其排挤而导致的内心焦虑，对这种放弃独立判断能力的过程作过分析，他所说的人们情愿“逃避自由”的原因，便包括着在这种内心焦虑的压力下，人们会情不自禁放弃个人立场的倾向，因为正如勒庞的解释所表明的，怀疑造成的不明确性，不但不会让群众喜欢，而且有可能使他们生出足以致人死命的愤怒。

4. 群体的“道德”

读勒庞的人或许最易于得出一个印象，即他过多地强调了群体的负面形象。但是，“群体心理”给个人行为所造成的结果，并不全然只是我们日常用语中所说的“罪恶”，它所导致的结果要比这复杂得多。用勒庞的话说：“它可以让一个守财奴变得挥霍无度，把怀疑论者改造成信徒，把诚实的人变成罪犯，懦夫变成豪杰。”因此对于我们在群体中看到的情况，很难仅仅用刑法学意义上的犯罪来定义，它是一种更为复杂的现象。

如勒庞一再所说，他所研究的并不是“群体犯罪的心理学”，而是表现在所有类型群体中的心理学特征，其中自然也包括英勇无畏的英雄主义群体。参与到群体中的个人，不但能够变得“偏执而野蛮”，而且在他只有一知半解甚至根本就不理解的各种“理想”的鼓舞下，他并不像大多数个人犯罪那样是受自我利益的支配。因此，我们可以认为群体行为的结果看上去非常恶劣，但参与其中的个人的动机，却很可能与卑鄙邪恶的私欲丝毫无涉。

当群体是受某种高远的理念的激励而行动时，它便会表现出极高的“道德”。然而这是一种什么意义上的道德呢？对此勒庞有个十分重要的区分，他说，如果“道德”一词指的是持久地尊重一定的社会习俗，不断抑制私心的冲动，那么显然可以说，由于群体太好冲动，太多变，它当然不可能是道德的。然而，如果我们把某些一时表现出来的品质，如舍己为人、自我牺牲、不计名利、献身精神和对平等的渴望等，也算作“道德”的内容，则群体经常会表现出很高的道德境界。不错，作为“暴民”的群体，其残忍程度常令人瞠目结舌，以致不断地有人因此而感叹人性之恶。而勒庞的分析则提醒我们，这里所说的“人”，在很多情况下应是指群体中的人，而非孤立的个人。如果群体的行为动机也完全是出自支配着个人行为的非法私利，那当然只能把它视为一种犯罪。这样的群体可以是黑社会或聚散无常的暴民团体，却不可能成为一个影响甚至改变历史的要素。群体要想成为历史变迁的主

角，它必须多多少少“为信仰而战”，也就是说，它的形成必须是为了某些简单而明确的信仰。在人们对唯一神教已失去信仰的时代，最有可能对组成群体的个人发挥巨大作用的，便是勒庞所说的“民族的荣誉、前途或爱国主义”。群体在这些信仰的激励下，很容易表现出极崇高的献身精神和不计名利的举动，并且它所能达到的崇高程度，是孤立的个人绝对望尘莫及的。这是一些与个人的日常利益完全没有关系的观念，只有它们能够让群体“达到使他慷慨赴死的地步”。

因此勒庞断言，凡是大规模的群体运动，总是类似于宗教运动。我们这个世纪的学者谈论甚多的意识形态作为宗教替代品的现象，原本是个勒庞早有深切感受的老话题了。他说：“一切政治、神学或社会信条，要想在群众中扎根，都必须采取宗教的形式——能够把危险的讨论排除在外的形式。即便有可能使群众接受无神论，这种信念也会表现出宗教情感中所有的偏执狂，它很快就会表现为一种崇拜。”这种运动表面上看就像是一首奇怪的交响诗，它兼有残酷和崇高两个截然不同的主旋律：崇高的境界，成功地激起了群众想入非非的感情，使他们在崇拜和服从中找到自己的幸福，它的“道德净化”作用，使他们可以把自己或别人的死亡同样看得轻如鸿毛。当然，这些受到崇高的宗教感情所激励的群众，“必然也会用火与剑去清除那些反对建立新信仰的人”，因而在无辜者的鲜血中映出的，从主观上说并不是人性的邪恶，而是真诚不屈信念，是出自“群体灵魂运作”的产物。

如果我们站在康德传统的伦理哲学基础上加以分析，勒庞所说的群体的不宽容和狂热，显然是同脱离了个人主义道德基础的“群体道德”有关的。从后来研究集体主义运动的文献中，我们可以得到进一步的了解，群体中个人利益的暂时消失，以及相应的犯罪意识的泯灭，其中的一个主要原因，便是千差万别的个人目标被一个集体目标所取代。在这种情况下，勒庞称群体中的个人会失去责任意识，也许并不十分恰当。实际情况可能恰恰相反，群体中的人认为自己可以对残暴行为不负私人道

德意义上的责任，除了群体是个“无名氏”的作用外，很可能还因为他更强烈地意识到自己要为一个“更崇高的事业负责”。在这种责任意识的激励下，他会不自觉地自我渺小化，把自己日常经营的目标与它对立起来，从而理所当然地认为，别人的个人目标同样也是没有价值的。

其实从上述勒庞对道德所作的区分中，我们已可隐约感到在判断群体的行为是否符合“道德”上往往会陷入困境的原因。无私的奉献当然是一种美德，我们也很难指摘人们为了国家和社会的未来命运所表现出来的热情，因此这很容易让我们得出“群体为国家和民族而犯罪不是犯罪”这种令人尴尬的结论。对于这一困境，后来的哈耶克曾以十分理解的态度作过说明，他指出：“如果因为极权主义国家大量的人民竭力支持一种在我们看来似乎否认了大部分道德价值的制度，我们便认为他们缺少道德热情，这是极不公平的。对于他们的大多数人来说，实际情况也许恰好相反：像国家社会主义或共产主义这类运动背后所蕴含的道德情感的强度，也许只有历史上伟大的宗教运动能与之相比。”但是问题在于，一个凌驾一切的共同目标，是同建立在个人责任上的道德无法并存的，因此，如果我们承认，个人只不过是所谓社会或国家这些更高实体的目的而服务的工具，“极权主义政体很多使我们害怕的特点便必定接踵而至。从集体主义立场出发而产生的不容忍和残酷地镇压异己，完全不顾个人的生命和幸福，都是这个基本前提的根本的和不可避免的后果。”

5. 英雄与群众

但是，勒庞的枪口并不是只对着让他感到惊恐的群体。与弗洛伊德在《群体心理学与自我的分析》中所言不同，勒庞并非只把眼光停留在群体行为上，“没有估计到领袖在集体心理中的重要性”。他非常清楚，缺了英雄的群体在大多数情况下只能

算是一些朝生暮死的“群氓”。

当然，能够让群体焕发出改天换地的巨大能量的英雄，绝对不会是那些江湖草寇式的人物。和群众经常表现出极高的道德境界相一致，英雄之成为英雄，也必是因为他具备能够迎合信众的为事业而献身的勇气、不懈的斗志和高尚的利他主义，勒庞通过对“剧院观众”的情绪化表现（他的描述不时让人想起当年那些《白毛女》、《放下你的鞭子》的观众的反应）的分析告诉我们，群体本能地希望英雄表现出他们所不具备的高尚品格。这些品格作为日常生活中很不多见的稀缺商品，英雄如果能让人们觉得他可以大量提供，这当然会让他广受爱戴。于此我们不妨说，卡莱尔断定群众有英雄崇拜的本能，也不是没有经济学上的根据。

弗洛伊德批评过勒庞在研究领袖上有不周全之处，也不是没有他的道理。因为在分析群体心理时，勒庞的确没有得出弗洛伊德那样的见识，把编造领袖神话视为个人解除心理压抑的有效手段。但是，他却沿着另一条历史更为悠久的西方政治学传统，为我们分析了领袖与群众的互动关系，字里行间透着一股十足的马基雅维利风格。他认为，在使群体形成意见并取得一致方面，领袖的作用是非常重要的，“他的意志是群体的核心，他是各色人等形成组织的第一要素，他为他们组成派别铺平了道路。”而群体则像是温顺的羊群，“没了头羊就会不知所措”。这就是为何“当波拿巴压制了一切自由，让每个人都对他的铁腕有切肤之感时，向他发出欢呼的正是那些最桀骜不驯的雅各宾党人。”

群体的轻信、极端与情绪化反应等等弱点，显然既为领袖的品质划定了上限，也给他动员自己的信众提供了许多可乘之机。首先，领袖本身可以智力高强，但是鉴于群体的素质低下，他为了获得信众的支持，也不能有太多的怀疑精神，这对他不但无益反而有害：“如果他想说明事情有多么复杂，同意做出解释和促进理解，他的

智力就会使他变得宽宏大量，这会大大削弱使徒们所必需的信念的强度与粗暴。在所有的时代，尤其是在大革命时期，伟大的民众领袖头脑之狭隘令人瞠目；但影响力最大的，肯定也是头脑最褊狭的人。”这里所蕴含的潜台词是，群体的心理过程中并没有多少的逻辑成分，在超出自己熟悉的生活范围之外，他也不具备多少经验和合理的批评能力，而这正是一些别有所图的个人或集团赢得群众信任的一个要件。他们也许只是些野心家，也许是这样或那样的理想主义者。他们在鼓吹什么大概并不重要，关键是如果政治中的人性真如勒庞描述的那样，则领袖在很大程度上是能够改变甚至制造人民的意志的。用熊彼特的话说，“这种人工制造的东西常常在现实中与古典理论中的普遍意志相一致。只要这种情形存在，人民的意志便不会是政治过程的动力，而只能是它的产物。”但更为重要的是，当我们面对政治过程时，虽然我们遇到的可能不是真正的人民意志，但是他们往往并不如是想，他们真诚地相信那不是领袖及其追随者制造出来的产物，而是真正发自他们的内心。我们已经知道，后来的人把这个过程称为“洗脑”，它是现代宣传术进步的一大成果，在此勒庞也应当享有一席之地。

他为我们概括出的领袖煽动信众的三个最为重要的手法，又会让人想到奥维尔的《1984》。当这些领袖们打算用各种社会学说影响群体的头脑时，他们需要借助“断言法、重复法和传染法”。他说，“群体因为夸大自己的感情，因此它只会被极端感情所打动。希望感动群体的演说家，必须出言不逊，信誓旦旦”。根据勒庞的观察，夸大其辞、言之凿凿、不断重复，绝对不以说理的方式证明任何事情，是说服群众的不二法门。因此，大凡能够成就大业的领袖人物，他最重要的品质不是博学多识，而是必须“具备强大而持久的意志力”，这是一种“极为罕见、极为强大的品质，它足以征服一切。……没有任何事情能阻挡住它，无论自然、上帝还是人，都不能”。由于有这种强大持久的意志，他所坚持的观念或追求的目标，最初

受到群众的赞成也许是因为其正确，但即使在已经铸成大错，思想的荒谬已经暴露无遗时，也未必能够动摇他的信念，因为任何理性思维对他已不起任何作用：“他们对别人的轻藐和保留态度无动于衷，或者这只会让他们更加兴奋。他们牺牲自己的利益和家庭——牺牲自己的一切。自我保护的本能在他们身上消失得无影无踪，在绝大多数情况下，他们孜孜以求的唯一回报就是以身殉职。”

在弗洛姆《对自由的恐惧》一书中，我读到了希特勒的一段话，它对于了解有着心理弱点的群体和偏执的领袖之间有着什么样的关系，一定是大有帮助的。希特勒是否读过勒庞我们不得而知，但是他除了有“坚强的意志和信念”之外，显然也十分了解他必须进行动员的群众。他说，群众“就像女人……宁愿屈从坚强的男人，而不愿统治懦弱的男人；群众爱戴的是统治者，而不是恳求者，他们更容易被一个不宽容对手的学说折服，而不太容易满足于慷慨大方的高贵自由，他们对用这种高贵自由能做些什么茫然不解，甚至很容易感到被遗弃了。他们既不会意识到对他们施以精神恐吓的冒失无礼，也不会意识到他们的人身自由已被粗暴剥夺，因为他们绝不会弄清这种学说的真实意义”。这些几乎是逐字逐句重复勒庞的话，如果他地下有知，也许会为自己犯下这种马基雅维利主义式的错误而懊悔不已。但是这也从另一个侧面说明，勒庞在分析群体心理时得出的结论，的确是同20世纪以来人类的政治命运息息相关。当汉娜·阿伦特告诉我们“凡是有群众的地方，就可能产生极权主义运动”时，她这里说的“群众”，显然就是指希特勒的群众，当然也指勒庞描述的群众。自法国大革命以降，由领袖、意识形态和勒庞意义上的群体所组成的这种新的三位一体，便取代了宗教与皇权，成为一切民主宪政架构之外政治合法性运动的要件，尤其在勒庞之后的一百年里，这种新的三位一体更是上演了一幕幕规模宏大而惨烈的悲剧。

6. 结语：群体的时代与民主

从以上讨论中我们不难看出，包括勒庞著作中那些没有多少恶意的种族主义言论在内，他的惊人的预见力，是我们难以否认的。20世纪是个群众参政意识普遍觉悟因而也是个民主口号盛行的世纪，然而它同时又是一个“最血腥的世纪”。与此相比，勒庞所援用的那些19世纪群众运动的事例，只能算是小儿科了。因此我们完全有理由认为，在这种民主观念的普及过程中，既包含着人类几千年来想要驯服强权的真诚愿望，也隐含着为此而奋斗的人民落入强权圈套的巨大危险。托克维尔当年说，“以人民主权的名义并由人民进行的革命，是不可能使一个民族获得自由的”。勒庞的对现代化过程中群众崛起的惊恐，其实是这种怀疑态度的继续。

就像当时包括尼采在内的许多思想家一样，勒庞对于世纪之交的西方文明，也抱着一种绝望的末世心态。他似乎在群体的崛起中嗅到了某种历史轮回的征兆。按他的历史观，一切文明都逃不脱由盛而衰的循环过程，而当一个文明开始败落时，摧毁一个破败的文明，一直就是群众最明确的任务，只有在这时，群体的主要使命才清晰可辨，这时“人多势众的原则似乎成了唯一的历史法则”。对于这些带有宿命论色彩的言论，我们可以不屑一顾，但是我们有理由认为，勒庞在潜意识里是想结束西方这种因权威危机而面对的混乱局面的。他所希望的解决方案，毫无疑问是18世纪的英国人建立的模式，因此他对“拉丁民族”缺乏盎格鲁—萨克逊人那种个人独立感情一再表示担心。他认为，由于缺少这种“种族品质”，他们在考虑自由问题时所关心的，只是自己宗派的集体独立性，“在各拉丁民族中间，自宗教法庭时代以来，各个时期的雅各宾党人，对自由从未能够有另一种理解”。这种群体意识中表现出来的集体主义倾向，使得法国人总是把民主理解为个人意志和自主权要服从于国家所代表的社会的意志和自主权，“因此在法国，不管是激进派、社会主义者还是保皇派，一切党派要求全都求助于国家”。他能够在群众给权力的合法性来源所造成的深刻变革中，警觉地嗅出“大众民主”与“独裁主义”之间有着直通车关

系的危险，这种思想显然起着至关重要的作用。

勒庞思想的来源，除了前面提到过的种族主义和对英国保守主义传统的留恋外，19世纪中叶以后在欧洲愈演愈烈的反理性主义思潮，对他的思想影响也是清晰可辨的。但是这种影响并没有使他转向浪漫主义，反而强化了他的传统主义立场。正如上文所说，他对人是理性动物这个启蒙哲学的基本假定，有着深刻的不信任。他用和后来的哈耶克几乎完全一样的语气，认为“对历史事实最细致的观察，无一例外地向我证实，社会组织就像一切生命有机体一样复杂，我们还不具备强迫它们在突然之间发生深刻变革的智力”。因此他反对一个民族热衷于重大的政治和社会变革，他认为，这种变革的计划从理论上说无论多么出色，都不会使民族气质即刻出现变化（因为“只有时间具备这样的力量”）。采用激进的方式，借助于抽象的原则贯彻一种社会改造的蓝图，只会“使一个高度精致的文明倒退到社会进化更早期的阶段”。

所有这些，构成了勒庞对群众、领袖和观念的鼓噪以及建立于其上的民主和社会主义理念持极端轻蔑态度的基础。虽然从这种“群体时代”的现象中，他错误地得出了和施宾格勒一样的结论，以为自己正在目睹西方文明就要没落的征兆，但是大概没有人会否认，他的群体心理学研究的意义是超越了这一错误的。因此，假如我们只去批评他那种有点神秘主义的种族论倾向和经常是不合“学术规范”的臆断（这当然必要），这无异于放弃了一些非常有价值的思想。

至少我们可以说，勒庞的群体心理学研究所触及的问题，不管在他之前还是此后，是一切思考民主问题的人所难以回避的。群众作为一种政治合法性的重要来源，早在古希腊时代，亚里士多德就指出过它有着走向独裁的危险。此后的柏克、孟德斯鸠、约翰·穆勒和托克维尔等人这方面的言论，也早已为人们所熟知。我们更应深思

一下，自从古希腊之后，以民众直接参政为基础的民主在人类历史上消失了2000多年，这一现象很可能有着深刻的人性方面的原因，假如我们只用一句“反动的黑暗时代”之类的话搪塞过去，未免显得幼稚可笑。勒庞生逢一个群众重新崛起的时代，他敏感地意识到了这种现象中所包含的危险，并且以他所掌握的心理学语言，坦率地把它说了出来。从这个意义上说，勒庞的思想是超意识形态的，不然的话，我们也许就无法解释，在民主和独裁的关系这个问题上，为何我们不管是在最右翼的哈耶克那儿，还是在力求不偏不倚的熊彼特或有左翼倾向的阿伦特和弗洛姆那儿，都可以看到勒庞思想的影子。这种不谋而合的立场，实是因为他们都看到了一个无可回避的事实，即20世纪暴虐而巨大的独裁制度，它与以往的专制最大的不同之处，便是它们的合法性全都援之以一定的群众运动。

政治言辞一贯冷峻的马克斯·韦伯论述权力类型的学说广为人知，其中有一种类型便是“直接诉诸民众的民主制”（plebiscitary democracy），关于这种类型，他说，“领袖民主制最重要的类型——魅力人物统治的正当性，便是蕴含在因为被统治者的意志而产生的、并且仅仅由于这种意志而得以存在的正当性的形式之中”，而在现实中提供着这种类型的，正是那些“古代的和现代的革命独裁者”。当韦伯说这些话时，他显然认为“革命独裁者”也能建立“民主”，这难免会让不明民主本义的人感到困惑不解。在这一点上勒庞则说得更明白一些，在表述同样的思想时，勒庞使用了几乎和韦伯一样的语言，但是他同时也指出了这种“民主”毁灭个人自由的本质：“大众民主（Popular democracy）的目的根本谈不上支配统治者。它完全为平等的精神所左右……对自由没有表现出丝毫的尊重。独裁制度是大众民主唯一能够理解的统治。”不言自明的是，这种不尊重自由的民主，当然也会使人们本来要用它来驯服权力的愿望完全落空。

因此在读了勒庞之后，当我们再听到有人说“代表人民的利益”或“代表大多数人

的利益”时，是不是该多一份警惕呢？阿克顿爵士的名言“权力导致腐败，绝对权力绝对导致腐败”，今天至少从口头上已被中国人广泛地接受，但是很少有人注意到一个事实，即他说这句话的意思，是在提醒人们对“一切权力”都有限制的必要，不管它是个人的权力还是集体的权力。至于如何完成这项任务，我们不免就会想到权力分立和选举制度等复杂的宪政民主架构。这是勒庞的弱项，当然也就不属于本文的话题了。

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勒庞《乌合之众》的得与失

罗伯特·墨顿 (Robert Merton)

在《社会心理学手册》(Handbook of Social Psychology, ed. by Gardner Lindzey, 1954) 这本权威著作中，美国的社会心理学大师奥尔波特 (Gordon W. Allport) 大胆地断言，“在社会心理学这个领域已经写出的著作当中，最有影响者，也许要算勒庞的《乌合之众》了。”此书是否应当享有这么突出的地位，当然可以提出异议，而且一直就存在着异议。不过有一点却是没有疑问的，即它确实对人们理解集体行为的作用以及社会心理学的思考发挥了巨大影响。此外，在“孤独的人群”和“千人一面”已经成为美国民众形容自己的处境和感受的恰当用语的时代，我们也无法怀疑此书的适时性。

勒庞这本小书持久的影响力，在我们看来有些令人费解。1895年它初次面世时，也

许可以说不过是一本赶时髦的书，但是，一种时髦若是持续了大半个世纪之久，想必它一定有些独到之处。我们如果再考虑它的性质，就会更加感到不解。它所包含的真理，也许没有一条不曾被人说过，而且比勒庞在此书中的说明更令人信服，有些甚至出现在他写此书之前，此后的论述更是不在话下。这本书在知识界却继续有着相当大的影响。更让人费解的是，此书提出的一些观点，如今已经被证明是有误导作用或错误的，然而它仍然是所有我们这些群众行为的研究者不可不读的文献。最后，书中还含有各种互不协调的意识形态，但是意识形态迥然不同的崇信意识形态的作家，却都以十分严肃的态度对待它。也许，要想解开这团表面看来充满矛盾的乱麻，我们最好还是考虑一下它对我们今天的意义。

《乌合之众》的经历和命运中的一个事实，有助于消除这种困惑。受到勒庞的观点触动的，不但有那些基本上全盘接受它们的人，如民粹派社会学家罗斯和心理学家麦克道格尔，甚至包括一些反对它们的人，如作为社会心理学家的弗洛伊德和社会学家帕克。反对者可以驳斥勒庞的言论，但是他们不能对它视而不见，至少，假如他们不想放弃对社会心理学问题的关心，他们就不能这样做，因为那都是些基本的问题。

这正是勒庞此书的主要功绩所在：它几乎从头到尾表现出一种对重要问题的敏感性。用大法官霍尔姆斯先生的话说，勒庞在这本书中表明，他具有“脊髓中的本能”，只有在极少数思想家中，才能看到这种不断发现有研究价值的问题的本领。对于社会心理学家以及所有思考自己社会的人，勒庞的著作所关注的问题，几乎无一例外，注定会成为十分重要的问题。这本书的标题有着使人受骗的局限性，但是它谈到了许多人们通常并不与“人群”联系在一起的现象。可以说，勒庞在此书的这里或那里，以十分简约甚至时代错置的方式，触及到了一些今天人们所关心的问题，如社会服从和过度服从、趣味单一、群众的反叛、大众文化、受别人支配的自

我、群众运动、人的自我异化、官僚化过程、逃避自由投向领袖的怀抱，以及无意识在社会行为中的作用，等等。简言之，他考察了一大堆现代人面临的社会问题和观念。我相信，正是这本小书所涉及的问题的多样性，使它有着持久的意义。

因此，《乌合之众》的当代意义，在于它发现问题的功能而非解决问题的功能。只要看一下此书对弗洛伊德的意义便可认识到，这两种知识功能虽然互有关联，还是有所区别的。弗洛伊德提供了一条主渠道，使勒庞的思想影响进入了当代人的头脑。当弗洛伊德在20年代把注意力转向“群众心理学”（这是他的“Massenpsychologie”一词的习惯译法），发表了这方面的第一本专著《群众心理学与自我的分析》时，他专辟一章讨论勒庞这本书。他开篇便下了一个断语：“勒庞的《群体心理学》（Psychologie des foules，该书法文原版的书名。——译注），一本当之无愧的名著”，最后又以类似的判断作结：“他极为精彩地描述了集体心态”。夹在这两个判断之间的，是连篇累牍地引用《乌合之众》中的段落，数量之多，与弗洛伊德简短的评论加在一起，几乎占了全书的六分之一。

但是人们很快便发现，弗洛伊德对勒庞这本书并非持明确的赞成态度。在下面一章，他一开口便收回了前面对勒庞思想的赞扬，他说：“.....我们现在必须补充一句，其实作者的所言没有一点新东西。.....此外，勒庞等人对群体心理的描述和评估，绝不是无可争议的。”

这些否定性断语看上去有些失礼，与弗洛伊德几页纸之前的说法也不十分吻合。不过，这种双重否定也许是内心感受的真实流露，而非不礼貌的废话。夸张法历来就是一种简单表明观点的技巧。因此，假如我们从弗洛伊德的判断中消除他表达这种判断所采用的夸张语气，只保留其实质，然后问一句：既然勒庞的话既无新意也不

正确，为何又对它如此重视呢？弗洛伊德为何像许多严肃的评论家一样，怀着从知识角度看明显的尊重来看待《乌合之众》呢？他干嘛要把此书作为自己论述社会心理学的起点？弗洛伊德以可敬的直率态度回答了我们的问题：“我们把勒庞的言论作为我们的引路人，因为它对无意识精神生活的强调，十分适合我们的心理学。”

弗洛伊德给自己重视勒庞的思想所作的简单解释，乍一看好像无可非议，然而并不全面。他解释了自己为何从勒庞的著作中找到了优点，却没有解释自己为何要贬低勒庞的思想既无新意也不正确。要想理解弗洛伊德这种自相矛盾的态度，还需要作进一步的说明。弗洛伊德对勒庞自相矛盾的态度是难以否认的。他在一页纸上否定勒庞，又在下一页纸上反过来说，勒庞“对群体心态作了出色的心理学说明”。

在弗洛伊德论述勒庞的一章中，可以找到对这种矛盾态度的思想——而不是心理学——解释。在这里，他几乎是用一种猫捉耗子式的苏格拉底对话的方式，为两个角色写出台词。这种矛盾态度的基础归结起来说就是：勒庞只是问题的发现者，而弗洛伊德可以成为问题的解决者，因为勒庞是否能够既当前者也当后者，并不是件十分确定的事情。对于前一种能力，勒庞值得赞赏，弗洛伊德也十分大方。至于后一种能力，勒庞顶多只能说是毫无用处，甚至完全错误，而弗洛伊德则坚持认为，他既无用又错误。弗洛伊德把这两种角色交替派给勒庞，于是他本人也在这种矛盾态度的两极之间摇摆。最后，弗洛伊德为所有这些论述提供了一幅清楚的画面（虽然是一幅形象需要大加修改的画面）：勒庞播种，弗洛伊德浇水并培育其生长。

在弗洛伊德看来，勒庞作为问题的发现者，指出了群体生活重要的方面，但并没有对它们作出解释。

勒庞讨论了“感情的强化”与“理智的欠缺”，因而点明了群体心理的“基本”事实。但是——弗洛伊德说——他并没有看到群体成员之间建立感情联系的心理过程

的原因。

作为问题的发现者，勒庞也看到了群体和有组织的团体中间“感情传染”和易受暗示的巨大作用，但是——弗洛伊德认为——他没有认识到，这是团体成员与领袖以及其他团体有着性本能关系的产物。

勒庞意识到，如果没有任何联系，“只是一些人聚在一起，尚不足以形成团体”，但是他却不理解这种联系是如何建立起来的。

勒庞特别指出了群体感情的易变、爱与恨的犹疑不定以及它的团结和仇视态度，但是他没有看到群体的矛盾和理想化（这时被夸大的受爱戴人物会变得不容批评）倾向的心理机制。

勒庞“生动描述了”群体缺乏感情约束以及它“没有中庸与三思而后行的能力”，但是他不具备任何理论，使自己可以看出这是退化到某个早期阶段的结果。（甚至弗洛伊德这样的大人物有时也会走神。他说勒庞没有明确的退化观念，这当然不错。但是勒庞一再把群体所特有的冲动、“无推理能力、缺乏判断力以及夸大感情”比作“进化的低级形态——例如妇女、野蛮人和儿童——中的倾向”。因此他已预见到了弗洛伊德本人的错误，当他写下退化到“不必奇怪可以在野蛮人或儿童身上看到的早期阶段”时，妇女显然被排除在了这个阶段之外。）

弗洛伊德错误地、因此也是有失公正地说，勒庞没有“估计到领袖在集体心理中的重要性”，而他能够揭示领袖在集体行为心理过程中的作用。弗洛伊德没有注意到，勒庞赋予了英雄神话以极大的重要性，这正像弗洛伊德在与奥托·兰克讨论之后认为英雄神话是个人把自己从不断的集体统治中解放出来的手段一样。

勒庞看到并强调了群体中的“扯平”趋势，它要求在受压制的平庸水平上的充分平

等。但是据弗洛伊德的判断，他没有认识到这仅仅是一个潜在过程的外在的可见后果，在这一过程中，群体成员“通过对同一个目标有着相同的爱戴而互相认同”，所谓“目标”，是弗洛伊德的专业术语，在这里指领袖。

勒庞用自己的语言，生动说明了作为群体和群体成员标志的“服从的欲望”。但是他就此止步，没有认识到这种情况的出现，是因为体现在领袖身上的集体理想取代了自我理想。

最后，弗洛伊德犯了个有益的错误，他认为，勒庞把自己的研究局限在有乌合之众特点的暂时性集体上，其实他是在无意中撞上了一个最有价值的研究题目，因为只有在这种暂时聚集的人群中，才能够最清楚地看到个人对群体的要求百依百顺，自愿放弃自己独立自主的精神。弗洛伊德这样来定义勒庞的群体概念是错误的，只要读读下面的几页，就可明白这一点。不过，一流的头脑即使犯下错误，也会有所收获。弗洛伊德的错误是个聪明人的过失、因为不留神而产生真理的幸运过失。虽然弗洛伊德有此说法，认为勒庞的陈述“只涉及短命的集体”却显然是错误的。然而这个错误却使得弗洛伊德赞扬勒庞选取了这些“喧闹的、暂时的群体”进行研究，“它们只是集体中的一个类型，我们从中可以看到，正是那些被我们视为个人特性的因素，彻底——虽然是暂时的——消失了”。弗洛伊德以这些话具体说明了一个在科学研究中普遍适用、在社会科学中尤其需要强调的基本原则，因为很少有人认识到它。这就是可以称之为搜寻“重大研究领域”的原则，即寻找这样一些课题——这里的具体课题就是暂时性的群体——它能够使人去研究那些可以取得特殊优势的科学问题。

勒庞部分地做了弗洛伊德以为他做过的事情，然而他是在不知不觉中这样做的。他集中研究了暂时性的群体，但并没有把自己局限于此。根据他的用法，“群体”是

个宽泛的概念，既指暂时聚集在一起的人，更是指一些持久存在的团体和社会阶层，例如组成议会、宗派和阶级的人。不过，勒庞在关注较有生命力的公众，甚至更为持久的阶级的同时，更为注意那些形成政治暴民的短命人群，因此他实际上抓住了一个研究集体行为的重要时机，即在可视性极佳的时刻对它们进行研究。有理由认为，弗洛伊德把勒庞显然并不具备的方法论技巧归在了他的名下。弗洛伊德得出这个对勒庞有利的评价，也不是因为他注意到了勒庞在这个具体研究中做了科学家都在从事的工作，即找到重大的研究素材，它们能够揭示出比所研究的事例更为广泛的变量之间的相互作用。

从弗洛伊德对待勒庞的矛盾态度中得出的结论是：勒庞对人群和集体行为的突出特征有相当敏锐的把握能力，但是他并没有对它们作出令人满意的说明。根据这种评价，勒庞像是一条专门寻找块菌的狗，他在社会心理学表层的某个位置上停留片刻，因为它下面有些别人没有发现的重要的理论块菌。弗洛伊德把自己的形象设计得与勒庞相反，他认为自己是个能够透过表面看本质的人，他能够找出社会心理学的块菌，把它们烹制成一道美味的知识佳肴。这两种形象对他们两人以及他们的著作都不十分公正，然而也不能说一点也不公正。勒庞主要是个群体社会心理学问题的发现者，而弗洛伊德在某个阶段是个很有想象力的问题发现者，有时也是这个领域的一个成功的问题解决者。通过评价弗洛伊德对待勒庞的矛盾态度，我们能够看到一些可以被称为重要的新思想（但是别人已经有所预见，因此并非不可缺少）和一些正确而有意义的思想（但并不十分深刻，因此只有提示的意义）的贡献和局限性。对勒庞这本《乌合之众》的矛盾态度，就是一个十分恰当的例证。

弗洛伊德对这书的感受并不稀奇。这里单单把它举出来予以说明，并非因为任何时候提到像弗洛伊德这样机智而富有创造性的头脑的作品，都会让我辈感到愉快，而是因为他对勒庞的理解，以及他的造成意外收获的误解，能够帮助我们理解此书。

如果弗洛伊德在提出自己有关人的社会行为的思想时，从中发现了大量有现实意义的因素，那么在较小的范围内我们也能够做到这一点。他从该书中得出许多发现，虽然总起来说他并没有发现任何十分正确或全新的观点，这对我们也有教益：勒庞的表述远不是盖棺之论，它只能算是一个为这个题目更为先进的观点提供了重要指导的起点。

一组有现实意义的因素，赋予了弗洛伊德对此书的解读以意义，同样它也能为我们的解读带来意义。这要求我们从该书中发掘出比它的字面含义更多的东西。读者不仅要注意勒庞多有论述的问题，还要注意他有时在无意之间表露的思想，这样我们便可以感受到人的社会行为中自己过去没有留心的某些方面。就像许多别的书一样，读者如果希望从中得出一些能够得到的东西，读出字里行间的含义是很重要的。这也适用于我们中间那些组成了各类团体的人，尤其是那些叫嚷着自己不服从的人（其实他们受着严格的约束），如果他们想理解对我们每个人都会发生作用的服从倾向的话。

此书包含着丰富的现实意义，其中有不少隐藏在字里行间，这不仅解释了它经久不衰的影响力。这种影响力也来自它的主要论点属于一些复杂思想的一部分，它们大多数仍然与我们同在，即强调人的行为中反理性或非理性的特点。这是一幅世纪末的人类画像，它把人类描绘成极易受到操纵、莫名其妙地情愿受骗上当的人。不过这显然是一幅未竟的肖像画。因为如果有些人受到控制，必定还有一些人在控制。因此从根本上说，有些人是把别人当作达到个人目的的手段。另一个更深刻的假设是，人类有着自我欺骗的无限能力，他能够头头是道地把罪恶说成美德，为了犯罪而否定美德。人类性格的这幅画像还导致了一种社会哲学和社会学，认为人类特别易于在社会的引导下变得十分愚蠢，使他天生的才智或是因为追随乌合之众而变得平庸无奇，或是用途邪恶，作为那些不十分奏效的暴力和强制的帮凶，欺骗自己的

同胞。

人既无理性又自私自利，易于冲动且反复无常，或者是把理性用在伤天害理的事情上。他既是暴力和虔诚骗局的实施者，又是它的牺牲品——这样一幅人类画像，在勒庞写此书时当然算不上什么新见解。至少从《君主论》——这个标题显然强调了控制者——的时代起，一直到《乌合之众》——这个标题转向了被控制者——的时代，每个世纪的马基雅维利主义作家，就一直在不断地设计出这样的形象。不过同样真实的是，它在上个世纪后半叶才变得十分醒目且一直延续至今，人类是一完美的理性动物这一形象，即使没有被它消灭，也受到了它的破坏。

对于人类及其行为中这个令人憎恶的方面，心理学家、社会学家、社会哲学家、政治理论学、政论记者以及有创造性的落魄小说家，都写过大量的书和应时之作，勒庞的《乌合之众》，不过是其中的一本而已。这本书出版的同一年，即1895年，布罗伊尔和弗洛伊德发表了他们的突破性力作《癔病的研究》，这是个可圈可点的巧合。它们的同时出现，无论如何也不能说是出于偶然。因为只有在造成强调人类非理性的著作大量出现的相同社会条件下，这种思想相近的著作才完全有可能几乎同时出现。

也许有人会否定这种说法，认为每个时代都有自己的麻烦，每个时代都会自以为面对着理性的黎明或非理性的开端。然而这种观点是错误的，它毕竟没有说明这种时代的自我形象在19世纪下半叶的法国何以如此迅速地抓住了人心。回顾19世纪50年代，由龚古尔兄弟组成的那个两人文学小组，他们从未满足于小组内的意见一致，一起预言患了贫血症的欧洲文明将遭受野蛮人的攻击，这不是指那些在欧洲已经找不到的野蛮人，而是那些——在他们看来——粗野的工人，他们说，这些人会把自己的这项任务称为“社会革命”，当时法国的人道主义知识分子——泰纳、圣伯

夫、讽刺作家“加瓦尔尼”、勒南，以及龚古尔兄弟生活和工作于其中的那个圈子里的其他人，全都对眼前的“道德卫生状况”忧心忡忡，对未来的日子充满疑虑。他们的预言在许多方面都和勒庞这本书的内容没有多大区别。例如泰纳就预言说，20世纪的人会表现得活力有余而悟性不足。

关于群众行将发生的统治，还有着比这些模糊的预兆更多的现象，它们足以说明，从社会学的角度看，勒庞的思想注定会出现，即使他本人从未存在过。在这一点上最好的证明是，在同一时间，另一位社会心理学家，意大利人西盖勒，也提出了基本相同的思想，正如其中不少思想也由法国人塔尔德表述过一样。大凡是两三个人几乎同时得出了相同的思想，经常会出现谁是思想先驱的争执。这场旷日持久的争论解释了勒庞为什么一再别有用心地重复他15年前就群体的“模仿”和“感情传染”问题说过的话。他与西盖勒不断进行着或是公开——这是勒庞的典型风格——或是指桑骂槐的争吵，后者在自己的《宗派心理学》中直率而愤怒地自称先驱，并说勒庞的《乌合之众》“大部分显然都是在抄袭我的著作”；在《犯罪群体》的第二版中，他又一时兴起，抱怨勒庞“在讨论群体心理时利用了我的观点，却对我只字不提”，又说，“我一点也没有正话反说的意思，我认为采用我的观点却不提我的名字，再没有比这更高的赞扬了，对此我没有丝毫的怀疑”。我们当然没有兴趣为这些一度颇为激昂的优先权声明作出宣判，这种事后的判决，是那些有知识成就的重要法官，那些思想史专家的事情。在西盖勒和勒庞以及——在较小的程度上——塔尔德之间的争吵，对我们的意义仅仅在于，许多人同时有着基本相同的思想，并且至少部分地相互独立存在，这证明了这些思想几乎必然出现，因为文化遗产中已经为它积累起了知识前提，还因为受着社会引导的兴趣，已经把思想家们的注意力转向了能够产生这些思想的问题。

有相当严格的证据，而不是道听途说，可以使我们认为，勒庞的著作部分地反映着

当时的文化气氛。回忆一下17世纪格兰维尔的气象学比喻吧，在20世纪怀特海使它复活之前，它一直就默默无闻。形成一种舆论气氛的思想，迎合了人们的趣味，这并非出于偶然。它们所以能够得到普及，是因为深层社会结构出现的变化，是因为这个结构由于各种压力和紧张关系已在咯咯作响，或是因为严重的震荡和变化使一些人们所接受的思想有了意义，或使一些与当前无关的思想变得不合时宜（它们还会顽强地表现自己，因为并不是文化中的一切都严格地受社会结构的决定，还因为同样的结构压力对该结构中地位不同的人会有不同的意义）。一般而言，思想的创造性以及这种思想的普及，需要同样的社会条件。具体而言，我认为，使勒庞的言论和思想迅速得到普及的那些重大历史事件，也就是对他提出那些思想起了很大作用的事件。同样是这些事件，使勒庞和他的听众之间产生了共鸣。

只要稍微看一下勒庞度过其漫长一生的历史背景，便可说明为什么他对群体中的个人的描述对于他本人和他的读者都深具意义，以及他为何根本没有机会对这种描述作重大的修改。勒庞生于1841年。那个时候人们本来以为具有革命精神的国王，路易·菲利普，变成了一个彻头彻尾的保守派，从而又激起了改头换面的激进主义和空想社会主义的传播。当勒庞还是个7岁大的孩子时，巴黎打起了街垒战并导致国王迅速退位，在6月起义的惨烈巷战后，路易·波拿巴亲王取代国王，成了第二共和国的总统。当时他还无法理解路易·波拿巴如何巧妙地利用民众，把总统职位变成了皇位，以拿破仑三世的称号傲慢地统治着第二帝国。不过后来，到了19世纪60年代，勒庞显然赞同这位皇帝安抚民心的十年统治——他是想避免民众的反叛，只希望巴黎的老百姓在经历了色当惨败后能够把欧洲忘掉。在1871年的公社期间，激进派以及共和派、普鲁东派和布朗基派等一伙乌合之众短暂地掌握了政权，勒庞对此深感忧虑。对于这次反叛，马克思怀着自相矛盾的心情，既说它是一个巨大的政治错误，又认为它是工人为自己的权利而举行起义的预演，是他们最终获得解放的序曲。作为一

名成熟但并不总是十分敏锐的观察家，勒庞目睹了1870年成立的第三共和国的审判、它那些走马灯一般的政府更迭，以及它为了统治群众而借助于蛊惑人心的努力（有时也确实奏效了）。尤其重要的是，对不久之后便要动笔的著作十分有利，勒庞亲眼目睹了那个优柔寡断而又好战的煽动家布朗热将军迅速取得潜在势力的过程，他在1886年7月14日，就像那位“马背上的人”一样，骑着自己那匹名为“突尼斯”的战马闯进了历史。

勒庞在全书中只提到了布朗热两次，一次提到他的名字，另一次只是间接的暗示，英译本的译者因为拿不准读者是否记得那段历史，认为有必要加上一条指名道姓的注释。后面这个暗示表明，作为一个即使说不上心惊胆颤也十分沮丧的保守派，勒庞本人对群体及其社会心理学的理解，在多大程度上是建立在他对发生在自己面前的事情的观察上。勒庞这样写道：

群体很容易做出刽子手的行动，同样也很容易慷慨赴义。（这种有关矛盾心理的论述令弗洛伊德感到亲切。）正是群体，为每一种信仰的胜利而不惜血流成河。（然后勒庞又补充上了与我们的目的十分相符的话。）若想了解群体在这方面能干出什么事情，不必回顾英雄主义的时代。他们在起义中从不吝惜自己的生命，就在不久以前，一位突然名声大噪的将军，可以轻而易举地找到上万人，只要他一声令下，他们就会为他的事业牺牲性命。（见本书第1卷第2章第1节）

这个未点名的将军当然就是布朗热。这段布朗热插曲即使法国人还没忘记，在美国人中间也早就被忘掉大半了，这就像那些可怕而短命的时期一样，强有力的煽动家因为没有最终把自己接手的政权合法化，通常都会被每个国家受到广泛阅读的史籍所遗忘。但是在19世纪80年代的后五年里，布朗热将军和他那群政治乌合之众的崛起，以及那场占领法国政治舞台的称为布朗热主义的运动，其规模就像约瑟夫·麦卡

锡参议员和称为麦卡锡主义的那场占领了50年代前五年美国政治舞台的运动一样。（可笑的是，这两件事居然连细节都十分相似，麦卡锡在政治上垮台三年后落魄而死，布朗热受到以叛国罪被审判的威胁，逃离了法国，三年后去世，死因显然是自杀。）

如此仓促地谈论这些人和运动，它们在时间上相隔几代人，社会空间也相距遥远，因此乍一看好像是些无聊的历史类比。勒庞的《乌合之众》毕竟不是在写历史，他借助于历史，是要努力找出群体性格和行为中一再出现的相似之处，它们只在细节上有所不同。虽然在勒庞的思想经历中没有证据表明，他首先提到布朗热插曲是想用归纳法找出群体社会心理的发展脉络，但是这段插曲的确引起了他的注意，在这一点上他和当时那些不加思索的法国人是不一样的。

变成偶像的布朗热这段短暂而不光彩的历史，读起来就像一部由勒庞创作的反映领袖和群众关系的社会心理学剧本。但是，既然是事件发生于前，因此更为合理的假设是，勒庞对事件进行了总结，而不是布朗热和他的追随者预演了这部著作。作为勒庞关于群体行为的思想之根源和可能的依据，布朗热主义也值得我们注意。

在经历了稳步提升，成为法国军队中最年轻的将军之后，布朗热进入了作战部，负责为当时的激进派领袖克莱孟梭制定那些秘密决策。他先是因为显著改善了军队的生活条件而获得广泛的支持，现在的军队已不是习惯于艰苦条件的职业军队，而是以一些暂时变成军人的普通文官为基础。不久，他变成了一个因人而异的多面人物。第三共和国心怀不满的大众，认为他是能够消除他们主要的不满根源——政权——的领袖，布朗热本人毫无政治信仰，因此他能够而且也确实答应满足许多政治派别相互对立的利益。他答应戴鲁莱德的爱国者同盟，要挥舞起恶棍的大棒来贯彻他们的沙文主义主张，要把德国人赶回莱茵河以洗雪民族耻辱；对于波拿巴主义

者，他许诺要恢复帝国，对于维持着他的花销的保皇党，他答应恢复君主制。五花八门的政治群体，社会主义者、机会主义者、温和的共和派和持不同意见的激进派，他能变得让每一派都把他认作“他们的人”。这些群体因为共同反对政权而松散地结合在一起，全都认为布朗热就是他们事业的领袖，虽然他本人除了将军的事业之外，实际上不支持任何事业。整个民族群体的各种矛盾，在领袖个人身上取得了统一。

政治事件一幕幕接踵而至：1886年巴士底狱纪念日，巴黎民众在朗香高喊他们支持将军，不要总统；在将军竞选获胜后，巴黎的群众不断叫喊着要他向爱丽舍宫进军；报纸对他表现得百依百顺，先是罗什福尔的《不妥协者报》，后来是维伊奥的《宇宙报》，再后来，其他一些报纸众口一词，都变成了将军及其运动的宣传页，在还没有出来证实一下已经说过什么之前，便盼望着听听“他们在街上正说些什么”；献给“我们勇敢的将军布朗热”、“啊！复仇将军”和“希望将军”的赞美诗迅速增加，这些歌既表达了群众的感情，也控制了他们的感情；各种玩具、机械工具，甚至——竟然偶像化到这种地步——烧酒，都拿这位受爱戴的领袖的名字来命名，简言之，这是布朗热主义短暂而强烈的支配期，它几乎就要以一次新的雾月18日而大获全胜。对这些事情无需再作细节上的描述，它们不过是勒庞这本书中的一页（当勒庞提到那个无名将军“可以轻而易举地找到上万人，只要他一声令下，他们就会为他的事业牺牲性命”时，字里行间便隐藏着这些事件）。

布朗热故事余下的部分也包含在这本书里，只是被伪装成了一些概括性的语言。特别恰当的记录是群体——尤其是巴黎，不过外省也一样——爱恨无常所造成的迅速变化的左右摇摆：布朗热今天还受到崇拜，明天便成了嫌犯。勒庞在布朗热的迅速崛起中，也许找到了他用于全书的一条公理，即就名望的起源而论，取得成功就是最大的成功，正像他从布朗热的突然垮台中也看到另一条相关的公理一样，虽然他

没有把它明说出来，这就是，就名望危险的衰落而言，失败就是最大的失败。当法国精明的政治家（主要是指老牌政客、法国内务部长孔斯坦，但并不限于他一人）不断算计这位大众英雄的诸多弱点时，他便很快失势，一如他很快得势一样。布朗热慑于叛国罪的审判，和他多年的可爱情妇玛格丽特·德·邦曼逃离法国，他先去布鲁塞尔，在很快被驱逐出境后，又去了伦敦，然后是泽西，最后又回到布鲁塞尔。他在流放中依然抱着天真的乐观主义，在布鲁塞尔发表了一些没人看的宣言，最后他终于认识到，法国各政治群体想必又落入了狡猾的政客手中，不再把他当作决定他们命运的人了。政治失败的打击，再加上1891年他的玛格丽特因结核病去世，使布朗热在两个月里哀痛不已，终于也让自己躺进了安葬着她的伊克塞勒墓地。

勒庞和他的同代人一起看到了这一切，但是和他们中间的许多人不同，他对自己的所见作了思考。在这出戏的中间，他看到巴黎轻浮的民众迅速忘记了他们的马背英雄，在布朗热逃离法国不久后的1889年6月，万国博览会开幕，在众多赏心悦目的事情中，埃菲尔铁塔独占鳌头，它那伸向天空300米的钢铁身躯，宣告了一个世纪的到来，在这个世纪里，钢铁城市将取代石头城市。在思考群众的轻信和多变时，勒庞想必从他们对那个末路英雄的报复性攻击中看到了证据，说明他们“为自己曾向一个已不复存在的权威低头哈腰而进行报复”（见本书第2卷第3章第3节）。

勒庞留心地看着这一切，并以概括的方式把它们写进了自己的《乌合之众》一书。即使布朗热插曲不能为他的社会心理学磨房提供足够的谷物，当时的历史也很容易供给他充足的原料。在布朗热主义消失后不久，便上演了雷赛布——一个能移动山岳、凿穿地峡的人——戏剧的最后一幕。他在苏伊士大获成功很久以后，却栽在因丑闻而引起的巴拿马运河的失败上。在年届88岁时，他自豪地佩戴着荣誉军团大十字勋章，却发现自己被判了五年徒刑。对于这件事，勒庞难以做到怒不形于色，也无法保持学术上的超然品格。于是我们在此书的一些地方，看到他愤愤不平地分析

了民众如何攻击这位“历史上最了不起的英雄之一”。

这一系列事件的登峰造极之作，就是被充分理解其含义的法国人至今还称为“大事件”的那件事，它也许加速了此书的写作进度，对此我们并不清楚。就在勒庞写这本书的同一年，出现了以德累福斯上尉的起诉，他迅速受到秘密审判并被定为叛国罪，然后剥夺军衔，被判在魔岛上终身服刑。他是第一个获准进入总参谋部的犹太人，而且是个阿尔萨斯人。主要是受到惊恐万状摇摇欲坠、虽有政治头脑却又愚蠢透顶的总参谋部当局的挑动，另一方面也受着它的操纵，法国群众的行为后来达到了顶点，并且造成了许多次要后果，其中之一便是给勒庞的书提供了新的依据。然而，1894年对这个非我族类的审判、定罪、撤职，足以把群众不负责任的轻信态度传遍全国，其严重程度即使最不关心政治的法国人（但愿这不是个自相矛盾的称呼）也不会不予注意，更不用说像勒庞这样的观察家了。

也许我们现在可以明白，为何说勒庞这本书是一部以阅读法国大革命事件为基础的群体行为的社会心理学著作，只是出于习惯，却并不完全准确。这种流行的解释只有部分的正确性。不错，在勒庞用来阐明自己这个或那个观点的50多个具体历史事件中，大约有20个左右说的是法国大革命的岁月，还有几个谈到了拿破仑。不过剩下的事件仍占一半左右，它们不但都发生在法国，而且都是勒庞亲眼目睹的事件。进一步说，所以提到大革命，也是因为勒庞本人那个时代的事件起着一部分作用。就像其他许多法国人一样，勒庞受着这场大革命的纠缠，但是在他的著作中还有无数个暗示表明，他对自己身边的群体行为所作的观察，提醒他去注意大革命中的一些相关事件。他对法国大革命的社会心理学研究，往往是因为他看到了19世纪法国的群体生活而对历史的回顾。简言之，他经常是在评价大革命时代群体行为的伪装下，对第三共和国的群体行为进行分析。

如我们所知，在阅读勒庞时，往往会觉得他本人经历过法国大革命，他的希望不幸被第二帝国所出卖，又因第三共和国而彻底破灭。当然不是这样。他只活了90岁，这本使他扬名四方的书问世于他55岁那年。但是他在自己那个时代对法国群体行为的观察，已足以为他的社会心理学奠定基础。勒庞一旦有了这样的想法，也许他会对圣保罗大教堂唱诗班入口处那句纪念雷恩的铭文重新加以解释，向他的同代人说：“诸位如果需要我这些想法的证明，看看你们周围吧！”

事情就是这样，过去时代的历史事件，既不是勒庞的群体行为理论的唯一来源，也不是其主要的经验证据。人们所以能够得出这样的看法，至少是因为他对于把历史用于学术研究的目的，表现出一种十分矛盾的态度。这本书里，他发现对于作为当时复杂事件和人类社会行为结果之真实记录的史学，或更确切地说是历史记载，他可以不予理会。在这一点上，虽然无据可查，但是按照他所宣布的原则，他持的是“历史全是一派胡言”的观点，（据说）这句话后来由亨利·福特说出而广为人知。如果福特确实说过这句妙语，他也只是简单一提，而且是出于无知，而勒庞却说得很多，并且不像是出于无知。怀着这样的心情，勒庞相信“只能把史学著作当作纯粹想象的产物。它们是对被歪曲了的事实所作的无根据的记述，并且混杂着一些对思考结果的解释。写这种书是彻头彻尾的虚掷光阴。”（见第1卷第2章第2节）为了得出这种虚无主义的判断，勒庞首先认为历史记载难逃两种噩运：第一，这是因为记录历史真相的证据并不存在或已散佚；第二，对碰巧可以利用的文献进行有倾向性的选择，他认为这是史学家不可避免的事情。

后来他又换了一种心情，这种心情显然延续了很长时间，使他花费精力写了好几本所谓历史著作。他发现，不严重地依赖历史，根本无法谈论群体行为（或人类任何其他类型的行为）。1912年，当勒庞发表《法国大革命和革命心理学》（*La révolution française et la psychologie des révolutions*）一书时，他只

是改变了自己的做法，却没有改变看法，即写出真实的历史是一种荒谬的要求。

就像同矛盾心理作斗争的大多数人一样，勒庞也提出了一种妥协的理论。这使他既可以和历史生活在一起，又能够否认与它同居的事实。这个合理化的理论迷人而简单：不错，“关于那些在人类历史上发挥过重大作用的伟大人物的生平，如赫拉克利特、释迦牟尼或穆哈默德，我们拥有一句真实的记录吗？”但是勒庞又说，这些人的“真实生平对我们无关紧要。我们想要知道的，是我们的伟人在大众神话中呈现出什么形象。打动群体心灵的是神话中的英雄，而不是一时的真实英雄”。（见第1卷第2章第2节）

对于这种好像在真正的历史与作为有效神话的历史之间取得妥协的做法，我们可以提出质疑，但是，对于勒庞在这种看待历史的矛盾心情中摇摆于两种对立倾向之间的困境，我们却必须给予同情。他触及到了一个后来得到更严格更令人信服的阐述的观点：在决定人们的历史地位上起着更大作用的，不是他们的“真实”面目，而是后人对他们的认识和感受。在这两者之间，在真实性（在创作者本人看来也许完美无缺）与表相之间，不必完全吻合，虽然有时能够吻合。在同自己这种对待历史的复杂感情的搏斗中，勒庞使自己接近于一个可以称为托马斯定理（这个名称来自20世纪美国社会学过去的大师托马斯）的观点：“假如人们把条件定义为真，则根据其结果它们即为真”。他接近于得出一个后来人们才知道的见解，即人的“公开形象”以及该形象在影响接受它的“群体”方面所起的作用。勒庞对自己对待历史的矛盾态度极力要想出一个究竟，这使他几乎——虽然少稍火候——得出一种正确的见解：作为神话的历史在形成后来作为社会现实的历史上发挥的作用。

勒庞虽然展现出他的全部智力（这一点不容忽视），比较而言他还是没能取得对那些学者的胜利，他们以人尽皆知的含糊其辞的最终分析为据，否认历史为发现人类

社会生活中的一致性因素提供了基本材料。勒庞像他的许多同代人一样，可悲的是，也像他的许多后来者一样，认为历史是一种表象，而历史文献所记录的是一些独一无二的事件。如果严格地说就是如此，如果历史材料不能用一种让人觉得似是而非的很不明确的语言，为探寻人类行为发展及其社会制度和社会结构发展中的相同因素提供充分的基础，那么勒庞确实是在浪费他本人和我们的时间。对于这种粗糙的错误观点，也只有那些享受着不劳而获的先人遗产的人才能瞧不起它：这不过是事后的聪明。〔就在《乌合之众》出版6年后，杰出的德国哲学家李凯尔特和文德尔班仍在解释为何历史只能得出特殊的描述，它们不同于能够在物理学和生物学中发现的相同因素。只是到了后来，才有人否认在研究普遍规律的（或概括性的）学科与研究独特（或称单独的）现象的学科之间所作的错误划分，例如，柏拉图的观点：“‘历史绝不会重复’与相应的历史在某些方面——我们可以称之为主要的方面——‘总是重复’，是同样正确的。”〕

幸运的是，勒庞在实践中继续否认他从原则上给予肯定的观点。他利用历史，通过从无疑具有独特性的具体历史事件中，抽象出某些在一定程度上重复出现的方面，以此找出人类行为中假定的相同因素。不过在指出这一点时，我们切不可对勒庞有失公正，把他实际上没有表现出来的先见之明归在他的名下。读一下此书便可知道，勒庞显然并不具备方法论的头脑。他的著作从来不为系统搜集证据所累，以便使自己的思想能够经受住公正的（即没有偏见的）检验。他所采用的方法，是社会哲学家、社会心理学家和社会观察家的方法，不但他那个时代十分流行，我们这个时代也远没有消失：把历史上的奇闻逸事用作思想资源，误以为这种资源多少能够证明由此得出的解释的真实性的方法。他的方法固然有缺陷，但是正如我们所见，他的某些观点却是正确的。它仍然有些粗糙，有待后来的社会科学家再付出大量平凡无奇的艰苦工作，他们不想从一个观念高峰跳向另一个观念高峰，他们在认为自

己已准备好攀登之前，先要长途跋涉于方法论研究的峡谷之中。

思想的传播，如果作者没有提供一个良好的基础，使人可以对正确成分和胡言乱言进行鉴别，便很易于变成勒庞的思想。区分错误思想和创造性思想的标准，在社会思想的领域和其他领域一样，当然就是看那些能够站住脚的、大体（但不肯定）正确的思想占了多大比例。就此而言勒庞似乎取得了相当高的打击率，这也可以解释此书为何有持久的影响。有时，正像弗洛伊德所暗示的那样，他的打击不着边际，而他却自以为赢了比赛。不过在社会哲学家的竞赛中，他的确不时得分，并能在关键时刻来上一个全垒打。

把勒庞同时说成是一项知识竞技中的英雄和一位社会学先知，也许会铸成新的错误：混乱的形象化比喻和迷恋时代错置的行为（棒球毕竟不是勒庞那个世界的一部分）。不过这个混乱的形象是可以捍卫的。勒庞接触到一系列棘手的问题，对于其中的每个问题他都想一试身手，最后他作出了一系列社会学断言，使他的后继者能够在这些难题上做得比勒庞本人更好。此外，在勒庞的后继者中间，一些研究人类群体行为的人，也曾独立采用过这个有关体育和科学的不雅的比喻。社会学家拉扎斯菲尔德和社会哲学家奥尔特加—加塞特都曾分别这样做过，对于对手类似的犯规表现，他们都是完全无辜的。拉扎斯菲尔德在《社会研究的语言》（*Language of Social Research*）一书中认为，奥林匹克运动上竞赛纪录的不断提高，其原因并不是人类竞技能力发生了达尔文主义或拉马克主义意义上的进化，而是因为对这种能力的训练在过去不断地有所改进。因此，每一代人都可以看到一些人的表现有了改进，但他们的能力并不比自己的前辈更好。在《群众的反叛》（*The Revolt of Masses*）——一本通过学习勒庞而改进了勒庞的书——中，奥尔特加对体育纪录的不断提高提出了同样的看法，并且指出科学中也有类似的情况发生。在人类文化的所有领域，大概除了艺术和道德之外，现实很符合这种一度过时的“进步”观，按

其严格的定义，它是指不断积累的知识以及有益的思想与行为能力的提高。因此可以说，勒庞《乌合之众》中的观点，一直被另一些头脑所改进，他们的能力未必高于勒庞，有时甚至还不如他，而是得益于后来者的地位。

在有些读者看来，勒庞的思想颇有先见之明。当他如先知般写道“我们就要进入的时代，千真万确将是一个群体的时代”时，他所谓群众进入了历史，是指他们过去几乎不起任何作用的意见已开始发挥作用，后来一些意识形态来源各不相同的作家，如科拉蒂尼、奥尔特加加塞特、纽曼、弗洛姆和阿伦特，都曾对这一观点作出更深入的阐述。

勒庞另一项颇有道理的预见是，他把群众人描述为日益被大众文化所湮没，这种文化把平庸低俗当作最有价值的东西。在他的笔下，与过去的社会相比，（勒庞认为）群众人更易于接受自己周围的人的判断和爱好，他这一观点不可能不让人想到今天人们对所谓当代人失去自我判断能力的关切。

社会学家帕克和伯吉斯承认，勒庞预见到了我们这个群众运动的时代，并且描述了这些运动的若干特点，其方法已被这方面的社会学研究所继承并作了重要的发展。

勒庞有先见之明的最后一个例子是，他认识到群体的日益重要性，这是一群缺乏组织的人，他们关注着同样的社会热点，在一定程度上表现出与同处一地、有组织的群体一样的心理行为。勒庞当然不能预见到广播电视这类影响巨大的新大众媒体（他毕竟不是真正的先知）。不过他确实注意到了编报纸的人对群众意见的影响，他们先是迎合群众的感情，然后把这些感情引入特定的行为渠道。

用恰当的行话说，所有这些“见识”都表明，一种观点，如果它指出了人类社会行为中一再出现的某些方面，那么即使它十分粗糙，也能够把握未来事件的某些方

面。这并非因为像一些人认为的那样，勒庞是个先知。先知是指那些自称能够预测具体事件的人，即使做不到万无一失，也能预见到许多细节。如果他是个出色的先知，他能够说这些事件会在何时何地发生。他能够对其细节做准确的描述。相反，研究社会、分析其运行要素的人，社会学的研究者，不适合承担这项艰巨的任务。他不是先知，虽然他经常被人错误地当做先知，或让人得出一种判断，以为他本人自称先知。他的任务仅仅是——这已相当困难——尽自己的最大努力找出某些条件，在这些条件下，我们可以合理地期待会出现某些社会行为和社会变化。当他遇到身边的一个具体问题，他只会谨慎地偶尔预测一下未来事件中有限的某些特定方面。社会科学家只偶尔作出预测，不仅是因为他比社会先知更没有把握（后者的一大优势是，他有着接触未来历史的私人渠道，这种知识很少有人具备，或根本就没有人具备）。不但已成为常规的谨慎态度和不确定性，使社会科学家只偶尔作出预测，例如关于人口大量增加所造成的后果的预测，而且因为，当他有时打算说明在特定条件下可以合理地期待发生什么时，他往往并不能说明这些预测性结果不可缺少的条件会在什么时候出现或能否出现。

社会科学家所作的预测，同与他貌合神离的先知相比，在另一个方面也有所不同。他希望从自己的失败中学习。假如社会科学家有理由认为应当发生的预期后果没有出现，如果研究表明，假定的条件事实上已经出现但没有发生预期的结果，他会坐下来重新评价自己的证据，彻底反省自己的思想，就像有人对他发出指示一样。先知对自己落空的预言会更加关爱，他不会丢弃这种预言，也不会重新整理自己关于事物如何发展的认识。相反，他习惯于轻描淡写地对待预测的结果与实际结果的不一致，使预言避开对立的证据，得以原封不动地继续存在下去。成功的先知能够很有效地做到这一点，正如古人所言，他用娴熟的辩解“保住面子”，使他的信徒从看来已经落空的每一次预言中，往往只能很快看到自己的先知更为深刻的力量。

对社会先知和社会科学家的这些简单比较，并不像看上去那样离题。我的意思是，当今天重读勒庞的《乌合之众》时，我们中间的一些人会禁不住把他在1895年所说的话视为对后来发生的事情的预言。这不仅仅是个错误，而且显然也对勒庞有害。这等于派给了勒庞一个先知的角色，一个他偶尔有所向往，但因为不适合自己而放弃了的角色。根据他的表现，也根据上个世纪末的流行时尚，他是想成为一名社会科学家。当然，与较年轻的法国同代人——例如迪尔凯姆，他开启了社会学思想和社会研究的新纪元——不同，勒庞从来没有学会如何按部就班地收集和分析社会学数据，以及用数据来否定自己的观点——如果它们是错误的话——真实性的方法。社会学研究这个阶段的到来仍然有待时日（当然，即使现在也只是处在初级阶段）。勒庞有社会学家的目标，但他并没有学会知识苦行僧一样的工作方式，而这是使他的研究在方法与推理上都具有说服力所必需的。他有社会学家的意图，却只有政论家的成果。但是，由于他对社会学有着脊髓中的本能，因此如我们所知，他说了许多很值得一说的话。

勒庞也说了不少不值得一说的话。我们看到，这本书内容并不平衡，观察的质量不平衡，根据观察作出的推论也不平衡。它充斥着各种观点，有些正确而富有成果，有些正确但并未结出果实，还有一些肯定不正确，但是有助于启发正确的观点，不幸的是，也有一些既不正确也无成果。我们只能说，勒庞与我们中间的大多数人一样，没有能力对他所提出的各种观点的价值作出区分。它们全是他的头脑的产物，因此他显然对它们一概厚爱有加。不管是好的还是坏的，能结出果实的还是寸草不生的，所有这些观点都受到了其长辈同样的呵护。实际上，他的行为给我们的感觉，就像寓言中那个乐善好施的儿子。不管他喜欢哪个知识儿孙，他都会把他带到这本书里来。他喜欢一些极有害的观点，我们如今已经知道它们根本上错误的，而且根据勒庞本人的价值观，也是很危险的。（我们很快就会看到这方面的一个例

子。)不过即使在这种情况下，他的良好感觉最终还是占了上风。

也许因为勒庞写的是一本有关群众的社会心理学著作，而不是他们的一部编年史，因此他的书里包含着许多与我们这个时代格格不入的内容。

勒庞把各种意识形态形象和信念稀奇古怪地搅和在一起，这方面的证据在这本小书里随处可见。他是个忧心忡忡的保守派，对有社会主义倾向的无产阶级的不断壮大深感忧虑。但是，一再出现的政治保守主义迹象、对社会主义每个方面的一贯敌视、一种独特的种族主义幻觉，以及把妇女描述成软弱而沉默、不善推理也不可理喻的人，她们好冲动，因此极不稳定，反复无常，缺乏道德，和男人相比完全等而下之，但这不一定是件坏事——所有这些观点只是该书的外表，即使把这些意识形态垃圾全都清除掉，对勒庞有关群众行为的基本认识也不会造成任何伤害，尽管它们尚不完善。

我们只来考虑一个这样的意识形态观点，勒庞和当时的许多人都持有这种观点，即他所说的“基本的种族观念”是“决定着我们命运的神秘主因”（见第3卷第4章）。但是，这种观点如其所示，不过是上世纪中叶戈宾诺所创立的那种种族主义，它是经久不衰的种族中心主义的基础，为剥夺“劣等种族”提供了理由。在勒庞看来，“种族”是个不易理解的概念，它大体上相当于“民族性格的构成”。例如，当勒庞提到“西班牙种族的遗传本能”时，或当他偶尔谈到所有地方的群体都有“女人气”，但他发现“拉丁民族女人气最重”时，我们便可以理解这一点。“种族”是个定义不严格的标签，可以把它贴在各国人民和民族身上，它反映着勒庞对人类学的无知，并不说明他有种族中心主义的坏心肠。

一本广为流行的书；对勒庞的时代和我们的时代一再表现出实际意义；绝对谈不上完全创新，严格地说也不正确；与作者的任何求知行为相比，表现最佳时也只能算

较好，最差时也不算很糟；字里行间与字面上有着同样多的意义；眼光时而偏于一隅时而放眼全球；既有预见又观念落后；在实践中有效地利用着历史，又从原则上否认它的真实性和有效性；从当时表现出人类行为共同特点的重要的事件中概括出了一些这样的特点；还有一些并不影响其本质的乌七八糟的意识形态怪论——这就是勒庞的《乌合之众》，一本仍然值得一读的书。

1960年1月于哥伦比亚大学

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作者前言



群体无疑总是无意识的，但也许就在这种无意识中间，隐藏着它力量强大的秘密。

以下研究是要对群体的特征作一说明。

遗传赋予每个种族中的每一个人以某些共同特征，这些特征加在一起，便构成了这个种族的气质。不过，当这些个体中的一部分人为了行动的目的而聚集成一个群体时，仅仅从他们聚在一起这个事实，我们就可以观察到，除了原有的种族特征之外，他们还表现出一些新的心理特征，这些特征有时与种族特征颇为不同。

在各民族的生活中，有组织的群体历来起着重要的作用，然而这种作用从来没有像现在这样重要。群体的无意识行为代替了个人的有意识行为，是目前这个时代的主要特征之一。

对于群体所引起的困难问题，我以纯科学的方式进行了考察。这就是说，我的努力只有方法上的考虑，不受各种意见、理论和教条的影响。我相信，这是发现少许真理的唯一办法，当这里所讨论的是个聚讼纷纭的话题时，情况尤其如此。致力于澄清一种现象的科学家，他对于自己的澄清会伤害到什么人的利益，是不会有考虑的。杰出的思想家阿尔维耶拉先生在最近一本著作中说，不属于任何当代学派的他，不时发现自己和所有这些派别的各种结论相左。我希望这部新著也堪当此论。属于某个学派，必然会相信它的偏见和先入为主的意见。

不过我还是要向读者解释一下，为什么他会发现我从自己的研究中得出一些他乍一看难以接受的结论。例如，为什么我在指出包括杰出人士的团体在内的群体精神的极端低劣之后，仍然要断定，尽管有这种低劣性，干涉他们的组织仍然是危险的呢？

其原因是，对历史事实最细致的观察，无一例外地向我证实，社会组织就像一切生命有机体一样复杂，我们还不具备强迫它们在突然之间发生深刻变革的智力。大自然有时采取一些激烈的手段，却从来不是以我们的方式，这说明对一个民族有致命危险的，莫过于它热衷于重大的变革，无论这些变革从理论上说多么出色。如果它能够使民族气质即刻出现变化，才能说它是有用的。然而只有时间具备这样的力量。人们受各种思想、感情和习惯所左右——这是我们的本性使然。各种制度和法律是我们性格的外在表现，反映着它的需要。作为其产物的各种制度和法律，是不能改变这种性格的。

研究社会现象，与研究产生这些现象的民族是分不开的。从哲学观点看，这些现象可能有绝对价值，实际上它们只有相对价值。

因此，在研究一种社会现象时，必须分清先后，从两个不同的方面对它加以考虑。

这样就会看到，纯粹理性的教诲经常同实践理性的教诲相反。这种划分几乎适用于任何材料，甚至自然科学的材料也不例外。从绝对真理的观点看，一个立方体或一个圆，都是由一定的公式做了严格定义的不变的几何形状。但是从印象的角度看，这些几何图形在我们眼里却会表现出十分不同的形状。从透视的角度看，立方体可以变成锥形的或方形的，圆可以变成椭圆或直线。但是，考虑这些虚幻的形状，远比考虑它们的真正形状更重要，因为它们，也只有它们，是我们所看到并能够用照相或绘画加以再现的形状。有时不真实的东西比真实的东西包含着更多的真理。按照事物准确的几何形状来呈现它们，有可能是在歪曲自然，使它变得不可辨认。我们不妨设想一下，如果世界上的居民只能复制或反拍物体，但无法接触它们，他们是很难对物体形态形成正确看法的。进一步说，如果有关这种形态的知识只有少数有学问的人才能掌握，它也就没有多少意义了。

研究社会现象的哲学家应当时刻牢记，这些现象除了有理论价值外，还有实践价值，只有这后一种价值与文明的进化有关，只有它才是重要的。认识到这个事实，在考虑最初逻辑迫使他接受的结论时，他就会采取非常谨慎的态度。

还有一个原因使他采取类似的保留态度。社会事实如此复杂，根本不可能全盘掌握或预见到它们的相互影响带来的后果。此外，在可见的事实背后，有时似乎还隐藏着成百上千种看不见的原因。可见的社会现象可能是某种巨大的无意识机制的结果，而这一机制通常超出了我们的分析范围。能够感觉到的现象可以喻为波浪，它不过是海洋深处我们一无所知的湍流的表象。就群体的大多数行为而言，它在精神上表现出一种独特的低劣性，在另一些行为中，它好像又受着某种神秘力量的左右，古人称它为命运、自然或天意，我们称之为亡灵的声音。我们虽然不了解它的本质，却不能忽视它的威力。在民族的内心深处，有时仿佛有一种持久的力量在支配着他们。例如，还有什么东西能比语言更复杂、更有逻辑、更神奇呢？但是，这

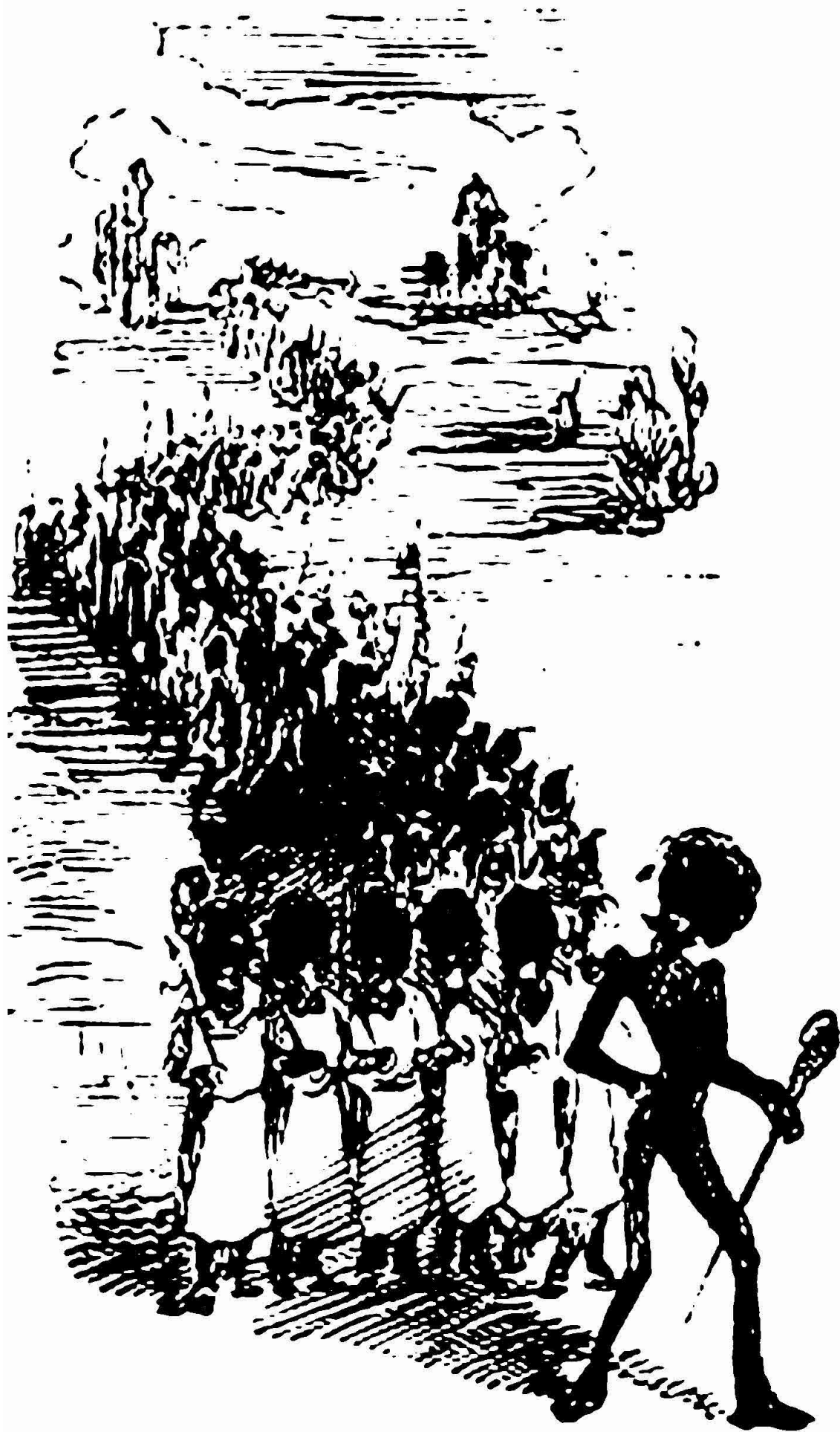
个组织程度令人赞叹的产物，如果不是来自群体无意识的禀赋，还能来自什么地方？最博学的学者，最有威望的语法学家，所能做到的也不过是指出支配着语言的那些规律，他们绝不可能创造这种规律。甚至伟人的思想，我们敢于断言那完全是他们头脑的产物吗？毫无疑问，这些思想是由独立的头脑创造出来的，然而，难道不是群体的禀赋提供了千百万颗沙粒，形成了它们生长的土壤吗？

群体无疑总是无意识的，但也许就在这种无意识中间，隐藏着它力量强大的秘密。在自然界，完全受本能支配的生物做出的一些动作，其神奇的复杂性令我们惊叹。理性不过是较为晚近的人类才具有的属性，而且尚未完美到能够向我们揭示无意识的规律，它要想站稳脚跟，仍然有待来日。无意识在我们的所有行为中作用巨大，而理性的作用无几。无意识作为一种仍然不为人知的力量起着作用。

如果我们打算待在狭小而安全的界限之内，利用科学来获取知识，不想步入模糊的猜测与无用的假设的领地，则我们必须要做的事情仅仅是，留心这些我们能够接触到的现象，把我们自己限制在对它作些思考。从这些思考中得出的每个结论肯定都是不成熟的，因为在这些我们能够明确观察到的现象背后，另有一些我们只能隐约看到的现象，而在它背后，还有一些我们一无所知的现象。

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导言：群体的时代



迄今为止，彻底摧毁一个破败的文明，一直就是群众最明确的任务。历史告诉我们，当文明赖以建立的道德因素失去威力时，它的最终解体总是由无意识的野蛮群体完成的，他们被不无道理地称为野蛮人。

提要：目前这个时代的演变/文明的大变革是民族思想变化的结果/现代人对群体力量的信念/它改变了欧洲各国的传统政策/民众的崛起是如何发生的，他们发挥威力的方式/群体力量的必然后果/除了破坏以外，群体起不到别的作用/衰老的文明解体是群体作用的结果/对群体心理学的普遍无知/立法者和政治家研究群体的重要性

发生在文明变革之前的大动荡，如罗马帝国的衰亡和阿拉伯帝国的建立，乍一看上去，似乎是由政治变化、外敌入侵或王朝的倾覆决定的。但是对这些事件作些更为细致的研究，就会发现在它们的表面原因背后，可以普遍看到人民的思想所发生的深刻变化。真正的历史大动荡，并不是那些以其宏大而暴烈的场面让我们吃惊的事情。造成文明洗心革面的唯一重要的变化，是影响到思想、观念和信仰的变化。令人难忘的历史事件，不过是人类思想不露痕迹的变化所造成的可见后果而已。这种重大事件所以如此罕见，是因为人类这个物种最稳定的因素，莫过于他世代相传的思维结构。

目前的时代便是这种人类思想正经历转型过程的关键时期之一。

构成这一转型基础的是两个基本因素。首先是宗教、政治和社会信仰的毁灭，而我们文明的所有要素，都是根植于这些信仰之中。其次是现代科学和工业的各种发现，创造了一种全新的生存和思想条件。

以往的观念虽已残破不全，却依然有着十分强大的力量，取而代之的观念仍处于形成的过程之中，现时代呈现为群龙无首的过渡状态。

这个必然有些混乱的时代最终会演变成什么样子，现在还难下断语。在我们这个社会之后，为社会建立基础的会是一些什么观念？目前我们仍不得而知。但已经十分清楚的是，不管未来的社会是根据什么路线加以组织，它都必须考虑到一股新的力量、一股最终仍会存在下来的现代至高无上的力量，即群体的力量。在以往视为当然、如今已经衰落或正在衰落的众多观念的废墟之上，在成功的革命所摧毁的许多权威资源的废墟之上，这股代之而起的唯一力量，看来不久注定会同其他力量结合在一起。当我们悠久的信仰崩塌消亡之时，当古老的社会柱石一根又一根倾倒之时，群体的势力便成为唯一无可匹敌的力量，而且它的声势还会不断壮大。我们就要进入的时代，千真万确将是一个群体的时代。

就在一个世纪之前，欧洲各国的传统政策和君主之间的对抗，是引起各种事变的主要因素。民众的意见通常起不了多少作用，或不起任何作用。如今，却是通常得到政治承认的各种传统、统治者的个人倾向及其相互对抗不再起作用了。相反，群众的声音已经取得了优势。正是这个声音向君主们表明群众的举动，使他们的言行必须注意那声音的内容。目前，铸就各民族命运的地方，是在群众的心中，而再也不是在君王们的国务会议上。

民众的各个阶层进入政治生活，现实地说，就是他们日益成为一个统治阶层，这是我们这个过渡时期最引人注目的特点。普选权的实行在很长一段时间里没有多大影响，因此它不像人们可能认为的那样，是这种政治权力转移过程的明确特征。群众势力开始不断壮大，首先是因为某些观念的传播，使它们慢慢地在人们的头脑中扎根，然后是个人逐渐结为社团，致力于一些理论观念的实现。正是通过结社，群体掌握了一些同他们的利益相关的观念——即便这些利益并不特别正当，却有着十分明确的界线——并终于意识到了自己的力量。群众现在成立了各种联合会，使一个又一个政权在它面前俯首称臣。他们还成立了工会，不顾一切经济规律，试图支配

劳动和工资。他们来到了支配着政府的议会，议员们为极缺乏主动性和独立性，几乎总是堕落成不过是那些选出他们的委员会的传声筒。

今天，群众的要求正在变得越来越明确，简直像是非要把目前存在的整个社会彻底摧毁不可，而所持的观点与原始共产主义息息相关，但这种共产主义只有在文明露出曙光之前，才是所有人类的正常状态。限制工作时间，把矿场、铁路、工厂和土地国有化，平等分配全部产品，为了广大群众的利益消灭上层阶级等等——这就是这些要求的内容。

群体不善推理，却急于采取行动。它们目前的组织赋予了它们巨大的力量。我们目睹其诞生的那些教条，很快也会具有旧式教条的威力，也就是说，不容讨论的专横武断的力量。群众的神权就要取代国王的神权了。

那些与我们的中产阶级情投意合的作家，最好地反映着这些阶级较为褊狭的思想、一成不变的观点、肤浅的怀疑主义以及表现得有些过分的自私。他们因为看到这种新势力不断壮大而深感惊恐。为了反抗人们混乱的头脑，他们向过去被他们嗤之以鼻的教会道德势力，发出了绝望的呼吁。他们给我们谈论科学的破产，心怀忏悔转向罗马教廷，提醒我们启示性真理的教诲。这些新的皈依者忘了，现在为时已晚。就算他们真被神宠所打动，此类措施也不会对那些头脑产生同样的影响了，因为他们已不大关心这些最近的宗教皈依者全神贯注的事情。今天的群众抛弃了他们的劝说者昨天已经抛弃并予以毁灭的诸神。没有任何力量，无论是神界的还是人间的，能够迫使河水流回它的源头。

科学并没有破产，科学从来没有陷进目前这种精神上的无政府状态，从这种状态中产生的新势力也并非它所造成。科学为我们许诺的是真理，或至少是我们的智力能够把握的一些有关各种关系的知识，它从来没有为我们许诺过和平或幸福。它对我

们的感情无动于衷，对我们的哀怨不闻不问。我们只能设法和科学生活在一起，因为没有任何力量能够恢复被它摧毁的幻觉。

在所有国家普遍都能看到的各种信号，向我们证明着群体势力的迅速壮大，它不理睬我们以为它过不了多久注定停止增长这种一厢情愿的想法。无论我们的命运如何，我们必须接受这种势力。一切反对它的说理，都是徒劳无益的纸上谈兵。群众势力的出现很可能标志着西方文明的最后一个阶段，它可能倒退到那些混乱的无政府时期，而这是每一个新社会诞生的必然前奏。那么，能够阻止这种结果吗？

迄今为止，彻底摧毁一个破败的文明，一直就是群众最明确的任务。这当然不是只有今天才能找到的迹象。历史告诉我们，当文明赖以建立的道德因素失去威力时，它的最终解体总是由无意识的野蛮群体完成的，他们被不无道理地称为野蛮人。创造和领导着文明的，历来就是少数知识贵族而不是群体。群体只有强大的破坏力。他们的统治永远无异于一个野蛮阶段。有着复杂的典章制度、从本能状态进入能够未雨绸缪的理性状态的文明，属于文化的高级阶段。群体无一例外地证明，仅靠他们自己，所有这些事情是不可能实现的。由于群体的力量有着纯粹的破坏性，因而他们的作用就像是加速垂危者或死尸解体的细菌。当文明的结构摇摇欲坠时，使它倾覆的总是群众。只有在这个时刻，他们的主要使命才是清晰可辨的，此时，人多势众的原则似乎成了唯一的历史法则。

我们的文明也蕴含着同样的命运吗？这种担心并非没有根据，但是我们现在还未处在一个能够做出肯定回答的位置上。

不管情况如何，我们注定要屈从于群体的势力，这是因为，群体的眼光短浅，使得有可能让它守规矩的所有障碍已经被一一清除。

对于这些正在成为热门话题的群体，我们所知甚少。专业心理学研究者的生活与它们相距甚远，对它们视而不见，因此当他们后来把注意力转向这个方向时，便认为能够进行研究的只有犯罪群体。犯罪群体无疑是存在的，但我们也会遇到英勇忘我的群体，以及其他各种类型的群体。群体犯罪只是他们一种特殊的心理表现。不能仅仅通过研究群体犯罪来了解他们的精神构成，这就像不能用描述个人犯罪来了解个人一样。

然而，从事实的角度看，世上的一切伟人，一切宗教和帝国的建立者，一切信仰的使徒和杰出政治家，甚至再说得平庸一点，一伙人里的小头目，都是不自觉的心理学家，他们对于群体性格有着出自本能但往往十分可靠的了解。正是因为对这种性格有正确的了解，他们能够轻而易举地确立自己的领导地位。拿破仑对他所治理的国家的群众心理有着非凡的洞察力，但有时他对属于另一些种族的群体心理，却完全缺乏了解。正是出于这种无知，他征讨西班牙尤其是俄罗斯，陷入了使自己的力量遭受致命打击的冲突，这注定会使他在短短的时间内归于毁灭。今天，对于那些不想再统治群体（这正在变成一件十分困难的事情），只求不过分受群体支配的政治家，群体心理学的知识已经成了他们最后的资源。

只有对群体心理有一定的认识，才能理解法律和制度对他们的作用是多么微不足道，才能理解除了别人强加于他们的意见，他们是多么没有能力坚持己见。要想领导他们，不能根据建立在纯粹平等学说上的原则，而是要去寻找那些能让他们动心的事情、能够诱惑他们的东西。譬如说，一个打算实行新税制的立法者，应当选择理论上最公正的方式吗？他才不会这样做呢。实际上，在群众眼里，也许最不公正的才是最好的。只有既不十分清楚易懂又显得负担最小的办法，才最易于被人们所容忍。因此，间接税不管多高，总是会被群体所接受，因为每天为日常消费品支付一点税金，不会干扰群体的习惯，从而可以在不知不觉中进行。用工资或其他一切

收入的比例税制代替这种办法，即一次性付出一大笔钱，就算这种新税制在理论上仅是别的办法带来的负担的十分之一，仍会引起无数的抗议。造成这种情况的事实是，一笔数目较多因而显得数量很大从而刺激了人们想象力的钱，已经被感觉不到的零星税金代替了。新税看起来不重，因为它是一点一点支付的。这种经济手段涉及眼光长远的计算，而这是群众力不能及的。

这是一个最简单的例子。人们很容易理解它的适用性。它也没有逃过拿破仑这位心理学家的眼睛。但是我们现代的立法者对群体的特点懵然无知，因而没有能力理解这一点。经验至今没有使他们充分认识到，人们从来不是按纯粹理性的教导采取行动的。

群体心理学还有许多其他实际用途。掌握了这门科学，就会对大量的历史和经济现象作出最为真切的说明，而离了这门学问，它们就会变得完全不可思议。我将有机会证明，最杰出的现代史学家泰纳，对法国大革命中的事件也理解得非常不全面，这是因为他从来没有想过应当研究一下群体的禀性。在研究这个极为复杂的时代时，他把自然科学家采用的描述方法作为自己的指南，而自然科学家所研究的现象中几乎不存在道德因素。然而，构成了历史的真正主脉的，正是这些因素。

因此，只从实践的角度看，群体心理学就很值得研究。即使完全是出于好奇，也值得对它加以关注。破译人们的行为动机，就像确定某种矿物或植物的属性一样有趣。我们对群体禀性的研究只能算是一种概括，是对我们的研究的一个简单总结。除了一点建议性的观点外，对它不必有太多的奢望。别人会为它打下更完备的基础。今天，我们不过是刚刚触及到一片几未开垦的处女地的表层而已。

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第一卷 群体心理

第一章 群体的一般特征



一千个偶然聚集在公共场所的人，没有任何明确的目标，从心理学意义上说，根本不能算是一个群体。

提要：从心理学角度看群体的构成/大量的个人聚集在一起并不足以构成一个群体/群体心理的特征/群体中个人固有的思想感情发生的变化以及他们个性的消失/群体总是受着无意识因素的支配/大脑活动的消失和脊髓活动的得势/智力的下降和感情的彻底变化/这种变化了的感情，既可以比形成群体的个人的感情更好，也可以比它更糟/群体既易于英勇无畏也易于犯罪。

从平常的含义上说，“群体”一词是指聚集在一起的个人，无论他们属于什么民族、职业或性别，也不管是什么事情让他们走到了一起。但是从心理学的角度看，“群体”一词却有着一种十分不同的重要含义。在某些既定的条件下，并且只有在这些条件下，一群人会表现出一些新的特点，它非常不同于组成这一群体的个人所具有的特点。聚集成群的人，他们的感情和思想全都采取同一个方向，他们自

觉的个性消失了，形成了一种集体心理。它无疑是暂时的，然而它确实表现出了一些非常明确的特点。这些聚集成群的人进入了一种状态，因为没有更好的说法，我姑且把它称为一个组织化的群体，或换个也许更为可取的说法，一个心理群体。它形成了一种独特的存在，受群体精神统一定律的支配。

不言自明，一些人偶然发现他们彼此站在一起，仅仅这个事实，并不能使他们获得一个组织化群体的特点。一千个偶然聚集在公共场所的人，没有任何明确的目标，从心理学意义上说，根本不能算是一个群体。要想具备这种群体特征，得有某些前提条件起作用，我们必须对它们的性质加以确定。

自觉的个性的消失，以及感情和思想转向一个不同的方向，是就要变成组织化群体的人所表现出的首要特征，但这不一定总是需要一些个人同时出现在一个地点。有时，在某种狂暴的感情——譬如因为国家大事——的影响下，成千上万孤立的个人也会获得一个心理群体的特征。在这种情况下，一个偶然事件就足以使他们闻风而动聚集在一起，从而立刻获得群体行为特有的属性。有时，五六个人就能构成一个心理群体，而数千人偶然聚在一起却不会发生这种现象。另一方面，虽然不可能看到整个民族聚在一起，但在某些影响的作用下，它也会变成一个群体。

心理群体一旦形成，它就会获得一些暂时的、然而又十分明确的普遍特征。除了这些普遍特征以外，它还会有另一些附带的特征，其具体表现因组成群体的人而各有不同，并且它的精神结构也会发生改变。因此，对心理群体不难进行分类。当我们深入研究这个问题时就会看到，一个异质的群体（即由不同成分组成的群体）会表现出一些与同质群体（即由大体相同的成分，如宗派、等级或阶层组成的群体）相同的特征，除了这些共同特征外，它们还具有一些自身的特点，从而使这两类群体有所区别。

不过，在深入研究不同类型的群体之前，我们必须先考察一下它们的共同特点。我们将像博物学家一样从事这项工作，他们总是先来描述一个科的全体成员的共同特点，然后再着手研究那些把该科所包含的属、种区别开来的具体特点。

对群体心理不易作出精确的描述，因为它的组织不仅有种族和构成方式上的不同，而且还因为支配群体的刺激因素的性质和强度而有所不同。不过，个体心理学的研究也会遇到同样的困难。一个人终其一生性格保持不变的事情，只有在小说里才能看到。只有环境的单一性，才能造成明显的性格单一性。我曾在其他著作中指出，一切精神结构都包含着各种性格的可能性，环境的突变就会使这种可能性表现出来。这解释了法国国民公会中最野蛮的成员为何原来都是些谦和的公民。在正常环境下，他们会是一些平和的公证人或善良的官员。风暴过后，他们又恢复了平常的性格，成为安静而守法的公民。拿破仑在他们中间为自己找到了最恭顺的臣民。

这里不可能对群体强弱不同的组织程度作全面的研究，因此我们只专注于那些已经达到完全组织化阶段的群体。这样我们就会看到群体可以变成什么样子，而不是它们一成不变的样子。只有在这个发达的组织化阶段，种族不变的主要特征才会被赋予某些新特点。这时，集体的全部感情和思想中所显示出来的变化，就会表现出一个明确的方向。只有在这种情况下，我前面所说的群体精神统一性的心理学规律才开始发生作用。

在群体的心理特征中，有一些可能与孤立的个人没有什么不同，而有一些则完全为群体所特有，因此只能在群体中看到。我们所研究的首先就是这些特征，以便揭示它们的重要性。

一个心理群体表现出来的最惊人的特点如下：构成这个群体的个人不管是谁，他们的生活方式、职业、性格或智力不管相同还是不同，他们变成了一个群体这个事

实，便使他们获得了一种集体心理，这使他们的感情、思想和行为变得与他们单独一人时的感情、思想和行为颇为不同。若不是形成了一个群体，有些念头或感情在个人身上根本就不会产生，或不可能变成行动。心理群体是一个由异质成分组成的暂时现象，当他们结合在一起时，就像因为结合成一种新的存在而构成一个生命体的细胞一样，会表现出一些特点，它们与单个细胞所具有的特点大不相同。

与人们在机智的哲学家赫伯特·斯宾塞笔下发现的观点相反，在形成一个群体的人群中，并不存在构成因素的总和或它们的平均值。实际表现出来的，是由于出现了新特点而形成的一种组合，就像某些化学元素——如碱和酸——反应后形成一种新物体一样，它所具有的特性十分不同于使它得以形成的那些物体。

组成一个群体的个人十分不同于孤立的个人，要想证明这一点并不困难，然而找出这种不同的原因却不那么容易。

要想多少了解一些究竟，首先必须记住现代心理学所确认的真理，即无意识现象不但在有机体的生活中，而且在智力活动中，都发挥着一种完全压倒性的作用。与精神生活中的无意识因素相比，有意识因素只起着很小的作用。最细心的分析家和最敏锐的观察家，充其量也只能找出一点支配他的行为的无意识动机。我们有意识的行为，是主要受遗传影响而造成的无意识的深层心理结构的产物。这个深层结构中包含着世代相传的无数共同特征，它们构成了一个种族先天的禀性。在我们的行为之可予说明的原因背后，毫无疑问隐藏着我们没有说明的原因，但是在这些原因背后，还有另外许多我们自己一无所知的神秘原因。我们的大多数日常行为，都是我们无法观察的一些隐蔽动机的结果。

无意识构成了种族的先天禀性，尤其在这个方面，属于该种族的个人之间是十分相似的，使他们彼此之间有所不同的，主要是他们性格中那些有意识的方面——教育

的结果，但更多的是因为独特的遗传条件。人们在智力上差异最大，但他们却有着非常相似的本能和情感。在属于情感领域的每一种事情上——宗教、政治、道德、爱憎等等，最杰出的人士很少能比凡夫俗子高明多少。从智力上说，一个伟大的数学家和他的鞋匠之间可能有天壤之别，但是从性格的角度看，他们可能差别甚微或根本没有差别。

这些普遍的性格特征，受着我们的无意识因素的支配，一个种族中的大多数普通人在同等程度上具备它们。我认为，正是这些特征，变成了群体中的共同属性。在集体心理中，个人的才智被削弱了，从而他们的个性也被削弱了。异质性被同质性所吞没，无意识的品质占了上风。

群体一般只有很普通的品质，这一事实解释了它为何不能完成需要很高智力的工作。涉及普遍利益的决定，是由杰出人士组成的议会作出的，但是各行各业的专家并不会比一群蠢人所采纳的决定更高明。实际上，他们通常只能用每个普通个人生来便具有的平庸才智，处理手头的工作。群体中累加在一起的只有愚蠢而不是天生的智慧。如果“整个世界”指的是群体，那就根本不像人们常说的那样，整个世界要比伏尔泰更聪明，倒不妨说伏尔泰比整个世界更聪明。

如果群体中的个人只是把他们共同分享的寻常品质集中在了一起，那么这只会带来明显的平庸，而不会如我们实际说过的那样，创造出一些新的特点。这些新特点是如何形成的呢？这就是我们现在要研究的问题。

有些不同的原因，对这些为群体所独有、孤立的个人并不具备的特点起着决定作用。首先，即使仅从数量上考虑，形成群体的个人也会感觉到一种势不可挡的力量，这使他敢于发泄出自本能的欲望，而在独自一人时，他是必须对这些欲望加以限制的。他很难约束自己不产生这样的念头：群体是个无名氏，因此也不必承担责

任。这样一来，总是约束着个人的责任感便彻底消失了。

第二个原因是传染的现象，也对群体的特点起着决定作用，同时还决定着它所接受的倾向。传染虽然是一种很容易确定其是否存在现象，却不易解释清楚。必须把它看作一种催眠方法，下面我们就对此作一简单的研究。在群体中，每种感情和行动都有传染性，其程度足以使个人随时准备为集体利益牺牲他的个人利益。这是一种与他的天性极为对立的倾向，如果不是成为群体的一员，他很少具备这样的能力。

决定着群体特点的第三个原因，也是最重要的原因，同孤立的个人所表现出的特点截然相反。我这里指的是易于接受暗示的表现，它也正是上面所说的相互传染所造成的结果。

要想理解这种现象，就必须记住最近的一些心理学发现。今天我们已经知道，通过不同的过程，个人可以被带入一种完全失去人格意识的状态，他对使自己失去人格意识的暗示者唯命是从，会做出一些同他的性格和习惯极为矛盾的举动。最为细致的观察似乎已经证实，长时间融入群体行动的个人，不久就会发现——或是因为在群体发挥催眠影响的作用下，或是由于一些我们无从知道的原因——自己进入一种特殊状态，它非常类似于被催眠的人在催眠师的操纵下进入的迷幻状态。被催眠者的大脑活动被麻木了，他变成了自己脊髓神经中受催眠师随意支配的一切无意识活动的奴隶。有意识的人格消失得无影无踪，意志和辨别力也不复存在。一切感情和思想都受着催眠师的左右。

大体上说，心理群体中的个人也处在这种状态之中。他不再能够意识到自己的行为。他就像受到催眠的人一样，一些能力遭到了破坏，同时另一些能力却有可能得到极大的强化。在某种暗示的影响下，他会因为难以抗拒的冲动而采取某种行动。

群体中的这种冲动，比被催眠者的冲动更难以抗拒，这是因为暗示对群体中的所有个人有着同样的作用，相互影响使其力量大增。在群体中，具备强大的个性，足以抵制那种暗示的个人寥寥无几，因此根本无法逆流而动。他们充其量只能因不同的暗示而改弦易辙。例如，正因为如此，有时只消一句悦耳的言辞或一个被及时唤醒的形象，便可以阻止群体最血腥的暴行。

现在我们知道了，有意识人格的消失，无意识人格的得势，思想和感情因暗示和相互传染作用而转向一个共同的方向，以及立刻把暗示的观念转化为行动的倾向，是组成群体的个人所表现出来的主要特点。他不再是他自己，他变成了一个不再受自己意志支配的玩偶。

进一步说，单单是他变成一个有机群体的成员这个事实，就能使他在文明的阶梯上倒退好几步。孤立的他可能是个有教养的个人，但在群体中他却变成了野蛮人——即一个行为受本能支配的动物。他表现得身不由己，残暴而狂热，也表现出原始人的热情和英雄主义，和原始人更为相似的是，他甘心让自己被各种言辞和形象所打动，而组成群体的人在孤立存在时，这些言辞和形象根本不会产生任何影响。他会情不自禁地做出同他最显而易见的利益和最熟悉的习惯截然相反的举动。一个群体中的个人，不过是众多沙粒中的一颗，可以被风吹到无论什么地方。

正是由于这些原因，人们看到陪审团作出了陪审员作为个人不会赞成的判决，议会实施着每个议员个人不可能同意的法律和措施。法国大革命时期，国民公会的委员们，如果分开来看，都是举止温和的开明公民。但是当他们结成一个群体时，却毫不迟疑地听命于最野蛮的提议，把完全清白无辜的人送上断头台，并且一反自己的利益，放弃他们不可侵犯的权利，在自己中间也滥杀无辜。

群体中的个人不但在行动上和他本人有着本质的差别。甚至在完全失去独立性之

前，他的思想和感情就已经发生了变化，这种变化是如此深刻，它可以让一个守财奴变得挥霍无度，把怀疑论者改造成信徒，把老实人变成罪犯，把懦夫变成豪杰。在1789年8月4日那个值得纪念的晚上，法国的贵族一时激情澎湃，毅然投票放弃了自己的特权，他们如果是单独考虑这事，没有一个人会表示同意。

从以上讨论得出的结论是，群体在智力上总是低于孤立的个人，但是从感情及其激起的行动这个角度看，群体可以比个人表现得更好或更差，这全看环境如何。一切取决于群体所接受的暗示具有什么性质。这就是只从犯罪角度研究群体的作家完全没有理解的要点。群体固然经常是犯罪群体，然而它也常常是英雄主义的群体。正是群体，而不是孤立的个人，会不顾一切地赴死犯难，为一种教义或观念的凯旋提供了保证，会怀着赢得荣誉的热情赴汤蹈火，会导致——就像十字军时代那样，在几乎全无粮草和装备的情况下——向异教徒讨还基督的墓地，或者像1793年那样捍卫自己的祖国。这种英雄主义毫无疑问有着无意识的成分，然而正是这种英雄主义创造了历史。如果人民只会以冷酷无情的方式干大事，世界史上便不会留下他们多少记录了。

第二章 群体的感情和道德观



群体因为夸大自己的感情，因此它只会被极端感情所打动。希望感动群体的演说家，必须出言不逊，信誓旦旦。夸大其辞、言之凿凿、不断重复，绝对不以说理的方式证明任何事情——这些都是公众集会上的演说家惯用的论说技巧。

提要：1．群体的冲动、多变和急躁。所有刺激因素都对群体有支配作用，并且它的反应会不停地发生变化/群体不会深思熟虑/种族的影响。2．群体轻信而易受暗示。

群体受暗示的左右/它把头脑中产生的幻觉当作现实/为何这些幻觉对组成群体的所有个人都是一样的/群体中有教养的人和无知的人没有区别/群体中的个人受幻觉支配的实例/史学著作的价值微乎其微。3．群体情绪的夸张与单纯。群体不允许怀疑和不确定/它们在感情上总是走极端。4．群体的偏执、专横和保守。这些感情的缘由/群体面对强权卑躬屈膝/一时的革命本能不妨碍他们极端保守/对变化和进步的本能敌视。5．群体的道德。群体的道德可以比个人高尚或低劣/解释与实例/群体很少被利益的考虑所左右/群体的道德净化作用。

在概括地说明了群体的主要特点之后，还要对这些特点的细节进行研究。

应当指出，群体的某些特点，如冲动、急躁、缺乏理性、没有判断力和批判精神、夸大感情等等，几乎总是可以在低级进化形态的生命中看到，例如妇女、野蛮人和儿童。不过这一点我只是顺便说说，对它的论证不在本书的范围之内。再说，这对于熟悉原始人心理的人没什么用处，也很难让对此事一无所知的人相信。

现在我就按部就班地讨论一下可以在大多数群体中看到的不同特点。

1．群体的冲动、易变和急躁

我们在研究群体的基本特点时曾说，它几乎完全受着无意识动机的支配。它的行为主要不是受大脑，而是受脊椎神经的影响。在这个方面，群体与原始人非常相似。就表现而言，他们的行动可以十分完美，然而，这些行为并不受大脑的支配，个人是按照他所受到的刺激因素决定自己的行动。所有刺激因素都对群体有控制作用，并且它的反应会不停地发生变化。群体是刺激因素的奴隶。孤立的个人就像群体中的个人一样，也会受刺激因素的影响，但是他的大脑会向他表明，受冲动的摆布是不足取的，因此他会约束自己不受摆布。这个道理可以用心理学语言表述如下：孤

立的个人具有主宰自己的反应行为的能力，群体则缺乏这种能力。

根据让群体产生兴奋的原因，它们所服从的各种冲动可以是豪爽的或残忍的、勇猛的或懦弱的，但是这种冲动总是极为强烈，因此个人利益，甚至保存生命的利益，也难以控制它们。刺激群体的因素多种多样，群体总是屈从于这些刺激，因此群体也极为多变。这解释了我们为什么会看到，群体可以转瞬之间就从最血腥的狂热变成最极端的宽宏大量和英雄主义。群体很容易做出刽子手的举动，同样也很容易慷慨赴义。正是群体，为每一种信仰的胜利而不惜血流成河。若想了解群体在这方面能做出什么事情，不必回顾英雄主义时代。它们在起义中从不吝惜自己的生命，就在不久以前，一位突然名声大噪的将军，可以轻而易举地找到上万人，只要他一声令下，他们就会为他的事业牺牲性命。

因此，群体根本不会作任何预先策划。他们可以先后被最矛盾的情感所激发，但是他们又总是受当前刺激因素的影响。他们就像被风暴卷起的树叶，向着每个方向飞舞，然后又落在地上。下面我们研究革命群体时，会举出一些他们感情多变的事例。

群体的这种易变性使它们难以统治，当公共权力落到它们手里时尤其如此。一旦日常生活中各种必要的事情不再对生活构成看不见的约束，民主便几乎不可能持续很久了。此外，群体虽然有着各种狂乱的愿望，它们却不能持久。群体没有能力作任何长远的打算或思考。

群体不仅冲动而多变。就像野蛮人一样，它不准备承认，在自己的愿望和这种愿望的实现之间会出现任何障碍，它没有能力理解这种中间障碍，因为数量上的强大使它感到自己势不可挡。对于群体中的个人来说，不可能的概念消失了。孤立的个人很清楚，在孤身一人时，他不能焚烧宫殿或洗劫商店，即使受到这样做的诱惑，他

也很容易抵制这种诱惑。但是在成为群体的一员时，他就会意识到人数赋予他的力量，这足以让他生出杀人劫掠的念头，并且会立刻屈从于这种诱惑。出乎预料的障碍会被狂暴地摧毁。人类的机体的确能够产生大量狂热的激情，因此可以说，愿望受阻的群体所形成的正常状态，也就是这种激愤状态。

种族的基本特点是我们产生一切情感的不变来源，它也总是会对群体的急躁、它们的冲动和多变产生影响，正像它会影响到我们所研究的一切大众感情一样。所有的群体无疑总是急躁而冲动的，但程度却大不相同。例如拉丁民族的群体和英国人的群体就有十分显著的差别。最近法国历史中的事件为这一点提供了生动的说明。25年前，仅仅是一份据说某位大使受到侮辱的电报被公之于众，就足以触犯众怒，结果是立刻引起了一场可怕的战争。几年后，关于凉山一次无足轻重的失败的电文，再次激起人们的怒火，由此导致政府立刻垮台。就在同时，英国在远征喀土穆时遭受的一次非常严重的失败，却只在英国引起了轻微的情绪，甚至大臣都未被解职。任何地方的群体都有些女人气，拉丁族裔的群体则女人气最多，凡是赢得他们信赖的人，命运会立刻为之大变。但是这样做，无一例外地等于在悬崖边上散步，不定哪天必会跌入深渊。

2. 群体的易受暗示和轻信

我们在定义群体时说过，它的一个普遍特征是极易受人暗示，我们还指出了在一切人类集体中暗示的传染性所能达到的程度；这个事实解释了群体感情向某个方向的迅速转变。不管人们认为这一点多么无足轻重，群体通常总是处在一种期待注意的状态中，因此很容易受人暗示。最初的提示，通过相互传染的过程，会很快进入群体中所有人的头脑，群体感情的一致倾向会立刻变成一个既成事实。

正如所有处在暗示影响下的个人所示，进入大脑的念头很容易变成行动。无论这种

行动是纵火焚烧宫殿还是自我牺牲，群体都会在所不辞。一切都取决于刺激因素的性质，而不再像孤立的个人那样，取决于受到暗示的行动与全部理由之间的关系，后者可能与采取这种行动极为对立。

于是，群体永远漫游在无意识的领地，会随时听命于一切暗示，表现出对理性的影响无动于衷的生物所特有的激情，它们失去了一切批判能力，除了极端轻信外再无别的可能。在群体中间，不可能的事不可能存在，要想对那种编造和传播子虚乌有的神话和故事的能力有所理解，必须牢牢地记住这一点。

一些可以轻易在群体中流传的神话之所以能够产生，不仅是因为他们极端轻信。这也是事件在人群的想象中经过了奇妙曲解之后造成的后果。在群体众目睽睽之下发生的最简单的事情，不久就会变得面目全非。群体是用形象来思维的，而形象本身又会立刻引起与它毫无逻辑关系的一系列形象。我们只要想一下，有时我们会因为在头脑中想到的任何事实而产生一连串幻觉，就很容易理解这种状态。我们的理性告诉我们，它们之间没有任何关系。但是群体对这个事实却视若无睹，把歪曲性的想象力所引起的幻觉和真实事件混为一谈。群体很少对主观和客观加以区分。它把头脑中产生的景象也当作现实，尽管这个景象同观察到的事实几乎总是只有微乎其微的关系。

群体对自己看到的事件进行歪曲的方式，好像既多且杂，各不相同，因为组成群体的个人有着非常不同的倾向。但是情况并非如此。作为相互传染的结果，受到的歪曲是一样的，在群体的所有个人中间表现出同样的状态。

群体中的某个人对真相的第一次歪曲，是传染性暗示过程的起点。耶路撒冷墙上的圣乔治出现在所有十字军官兵面前之前，在场的人中肯定有个人首先感觉到了他的存在。在暗示和相互传染的推动下，一个人编造的奇迹，立刻就会被所有的人接

受。

历史中经常出现的这种集体幻觉的机制历来如此。这种幻觉似乎具备一切公认的真实性特点，因为它被成千上万人观察到的现象。

若想反驳以上所言，没有必要考虑组成群体的个人的智力品质。这种品质无足轻重。从他们成为群体一员之日始，博学之士便和白痴一起失去了观察能力。

这个论点似乎说不太通。如想消除人们的疑虑，必须研究大量的历史事实，即使写下好几本书，也不足以达到这个目的。

但是我不想让读者觉得这是些没有得到证实的主张。因此我要为它举出几个实例，它们都是从可以引用的无数事例中随便挑出来的。

下面是个最典型的实例，因为它来自使群体成为牺牲品的集体幻觉。这些群体中的个人，既有最无知的，也有最有学问的。一名海军上尉朱利安·费利克斯在他的《海流》一书中偶尔提到了这件事，《科学杂志》过去也曾加以引用。

护航舰“贝勒·波拉”号在外海游弋，想寻找到在一场风暴中与它失散的巡洋舰“波索”号。当时正值阳光灿烂的大白天。值勤兵突然发出了有一艘遇难船只的信号。船员们顺着信号指出的方向望去，所有官兵都清楚地看到一只载满了人的木筏被发出遇难信号的船拖着。然而这不过是一种集体幻觉。德斯弗斯上将放下一条船去营救遇难士兵。在接近目标时，船上的官兵看到“有一大群活着的人，他们伸着手，能够听到许多混乱的声音在哀号”。但是在到达目标时，船上的人却发现自己不过是找到了几根长满树叶的树枝，它们是从附近海岸漂过来的。在一目了然的事实面前幻觉才消失了。

在这个事例中，可以清楚地看到我们已经解释过的集体幻觉的作用机制。一方面，我们看到一个在期待中观望的群体，另一方面是值勤者发出海上有遇难船只的信号这样一个暗示。在相互传染的过程中，这一暗示被当时的全体官兵所接受。

使眼前发生的事情遭到歪曲，真相被与它无关的幻觉所取代——群体中出现这种情况，不一定需要人数众多。只要几个人聚集在一起就能形成一个群体，就算他们全是博学之士，在他们的专长之外同样会表现出群体的所有特点。他们每个人所具有的观察力和批判精神马上就会消失。一位敏锐的心理学家达维先生为我们提供了一个同这里的问题有关的非常奇妙的例子，最近的《心理学年鉴》提到了这件事。达维先生把一群杰出的观察家召集在一起，其中包括英国最著名的科学家之一华莱士先生。在让他们审查了物体并根据自己的意愿做上标记之后，他当着他们的面演示格式化的精神现象：显灵，并在石板上写字等等。从这些杰出观察家那里得到的报告全都同意，他们观察到的现象只能用超自然的手段获得。他向他们表示，这不过是简单的骗术造成的结果。

“达维先生的研究中最令人吃惊的特点，”这份文献的作者说，“不是骗术本身的神奇，而是外行目击者所提供的报告的极端虚弱。”他说，“显然，甚至众多目击者也会列举出一些完全错误的条件关系，但其结论是，假如他们的描述被认为是正确的，他们所描述的现象便不能用骗术来解释。达维先生发明的方法非常简单，人们对他竟敢采用这些方法不免感到吃惊。但是他具有支配群体大脑的能力，他能让他们相信，他们看到了自己并没有看到的事情。”这里我们遇到的仍然是催眠师影响被催眠者的能力。可见，对于头脑非常严谨、事先就要求其抱着怀疑态度的人，这种能力都可以发挥作用，它能轻易让普通群体上当受骗，也就不足为怪了。

类似的例子还有很多。在我写下这些文字时，报纸上充斥着两个小女孩在塞纳河溺

水身亡的报道。五六个目击者言之凿凿地说，他们认出了这两个孩子。所有的证词如出一辙，不容预审法官再有任何怀疑。他签署了死亡证明，但就在为孩子举行葬礼时，一个偶然的事件使人们发现，本来以为死了的人仍然活着，并且她们和溺水而死的人没有多少相似之处。就像前面提到的事例一样，第一个目击者本人就是幻觉的牺牲品，他的证词足以对其他目击者产生影响。

在这类事情中，暗示的起点一般都是某个人多少有些模糊的记忆所产生的幻觉，在这一最初的幻觉得到肯定之后，就会引起相互传染。如果第一个观察者非常没有主见，他相信自己已经辨认出的尸体，有时会呈现出——除了一切真实的相似处之外——一些特征，譬如一块伤疤什么的，或一些让其他人产生同感的装束上的细节。由此产生的同感会变成一个肯定过程的核心，它会征服理解力，窒息一切判断力。观察者这时看到的不再是客体本身，而是他头脑中产生的幻象。在旧事重提的报纸所记录的如下事例中，孩子的尸体竟被自己的母亲认错，由此可以得到解释。从这种现象中，肯定能够找到我刚才已指出其作用的两种暗示。

另一个孩子认出了这个孩子，但他搞错了。然后又开始了没有根据的辨认过程。

一件不同寻常的事发生了。在同学辨认尸体的第二天，一个妇女喊道：“天哪，那是我的孩子！”

她走近尸体，观察他的衣服，又看看他额头上的伤疤。“这肯定是我儿子，”她说，“他去年七月失踪。他一定是被人拐走杀害了。”

这女人是福尔街的看门人，姓夏凡德雷。她的表弟也被叫了来。问到他时，他说：“那是小费利贝。”住在这条街上的好几个人，也认出了在拉弗莱特找到的这孩子是费利贝·夏凡德雷，其中有孩子的同学，他所根据的是那孩子佩带的一枚徽

章。

但是，邻居、表弟、同学和当妈的全搞错了。六周后，那孩子的身份得到了确认。他是波尔多人，在那里被人杀害，又被一伙人运到了巴黎。

应当指出，产生这种误认的经常是妇女和儿童——即最没有主见的人。他们也向我们表明，这种目击者在法庭上会有什么价值。尤其就儿童而言，绝不能拿他们的证词当真。地方长官惯于说童言无忌。哪怕他们只有一点基本的心理学修养，他们也会知道，事情恰恰相反，儿童一直就在撒谎。当然，这是一种无辜的谎言，但它仍然是谎言。正像经常发生的情况那样，用孩子的证词来决定被告的命运，还不如用扔钱币的方式来合理。

还是回到群体的观察力这个问题上来吧。我们的结论是，他们的集体观察极可能出错，大多数时候它所表达的是在传染过程中影响着同伴的个人幻觉。各种事实都证明，应当明智地认为群体的证词极不可靠，它甚至能够达到无以复加的程度。25年前的色当一役，有数千人参与了著名的骑兵进攻，但是面对那些最为矛盾的目击者证词，根本不可能确定谁在指挥这场战役。英国将军沃尔斯利爵士在最近的一本书中证明，关于滑铁卢战役中一些最重要的事件，至今一直有人在犯下最严重的事实错误——这是一些由数百人证明过的事实。

这些事实向我们证明了群体的证词价值何在。讨论逻辑学的文章有无数证人的一致同意，因此属于可以用来支持事实之准确性的最强有力的证明。然而我们的群体心理学知识告诉我们，在这个问题上，讨论逻辑的文章需要重写。受到最严重怀疑的事件，肯定是那些观察者人数最多的事件。说一件事同时被数千个目击者所证实，这通常也就是说真相与公认的记述相去甚远。

从以上情况得出的明确结论是，只能把史学著作当作纯粹想象的产物。它们是对观察有误的事实所作的无根据的记述，并且混杂着一些对思考结果的解释。写这样的东西完全是在虚掷光阴。假如历史没有给我们留下它的文学、艺术和不朽之作，我们对以往时代的真相便一无所知。那些在人类历史上起过重大作用的伟人，如赫拉克利特、释迦牟尼或穆哈默德，我们拥有一句真实的记录吗？我们极可能一句也没有。不过实事求是地说，他们的真实生平对我们无关紧要。我们想知道的，是我们的伟人在大众神话中呈现什么形象。打动群体心灵的是神话中的英雄，而不是当时的真实英雄。

不幸的是，神话虽然被清楚地记录在书中，它们本身却无稳定性可言。随着时光的流逝，尤其是由于种族的缘故，群体的想象力在不断地改变着它们。《旧约全书》中嗜血成性的耶和华与圣德肋撒的爱的上帝有天壤之别，在中国受到崇拜的佛祖，与印度人所尊奉的佛祖亦无多少共同特点。

英雄的神话因为群体的想象力而改变，使英雄离我们而去，也无需数百年的时间。转变有时就发生在几年之内。我们在自己这个时代便看到，历史上最了不起的伟人之一的神话，在不到50年间便改变了数次。在波旁家族的统治下，拿破仑成了田园派和自由主义的慈善家，一个卑贱者的朋友。在诗人眼里，他注定会长期留存在乡村人民的记忆之中。30年后，这个步态安详的英雄又变成了一个嗜血成性的暴君，他在篡夺权力并毁灭了自由之后，仅仅为了满足自己的野心，便让300万人命丧黄泉。如今我们看到这个神话又在发生变化。数千年之后，未来的博学之士面对这些矛盾百出的记载，也许会对是否真有这位英雄表示怀疑，正像现在有些人怀疑释迦牟尼一样。从他身上，他们只会看到一个光彩照人的神话或一部赫拉克利特式传奇的演变。对这种缺乏确定性的情况，他们无疑很容易心安理得，因为和今天的我们相比，他们更明白群体的特点和心理。他们知道，除了神话之外，历史没有多少保

存其他记忆的能力。

3．群体情绪的夸张与单纯

群体表现出来的感情不管是好是坏，其突出的特点就是极为简单而夸张。在这方面，就像许多其他方面一样，群体中的个人类似于原始人。因为不能作出细致的区分，他把事情视为一个整体，看不到它们的中间过渡状态。群体情绪的夸张也受到另一个事实的强化，即不管什么感情，一旦它表现出来，通过暗示和传染过程而非常迅速地传播，它所明确赞扬的目标就会力量大增。

群体情绪的简单和夸张所造成的结果是，它全然不知怀疑和不确定性为何物。它就像女人一样，一下子便会陷入极端。怀疑一说出口，立刻就会成为不容辩驳的证据。心生厌恶或有反对意见，如果是发生在孤立的个人身上，不会有什么力量，若是群体中的个人，却能立刻变成勃然大怒。

群体感情的狂暴，尤其是在异质的群体中间，又会因责任感的彻底消失而强化。意识到肯定不会受到惩罚——而且人数越多，这一点就越是肯定——以及因为人多势众而一时产生的力量感，会使群体表现出一些孤立的个人不可能有的情绪和行动。在群体中间，傻瓜、低能儿和心怀妒忌的人，摆脱了自己卑微无能的感觉，会感觉到一种残忍、短暂但又巨大的力量。

不幸的是，群体的这种夸张倾向，常常作用于一些恶劣的感情。它们是原始人的本能隔代遗传的残留，孤立而负责的个人因为担心受罚，不得不对它们有所约束。因此群体很容易干出最恶劣的极端勾当。

不过，这并不意味着群体没有能力在巧妙的影响之下，表现出英雄主义、献身精神或最崇高的美德。他们甚至比孤立的个人更能表现出这些品质。当我们研究群体的

道德时，我们很快还有机会回到这个话题上来。

群体因为夸大自己的感情，因此它只会被极端感情所打动。希望感动群体的演说家，必须出言不逊，信誓旦旦。夸大其辞、言之凿凿、不断重复，绝对不以说理的方式证明任何事情——这些都是公众集会上的演说家惯用的论说技巧。

进一步说，对于他们自己的英雄的感情，群体也会作出类似的夸张。英雄所表现出来的品质和美德，肯定总是被群体夸大。早就有人正确地指出，观众会要求舞台上的英雄具有现实生活中不可能存在的勇气、道德和美好品质。

在剧场里观察事物的特殊立场，早就有人正确认识到了它的重要性。这种立场毫无疑问是存在的，但是它的原则与常识和逻辑基本上毫无相同之处。打动观众的艺术当然品味低下，不过这也需要特殊的才能。通过阅读剧本来解释一出戏的成功，往往是不可能的。剧院经理在接受一部戏时，他们自己通常并不知道它能否取得成功。因为如果想对这事作出判断，他们必须能够把自己变成观众。

被所有剧院拒绝过的《夏莱的姨妈》，最后因为一个股票商人出资才得见天日，它在法国演出了二百多场，在伦敦上演了一千多场。如果不作上面的解释，即剧院经理不可能代替观众，便无法理解这些既有资格又十分小心地避免这类失误的人，为何会判断错误。我无法在此讨论这个话题，不过，如果熟悉剧院生活的作家也是个细心的心理学家，这个问题倒是很值得他费些笔墨。

这里我们又一次可以作出更广泛的解释。我们会说明种族因素的压倒性影响。一部在某国掀起热情的歌剧，在另一国却未获成功，或只取得了部分的或平常的成功，是因为它没有产生能够作用于另一些公众的影响力。

我没有必要再补充说，群体的夸张倾向只作用于感情，对智力不起任何作用。我已

经表明，个人一旦成为群体的一员，他的智力立刻会大大下降。一位有学问的官员塔尔德先生，在研究群体犯罪时也证实了这一点。群体仅仅能够把感情提升到极高和——或相反——极低的境界。

4. 群体的偏执、专横和保守

群体只知道简单而极端的感情；提供给他们各种意见、想法和信念，他们或者全盘接受，或者一概拒绝；将其视为绝对真理或绝对谬论。用暗示的办法加以诱导而不是作出合理解释的信念，历来都是如此。与宗教信仰有关的偏执及其对人们的头脑实行的专制统治，早就为大家所知。

对何为真理何为谬误总是心存怀疑，另一方面，又清楚地意识到自己的强大，群体便给自己的理想和偏执赋予了专横的性质。个人可以接受矛盾，进行讨论，群体是绝对不会这样做的。在公众集会上，演说者哪怕作出最轻微的反驳，立刻就会招来怒吼和粗野的叫骂。在一片嘘声和驱逐声中，演说者很快就会败下阵来。当然，假如现场缺少当权者的代表这种约束性因素，反驳者往往会被打死。

专横和偏执是一切类型的群体的共性，但是其强度各有不同。在这个方面，支配着人们感情和思想的基本的种族观念，会一再表现出来。尤其在拉丁民族的群体中，可以看到专横和偏执能够发展到无以复加的地步。事实上，这两种态度在拉丁民族的群体中的发展，已经彻底破坏了盎格鲁—萨克逊人所具有的那种强烈的个人独立感情。拉丁民族的群体只关心他们所属宗派的集体独立性，他们对独立有独特的见解，认为必须让那些与他们意见相左的人立刻强烈反对自己的信念。在各拉丁民族中间，自宗教法庭时代以来，各个时期的雅各宾党人，对自由从未能够有另一种理解。

专横和偏执是群体有着明确认识的感情，他们很容易产生这种感情，而且只要有人在他们中间煽动起这种情绪，他们随时都会将其付诸实践。群体对强权俯首帖耳，却很少为仁慈心肠所动，他们认为那不过是软弱可欺的另一种形式。他们的同情心从不听命于作风温和的主子，而是只向严厉欺压他们的暴君低头。他们总是为这种人塑起最壮观的雕像。不错，他们喜欢践踏被他们剥夺了权力的专制者，但那是因为在失势之后他也变成了一介平民。他受到蔑视是因为他不再让人害怕。群体喜欢的英雄，永远像个恺撒。他的权杖吸引着他们，他的权力威慑着他们，他的利剑让他们心怀敬畏。

群体随时会反抗软弱可欺者，对强权低声下气。如果强权时断时续，而群体又总是被极端情绪所左右，它便会表现得反复无常，时而无法无天，时而卑躬屈膝。

然而，如果以为群体中的革命本能处在主导地位，那就完全误解了它们的心理。在这件事上使我们上当的，不过是它们的暴力倾向。它们的反叛和破坏行为的爆发总是十分短暂，群体强烈地受着无意识因素的支配，因此很容易屈从于世俗的等级制，难免会十分保守。对它们撒手不管，它们很快会对混乱感到厌倦，本能地变成奴才。当波拿巴压制了一切自由，让每个人都对他的铁腕有切肤之感时，向他发出欢呼的正是那些最桀骜不驯的雅各宾党人。

如果不考虑群体深刻的保守本能，就难以理解历史，尤其是民众的革命。不错，它们可能希望改朝换代，为了取得这种变革，它们有时甚至发动暴力革命，然而这些旧制度的本质仍然反映着种族对等级制的需要，因此它们不可能得不到种族的服从。群体的多变，只会影响到很表面的事情。其实它们就像原始人一样，有着坚不可摧的保守本能。它们对一切传统的迷恋与崇敬是绝对的；它们对一切有可能改变自身生活基本状态的新事物，有着根深蒂固的无意识恐惧。在发明机器织机或出现

蒸汽机和铁路的时代，如果民主派掌握着他们今天拥有的权力，这些发明也不可能实现，或至少要付出革命和不断杀戮的代价。对于文明的进步而言，值得庆幸的是，只是在伟大的科学发明和工业出现之后，群体才开始掌握了权力。

5. 群体的道德

如果“道德”一词指的是持久尊重一定的社会习俗，不断抑制私心的冲动，那么显然可以说，由于群体太好冲动，太多变，因此它不可能是道德的。相反，如果我们把某些一时表现出来的品质，如舍己为人、自我牺牲、不计名利、献身精神和对平等的渴望等，也算作“道德”的内容，则我们可以说，群体经常会表现出极高的道德。

研究过群体的少数心理学家，只着眼于他们的犯罪行为，在看到经常发生这种行为后，他们得出的结论是，群体的道德水平十分低劣。

这种情况当然经常存在。但为何是这样？这不过是因为我们从原始时代继承了野蛮和破坏性的本能，它蛰伏在我们每个人身上。孤立的个人在生活中满足这种本能是很危险的，但是当他加入一个不负责任的群体时，因为很清楚不会受到惩罚，他便会彻底放纵这种本能。在生活中，我们不能向自己的同胞发泄这种破坏性本能，便把它发泄在动物身上。群体捕猎的热情与凶残，有着同样的根源。群体慢慢杀死没有反抗能力的牺牲者，表现出一种十分懦弱的残忍。不过在哲学家看来，这种残忍，与几十个猎人聚集成群用猎犬追捕和杀死一只不幸的鹿时表现出的残忍，有着非常密切的关系。

群体可以杀人放火，无恶不作，但是也能表现出极崇高的献身、牺牲和不计名利的举动，即孤立的个人根本做不到的极崇高的行为。以名誉、光荣和爱国主义作为号

召，最有可能影响到组成群体的个人，而且经常可以达到使他慷慨赴死的地步。像十字军远征和1793年的志愿者那种事例，历史上比比皆是。只有集体能够表现出伟大的不计名利和献身的精神。群体为了自己只有一知半解的信仰、观念和只言片语，便英勇地面对死亡，这样的事例何止千万！不断举行示威的人群，更有可能是为了服从一道命令，而不是为了增加一点养家糊口的薪水。私人利益几乎是孤立的个人唯一的行为动机，却很少成为群体的强大动力。在群体的智力难以理解的多次战争中，支配着群体的肯定不是私人利益——在这种战争中，他们甘愿自己被人屠杀，就像是被猎人施了催眠术的小鸟。

即使在一群罪大恶极的坏蛋中间，经常也会出现这样的情况，他们仅仅因为是群体中的一员，便会暂时表现出严格的道德纪律。泰纳让人们注意一个事实，九月惨案的罪犯把他们从牺牲者身上找到的钱包和钻石放在会议桌上，本来他们是很容易把这些东西据为己有的。1848年革命期间，在占领杜伊勒利宫时呼啸而过的群众，并没有染指那些让他们兴奋不已的物品，而其中的任何一件都意味着多日的面包。

群体对个人的这种道德净化作用，肯定不是一种不变的常规，然而，它却是一种经常可以看到的常态。甚至在不像我刚才说过的那样严重的环境下，也可以看到这种情况。我前面说过，剧院里的观众要求作品中的英雄有着夸张的美德，一般也可以看到，一次集会，即使其成员品质低劣，通常也会表现得一本正经。放荡不羁的人、拉皮条的和粗人，在有些危险的场合或交谈中，经常会一下子变得细声细语，虽然与他们习惯了的谈话相比，这种场合不会造成更多的伤害。

群体虽然经常放纵自己低劣的本能，他们也不时树立起崇高道德行为的典范。如果不计名利、顺从和绝对献身于真正的或虚幻的理想，都可算作美德，那就可以说，群体经常具备这种美德，而且它所达到的水平，即使最聪明的哲学家也难以望其项

背。他们当然是在无意识地实践着这些美德，然而这无碍大局，我们不该对群体求全责备，说他们经常受无意识因素的左右，不善于动脑筋。在某些情况下，如果他们开动脑筋考虑起自己的眼前利益，我们这个星球上根本就不会成长出文明，人类也不会有自己的历史了。

第三章 群体的观念、推理和想象力



影响民众想象力的，并不是事实本身，而是它们发生和引起注意的方式。

提要：1. 群体的观念。基本观念和次要观念/相互矛盾的观念为何能够并存/高深的

观念必须经过改造才能被群众所接受/观念的社会影响与它是否包含真理无关。2 . 群体的推理能力。群体不受理性的影响/群体只有十分低下的推理能力/它所接受
的观念只有表面上的相似性或连续性。3 . 群体的想象力。群体有着强大的想象力/群
体只会形象思维，这些形象之间没有任何逻辑关系/群体易受神奇事物的感动，神奇
事物是文明的真正支柱/民众的想象力是政客的权力基础/能够以事实触发群体想象
力的方式。

1 . 群体的观念

我们在前一本著作研究群体观念对各国发展的影响时已经指出，每一种文明都是屈指可数的几个基本观念的产物，这些观念很少受到革新。我们说明了这些观念在群体心中是多么根深蒂固，影响这一过程是多么困难，以及这些观念一旦得到落实所具有的力量。最后我们又说，历史大动荡就是这些基本观念的变化所引发的结果。

我们已经用大量篇幅讨论过这个问题，因此我现在不想旧话重提。这里我只想简单谈谈群体能够接受观念这一问题，以及他们领会这些观念的方式。

这些观念可以分为两类。一类是那些因一时的环境影响来去匆匆的观念，譬如那些只会让个人或某种理论着迷的观念。另一类是基本观念，它们因为环境、遗传规律和公众意见而具有极大的稳定性。过去的宗教观念，以及今天的社会主义和民主观念，都属于这类观念。

如今，被我们的父辈视为人生支柱的那些伟大的基本观念，正在摇摇欲坠。它们的稳定性已丧失殆尽，同时，建立于其上的制度也受到了严重的动摇。每天都在形成大量我刚才说过的那种过眼烟云一般的观念，但是看来它们很少具有生命力并能够发挥持久的影响。

给群体提供的无论是什么观念，只有当它们具有绝对的、毫不妥协的和简单明了的形式时，才能产生有效的影响。因此它们都会披上形象化的外衣，也只有以这种形式，它们才能为群众所接受。在这些形象化的观念之间，没有任何逻辑上的相似性或连续性，它们可以相互取代，就像操作者从幻灯机中取出一张又一张叠在一起的幻灯片一样。这解释了为什么能够看到最矛盾的观念在群体中同时流行。随着时机不同，群体会处在它的理解力所及的不同观念之一的影响之下，因此能够干出大相径庭的事情。群体完全缺乏批判精神，因此也察觉不到这些矛盾。

这种现象并不是群体所特有的。许多孤立的个人，不只是野蛮人，而且在智力的某个方面接近于原始人的所有人，例如宗教信仰上的狂热宗派，在他们身上都可以看到这种现象。我曾看到，在我们欧洲大学里受过教育并拿到了文凭的有教养的印度人，就令人费解地表现出这种现象。一部分西方观念被附着于他们一成不变的、基本的传统观念或社会观念之上。根据不同的场合，这一套或那一套观念就会表现出来，并伴之以相应的言谈举止，这会让同一个人显得极为矛盾。不过，这些矛盾与其说真正存在，不如说只是一种表面现象，因为只有世代相传的观念才能对孤立的个人产生足够的影响，变成他的行为动机。只有当一个人因为不同种族的通婚而处在不同的传统倾向中间时，他的行为才会真正不时表现得截然对立。这些现象虽然在心理学上十分重要，不过在这里纠缠它们并无益处。我的意见是，要想充分理解它们，至少要花上十年时间周游各地进行观察。

观念只有采取简单明了的形式，才能被群体所接受，因此它必须经过一番彻底的改造，才能变得通俗易懂。当我们面对的是有些高深莫测的哲学或科学观念时，我们尤其会看到，为了适应群体低劣的智力水平，对它们需要进行多么深刻的改造。这些改造取决于群体或群体所属的种族的性质，不过其一般趋势都是观念的低俗化和简单化。这解释了一个事实，即从社会的角度看，现实中很少存在观念的等级制，

也就是说，很少存在着有高下之分的观念。一种观念，不管它刚一出现时多么伟大或正确，它那些高深或伟大的成分，仅仅因为它进入了群体的智力范围并对它们产生影响，便会被剥夺殆尽。

不过从社会的角度看，一种观念的等级价值，它的固有价值，并不重要。必须考虑的是它所产生的效果。中世纪的基督教观念，上个世纪的民主观念，或今天的社会主义观念，都算不上十分高明。从哲学的角度考虑，它们只能算是一些令人扼腕的错误，但是它们的威力却十分强大，在未来很长一段时间里，它们将是决定各国行动的最基本因素。

甚至当一种观念经过了彻底的改造，使群体能够接受时，它也只有进入无意识领域，变成一种情感——这需要很长的时间——时才会产生影响，其中涉及的各种过程，我们将在下文予以讨论。

切莫以为，一种观念会仅仅因为它正确，便至少能在有教养者的头脑中产生作用。只要看一下最确凿的证据对大多数人的影响多么微不足道，立刻就可以搞清楚这个事实。十分明显的证据，也许会被有教养的人所接受，但是信徒很快就会被他的无意识的自我重新带回他原来的观点。人们将看到，过不了几天他便会故态复萌，用同样的语言重新提出他过去的证明。实际上，他仍处在以往观念的影响之下，它们已经变成了一种情感；只有这种观念影响着我们的言行举止最隐秘的动机。群体中的情况也不会例外。

当观念通过不同的方式，终于深入到群体的头脑之中并且产生了一系列效果时，和它对抗是徒劳的。引发法国大革命的那些哲学观念，花了将近一个世纪才深入群众的心中。一旦它们变得根深蒂固，其不可抗拒的威力尽人皆知。整个民族为了社会平等、为了实现抽象的权利和理想主义自由而作的不懈追求，使所有的王室都摇摇

欲坠，使西方世界陷入深刻的动荡之中。在20年的时间里，各国都内讧不已，欧洲出现了甚至连成吉思汗或帖木儿看了也会心惊胆战的大屠杀。世界还从未见过因为一种观念的传播而引起如此大规模的后果。

让观念在群众的头脑里扎根需要很长时间，而根除它们所需要的时间也短不了多少。因此就观念而言，群体总是落后于博学之士和哲学家好几代人。今天所有的政客都十分清楚，我刚才提到的那些基本观念中混杂着错误，然而由于这些观念的影响力依然十分强大，他们也不得不根据自己已经不再相信的真理中的原则进行统治。

2．群体的理性

不能绝对地说，群体没有理性或不受理性的影响。

但是它所接受的论证，以及能够对它产生影响的论证，从逻辑上属于十分拙劣的一类，因此把它们称为推理，只能算是一种比喻。

就像高级的推理一样，群体低劣的推理能力也要借助于观念，不过，在群体所采用的各种观念之间，只存在着表面的相似性或连续性。群体的推理方式类似于爱斯基摩人的方式，他们从经验中得知，冰这种透明物质放在嘴里可以融化，于是认为同样属于透明物质的玻璃，放在嘴里也会融化；他们又像一些野蛮人，以为吃下骁勇敌手的心脏，便得到了他的胆量；或是像一些受雇主剥削的苦力，立刻便认为天下所有雇主都是剥削他们的人。

群体推理的特点，是把彼此不同、只在表面上相似的事物搅在一起，并且立刻把具体的事物普遍化。知道如何操纵群体的人，给他们提供的也正是这种论证。它们是影响群体的唯一论证。包含一系列环节的逻辑论证，对群体来说完全是不可理

解的，因此不妨说，他们并不推理或只会错误地推理，也不受推理过程的影响。读读某些演说词，其中的弱点经常让人感到惊讶，但是它们对听众却有巨大的影响。人们忘记了一点，它们并不是让哲学家阅读的，而是用来说服集体的。同群体有密切交往的演说家，能够在群体中激发出对他们有诱惑力的形象。只要他成功地做到了这一点，他便达到了自己的目的。20本滔滔不绝的长篇论证——它们总是认真思考的产物——还不如几句能够对它试图说服的头脑有号召力的话。

没有必要进一步指出，群体没有推理能力，因此它也无法表现出任何批判精神，也就是说，它不能辨别真伪或对任何事物形成正确的判断。群体所接受的判断，仅仅是强加给它们的判断，而绝不是经过讨论后得到采纳的判断。在这方面，也有无数的个人比群体水平高明不了多少。有些意见轻而易举就得到了普遍赞同，更多的是因为大多数人感到，他们不可能根据自己的推理形成自己的独特看法。

3．群体的想象力

正像缺乏推理能力的人一样，群体形象化的想象力不但强大而活跃，并且非常敏感。一个人、一件事或一次事故在他们头脑中唤起的形象，全都栩栩如生。从一定意义上说，群体就像个睡眠中的人，他的理性已被暂时悬置，因此他的头脑中能产生出极鲜明的形象，但是只要他能够开始思考，这种形象也会迅速消失。既然群体没有思考和推理能力，因此它们不认为世上还有做不到的事情。一般而言它们也会认为，最不可能的事情便是最惊人的事情。一个事件中不同寻常的、传奇式的一面会给群体留下特别深刻的印象，原因便在于此。实际上，分析一下一种文明就会发现，使它得以存在的真正基础，正是那些神奇的、传奇般的内容。在历史上，表相总是比真相起着更重要的作用，不现实的因素总是比现实的因素更重要。

只会形象思维的群体，也只能被形象所打动。只有形象能吸引或吓住群体，成为它

们的行为动机。

因此，最能活灵活现反映人物形象的戏剧表演，总是对群体有巨大的影响。在罗马民众的眼里，面包和宏大壮观的表演构成了幸福的理想，他们再无所求。在此后的所有时代里，这种理想很少改变。对各种群体的想象力起作用的莫过于戏剧表演。所有观众同时体验着同样的感情，这些感情没有立刻变成行动，不过是因为最无意识的观众也不会认识不到，他不过是个幻觉的牺牲品，他的笑声与泪水，都是为了那个想象出来的离奇故事。然而，有时因为形象的暗示而产生的感情却十分强烈，因此就像暗示通常所起的作用一样，它们倾向于变成行动。这类故事我们时有所闻：大众剧场的经理仅仅因为上演了一出让让人情绪低沉的戏，便不得不在扮演叛徒的演员离开剧院时为他提供保护，以免受到那些对叛徒的罪恶义愤填膺的观众的粗暴攻击，尽管那罪行不过是想象的产物。我认为，我们在这里看到的是群体心理状态、尤其是对其施以影响的技巧之最显著的表现。虚幻的因素对他们的影响几乎像现实一样大。他们有着对两者不加区分的明显倾向。

侵略者的权力和国家的威力，便是建立在群体的想象力上。在领导群体时，尤其要在这种想象力上狠下功夫。所有重大的历史事件，佛教、基督教和伊斯兰教的兴起，宗教改革，法国大革命，以及我们这个时代社会主义的可怕入侵，都是因为对群体的想象力产生强烈影响所造成的直接或间接的后果。

此外，所有时代和所有国家的伟大政客，包括最专横的暴君，也都把群众的想象力视为他们权力的基础，他们从来没有设想过通过与它作对进行统治。拿破仑对国会说：“我通过改宗天主教，终止了旺代战争，通过变成个穆斯林教徒，在埃及站住了脚，通过成为一名信奉教皇至上的人，赢得了意大利神父的支持，如果我去统治一个犹太人的国家，我也会重修所罗门的神庙。”自从亚历山大和恺撒以来，大概

从来没有一个伟大的人物更好地了解怎样影响群众的想象力。他始终全神贯注的事情，就是强烈地作用于这种想象力。在胜利时，在屠杀时，在演说时，在自己的所有行动中，他都把这一点牢记在心中。直到他躺在床上就要咽气时，依然对此念念不忘。

如何影响群众的想象力呢？我们很快就会知道。这里我们只需说明，要想掌握这种本领，万万不可求助于智力或推理，也就是说，绝对不可以采用论证的方式。安东尼让民众反对谋杀恺撒的人，采用的办法并不是机智的说理，而是让民众意识到他的意志，是用手指着恺撒的尸体。

不管刺激群众想象力的是什么，采取的形式都是令人吃惊的鲜明形象，并且没有任何多余的解释，或仅仅伴之以几个不同寻常或神奇的事实。有关的事例是一场伟大的胜利，一种大奇迹、大罪恶或大前景。事例必须摆在作为一个整体的群众面前，其来源必须秘不示人。上千次小罪或小事件，丝毫也不会触动群众的想象力，而一个大罪或大事件却会给他们留下深刻的印象，即使其后果造成的危害与100次小罪相比不知小多少。就是几年前，流行性感冒仅在巴黎一地便造成了5000人的死亡，但是它对民众的想象力几乎没有任何影响。原因在于，这种真实的大规模死亡没有以某个生动的形象表现出来，而是通过每周发布的统计信息知道的。相反，如果一次事件造成的死亡只有500人而不是5000人，但它是在一天之内发生于公众面前，是一次极其引人瞩目的事件，譬如说是因为埃菲尔铁塔轰然倒塌，就会对群众的想象力产生重大影响。人们因为得不到相关的消息，以为一艘穿越大西洋的汽轮可能已在大洋中沉没，此事对群众想象力的影响整整持续了一周。但是官方的统计表明，仅仅1894年一年，就有850条船和203艘汽轮失事。以造成的生命和财产损失而论，它们比那次大西洋航线上的失事严重得多，而群众在任何时候都没有关心过这些接连不断的失事。

影响民众想象力的，并不是事实本身，而是它们发生和引起注意的方式。如果让我表明看法的话，我会说，必须对它们进行浓缩加工，它们才会形成一种令人瞠目结舌的惊人形象。掌握了影响群众想象力的艺术，也就掌握了统治他们的艺术。

第四章 群体信仰所采取的宗教形式



一切政治、神学或社会信条，要想在群众中扎根，都必须采取宗教的形式——能够把危险的讨论排除在外的形式。即便有可能使群众接受无神论，这种信念也会表现出宗教情感中所有的偏执狂，它很快就会表现为一种崇拜。

提要：宗教感情的意义/它不取决于对某个神的崇拜/它的特点/信念的强大是因为它采取了宗教的形式/不同的例子/民众的上帝从未消失/宗教感情复活所采取的新形式/宗教形式的无神论/从历史角度看这些现象的重要性/历史上的大事件都是群体宗教感情而非孤立的个人意志的结果。

我们已经证明，群体并不进行推理，它对观念或是全盘接受，或是完全拒绝；对它产生影响的暗示，会彻底征服它的理解力，并且使它倾向于立刻变成行动。我们还证明，对群体给予恰当的影响，它就会为自己所信奉的理想慷慨赴死。我们也看到，它只会产生狂暴而极端的情绪，同情心很快就会变成崇拜，而一旦心生厌恶，

也几乎立刻会变为仇恨。这些一般性解释，已经为我们揭示了群体信念的性质。

在对这些信念作更为细致的考察时，显然还会发现，不论是在有着狂热宗教信仰的时代，还是发生了政治大动荡的时代——例如上个世纪的状况——它们总是采取一种特殊的形式，我除了把它称为宗教感情之外，再没有更好的称呼。

这种感情有着十分简单的特点，比如对想象中某个高高在上者的崇拜，对生命赖以存在的某种力量的畏惧，盲目服从它的命令，没有能力对其信条展开讨论，传播这种信条的愿望，倾向于把不接受它们的任何人视为仇敌。这种感情所涉及的不管是一个看不见的上帝、一具木头或石头偶像，还是某个英雄或政治观念，只要它具有上述特点，它便总是有着宗教的本质。可以看到，它还会在同等程度上表现出超自然和神秘的因素。群体下意识地把某种神秘的力量等同于一时激起他们热情的政治信条或获胜的领袖。

一个人如果只崇拜某个神，他还算不上有虔诚的信仰，只有当他把自己的一切思想资源、一切自愿的服从行为、发自肺腑的幻想热情，全部奉献给一项事业或一个人，将其作为自己全部思想和行动的目标与准绳时，才能够说他是个虔诚的人。

偏执与妄想是宗教感情的必然伴侣。凡是自信掌握了现世或来世幸福秘密的人，难免都会有这样的表现。当聚集在一起的人受到某种信念的激励时，在他们中间也会发现这两个特点。恐怖统治时代的雅各宾党人，骨子里就像宗教法庭时代的天主教徒一样虔诚，他们残暴的激情也有着同样的来源。

群体的信念有着盲目服从、残忍的偏执以及要求狂热的宣传等等这些宗教感情所固有的特点，因此可以说，他们的一切信念都具有宗教的形式。受到某个群体拥戴的英雄，在这个群体看来就是一个真正的神。拿破仑当了15年这样的神，一个比任何

神都更频繁地受到崇拜、更轻松地把人置于死地的神。基督教的神和异教徒的神，对处在他们掌握中的头脑，也从未实行过如此绝对的统治。

一切宗教或政治信条的创立者之所以能够立住脚，皆因为他们成功地激起了群众想入非非的感情，他们使群众在崇拜和服从中，找到了自己的幸福，随时准备为自己的偶像赴汤蹈火。这在任何时代概无例外。德·库朗热在论述罗马高卢人的杰作中正确地指出，维持着罗马帝国的根本不是武力，而是它所激发出的一种虔诚的赞美之情。他正确地写道：“一种在民众中受到憎恶的统治形式，竟能维持了五个世纪之久，世界史上还不曾有过类似的现象……帝国的区区30个军团，如何能让1亿人俯首帖耳，这真是不可思议。”他们服从的原因在于，皇帝是罗马伟业的人格化象征，他就像神一样受到了全体人民的一致崇拜。在他的疆域之内，即使最小的城镇也没有膜拜皇帝的祭坛。“当时，从帝国的一端到另一端，到处都可以看到一种新宗教的兴起，它的神就是皇帝本人。在基督教以前的许多年里，60座城市所代表的整个高卢地区，都建起了和里昂城附近的庙宇相似的纪念奥古斯都皇帝的神殿……其祭司由联合在一起的高卢城市选出，他是当地的首要人物……把这一切归因于畏惧和奴性是不可能的。整个民族不可能全是奴隶，尤其不可能是长达三个世纪的奴隶。崇拜君主的并不是那些廷臣，而是罗马；不仅仅是罗马，还有高卢地区、西班牙、希腊和亚洲。”

大多数支配着人们头脑的大人物，如今已经不再设立圣坛，但是他们还有雕像，或者，他们的赞美者手里有他们的画像，以他们为对象的崇拜行为，和他们的前辈所得到的相比毫不逊色。只要深入探究一下群众心理学的这个基本问题，即可破解历史的奥妙。群众不管需要别的什么，他们首先需要上帝。

切莫认为，这些事情不过是过去时代的神话，早已被理性彻底清除。在同理性永恒

的冲突中，失败的从来就不是感情。群众固然已经听不到神或宗教这种词，过去，正是以它们的名义，群众长期受着奴役。但是在过去一百年里，他们从未拥有过如此多的崇拜对象，古代的神也无缘拥有这样多受到崇拜的塑像。近年研究过大众运动的人知道，在布朗热主义的旗号下，群众的宗教本能是多么容易复活。在任何一家乡村小酒馆里，都不会找不到这位英雄的画像。他被赋予匡扶正义铲除邪恶的全权，成千上万的人会为他献出生命。如果他的性格与他传奇般的名望不相上下，他肯定能在历史上占据伟人的地位。

由此可见，断言群众需要宗教，实在是十分无用的老生常谈，因为一切政治、神学或社会信条，要想在群众中扎根，都必须采取宗教的形式——能够把危险的讨论排除在外的形式。即便有可能使群众接受无神论，这种信念也会表现出宗教情感中所有的偏执狂，它很快就会表现为一种崇拜。实证主义者这个小宗派的演变，为我们提供了一个不寻常的例证。同陀斯妥耶夫斯基这位深刻思想家的名字联系在一起的虚无主义者，发生在他们身上的事情，很快也会发生在实证主义身上。他在某一天受到理性之光的启发，撕碎了小教堂祭坛上一切神仙和圣人的画像，他吹灭蜡烛，立刻用无神论哲学家——如比希纳和莫勒斯霍特——的著作代替了那些被破坏的物品，然后他又虔诚地点燃了蜡烛。他的宗教信仰的对象变了，然而真能说他的宗教感情也变了吗？

我要再说一遍，除非我们研究群体信念长期采取的宗教形式，否则便不可能理解一些肯定十分重要的历史事件。对某些社会现象的研究，更需要着眼于心理学的角度，而不是自然主义的角度。史学家泰纳只从自然主义角度研究法国大革命，因此他往往看不到一些事件的起源。他对事实有充分的讨论，然而从研究群体心理学的要求看，他并不总是能够找出它们的起因。事件中血腥、混乱和残忍的一面让他感到惊恐，但是从那部伟大戏剧的英雄身上，很少能够看到还有一群癫狂的野蛮人

恣意妄为，对自己的本能丝毫不加约束。这场革命的暴烈，它的肆意屠杀，它对宣传的需要，它向一切事物发出的战争宣言，只有当认识到这场革命不过是一种新宗教信仰在群众中的建立时，才会得到恰当的解释。宗教改革、圣巴托洛缪的大屠杀、法国的宗教战争、宗教法庭、恐怖时期，都属于同类现象，都是受宗教感情激励的群众所为，凡是怀有这种感情的人，必然会用火与剑去清除那些反对建立新信仰的人。宗教法庭的办法，是一切有着真诚而不屈信念的人所采用的办法。假如他们采用了别的办法，他们的信念也就不该得到这样的评语了。

像我刚才提到的这些大事件，只有在群众的灵魂想让它们发生时，它们才有可能发生。即使最绝对的专制者也无法造成这种事件。当史学家告诉我们圣巴托洛缪惨案是一个国王所为时，他们对群体心理表现得和君王们一样无知。这种命令只能由群体的灵魂来贯彻。握有最绝对的权力的最专制的君主，充其量只能加快或延缓其显灵的时间。圣巴托洛缪惨案或宗教战争，并不完全是国王们所为，就像恐怖统治不完全是罗伯斯庇尔、丹东或圣鞠斯特所为一样。在这些事件的深处，总可以找到的绝不是统治者的权力，而是群体灵魂的运作。

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第二卷 群体的意见与信念

第一章 群体的意见和信念中的间接因素



教育既不会使人变得更道德，也不会使他更幸福；它既不能改变他的本能，也不能改变他天生的热情，而且有时——只要进行不良引导即可——害处远大于好处。

提要：群体信念的准备性因素。1．种族。它的影响至关重要。/2．传统。种族精神的综合反映/传统的社会意义/它在失去必要性后会成为有害因素/群体是传统最坚定的维护者。3．时间。它建立信念，也毁灭信念/在时间的帮助下从无序走向有序。4．政治和社会制度。错误的认识/它们的影响力甚小/各民族不能选择自己视为最好的制度/相同的制度名称下掩盖着最不相同的东西/理论上不好的制度，对某些民族却是必要的。5．教育。关于教育影响群众的错误观点/统计学上的说明/拉丁民族的教育制度对道德的破坏作用/不同民族所提供的事例。

在研究了群体的精神结构之后，我们了解了它的感情、思维和推理方式，现在让我们来看看它的意见和信念是如何形成的。

决定着这些意见和信念的因素分为两类：间接因素和直接因素。

间接因素是指这样一些因素，它能够使群体接受某些信念，并且使其再也难以接受别的信念。这些因素为以下情况的出现准备了基础：突然会冒出来一些威力与结果都令人吃惊的新观念，虽然它们的自发性不过是一种表象。某些观念的爆发并被付诸行动，有时看起来显得十分突然。然而这只是一种表面结果，在它背后肯定能够找到一种延续良久的准备性力量。直接因素是这样一些因素，随着上述长期性准备工作的延续，它们能够成为实际说服群体的资源，不过，若是没有那种准备工作，它们也不会发生作用。这就是说，它们是使观念采取一定形式并且使它能够产生一定结果的因素。集体突然开始加以贯彻的方案，就是由这种直接因素引起的。一次骚乱的爆发，或一个罢工决定，甚至民众授予某人权力去推翻政府，都可归因这种因素。

在所有重大历史事件中，都可以找到这两种因素相继发生作用。这里仅以一个最令人震惊的事件为例，法国大革命的间接因素包括哲学家的著作、贵族的苛捐杂税以及科学思想的进步。有了这些准备，群众的头脑便很容易被演说家的演讲以及朝廷用不疼不痒的改良进行的抵抗所激怒。

有些间接因素具有普遍性，可以看出，它们是群体一切信念和意见的基础。这些因素就是种族、传统、时代、各种典章制度和教育。

现在我们就来研究一下这些不同因素的影响。

1. 种族

种族的因素必须被列在第一位，因为它本身的重要性远远超过其他因素。我在前一本著作中曾对它有过充分的研究，故无须再作详细的讨论。在前一本著作中，我们说明了一个历史上的种族有什么特点，以及它一旦形成了自己的禀性，作为遗传规

律的结果，它便具有了这样的力量，它的信仰、制度和艺术，总之，它文明中的一切成分，仅仅是它的气质的外在表现。我们指出，种族的力量具有这样的特点，没有任何要素在从一个民族传播给另一民族时，不会经历深刻的变化。

环境和各种事件代表着一时的社会暗示性因素，它们可能有相当大的影响，但这种影响如果与种族的暗示因素对立，换言之，如果它与一个民族世代继承下来的因素相反，它便只能是暂时的。

我们在本书下面的一些章节里，还会不时谈及种族的影响，我们会说明，这种影响是如此强大，它决定着群体气质的特征。这一事实造成的后果是，不同国家的群体表现出相当不同的信念和行为，受到影响的方式也各不相同。

2. 传统

传统代表着过去的观念、欲望和感情。它们是种族综合作用的产物，并且对我们发挥着巨大影响。

自从胚胎学证明了过去的时间对生物进化的巨大影响以后，生物科学便发生了变化；如果这种理论更加广为人知，历史科学想必也会出现类似的变化。然而目前它尚未得到足够广泛的普及，许多政客同上个世纪的学究们相比，仍然高明不了多少，他们相信社会能够和自己的过去决裂，完全遵照理性之光所指引的唯一道路前进。

民族是在历史中形成的一个有机体，因此就像其他有机体一样，它只能通过缓慢的遗传积累过程发生变化。

支配着人们的是传统，当他们形成群体时，就更是如此。他们能够轻易给传统造成

的变化，如我一再指出的那样，仅仅是一些名称和外在形式而已。

对这种状况不必感到遗憾。脱离了传统，不管民族气质还是文明，都不可能存在。因此自有人类以来，他一直便有着两大关切，一是建立某种传统结构，二是当它有益的成果已变得破败不堪时，努力摧毁这种传统。没有传统，文明是不可能的；没有对这些传统的破坏，进步也是不可能的。困难——这是个极严重的困难——在于如何在稳定与求变之间取得平衡。如果一个民族使自己的习俗变得过于牢固，它便不会再发生变化，于是就像中国一样，变得没有改进能力。在这种情况下，暴力革命也没多少用处，因为由此造成的结果，或者是打碎的锁链被重新拼接在一起，让整个过去原封不动地再现，或者是对被打碎的事物撒手不管，衰败很快被无政府状态所取代。

因此，对于一个民族来说，理想的状态是保留过去的制度，只用不易察觉的方式一点一滴地改进它们。这个理想不易实现。使它变成现实的几乎只有古罗马人和近代英国人。

死抱着传统观念不放，极其顽固地反对变革传统观念的，正是群体。有地产的群体更是如此。我坚持认为群体具有保守主义精神，并且指出，最狂暴的反叛最终也只会造成一些嘴皮子上的变化。上个世纪末，教堂被毁，僧侣们或是被驱逐出国，或是殒命于断头台，人们也许会想，旧日的宗教观念已经威力尽失。但是没过几年，为了顺应普遍的要求，遭禁的公开礼拜制度便又建立起来了。

被暂时消灭的旧传统，又恢复了昔日的影响。

没有任何事例能更好地反映传统对群体心态的威力。最不受怀疑的偶像，并不住在庙堂之上，也不是宫廷里那些最专制的暴君，转瞬之间他们就可以被人打碎。支配

着我们内心最深处的自我的，是那些看不见的主人，它可以安全地避开一切反叛，只能在数百年的时间里被慢慢地磨损。

3 . 时间

时间对于社会问题就像对生物学问题一样，是最有力的因素之一。它是唯一的真正创造者，也是唯一的伟大毁灭者。积土成山要靠时间，从地质时代模糊难辨的细胞到产生出高贵的人类，靠的也是时间。数百年的作用足以改变一切固有的现象。人们正确地认为，如果蚂蚁有充足的时间，它也能把勃朗克山夷为平地。如果有人掌握了随意改变时间的魔法，他便具有了信徒赋予上帝的权力。

不过，这里我们只来讨论时间对群体形成意见的影响。从这个角度看，它也有着巨大的作用。一些重大的要素，譬如种族，也取决于它，没有它便无法形成。它引起一切信仰的诞生、成长和死亡。它们获得力量靠的是时间，失去力量也是因为时间。

具体而言，群体的意见和信念是由时间装备起来的，或者它至少为它们准备了生长的土壤。一些观念可实现于一个时代，却不能实现于另一个时代，原因就在这里。是时间把各种信仰和思想的碎屑堆积成山，从而使某个时代能够产生出它的观念。这些观念的出现并不是像掷骰子一样全凭运气，它们都深深植根于漫长的过去。当它们开花结果时，是时间为它们作好了准备。如想了解它们的起源，就必须回顾既往。它们既是历史的儿女，又是未来的母亲，然而也永远是时间的奴隶。

因此，时间是我们最可靠的主人，为了看到一切事物有何变化，应当让它自由发挥作用。今天，面对群众可怕的愿望以及它所预示的破坏和骚乱，我们深感不安。要想看到平衡的恢复，除了依靠时间，再无他法。拉维斯先生所言甚是：“没有哪种

统治形式可以一夜之间建立起来。政治和社会组织是需要数百年才能打造出来的产物。封建制度在建立起它的典章之前，经历了数百年毫无秩序的混乱。绝对君权也是在存在了数百年后，才找到了统治的成规。这些等待的时期是极为动荡的。”

4．政治和社会制度

制度能够改正社会的弊端，国家的进步是改进制度与统治带来的结果，社会变革可以用各种命令来实现——我认为这些想法仍然受到普遍的赞同。它们是法国大革命的起点，而且目前的各种社会学说也仍然以它为基础。

最具连续性的经验一直未能动摇这个重大的谬见。哲学家和史学家们枉费心地想证明它的荒谬，不过他们却可以毫不费力地证明，各种制度是观念、感情和习俗的产物，而观念、感情和习俗并不会随着改写法典而被一并改写。一个民族并不能随意选择自己的制度，就像它不能随意选择自己头发和眼睛的颜色一样。制度和政府都是种族的产物，它们并不是某个时代的创造者，而是由这个时代所创造。对各民族的统治，不是根据他们一时的奇思怪想，而是他们的性质决定了他们要被统治。一种政治制度的形成需要上百年的时间，改造它也同样如此。各种制度并没有固有的优点，就它们本身而言，它们无所谓好坏。在特定的时刻对一个民族有益的制度，对另一个民族也许极为有害。

进一步说，一个民族并没有真正改变其各种制度的能力。毫无疑问，以暴力革命为代价，它可以改变其名称，但是其本质依然如故。名称不过是些无用的符号，历史学家在深入到事物的深层时，很少需要留意它们。正是因为如此，英国这个世界上最民主的国家仍然生活在君主制的统治下，而经常表现得十分嚣张的最具压迫性的专制主义，却是存在于那些原属西班牙的美洲共和国，尽管它们都有共和制的宪法。决定着各民族命运的是它们的性格，而不是它们的政府。我曾在前一本书中，

通过提出典型事例来证实这一观点。

因此，把时间浪费在炮制各种煞有介事的宪法上，就像是小孩子的把戏，是无知的修辞学家毫无用处的劳动。必要性和时间承担着完善宪政的责任，我们最明智的做法，就是让这两个因素发挥作用。这就是盎格鲁—萨克逊人采用的办法，正像他们伟大的史学家麦考利在一段文字中告诉我们的，拉丁民族各国的政客们，应当由衷地学习这种方法。他指出，法律所能取得的一切好处，从纯粹理性的角度看，表现出一片荒谬与矛盾，他然后又对拉丁民族一拥而上发疯般制定出来的宪法文本与英国的宪法进行了比较。他指出，后者总是一点一滴慢慢地发生变化，影响是来自必要性，而不是来自思辨式的推理：

从来不考虑是否严谨对称，更多地是考虑它的方便实用；从来不单纯以不一致为由去消除不一致；除非感到有所不满，绝对不加以变革；除非能够消除这种不满，绝对不进行革新；除了针对具体情况必须提供的条款之外，绝对不制定任何范围更大的条款——这些原则，从约翰国王的时代直到维多利亚女王的时代，一直支配着我们二百五十届议会，使它变得从容不迫。

要想说明各民族的法律和各项制度在多大程度上表达着每个种族的需要，因此没有必要对其进行粗暴的变革，就要对它们逐一进行审查。例如，对集权制的优点和缺点，可以沉溺于哲学上的考究。但是，当我们看到，一个由不同种族构成的国民用了一千年时间来维护这种集权制；当我们看到，一场目的在于摧毁过去一切制度的大革命也不得不尊重这种集权制，甚至使它进一步强化，在这种情况下，我们就该承认它是迫切需要的产物，承认它是这个民族的生存条件。对于那些奢谈毁掉这种制度的政客，我们应当对他们可怜的智力水平报以怜悯。如果他们碰巧做成了这件事，他们的成功立刻会预示着一场残酷的内战，这又会立刻带来一种比旧政权更具

压迫性的新的集权制度。

从以上所述得出的结论是，深刻影响群体禀性的手段，不能到制度中去寻找。我们看到，有些国家，譬如美国，在民主制度下取得了高度繁荣，而另一些国家，譬如那些西班牙人的美洲共和国，在极为相似的制度下，却生活在可悲的混乱状态中，这时我们就应当承认，这种制度与一个民族的伟大和另一个民族的衰败都是不相干的。各民族是受着它们自己性格的支配，凡是与这种性格不和的模式，都不过是一件借来的外套，一种暂时的伪装。毫无疑问，为强行建立某些制度而进行的血腥战争和暴力革命一直就在发生，而且还会继续发生，人们就像对待圣人的遗骨一样，赋予这些制度以创造幸福的超自然力量。因此从某种意义上可以说，是制度反作用于群体的头脑，它们才引发了这些大动荡。然而，其实并不是制度以这种方式产生了反作用，因为我们知道，不管成功或失败，它们本身并没有以这种方式产生反作用，因为它们本身并不具有那样的能力。影响群众头脑的是各种幻想和词语，尤其是词语，它们的强大一如它们的荒诞，下面我就简单揭示一下它们令人吃惊的影响。

5．教育

在当前这个时代的主要观念中，首当其冲的是这样一种观念，即认为教育能够使人大大改变，它会万无一失地改造他们，甚至能够把他们变成平等的人。这种主张被不断地重复，仅仅这个事实就足以让它最终成为最牢固的民主信条。如今要想击败这种观念，就像过去击败教会一样困难。

但是在这个问题上，就像在许多其他问题上一样，民主观念与心理学和经验的结论有着深刻的差异。包括赫伯特·斯宾塞在内的许多杰出哲学家，已经毫不费力地证明，教育既不会使人变得更道德，也不会使他更幸福；它既不能改变他的本能，也

不能改变他天生的热情，而且有时——只要进行不良引导即可——害处远大于好处。统计学家已经为这种观点提供了佐证，他们告诉我们，犯罪随着教育，至少是某种教育的普及而增加，社会的一些最坏的敌人，也是在学校获奖者名单上有案可查的人。一位杰出的官员，阿道夫·吉约先生，在最近一本著作里指出，目前受过教育的罪犯和文盲罪犯的比例是3000：1000，在50年的时间里，人口中的犯罪比例从每10万居民227人上升到了552人，即增长了133%。他也像他的同事一样注意到，年轻人犯罪增长得尤其多，而人尽皆知的是，法国为了他们，已经用免费义务制教育取代了交费制。

当然不能说，即使正确引导的教育，也不会造成十分有益的实际结果——谁也没有坚持过这种主张。就算它不会提升道德水平，至少也会反映在专业技能的发展上。不幸的是，尤其在过去25年里，拉丁民族把它们的教育制度建立在了十分错误的原则上，尽管有些最杰出的头脑，如布吕尔、德·库朗热、泰纳等许多人提出了意见，它们依然不思悔改。我本人在过去出版的一本书中指出，法国的教育制度把多数受过这种教育的人变成了社会的敌人，它让无数学子加入了最恶劣的社会主义者的阵营。

这种制度——它可能很适合拉丁民族的禀性——的主要危险来自这样一个事实，即它是以根本错误的心理学观点为基础，认为智力是通过一心学好教科书来提高的。由于采用了这种观点，便尽可能强化许多手册中的知识。从小学直到离开大学，一个年轻人只能死记硬背书本，他的判断力和个人主动性从来派不上用场。受教育对于他来说就是背书和服从。

一位前公共教育部长朱勒·西蒙先生写道：“学习课程，把一种语法或一篇纲要牢记在心，重复得好，模仿也出色——这实在是一种十分可笑的教育方式，它的每项工

作都是一种信仰行为，即默认教师不可能犯错误。这种教育的唯一结果，就是贬低自我，让我们变得无能。”

如果这种教育仅仅是无用，人们还可以对孩子们示以同情，他们虽然没有在小学里从事必要的学习，毕竟被教会了一些科劳泰尔后裔的族谱、纽斯特里亚和奥斯特拉西亚之间的冲突或动物分类之类的知识。但是这种制度的危险要比这严重得多，它使服从它的人强烈地厌恶自己的生活状态，极想逃之夭夭。工人不想再做工人，农民不想再当农民，而大多数地位卑贱的中产阶级，除了吃国家职员这碗饭以外，不想让他们的儿子从事任何别的职业。法国的学校不是让人为生活作好准备，而是只打算让他们从事政府的职业，在这个行当上取得成功，无需任何必要的自我定向，或表现出哪怕一点个人的主动性。这种制度在社会等级的最底层创造了一支无产阶级大军，他们对自己的命运忿忿不平，随时都想起来造反。在最高层，它培养出一群轻浮的资产阶级，他们既多疑又轻信，对国家抱着迷信般的信任，把它视同天道，却又时时不忘对它表示敌意，总是把自己的过错推给政府，离了当局的干涉，他们便一事无成。

国家用教科书制造出这么多有文凭的人，然而它只能利用其中的一小部分，于是只好让另一些人无事可做。因此，它只能把饭碗只给先来的，剩下的便全都成了它的敌人。从社会金字塔的最高层到最低层，从最卑贱的小秘书到教授和警察局长，有大量吹嘘文凭的人在围攻各种职位，商人想找到一个代他处理殖民地生意的人难上加难，成千上万的人却在谋求最平庸的官差。只在塞纳一地，就有两万名男女教师失业，他们全都蔑视农田或工场，只想从国家那儿讨生计。被选中的人数是有限的，因此肯定有大量心怀不满的人。他们随时会参与任何革命，不管它的头领是谁，也不管它有什么目标。可以说，掌握一些派不上用场的知识，是让人造反的不二法门。

显然，迷途知返为时已晚。只有经验这位人民最好的老师，最终会揭示出我们的错误。只有它能够证明，必须废除我们那些可恶的教科书和可悲的考试，代之以勤劳的教育，它能够劝导我们的年轻人回到田野和工场，回到他们今天不惜任何代价逃避的殖民地事业。

如今，一切受教育的人所需要的专业教育，就是我们祖辈所理解的教育。在今天，凭自己意志的力量、开拓能力和创业精神统治世界的民族中，这种教育依然强盛。泰纳先生这位伟大的思想家，在一系列著名篇章——下面我还会引用其中一些重要段落——中清楚说明了，我们过去的教育制度与今天英国和美国的制度大体相似。他在对拉丁民族和盎格鲁-萨克逊民族的制度进行不同寻常的比较时，明确指出了这两种方式的后果。

也许人们在迫不得已的情况下会认为，继续接受我们古典教育中的全部弊端，尽管它只能培养出心怀不满和不适应自己生活状况的人，但是向人灌输大量肤浅的知识，不出差错地背诵大量教科书，毕竟能够提高智力水平。但是它真能提高这种水平吗？不可能！生活中取得成功的条件是判断力，是经验，是开拓精神和个性——这些素质都不是书本能够带来的。教科书和字典可以是有用的参考工具，但长久把它们放在脑子里却没有任何用处。

如何能够让专业教育提高智力，使它达到大大高于古典教育的水平呢？泰纳先生做过出色的说明。他说：

观念只有在它们自然而正常的环境中才能形成。促进观念的成长，需要年轻人每天从工场、矿山、法庭、书房、建筑工地和医院获得大量的感官印象；他得亲眼看到各种工具、材料和操作；他得与顾客、工作者和劳动者在一起，不管他们干得是好是坏，也不管他们是赚是赔。采用这种方式，他们才能对那些从眼睛、耳朵、双手

甚至味觉中得到的各种细节，有些微不足道的理解。学习者是在不知不觉中获得了这些细节，默默地推敲，在心中逐渐成形，并且或迟或早会产生出一些提示，让他们着手新的组合、简化、生意、改进或发明。而法国年轻人恰恰在最能出成果的年纪，被剥夺了所有这些宝贵的接触、所有这些不可缺少的学习因素。因为有七八年的时间他一直被关在学校里，切断了一切亲身体验的机会，因此对于世间的人和事，对于控制这些人和事的各种办法，不可能得到鲜明而准确的理解。

.....十人之中，至少九个人在几年里把他们的时间和努力浪费掉了，而这是有效、重要、甚至是决定性的几年。他们中间有一半甚至三分之二的人，是为了考试而活着——我这里指的是那些被淘汰者。还有一半或三分之二成功地得到了某种学历、证书或一纸文凭——我指的是那些超负荷工作的人。在规定的某一天，坐在一把椅子上，面对一张桌子，在连续两小时的时间，又涉及一大堆学科，非要让他们成为一切人类知识的活字典——这种要求是太过分了。在那一天的那两个小时内，他们也许正确或接近正确，但用不了一个月，他们便不再是这样。他们不可能再通过考试。他们脑子里那些过多的、过于沉重的所学不断流失，且没有新东西补充进去。他们的精神活力衰退了，他们继续成长的能力涸竭了，一个得到充分发展的人出现了，然而他也是个筋疲力尽的人。他成家立业，落入生活的俗套，而只要落入这种俗套，他就会把自己封闭在狭隘的职业中，工作也许还算本分，但仅此而已。这就是平均收益，收入肯定不能抵消开支。而在1789年以前，法国就像英国或美国一样，采用的却是相反的办法，由此得到的结果并无不同，甚至更好。

此后这位著名的历史学家又向我们揭示了我们的制度与盎格鲁-萨克逊人的差别。后者并没有我们那样多的专业学校。他们的教育并不是建立在啃书本上，而是建立在实物教学上。例如，他们的工程师并不是在学校，而是在车间里训练出来的。这种方法表明，每个人都能达到他的智力允许他达到的水平。如果他没有进一步发展的

能力，他可以成为工人或领班，如果天资不俗，他便会成为工程师。与个人前程全取决他在19或20岁时一次几小时考试的做法相比，这种办法更民主，对社会也更有利。

在医院、矿山和工厂，在建筑师或律师的办公室里，十分年轻便开始学业的学生们，按部就班地经历他们的学徒期，非常类似于办公室里的律师秘书或工作室里的艺术家。在投入实际工作之前，他也有机会接受一些一般性教育过程，因此已经准备好了一个框架，可以把他们迅速观察到的东西储存进去，而且他能够利用自己在空闲时间得到的各种各样的技能，由此逐渐同他所获得的日常经验协调一致。在这种制度下，实践能力得到了发展，并且与学生的才能相适应，发展方向也符合他未来的任务和特定工作的要求，这些工作就是他今后要从事的工作。因此在英国或美国，年轻人很快便处在能够尽量发挥自己能力的位置上。在25岁时——如果不缺少各种材料和部件，时间还会提前——他不但成了一个有用的工作者，甚至具备自我创业的能力；他不只是机器上的一个零件，而且是个发动机。而在制度与此相反的法国，一代又一代人越来越向中国看齐——由此造成的人力浪费是巨大的。

关于我们拉丁民族的教育制度与实践生活不断扩大的差距，这位伟大的哲学家得出了如下结论：

在教育三个阶段，即儿童期、少年期和青年期，如果从考试、学历、证书和文凭的角度看，坐在学校板凳上啃理论和教科书的时间是有点长得过头了，而且负担过重。即使仅从这个角度看，采用的办法也糟糕透顶，它是一种违反自然的、与社会对立的制度。过多地延长实际的学徒期，我们的学校寄宿制度，人为的训练和填鸭式教学，功课过重，不考虑以后的时代，不考虑成人的年龄和人们的职业，不考虑年轻人很快就要投身其中的现实世界，不考虑我们活动于其中、他必须加以适应或

提前学会适应的社会，不考虑人类为保护自己而必须从事的斗争，不考虑为了站住脚跟他得提前得到装备、武器和训练并且意志坚强。这种不可缺少的装备，这种最重要的学习，这种丰富的常识和意志力，我们的学校全都没有教给法国的年轻人。它不但远远没有让他们获得应付明确生存状态的素质，反而破坏了他这种素质。因此从他走进这个世界，踏入他的活动领域之日起，他经常只会遇到一系列痛苦的挫折，由此给他造成的创痛久久不能痊愈，有时甚至失去生活能力。这种试验既困难又危险。这个过程对精神和道德的均衡产生了不良影响，甚至有难以恢复之虞。十分突然而彻底的幻灭已经发生了。这种欺骗太严重了，失望太强烈了。

以上所言是否偏离了群体心理学的主题？我相信并非如此。如果我们想知道今天正在群众中酝酿、明天就会出现的各种想法和信念，就必须对为其提供土壤的因素有所了解。教育能够使一个国家的年轻人了解到这个国家会变成什么样子。为当前这代人提供的教育，有理由让人灰心丧气。在改善或恶化群众的头脑方面，教育至少能发挥一部分作用。因而有必要说明，这种头脑是如何由当前的制度培养出来的，冷漠而中立的群众是如何变成了一支心怀不满的大军，随时打算听从一切乌托邦分子和能言善辩者的暗示。今天，能够找到社会主义者的地方，正是教室，为拉丁民族走向衰败铺平道路的，也是教室。

可以把泰纳的这些话与最近保罗·布尔热在其《海外》（*Outre-Mer*）这本杰作中对美国教育的观察作一比较。他也指出了我们的教育制度只会培养头脑狭隘、缺乏开拓精神和意志力的资产阶级或无政府主义者，他们“是两种同样有害的文明人，只会陷入无关痛痒的老生常谈或肆无忌惮的破坏”，然后他对我们法国的学校（公立学校）这种制造退化的工厂和美国那种能让人为生活作好出色准备的学校作了一番比较，我认为这个问题太值得反思了。真正的民主国家与嘴上自称民主但思想糊涂的国家之间的巨大差别，通过这种比较而暴露无遗。[布尔热（Paul Bourget），

1852—1935)，法国文学家，第一次世界大战前后是保守派文人中的代表人物。
——译注]

第二章 群体意见的直接因素



我们在研究群体的想象力时已经看到，它特别易于被形象产生的印象所左右。这些形象不一定随时都有，但是可以利用一些词语或套话，巧妙地把它们激活。

提要：1．形象、词语和套话。词语和套话的神奇力量/词语的力量与它所唤起的形象有关，但独立于它的真正含义/这些形象因时代和种族而各有不同/常用词语含义多变的实例/给旧事物更换名称的政治效用/种族差别造成的词义变化/“民主”一词在欧洲和美国的含义。2．幻觉。它的重要性/在所有文明的起源中都能发现幻觉/群体更喜欢幻觉而不是真理。3．经验。只有经验能够使必要的真理在群众心中生根/经验只有不断地重复才能生效/为说服群众必须付出的经验代价。4．理性。它对群体没有任何作用/群体只受无意识感情的影响/逻辑在历史中的作用/发生不可思议的事情的秘密。

我们刚才讨论了赋予群体心理以特定属性，使某些感情和观念得以发展的间接性准备因素。现在我们还研究一下能够直接发挥作用的因素。在下面这一章里我们会看到，要想让这些因素充分发挥作用，应当如何运用它们。

我们在本书的第一部分研究过集体的感情、观念和推理方式，根据这些知识，显然可以从影响他们心理的方法中，归纳出一些一般性原理。我们已经知道，什么事情会刺激群体的想象力，也了解了暗示、特别是那些以形象的方式表现出来的暗示的力量和传染过程。然而，正像暗示可以有十分不同的来源一样，能够对群体心理产生影响的因素也相当不同，因此必须对它们分别给予研究。这种研究是有益的。群体就像古代神话中的斯芬克司，必须对它的心理学问题给出一个答案，不然我们就会被它毁掉。

1．形象、词语和套话

我们在研究群体的想象力时已经看到，它特别易于被形象产生的印象所左右。这些形象不一定随时都有，但是可以利用一些词语或套话，巧妙地把它们激活。经过艺术化处理之后，它们毫无疑问有着神奇的力量，能够在群体心中掀起最可怕的风暴，反过来说，它们也能平息风暴。因为各种词语和套话的力量而死去的人，只用他们的尸骨，就能建造一座比古老的齐奥普斯更高的金字塔。

词语的威力与它们所唤醒的形象有关，同时又独立于它们的真实含义。最不明确的话语，有时反而影响最大。例如像民主、社会主义、平等、自由等等，它们的含义极为模糊，即使一大堆专著也不足以确定它们的所指。然而这区区几个词语的确有着神奇的威力，它们似乎是解决一切问题的灵丹妙药。各种极不相同的潜意识中的抱负及其实现的希望，全被它们集于一身。

说理与论证战胜不了一些词语和套话。它们是和群体一起隆重上市的。只要一听到它们，人人都会肃然起敬，俯首而立。许多人把它们当作自然的力量，甚至是超自然的力量。它们在人们心中唤起宏伟壮丽的幻象，也正是它们含糊不清，使它们有了神秘的力量。它们是藏在圣坛背后的神灵，信众只能诚惶诚恐地来到它们面前。

词语唤起的形象独立于它们的含义。这些形象因时代而异，也因民族而异。不过套话并没有改变，有些暂时的形象是和一定的词语联系在一起的：词语就像是用来唤醒它们的电铃按钮。

并非所有的词语和套话都有唤起形象的力量，有些词语在一段时间里有这种力量，但在使用过程也会失去它，不会再让头脑产生任何反应。这时它们就变成了空话，其主要作用是让使用者免去思考的义务。用我们年轻时学到少量套话和常识把自己武装起来，我们便拥有了应付生活所需要的一切，再也不必对任何事情进行思考。

只要研究一下某种特定的语言，就会发现它所包含的词语在时代变迁中变化得极慢，而这些词语所唤起的形象，或人们赋予它们的含义，却不停地发生着变化。因此我在另一本书中得出结论说，准确地翻译一种语言，尤其那些死亡的语言，是绝对不可能的。当我们用一句法语来取代一句拉丁语、希腊语或《圣经》里的句子时，或者当我们打算理解一本二三百年前用我们自己的语言写成的书时，我们实际上是在做什么呢？我们不过是在用现代生活赋予我们的一些形象和观念代替了另一些不同的形象和观念，它们是存在于古代一些种族的头脑中的产物，这些人的生活状况与我们没有任何相似之处。当大革命时的人以为自己在模仿古希腊和古罗马人时，他们除了把从来没有存在过的含义赋予古代的词语之外，还能做些什么呢？

希腊人的制度与今天用同样的词语设计出来的制度有何相似之处？那时的共和国本质上是一种贵族统治的制度，是由一小撮团结一致的小暴君统治着一群绝对服从的奴隶构成的制度。这些建立在奴隶制上的集体贵族统治，没了这种奴隶制一天也不能存在。

“自由”这个词也是如此。在一个从未想过思想自由的可能性，讨论城邦的诸神、法典和习俗就是最严重最不寻常的犯罪的地方，自由的含义与我们今天赋予它的含义有何相似之处？像“祖国”这样的词，对于雅典人或斯巴达人来说，除了指雅典或斯巴达的城邦崇拜之外，还能有别的含义吗？它当然不可能指由彼此征伐不断的敌对城邦组成的全希腊。在古代高卢，“祖国”这个词又能有什么含义？它是由相互敌视的部落和种族组成的，它们有着不同的语言和宗教，恺撒能够轻易征服它们，正是因为他总是能够从中找到自己的盟友。罗马人缔造了一个高卢人的国家，是因为他们使这个国家形成了政治和宗教上的统一。不必扯这么远，就拿二百年前的事来说吧，能够认为今天法国各省对“祖国”一词的理解，与大孔代——他和外国人结盟反对自己的君主——是一样的吗？然而词还是那个词。过去跑到外国去的

法国保皇党人，他们认为自己反对法国是在恪守气节，他们认为法国已经变节，因为封建制度的法律是把诸侯同主子而不是土地联系在一起的，因此有君主在，才有祖国在；可见，祖国对于他们的意义，不是与现代人大不相同吗？

意义随着时代的变迁而发生深刻变化的词语比比皆是。我们对它们的理解，只能达到过去经过了漫长的努力所能达到的水平。有人曾十分正确地说，即使想正确理解“国王”和“王室”这种称呼对我们曾祖父一辈意味着什么，也需要作大量的研究。更为复杂的概念会出现什么情况也就可想而知了。

由此可见，词语只有变动不定的暂时含义，它随着时代和民族的不同而不同。因此，我们若想以它们为手段去影响群体，我们必须搞清楚某个时候群体赋予它们的含义，而不是它们过去具有的含义，或精神状态有所不同的个人给予它们的含义。

因此，当群体因为政治动荡或信仰变化，对某些词语唤起的形象深感厌恶时，假如事物因为与传统结构紧密联系在一起而无法改变，那么一个真正的政治家的当务之急，就是在不伤害事物本身的同时赶紧变换说法。聪明的托克维尔很久以前就说过，执政府和帝国的具体工作就是用新的名称把大多数过去的制度重新包装一遍，这就是说，用新名称代替那些能够让群众想起不利形象的名称，因为它们的新鲜能防止这种联想。“地租”变成了“土地税”，“盐赋”变成了“盐税”，“徭役”变成了间接摊派，商号和行会的税款变成了执照费，如此等等。

可见，政治家最基本的任务之一，就是对流行用语，或至少对再没有人感兴趣，民众已经不能容忍其旧名称的事物保持警觉。名称的威力如此强大，如果选择得当，它足以使最可恶的事情改头换面，变得能被民众所接受。泰纳正确地指出，雅各宾党人正是利用了“自由”和“博爱”这种当时十分流行的说法，才能够“建立起堪与达荷美媲美的暴政，建立起和宗教法庭相类的审判台，干出与古墨西哥人相差无

几的人类大屠杀这种成就”。统治者的艺术，就像律师的艺术一样，首先在于驾驭辞藻的学问。这门艺术遇到的最大困难之一，就是在同一个社会，同一个词对于不同的社会阶层往往有不同的含义，表面上看他们用词相同，其实他们说着不同的语言。

在以上事例中，时间是促成词语含义发生变化的主要因素。如果我们再考虑到种族因素，我们就会看到，在同一个时期，在教养相同但种族不同的人中间，相同的词也经常与极不相同的观念相对应。不是见多识广的人，不可能理解这些差别，因此我不会纠缠在这个问题上。我只想指出，正是群众使用最多的那些词，在不同的民族中有着最不相同的含义。例如今天使用如此频繁的“民主”和“社会主义”，就属于这种情况。

实际上，它们在拉丁民族和盎格鲁-萨克逊民族中代表着十分对立的思想。在拉丁民族看来，“民主”更多地是指个人意志和自主权要服从于国家所代表的社会的意志和自主权。国家在日甚一日地支配着一切，集权、垄断并制造一切。不管是激进派、社会主义者还是保皇派，一切党派一概求助于国家。而在盎格鲁-萨克逊地区，尤其是在美国，“民主”一词却是指个人意志的有力发展，国家要尽可能服从这一发展，除了政策、军队和外交关系外，它不能支配任何事情，甚至公共教育也不例外。由此可见，同一个词，在一个民族是指个人意志和自主权的从属性以及国家的优势，而在另一个民族，却是指个人意志的超常发展和国家的彻底服从。

2. 幻觉

自从出现文明以来，群体便一直处在幻觉的影响之下。他们为制造幻觉的人建庙塑像，设立祭坛，超过了所有其他人。不管是过去的宗教幻觉还是现在的哲学和社会幻觉，这些牢不可破至高无上的力量，可以在我们这个星球上不断发展的任何文明

的灵魂中找到。古代巴比伦和埃及的神庙，中世纪的宗教建筑，是为它们而建；一个世纪以前震撼全欧洲的一场大动荡，是为它们而发动；我们的所有政治、艺术和社会学说，全都难逃它们的强大影响。有时，人类以可怕的动乱为代价，能够消除这些幻觉，然而他似乎注定还会让它们死而复生。没有它们，他不可能走出自己原始的野蛮状态；没有它们，他似乎很快就会重新回到这种野蛮状态。毫无疑问，它们不过是些无用的幻影，但是这些我们梦想中的产物，却使各民族创造出了辉煌壮丽值得夸耀的艺术或伟大文明。

在这个问题上，使群体形成意见的是由一些临时胡乱拼凑起来的不同观点，我在前面已经解释过这种机制。当时法国的国民卫队是由一些温顺的小店主组成的，他们的纪律极其涣散，根本不能拿他们当真。然而，冠以相似名称的任何军队会使人产生同样的联想，因此也会被认为是无害的。当时，群众的这种错误认识也为他们的领袖所持有，在涉及以偏概全的意见方面，这种情况时有发生。奥列弗先生在最近出版的一本书中提到，一位经常追随意、绝不超前的政治家——这里指梯也尔先生——在1867年12月31日的一次内阁讲话中，就宣称普鲁士除了一支和法国相等的常备军外，只拥有和法国相似的国民卫队，因此对它不必重视。

如果有人毁掉那些博物馆和图书馆，如果有人把教堂前石板路上那些在宗教鼓舞下建起的一切作品和艺术纪念物统统推倒，人类伟大的梦想还会留下些什么呢？让人们怀抱着那些希望和幻想吧，不然他们是活不下去的。这就是存在着诸神、英雄和诗人的原因。科学承担起这一任务已有五十年的时间，但是在渴望理想的心灵里，科学是有所欠缺的，因为它不敢做出过于慷慨的承诺，因为它不能撒谎。

上个世纪的哲学家热情地投身于对宗教、政治和社会幻觉的破坏，我们的祖辈已在这种幻觉中生活了许多世纪。他们毁灭了这些幻觉，希望和顺从的源泉也就随之涸

竭。幻想遭到扼杀之后，他们面对着盲目而无声无息的自然力量，而它对软弱和慈悲心肠一概无动于衷。

哲学不管取得了多大进步，它迄今仍没有给群众提供任何能够让他们着迷的理想。然而群众无论付出多大的代价，他们必须拥有自己的幻想，于是他们便像趋光的昆虫一样，本能地转向那些迎合他们需要的巧舌如簧者。推动各民族演化的主要因素，永远不是真理，而是谬误。如今社会主义为何如此强大，原因就在于它是仍然具有活力的最后的幻想。尽管存在着一切科学证据，它依然继续发展。它的主要力量是因为这样一个事实，即它的鼓吹者是那些非常无视现实，因而敢于向人类承诺幸福的人。如今，这种社会主义幻觉肆虐于过去大量的废墟之上，未来是属于它的。群众从来就没有渴望过真理，面对那些不合口味的证据，他们会拂袖而去，假如谬论对他们有诱惑力，他们更愿意崇拜谬论，凡是能向他们供应幻觉的，也可以很容易地成为他们的主人，凡是让他们幻灭的，都会成为他们的牺牲品。

3. 经验

经验几乎是唯一能够让真理在群众心中牢固生根、让过于危险的幻想归于破灭的有效手段。但是为了达到这个目的，经验必须发生在非常大的范围，而且得一再出现。通常，一代人的经验对下一代人是没有多少用处的。这就是一些被当作证据引用的历史事实达不到目的的原因。它们唯一的作用就是证明了，一种广泛的经验即使仅仅想成功地动摇牢固地根植于群众头脑中的错误观点，也需要一代又一代地反复出现。

史学家毫无疑问会把19世纪以及再早一些的年代当作一个充斥着奇异经验的时代，任何时代都没有做过如此多的试验。

最宏伟的试验就是法国大革命。发现一个社会有待于遵照纯粹理性的指导，从上到下翻新一遍，这必然会导致数百万人死于非命，让欧洲在20年里陷入深刻的动荡。为了用经验向我们证明，独裁者会让拥戴他们的民族损失惨重，需要在50年里来上两次破坏性试验。但是，虽然试验结果明确无误，好像仍然不那么令人信服。第一次试验的代价是300万人的性命和一次入侵，第二次试验导致割让领土并在事后表明了常备军的必要性。此后几乎还要来第三次试验。恐怕不定哪天它肯定会发生。要想让整个民族相信，庞大的德国军队并不像30年前普遍认为的那样，只是一支无害的国民卫队，就必须来上一次让我们损失惨重的战争。让人认识到贸易保护会毁掉实行这种制度的民族，至少需要20年的灾难性试验。这种例子显然不胜枚举。

4. 理性

在列举能够对群众心理产生影响的因素时，根本就没有必要提到理性，除非是为了指出它的影响的消极价值。

我们已经证明，群体是不受推理影响的，它们只能理解那些拼凑起来的观念。因此，那些知道如何影响它们的演说家，总是借助于它们的感情而不是它们的理性。逻辑定律对群体不起作用。让群体相信什么，首先得搞清楚让它们兴奋的感情，并且装出自己也有这种感情的样子，然后以借助于初级的联想方式，用一些非常著名的暗示性形象，去改变他们的看法，这样才能够——如果有必要的话——再回到最初提出的观点上来，慢慢地探明引起某种说法的感情。这种根据讲话的效果不断改变措辞的必要性，使一切有效的演讲完全不可能事先进行准备和研究。在这种事先准备好的演讲中，演讲者遵循的是自己的思路而不是听众的思路，仅这一个事实就会使他不可能产生任何影响。

讲究逻辑的头脑，惯于相信一系列大体严密的论证步骤，因此在向群众讲话时，难

免会借助于这种说服的方式，他们面对自己的论证不起作用，总是百思不得其解。有位逻辑学家写道：“通常，建立在三段论上——即建立在一致性联系上——的数学结论是不可更改的……由于这种不可更改的性质，即使是无机物，如果它能够遵循这种一致性联系的话，也会不得不表示同意。”这话说得当然不错，然而群体并不比无机物更能遵守这种组合，它甚至没有理解的能力。只要尝试一下用推理来说服原始的头脑——例如野蛮人或儿童的头脑——即可知道这种论说方式是多么不值钱。

如想看清楚同感情对抗的理性是多么苍白无力，甚至不必降低到这么原始的水平。我们只要想一下，就在几百年前，与最简单的逻辑也不相符的宗教迷信是多么顽强！在接近两千年的时间里，最清醒的天才也不得不在它们的规矩面前俯首称臣。只是到了现代，它们的真实性才多少受到了一些挑战。中世纪和文艺复兴时代也有不少开明之士，但没有一个人通过理性思考，认识到自己的迷信中十分幼稚的一面，或者对魔鬼的罪行或烧死巫师的必要性表示过丝毫的怀疑。

群体从来不受理性的指引，是否该对此表示遗憾？我们不必贸然称是。毫无疑问，是幻觉引起的激情和愚顽，激励着人类走上了文明之路，在这方面人类的理性没有多大用处。作为支配着我们的无意识的力量的产物，这些幻觉无疑是必要的。每个种族的精神成分中都携带着它命运的定律，并且也许它由于一种难以抑制的冲动，只能服从这些定律，即使这种冲动显然极不合理。有时，各民族好像被一些神秘的力量所左右，它们类似于那种使橡果长成橡树或让彗星在自己轨道上运行的力量。

我们若想对这些力量有一点认识，就必须研究一个民族的整个进化过程，而不是这一进化过程不时出现的一些孤立的事实。如果只考虑这些事实，历史就会变得仿佛是一连串不可能的偶然性所造成的结果。一个加利利的木匠似乎不可能变成一个持

续两千年之久的全能的神，使最重要的文明以他为基础形成；一小撮从沙漠里冒出来的阿拉伯人，似乎不太可能征服希腊罗马世界的大部分地区并建立起比亚历山大的领土更大的帝国；在欧洲已经十分发达、各地政权都已有了等级森严的制度的时代，区区一个炮兵中尉似乎也不太可能征服众多民族及其国王。

因此，还是让我们把理性留给哲人，不要过于强烈地坚持让它插手对人的统治吧。一切文明的主要动力并不是理性，倒不如说，尽管存在着理性，文明的动力仍然是各种感情——譬如尊严、自我牺牲、宗教信仰、爱国主义以及对荣誉的爱。

第三章 群体领袖及其说服的手法



作出简洁有力的断言，不理睬任何推理和证据，是让某种观念进入群众头脑最可靠的办法之一。一个断言越是简单明了，证据和证明看上去越贫乏，它就越有威力。

提要：1．群体的领袖。一切群体动物有着服从头领的本能需要/群体领袖的心理/只有他们能够使群众有所信仰并把他们组织起来/领袖的专制/领袖的分类/意志的作用。2．领袖的动员手段。这些手段的不同作用/相互传染从社会下层向上层蔓延的过程/民众的意见不久就会成普遍意见。3．名望。名望的定义和分类/先天的名望和个人名望/不同的实例/名望受到破坏的方式。

我们现在已经了解了群体的精神构成，我们也明白了能够对他们的头脑产生影响的力量。仍然有待研究的是，这些力量是如何发挥作用的，以及是什么人把它们有效地转变成了实践的力量。

1. 群体的领袖

只要有一些生物聚集在一起，不管是动物还是人，都会本能地让自己处在一个头领的统治之下。

就人类的群体而言，所谓的头领，有时不过是个小头目或煽风点火的人，但即使如此，他的作用也相当重要。他的意志是群体形成意见并取得一致的核心。他是各色人等形成组织的第一要素，他们为他们组成派别铺平了道路。一群人就像温顺的羊群，没了头羊就会不知所措。

领袖最初往往不过是被领导者中的一员。他本人也是被一些观念所迷惑，然后才变成了它的使徒。他对这些观念十分着迷，以至除此之外的一切事情都消失了。在他看来，一切相反的意见都是谬论或迷信。这方面的一个例子是罗伯斯庇尔，他对卢梭的哲学观念如醉如痴，在传播它们时竟然采用了宗教法庭的手段。

我们所说的领袖，更有可能是个实干家而非思想家。他们并没有头脑敏锐深谋远虑的天赋，他们也不可能如此，因为这种品质一般会让人犹疑不决。在那些神经有毛病的、好兴奋的、半癫狂的即处在疯子边缘的人中间，尤其容易产生这种人物。不管他们坚持的观念或追求的目标多么荒诞，他们的信念是如此坚定，这使得任何理性思维对他们都不起作用。他们对别人的轻藐和保留态度无动于衷，或者这只会让他们更加兴奋。他们牺牲自己的利益和家庭——牺牲自己的一切。自我保护的本能在他们身上消失得全无踪迹，在绝大多数情况下，他们孜孜以求的唯一回报就是以

身殉职。他们强烈的信仰使他们的话具有极大的说服力。芸芸众生总是愿意听从意志坚强的人，而他也知道如何迫使他们接受自己的看法。聚集成群的人会完全丧失自己的意志，本能地转向一个具备他们所没有的品质的人。

各民族从来就不缺领袖，然而，他们并非全都受着那种适合于使徒的强烈信念的激励。这些领袖往往熟谙巧言令色之道，一味追求私利，用取悦于无耻的本能来说服众人。他们利用这种方式可能产生极大的影响，然而这只能奏效于一时。有着狂热的信仰，能够打动群众灵魂的人，即隐士彼得、路德、萨伏那罗拉之流，以及法国大革命中的人物，他们是在自己先被一种信条搞得想入非非之后，才能够让别人也想入非非。这样他们才能够在自己信众的灵魂里唤起一股坚不可摧的力量，即所谓的信仰，它能让一个人变得完全受自己的梦想奴役。

无论信仰是宗教的、政治的或社会的，也无论这信仰的对象是一本书、一个人或一种观念，信仰的建立永远取决于人群中伟大领袖的作用。正是在这一点上，他们有着非常巨大的影响力。在人类所能支配的一切力量中，信仰的力量最为惊人，福音书上说，它有移山填海的力量，一点也不假。使一个人具有信仰，就是让他强大了十倍。重大的历史事件一直是由一些籍籍无名的信徒造成的，他们除了自己赞成的信仰之外，几乎什么也不知道。传遍全球的伟大宗教，或是从这个半球扩张到另一半球的帝国，它们之得以建立，靠的并不是学者或哲学家的帮助，更不是怀疑论者的帮助。

不过，对于以上提到的这些事情，我们所关注的是那些伟大的领袖人物，他们为数甚少，史学家很容易把他们一一清点出来。他们构成了一个连续体的顶峰，其上是一些权势显赫的主子，下面则是一些出力的人，在烟雾缭绕的小酒馆里，他们不停地向自己同志的耳朵里灌输着只言片语，慢慢地使其入迷。对于那些话的含义，他们

自己也很少理解，但是根据他们的说法，只要将其付诸实行，一定会导致一切希望和梦想的实现。

在每个社会领域，从最高贵者到最低贱者，人只要一脱离孤独状态，立刻便处在某个领袖的影响之下。大多数人，尤其是群众中的大多数人，除了自己的行业之外，对任何问题都没有清楚而合理的想法。领袖的作用就是充当他们的引路人。不过，他也可以被定期出版物所取代，虽然往往效果不佳，它们制造有利于群众领袖的舆论，向他们提供现成的套话，使他们不必再为说理操心。

群众领袖握有非常专制的权威，这种专制性当然是他们得到服从的条件。人们经常注意到，他们的权威无须任何后盾，就能轻易使工人阶级中最狂暴的人听命于自己。他们规定工时和工资比例，他们发出罢工命令，何时开始何时结束，全凭他们一声令下。

如今，由于政府甘心受人怀疑，使自己越来越没有力量，因此这些领袖和鼓动家正日益倾向于僭取政府的位置。这些新主子的暴政带来的结果是，群众在服从他们时，要比服从政府温顺得多。如果因为某种变故，领袖从舞台上消失，群众就会回到当初群龙无首不堪一击的状态。在上次巴黎公共马车雇员的罢工中，两个指挥的领袖一被抓起来，就足以让罢工立刻结束。在群体的灵魂中占上风的，并不是对自由的要求，而是当奴才的欲望。他们是如此倾向于服从，因此不管谁自称是他们的主子，他们都会本能地表示臣服。

这些首领和煽动家可以分成明显不同的两类。一类包括那些充满活力，但只一时拥有坚强意志的人。和他们相比，另一类人更为罕见，他们的意志力更持久。前一种人一身蛮勇，在领导突然决定的暴动、带领群众冒死犯难、让新兵一夜之间变成英雄这些事情中，他们特别派得上用场。第一帝国时代的内伊和缪拉就属于这种人，

在我们这个时代，加里波第也属于这种人物，他虽一无所长，却是个精力充沛的冒险家，他只带领一小撮人，就能够拿下古老的那不勒斯王国，尽管它受着一支纪律严明的军队的保护。

不过，这类领袖的活力虽是一种应予考虑的力量，它却不能持久，很难延续到使它发挥作用的兴奋事件之后。当这些英雄回到日常生活中时，就像我刚才谈到的情况一样，他们往往暴露出最惊人的性格弱点。他们虽然能够领导别人，却好像不能在最简单的环境下思考和支配自己的行为。他们是这样一些领袖，在某些条件下，他们本人也受人领导并不断地受到刺激，总是有某个人或观念在指引着他们，有明确划定的行动路线可供他们遵循，不然他们就不能发挥自己的作用。而另一类领袖，即那些能够持续保持意志力的人，尽管不那么光彩夺目，其影响力却要大得多。在这类人中，可以找到各种宗教和伟业的真正奠基人，例如圣保罗、哥伦布和德·雷赛布皆是。他们或是聪明，或是头脑狭隘，这都无关紧要——世界是属于他们的。他们所具备的持久的意志力，是一种极为罕见、极为强大的品质，它足以征服一切。强大而持久的意志能够成就什么，并不总是能够得到充分的评价。没有任何事情能阻挡住它，无论自然、上帝还是人，都不能。

强大而持久的意志能够造成什么结果，德·雷赛布为我们提供了一个最近的例子。他是一个把世界分成东西两半的人，他所成就的事业，过去三千年里曾有最伟大的统治者徒劳地做过尝试。他后来败在一项类似的事业上，但那是因为他年事已高的缘故，包括意志在内的一切事情，都会在衰老面前屈服的。

若想说明单凭意志的力量能够完成什么事业，只须仔细想一下与开凿苏伊士运河时必须克服的困难有关的历史记载即可。一位见证人用令人印象深刻的寥寥数语，记录下了这项伟大工程的作者所讲述的整个故事：

日复一日，不管遇到什么事情，他都在讲着那个关于运河的惊人故事。他讲述他所战胜的一切、他如何把不可能变为可能、他遇到的一切反对意见、与他作对的所有联盟，他经历的所有失望、逆境和失败，都没能让他灰心丧气。他追忆英国如何打击他、法国和埃及如何迟疑不决、工程初期法国领事馆如何首当其冲反对他，以及他所遇到的反对的性质，有人试图用拒绝供应饮水，使他的工人因口渴而逃跑。他还谈到，海军部长和工程师、一切富有经验、受过科学训练并且有责任心的人，全都自然而然变成了他的敌人，他们全都站在科学立场上，断定灾难就在眼前，预言它正在逼近，并且计算出它会在某日某时发生，就像预测日食一样。

涉及所有这些伟大领袖生平的书，不会包含太多的人名，但是这些名字却同文明史上最重大的事件联系在一起。

2. 领袖的动员手段：断言、重复和传染

如果想在很短的时间里激发起群体的热情，让他们采取任何性质的行动，譬如掠夺宫殿、誓死守卫要塞或阵地，就必须让群体对暗示作出迅速的反应，其中效果最大的就是榜样。不过为了达到这个目的，群体应当在事前就有一些环境上的准备，尤其是希望影响他们的人应具备某种品质，对于这种有待于做深入研究的品质，我称之为名望。

但是，当领袖们打算用观念和信念——例如利用现代的各种社会学说——影响群体的头脑时，他们所借助的手段各有不同。其中有三种手段最为重要，也十分明确，即断言法、重复法和传染法。它们的作用有些缓慢，然而一旦生效，却有持久的效果。

作出简洁有力的断言，不理睬任何推理和证据，是让某种观念进入群众头脑最可靠

的办法之一。一个断言越是简单明了，证据和证明看上去越贫乏，它就越有威力。一切时代的宗教书和各种法典，总是诉诸简单的断言。号召人们起来捍卫某项政治事业的政客，利用广告手段推销产品的商人，全都深知断言的价值。

但是，如果没有不断地重复断言——而且要尽可能措辞不变——它仍不会产生真正的影响。我相信拿破仑曾经说过，极为重要的修辞法只有一个，那就是重复。得到断言的事情，是通过不断重复才在头脑中生根，并且这种方式最终能够使人把它当作得到证实的真理接受下来。

只要看一看重复对最开明的头脑所发挥的力量，就可以理解它对群体的影响。这种力量是来自这样一个事实，即从长远看，不断重复的说法会进入我们无意识的自我的深层区域，而我们的行为动机正是在这里形成的。到了一定的时候，我们会忘记谁是个不断被重复的主张的作者，我们最终会对它深信不移。广告所以有令人吃惊的威力，原因就在这里。如果我们成百上千次读到，X牌巧克力是最棒的巧克力，我们就会以为自己听到四面八方都在这样说，最终我们会确信事实就是如此。如果我们成百上千次读到，Y牌药粉治好了身患顽症的最知名的人士，一旦我们患上了类似的疾病，我们终究会忍不住也去试用一下。如果我们总是在同一家报纸上读到张三是个臭名昭著的流氓，李四是最诚实老实的人，我们最终会相信事实就是如此，除非我们再去读一家观点相反、把他们的品质完全颠倒过来的报纸。把断言和重复分开使用，它们各自都具备足够强大的力量相互拼杀一番。

如果一个断言得到了有效的重复，在这种重复中再也不存在异议，就像在一些著名的金融项目中，富豪足以收买所有参与者一样，此时就会形成所谓的流行意见，强大的传染过程于此启动。各种观念、感情、情绪和信念，在群众中都具有和微生物一样强大的传染力。这是一种十分自然的现象，因为甚至在聚集成群的动物中，也

可以看到这种现象。马厩里有一匹马啃咬食槽，另一些马也会起而效尤；几只羊感到惊恐，很快也会蔓延到整个羊群。在聚集成群的人中间，所有情绪也会迅速传染，这解释了恐慌的突发性。头脑混乱就像疯狂一样，它本身也是易于传染的。在自己是疯病专家的医生中间，不时有人会变成疯子，这已是广为人知的事情。当然，最近有人提到一些疯病，例如广场恐惧症，也能由人传染给动物。每个人都同时处在同一个地点，并不是他们受到传染不可或缺的条件。有些事件能让所有的头脑产生一种独特的倾向以及一种群体所特有的性格，在这种事件的影响下，地处遥远的人也能感受到传染的力量。当人们在心理上已经有所准备，受到了我前面研究过的一些间接因素的影响时，情况尤其如此。这方面的一个事例是1848年的革命运动，它在巴黎爆发后，便迅速传遍大半个欧洲，使一些王权摇摇欲坠。

很多影响要归因于模仿，其实这不过是传染造成的结果。我在另一本著作中对它的影响已经作过说明，因此这里我只想抄一段15年前我就这一问题说过的话。下面引述的观点已由另一些作者在最近的出版物中作了进一步的阐发。

人就像动物一样有着模仿的天性。模仿对他来说是必然的，因为模仿总是一件很容易的事情。正是因为这种必然性，才使所谓时尚的力量如此强大。无论是意见、观念、文学作品甚至服装，有几个人有足够的勇气与时尚作对？支配着大众的是榜样，不是论证。每个时期都有少数个人同其他人作对并受到无意识的群众的模仿，但是这些有个性的人不能过于明目张胆地反对公认的观念。他们要是这样做的话，会使模仿他们变得过于困难，他们的影响也就无从谈起。正是由于这个原因，过于超前于自己时代的人，一般不会对它产生影响。这是因为两者过于界线分明。也是由于这个原因，欧洲人的文明尽管优点多多，他们对东方民族却只有微不足道的影响，因为两者之间的差别实在是太大了。

历史与模仿的双重作用，从长远看，会使同一个国家、同一个时代的一切人十分相似，甚至那些好像坚决不受这种双重影响的个人，如哲学家、博学之士和文人，他们的思想和风格也散发着一一种相似的气息，使他们所属的时代立刻就能被辨认出来。如想全面了解一个人读什么书，他有什么消遣的习惯，他生活于其中的环境，并没有必要同他作长时间的交谈。

传染的威力甚大，它不但能迫使个人接受某些意见，而且能让他接受一些感情模式。传染是一些著作在某个时期受到蔑视——可以拿《唐豪塞》为例——的原因，就在几年后，出于同样的原因，那些持批评态度的人，又会对它们大加赞赏。

群体的意见和信念尤其会因为传染、但绝不会因为推理而得到普及。目前流行于工人阶级中的学说，是他们在公共场所学到的，这是断言、重复和传染的成果。当然，每个时代创立群众信仰的方式，也大都如出一辙。勒南就曾正确地把基督教最早的创立者比作“从一个公共场合到另一个公共场合传播观念的社会主义工人”；伏尔泰在谈到基督教时也注意到，“在一百多年里，接受它的只有一些最恶劣的败类”。

应当指出，与我前面提到的情况相似，传染在作用于广大民众之后，也会扩散到社会的上层。今天我们看到，社会主义信条就出现了这种现象，它正在被那些会成为它首批牺牲者的人所接受。传染的威力是如此巨大，在它的作用下，甚至个人利益的意识也会消失得无影无踪。

由此解释了一个事实：得到民众接受的每一种观念，最终总是会以其强大的力量在社会的最上层扎根，不管获胜意见的荒谬性是多么显而易见。社会下层对社会上层的这种反作用是个更为奇特的现象，因为群众的信念多多少少总是起源于一种更高深的观念，而它在自己的诞生地往往一直没有什么影响。领袖和鼓动家被这种更高

深的观念征服以后，就会把它取为己用，对它进行歪曲，组织起使它再次受到歪曲的宗派，然后在群众中加以传播，而他们会使这个篡改过程更上一层楼。观念变成大众的真理，它就会回到自己的发源地，对一个民族的上层产生影响。从长远看是智力在塑造着世界的命运，但这种作用十分间接。当哲学家的思想通过我所描述的这个过程终于大获全胜时，提出观念的哲人们早已化为尘土。

3. 名望

利用断言、重复和传染进行普及的观念，因环境而获得了巨大的威力，这时它们就会具有一种神奇的力量，即所谓的名望。

世界上不管什么样的统治力量，无论它是观念还是人，其权力得到加强，主要都是利用了一种难以抗拒的力量，它的名称就是“名望”。每个人都了解这个词的含义，但是其用法却十分不同，因此不易做出定义。名望所涉及的感情，既可以是赞赏，也可能是畏惧。有时这些感情是它的基础，但是没有它们它也完全能够存在。最大的名望归死人所有，即那些我们不再惧怕的人，例如亚历山大、恺撒、穆哈默德和佛祖。此外还有一些我们并不赞赏的虚构的存在——印度地下神庙中那些可怕的神灵，但是它们因为具有名望而让我们害怕。

在现实中，名望是某个人、某本著作或某种观念对我们头脑的支配力。这种支配会完全麻痹我们的批判能力，让我们心中充满惊奇和敬畏。这种感觉就像所有感情一样难以理解，不过它好像与魅力人物所引起的幻觉没有什么不同。名望是一切权力的主因。不管神仙、国王还是美女，缺了它一概没戏。

形形色色的名望总括起来可以分为两大类：先天的名望和个人名望。先天的名望来自称号、财富和名誉。它可以独立于个人的名望。相反，个人名望基本上为一个人

所特有，它可以和名誉、荣耀、财富共存，或由此得到加强，不过没有这些东西，它也完全能够存在。

后天获得的或人为的名望更为常见。一个人占据着某种位置、拥有一定的财富或头衔，仅仅这些事实，就能使他享有名望，不管他本人多么没有价值。一身戎装的士兵、身着法袍的法官，总会令人肃然起敬。帕斯卡尔十分正确地指出，法袍和假发是法官必不可少的行头。没了这些东西，他们的权威就会损失一半。即使是最狂放不羁的社会主义者，王公爵爷的形象对他也多少总会有所触动。拥有这种头衔会使剥夺生意人变得轻而易举。

以上所说的这种名望，是由人来体现的，在这些名望之侧，还有一些名望体现在各种意见、文学和艺术作品等事物中。后者的名望往往只是长年累月重复的结果。历史，尤其是文学和艺术的历史，不过就是在不断地重复一些判断。谁也不想证实这些判断，每个人最后都会重复他从学校里学到的东西，直到出现一些再没人敢于说三道四的称号和事物。对于一个现代读者来说，研读荷马肯定是极令人生厌的事，然而谁敢这么说？巴台农神庙按其现存的状态，不过是一堆非常没有意思的破败废墟，但是它的巨大名望却使它看起来不是那个样子，而是与所有的历史记忆联系在一起。名望的特点就是阻止我们看到事物的本来面目，让我们的判断力彻底麻木。群众就像个人一样，总是需要对一切事情有现成的意见。这些意见的普遍性与它们是对是错全无关系，它们只受制于名望。

现在我来谈谈个人的名望。它的性质非常不同于我刚才说过的那些人为的或先天的名望。这是一种与一切头衔和权力无关的品质，而且只为极少数人所具备，它能使他们对自己周围的人施以真正神奇的幻术，即使这些人与他们有着平等的社会地位，而且他们也不具备任何平常的统治手段。他们强迫周围的人接受他们的思想与

感情，众人对他的服从，就像吃人易如反掌的动物服从驯兽师一般。

伟大的群众领袖，如佛祖、耶稣、穆哈默德、圣女贞德和拿破仑，都享有这种极高的名望，他们所取得的地位也同这种名望特别有关。各路神仙、英雄豪杰和各种教义，能够在这个世界上大行其道，都是因为各有其深入人心的力量。当然，对这些人 and 教义是不能探讨的，只要一探究，它们便烟消云散。

我提到的这些人在成名之前，早就具备一种神奇的力量，没有这种力量他们也不可能成名。譬如说，达到荣耀巅峰时的拿破仑，仅仅因为他的权力这一事实，就享有巨大的名望，但是在他没有这种权力，仍然籍籍无名时，他就已经部分地具备了这种名望。当他还是个名不见经传的将军时，多亏了那些有权势者要保护自己，他被派去指挥意大利的军队。他发现自己处在—群愤怒的将军中间，他们一心要给这个总督派来的年轻外来户一点颜色瞧瞧。从一开始，从第一次会面时起，他没有借助于任何语言、姿态或威胁，一看到这个就要变成大人物的人，他们就被他征服了。泰纳利用当时的回忆录，对这次会面作了引人入胜的说明：

师部的将军中间包括奥热罗，一个一身蛮勇的赳赳武夫，他为自己的高大身材和剽悍而洋洋自得。他来到军营，对巴黎派给他们的那个暴发户一肚子怒气。对于他们得到的有关此人如何强大的描述，奥热罗打算粗暴地不予理睬：一个巴拉斯的宠儿，一个因旺代事件而得到将军头衔的人，他在学校里的成绩就是街头斗殴，相貌不佳，有着数学家和梦想家的美名。他们被带来了，波拿巴让他们等在外边。他终于佩戴着自己的剑出现在他们面前。他带上帽子，说明了他采取的措施，下达命令，然后让他们离开。奥热罗一直沉默不语。直到出门后他才重新找回了自信，让自己能够像通常那样骂骂咧咧地说话。他同意马塞纳的看法，这个小个子魔鬼将军让他感到敬畏，他搞不懂那种一下子就把他压倒的气势。

变成大人物后，拿破仑的名望与他的荣耀同步增长，至少在他的追随者眼里，他和神灵的名望已不相上下。旺达姆将军，一个粗汉、大革命时代的典型军人，甚至比奥热罗更粗野，1815年，在与阿纳诺元帅一起登上杜伊勒里宫的楼梯时，他对元帅谈到了拿破仑：“那个魔鬼般的人物对我施用的幻术，我自己也搞不懂为何如此厉害，我既不怕神，也不怕鬼，但一看到他，我就像个小孩子一样禁不住打颤。他简直能够让我钻进针眼，投身火海。”

拿破仑对和他接触过的所有人，都能产生这种神奇的影响。达武在谈到莫雷和他本人的奉献精神时说：“如果皇帝对我们说，‘毁灭巴黎，不让一个人活着或跑掉，这对于我的政策至关重要’，我相信马雷是会为他保密的，不过他还不至于顽固到不想让自己的家人离开这座城市。而我会因为担心泄露真情，把我的妻儿留在这里。”

必须记住这种命令让人神魂颠倒的惊人力量，才能够理解他从厄尔巴岛返回法国的壮举——他孤身一人，面对一个对他的暴政想必已感到厌倦的大国的全部武装，却能闪电般地征服整个法国。他只须看一眼那些派来阻挡他、曾发誓要完成自己使命的将军们，他们没作任何商量便屈服了。

英国将军吴士礼写道：“拿破仑，一个来自他的王国厄尔巴小岛的逃犯，几乎是孤身一人在法国登陆，兵不血刃，几周之内便把合法国王统治下的法国权力组织统统推翻。想证明一个人的权势，还有比这更惊人的方式吗？在他的这场最后战役中，从头至尾，他以令人惊叹的气势压倒了同盟国！他们让他牵着鼻子走，他差一点就打败他们！”

他的名望长于他的寿命，而且有增无减。他的名望让他的一个籍籍无名的侄子变成了皇帝。直到今天他的传奇故事仍然不绝于耳，足见对他的怀念是多么强烈。随心

所欲地迫害人，为了一次次的征伐，就让数百万人死于非命——只要你有足够的名望和付诸实施的天才，人们就会允许你这样做。

不错，我所谈的都是名望的一些极不寻常的例子。但是为了了解那些伟大的宗教、伟大的学说和伟大的帝国的起源，提提这些事例是有好处的。没有这种名望对群众的影响，这些发展就会成为不可思议的事情。

但是，名望并不是完全以个人的权势、军事业绩或宗教敬畏为基础。它可以有较为平庸的来源，其力量也相当可观。我们这个世纪便提供了若干实例。能够让后人世代不忘的最惊人的事例之一，是那个把大陆一分为二，改变了地球面貌和通商关系的著名人物的故事。他完成了自己的壮举，是因为他有强大的意志，也因为他能让自己周围的人着迷。为了克服他遇到的无数反对，他只让自己的表现说话。他言语简洁，他的魅力可以化敌为友。英国人反对他的计划尤其卖力，但是他一出现在英国，就把所有选票都争取到了自己一边；晚年他路过南安普顿时，一路上教堂钟声不断；如今又有一场运动在英国展开，要为他树立一座塑像。

征服了必须征服的一切——人和事、沼泽、岩石、沙地——之后，他不再相信还有什么事情能挡得住他，他想在巴拿马再挖一条苏伊士运河。他按老办法着手这项工程，但是他已上了年纪。此外，虽有移山填海的信念，如果那山过于高大，也是没办法移动的。山会进行抵抗，后来发生的灾难，也抹去了这位英雄身上耀眼的光环。他的一生说明了名望如何出现，也说明了它如何消失。在成就了足以同历史上最伟大的英雄媲美的业绩之后，他却被自己家乡的官僚打入最下贱的罪犯之流。他去世时没人留意，灵柩经过处，是一群无动于衷的民众。只有外国政府像对待历史上每个最伟大的人一样，怀着敬意对他表示纪念。

上面提到的这些事仍然属于极端的例子。要想对名望的心理学有细致的认识，把它

们置于一系列事例中的极端是必要的。这个系列的一端是宗教和帝国的创立者，另一端则是用一顶新帽子或一件新服饰向邻居炫耀的人。

在这一系列事例的两极之间，文明中的各种不同因素——科学、艺术、文学等等——所导致的一切不同形式的名望，都有一席之地，并且可以看到，名望是说服群众的一个基本因素。享有名望的人、观念或物品，会在传染的作用下，立刻受到人们自觉不自觉的模仿，使整整一代人接受某些感情或表达思想的模式。进一步说，这种模仿通常是不自觉的，这解释了它的彻底性这一事实。临摹某些原始人的单调色彩和僵硬姿态的现代画家，很少能够比他们灵感的来源更有生命力。他们相信自己的真诚，但若是没有哪个杰出的大师复活了这种艺术形式，人们便会一直只看到他们幼稚低级的一面。那些模仿另一位著名大师的艺术家，在他们的画布上涂满了紫罗兰色的暗影，但是他们在自然界并没有看到比50年前更多的紫罗兰。他们是受了另一位画家的个性和特殊印象的影响，即受到了他的“暗示”，而这位画家尽管古怪，却成功地获得了巨大的名望。在文明的所有因素中，都可以举出类似的例子。

由以上论述可知，名望的产生与若干因素有关，而其中成功永远是最重要的一个因素。每个成功者，每个得到承认的观念，仅仅因为成功这一事实，便不再受到人们的怀疑。成功是通向名望的主要台阶，其证据就是成功一旦消失，名望几乎也总是随之消失。昨天受群众拥戴的英雄一旦失败，今天就会受到侮辱。当然，名望越高，反应也会越强烈。在这种情况下，群众会把末路英雄视为自己的同类，为自己曾向一个已不复存在的权威低头哈腰而进行报复。当年罗伯斯庇尔把自己的同伙和大量的人处死时，他享有巨大的名望。当几张选票的转移剥夺了他的权力时，他便立刻失去了名望，群众齐声咒骂着把他送上了断头台，正像不久前对待他的牺牲品一样。信徒们总是穷凶极恶地打碎他们以前神灵的塑像。

缺少成功的名望，会在很短的时间里消失。不过它也可以在探讨中受到磨蚀，只是时间要更长一些。不管怎么说，探讨的力量是极为可靠的。当名望变成问题时，便不再是名望。能够长期保持名望的神与人，对探讨都毫不宽容。为了让群众敬仰，必须同它保持距离。

第四章 群体的信念和意见的变化范围



人的行为首先是受他们的信念支配，也受由这些信念所形成的习惯支配。这些信念调整着我们生活中最无足轻重的行动，最具独立性的精神也摆脱不了它们的影响。

提要：1．牢固的信念。某些普遍信念不易改变/它们是文明的主流/根除它们十分困难/信念在哲学上的荒谬性不妨碍它的传播。2．群体意见的多变。不是来自普遍信念的意见极为易变/近百年来观念和信仰的多样化/这种多样化的真正界线/受到多样化影响的事物/混乱的报业造成了意见的多变。

1．牢固的信念

生物的解剖学特征和心理特征有着密切的相似之处。在这些解剖学特征中，会看到一些不易改变或只有轻微改变的因素，它们的改变需要以地质年代来计算。除了这些稳定的、不可摧毁的特征之外，也可以看到一些极易变化的特征，如利用畜牧和

园艺技术很容易就能加以改变的特征，有时它们甚至会使观察者看不到那些基本特征。

在道德特征上也可以看到同样的现象。一个种族除了有不可变的心理特征外，也能看到它有一些可变因素。因此在研究一个民族的信仰和意见时，在一个牢固的基础结构之上，总是可以观察到有一些嫁接在上面的意见，其多变一如岩石上的流沙。

因此，群体的意见和信念可以分成非常不同的两类。一方面我们有重要而持久的信仰，它们能够数百年保持不变，整个文明也许就是以它为基础。例如过去的封建主义、基督教和新教，在我们这个时代则有民族主义原则和当代的民主和社会主义观念。其次是一些短暂而易变的意见，它们通常是每个时代生生灭灭的一些普遍学说的产物，这方面的例子有影响文学艺术的各种理论，例如那些产生了浪漫主义、自然主义或神秘主义的理论。这些意见通常都是表面的，就像时尚一样多变。它们类似于一池深水的表面不断出现和消失的涟漪。

伟大的普遍信仰数量十分有限。它们的兴衰是每一个文明种族的历史上令人瞩目的事件。它们构成了文明的真正基础。

用一时的意见影响群众的头脑不难，想让一种信仰在其中长久扎根却极为不易。不过，一旦这种信念得到确立，要想根除它也同样困难。通常只有用暴力革命才能对它们进行革新。甚至当信念对人们的头脑几乎已完全失去控制力时，也要借助于革命。在这种情况下，革命的作用是对几乎已经被人们抛弃的东西作最后的清理，因为习惯势力阻碍着人们完全放弃它们。一场革命的开始，其实就是一种信念的末日。

一种信念开始衰亡的确切时刻很容易辨认——这就是它的价值开始受到质疑的时刻。一切普遍信念不过是一种虚构，它唯一的生存条件就是它不能受到审察。

不过，即使当一种信念已经摇摇欲坠时，根据它建立起来的制度仍会保持其力量，消失得十分缓慢。最后，当信念的余威尽失时，建立于其上的一切很快也会开始衰亡。迄今为止，没有哪个民族能够在没有下决心破坏其全部文明因素的情况下转变它的信仰。这个民族会继续这一转变过程，直到停下脚步接受一种新的普遍信念为止，在此之前它会一直处在一种无政府状态中。普遍信念是文明不可缺少的柱石，它们决定着各种思想倾向。只有它们能够激发信仰并形成责任意识。

各民族一直清楚获得普遍信念的好处，它们本能地知道，这种信念的消失是它们衰败的信号。使罗马人能够征服世界的信念，是他们对罗马的狂热崇拜；当这种信念寿终正寝时，罗马也注定衰亡。至于那些毁灭了罗马文明的野蛮人，只有当他们具备某种共同接受的信念，使他们取得了一定的团结，摆脱了无政府状态时，才能做到这一点。

各民族在捍卫自己意见时，总是表现出不宽容的态度，这显然事出有因。这种对哲学批判表现出来的不宽容态度，代表着一个民族生命中最必要的品质。在中世纪，正是为了寻求或坚持普遍信仰，才有那么多发明创新者被送上火刑柱，即或他们逃脱了殉道，也难免死于绝望。也正是为了捍卫这些信念，世界上才经常上演一幕幕最可怕的混乱，才有成千上万的人战死沙场或将要死在那里。

建立普遍信念的道路可谓困难重重，不过一旦它站稳了脚跟，它便会长期具有不可征服的力量，无论从哲学上看它多么荒谬，它都会进入最清醒的头脑。在长达一千五百年的时间里，欧洲各民族不是一直认为，那些像莫洛克神一样野蛮的宗教神话是不容争议的吗？有个上帝因为他自己创造出来的动物不听话，便进行自我报复，让其儿子承受可怕的酷刑，在十多个世纪里，居然一直没人认识到这种神话荒谬至极。有过人天赋者，如伽利略、牛顿、莱布尼茨，一刻也没有想到过这种说教的真

实性值得怀疑。普遍信仰有催眠作用，没有任何事情比这个事实更典型，也没有任何事情能更确切地表明，我们的理智有着令人汗颜的局限性。

新的教条一旦在群体的头脑中生根，就会成为鼓舞人心的源泉，它由此会发展出各种制度、艺术和生活方式。在这种环境之下，它对人们实行着绝对的控制。实干家一心要让这种普遍接受的信仰变成现实，立法者一心想把它付诸实行，哲学家、艺术家和文人全都醉心于如何以各种不同的方式表现它，除此之外再无他想。

从基本信念中可以派生出一些短暂的观念，然而它们总是具有那些信念赋予它们的印记。埃及文明，中世纪的欧洲文明，阿拉伯地区的穆斯林文明，都是寥寥几种宗教信仰的产物，这些文明中即使最微不足道的事物，也都留下了它们一眼就能辨认出来的印记。

因此，幸亏有这些普遍信念，每个时代的人都是在一个由相似的传统、意见和习惯组成的基本环境中成长，他们不能摆脱这些东西的桎梏。人的行为首先是受他们的信念支配，也受由这些信念所形成的习惯支配。这些信念调整着我们生活中最无足轻重的行动，最具独立性的精神也摆脱不了它们的影响。在不知不觉中支配着人们头脑的暴政，是唯一真正的暴政，因为你无法同它作战。不错，提比略、成吉思汗和拿破仑都是可怕的暴君，但是躺在坟墓深处的摩西、佛祖、耶稣和穆哈默德，对人类实行着更深刻的专制统治。利用密谋可以推翻一个暴君，而反对牢固的信念又有什么可资利用？在同罗马天主教的暴力对抗中，最终屈服的是法国大革命，尽管群体的同情显然是在它这一边，尽管它采用了像宗教法庭一样无情的破坏手段。人类所知道的唯一真正的暴君，历来就是他们对死人的怀念或他们为自己编织出来的幻觉。

普遍的信念从哲学上说往往十分荒谬，但这从来不会成为它们获胜的障碍。当然，

如果这些信念缺少了提供某种神奇的荒谬性这一条件，它们也不可能获胜。因此，今天的社会主义信念虽有明显的破绽，这并没有阻止它们赢得群众。这种思考得出的唯一结论是，和所有宗教信仰相比，其实它只能算是等而下之的信仰，因为前者所提供的幸福理想只能实现于来世，因此也无法反驳它，而社会主义的幸福理想是要在现世得到落实，因而只要有人想努力实现这种理想，它的许诺的空洞无物立刻就会暴露无遗，从而使这种新信仰身败名裂。因此，它的力量的增长也只能到它获得胜利，开始实现自身的那天为止。由于这个原因，这种新宗教虽然像过去所有的宗教一样，也是以产生破坏性影响为起点，但是将来它并不能发挥创造性的作用。

2. 群众意见的多变

以上我们阐述了牢固信念的力量，不过在这个基础的表面，还会生长出一些不断生生灭灭的意见、观念和思想。其中一些也许朝生暮死，较重要的也不会比一代人的寿命更长。我们已经指出，这种意见的变化有时不过是些表面现象，它们总是受到某些种族意识的影响。例如在评价法国政治制度时我们说明，各政党表面上看极为不同——保皇派、激进派、帝国主义者、社会主义者等等，但是它们都有着一个绝对一致的理想，并且这个理想完全是由法兰西民族的精神结构决定的，因为在另一些民族中，在相同的名称下会看到一些完全相反的理想。无论是给那些意见所起的名称，还是其骗人的用法，都不会改变事物的本质。大革命时代的人饱受拉丁文学的熏陶，他们的眼睛只盯着罗马共和国，采用它的法律、它的权标、它的法袍，但他们并没有变成罗马人，因为后者是处在一个有着强大的历史意义的帝国的统治之下。哲学家的任务，就是研究古代的信念在其表面变化背后有什么东西支撑着它们，在不断变化的意见中找出受普遍信念和种族特性决定的成分。

如果不作这种哲学上的检验，人们会以为群众会经常随意改变他们的政治或宗教信

念。一切历史，无论是政治的、宗教的、艺术的或文学的历史，似乎都证明了事情就是如此。作为例证，让我们来看看法国历史上非常短暂的一个时期，即1790到1820年这三十年的时间，这也正好是一代人的时间。在这段时间，我们看到，最初是保皇派的群体变得十分革命，然后成为极端的帝国主义者，最后又变成了君主制的支持者。在宗教问题上，他们在这段时间从天主教倒向无神论，然后倒向自然神论，最后又回到了最坚定的天主教立场。这些变化不只发生在群众中，而且发生在他们的领导者中。我们吃惊地发现，国民公会中的一些要人，国王的死敌、既不信上帝也不信主子的人，竟会变成拿破仑恭顺的奴仆，在路易十八统治下，又手持蜡烛虔诚地走在宗教队伍中间。

在以后的七十年里，群众的意见又发生了无数次变化。本世纪初“背信弃义的英国佬”在拿破仑的继承者统治时期，成了法国的盟友。两度受到法国入侵的俄国，以满意的心情看着法国倒退，也变成了它的朋友。

在文学、艺术和哲学中，接下来的意见变化更为迅速。浪漫主义、自然主义和神秘主义等等，轮番登场，生生灭灭。昨天还受着吹捧的艺术家和作家，明天就会被人痛加责骂。

但是，当我们深入分析所有这些表面的变化时，我们发现了什么？一切与民族的普遍信念和情感相悖的东西，都没有持久力，逆流不久便又回到了主河道。与种族的任何普遍信念或情感全无关系、从而不可能具有稳定性的意见，只能听任机遇的摆布，或者——假如其说法还有可取之处——会根据周围的环境而发生变化。它们只能是在暗示和传染的作用下形成的一种暂时现象。它们匆匆成熟，又匆匆消失，就像海边沙滩上被风吹成的沙丘。

目前，群体中易变的意见比以往任何时候都多，这有三个不同的原因。

首先，昔日的信仰正在日甚一日地失去影响力，因此它们也不再像过去那样，能够形成当时的短暂意见。普遍信仰的衰落，为一大堆既无历史也无未来的偶然意见提供了场所。

第二个原因是群众的势力在不断增长，这种势力越来越没有制衡力量。我们已有所了解的群体观念的亟其多变这一特点，得以无拘无束地表现出来。

最后，第三个原因是报业最近的发展，它们不断把十分对立的意见带到群众面前。每一种个别的意见所产生的暗示作用，很快就会受到对立意见的暗示作用的破坏。结果是任何意见都难以普及，它们全都成了过眼烟云。今天，一种意见还来不及被足够多的人接受，从而成为普遍意见，便已寿终正寝。

这些不同的原因造成一种世界史上的全新现象，它是这个时代最显著的特点。我这里是指政府在领导舆论上的无能。

过去，就在不久以前，政府的措施、少数作家和寥寥几家报纸的影响，就是公众舆论真正的反映者，而今天作家已经没有任何影响力，报纸则只反映意见。对于政客来说，他们莫说是引导各种意见，追赶意见还怕来不及。他们害怕意见，有时甚至变成了恐惧，这使他们采取了极不稳定的行动路线。

于是，群体的意见越来越倾向于变成政治的最高指导原则。它已经发展到了这种地步，竟然能够迫使国家之间结盟，例如最近的法俄同盟，就几乎完全是一场大众运动的产物。目前一种奇怪的病症是，人们看到教皇、国王和皇帝们也在同意接受采访，仿佛他们也愿意把自己在某个问题上的看法交给群众评判。在政治事务上不可感情用事，过去这样说也许还算正确，但是当政治越来越受到多变的群众冲动的支配，而他们又不受理性的影响，只受情绪支配时，还能再这样说吗？

至于过去引导意见的报业，就像政府一样，它在群众势力面前也变得屈尊附就。当然，它仍然有相当大的影响，然而这不过是因为它只一味反映群众的意见及其不断的变化。报业既然成了仅仅提供信息的部门，它便放弃了让人接受某种观念或学说的努力。它在公众思想的变化中随波逐流，出于竞争的必要，它也只能这样做，因为它害怕失去自己的读者。过去那些稳健而有影响力的报纸，如《宪法报》、《论坛报》或《世纪报》，被上一代人当作智慧的传播者，如今它们不是已经消失，就是变成了典型的现代报纸，最有价值的新闻被夹在各种轻松话题、社会见闻和金融谎言之间。如今，没有哪家报纸富裕到能够让它的撰稿人传播自己的意见，因为对于那些只想得到消息，对经过深思熟虑后作出的所有断言一概表示怀疑的读者，这种意见的价值微乎其微。甚至评论家也不再能有把握地说一本书或一台戏获得了成功。他们能够恶语中伤，但不能提供服务。报馆十分清楚，在形成批评或个人意见上没有任何有用的东西，于是它们便采取压制批评的立场，只限于提一下书名，再添上两三句“捧场的话”。在20年的时间里，同样的命运也许会降临到戏剧评论的头上。

今天，密切关注各种意见，已经成为报社和政府的第一要务。它们需要在没有任何中间环节的情况下知道一个事件、一项法案或一次演说造成的效果。这可不是件轻松的任务，因为没有任何事情比群众的想法更为多变，今天，也没有任何事情，能够像群众对他们昨天还赞扬的事情今天便给予痛骂的做法更为常见。

不存在任何引导意见的力量，再加上普遍信仰的毁灭，其最终结果就是对一切秩序都存在着极端分歧的信念，并且使群众对于一切不明确触及他们直接利益的事情，越来越不关心。对社会主义之类的信条的探究，只在很没有文化的阶层如矿山和工厂工人中间，能够找到信誓旦旦的拥护者。中产阶级的下层成员以及受过一些教育的工人，不是变成了彻底的怀疑论者，就是抱着极不稳定的意见。

过去25年里朝着这个方向的演变是惊人的。在这之前的那个时期，虽然与我们相距不算太远，人们的意见还仍然大致存在着一般趋势，它们的产生是因为接受了一些基本的信仰。只根据某人是个君主制的拥护者这一事实，即可断定他持有某些明确的历史观和科学观；只根据某人是共和主义者，便可以说他有着完全相反的观点。拥护君主制的人十分清楚，人不是从猴子变过来的，而共和主义者同样十分清楚，人类的祖先就是猴子。拥护君主制的人有责任为王室说话，共和主义者则必须怀着对大革命的崇敬发言。凡是提到一些人名，如罗伯斯庇尔和马拉，语气中必须含有宗教式的虔诚，还有一些人名，如恺撒、奥古斯都或拿破仑，也万万不可在提到时不予以猛烈的痛斥。甚至在法兰西的索邦，也普遍存在着这种理解历史的幼稚方式。

目前，由于讨论和分析的缘故，一切意见都失去了名望；它们的特征很快退化，持续的时间之短很难唤起我们的热情。现代人日益变得麻木不仁。

对于意见的衰退不必过于悲伤。无可争辩，这是一个民族生命衰败的征兆。当然，伟大的人、具备超凡眼光的人、使徒和民众领袖——总之，那些真诚的、有强烈信念的人——与专事否定、批判的人或麻木不仁的人相比，能够发挥更大的影响，不过我们切莫忘记，由于目前群众拥有庞大的势力，因此，如果有一种意见赢得了足够的名望，使自己能够得到普遍接受，那么它很快便会拥有强大的专制权力，使一切事情全要屈服于它，自由讨论的时代便会长久地消失。群众偶尔是个步态悠闲的主人，就像赫利奥加巴勒和梯比留斯一样，但他们也是狂暴而反复无常的。当一种文明让群众占了上风时，它便几乎没有多少机会再延续下去了。如果说还有什么事情能够推迟自身的毁灭的话，那就是极不稳定的群众意见，以及他们对一切普遍信仰的麻木不仁。

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第三卷 不同群体的分类及其特点

第一章 群体的分类



群体在智力上总是低于孤立的个人，但是从感情及其激起的行动这个角度看，群体可以比个人表现得更好或更差，这全看环境如何。

提要：群体的一般分类/1．异质性群体。它们的不同类型/种族的影响/群体精神敌不过种族精神/种族精神代表文明状态，群体精神代表野蛮状态。2．同质性群体。它们的不同类型/宗派、身份团体和阶级。

我们已在本书中论述了群体心理的一般特点。仍然有待说明的是，当不同类型的集体在一定刺激因素的影响下变成群体时，它们各自具有的特点。我们先用几句话来谈谈群体的分类。

我们的起点是简单的人群。当许多人组成的人群是属于不同种族时，我们便看到了它最初级的形态。在这种情况下，唯一能够形成团结的共同纽带，是头领或多或少受到尊敬的意志。在几百年的时间里不断进犯罗马帝国的野蛮人，来源十分复杂，因此可以把他们作为这种人群的典型。

比不同种族的个人组成的人群更高的层面，是那些在某些影响下获得了共同特征，因而最终形成一个种族的人群。它们有时表现出某些群体的特征，不过这些特征在一定程度上敌不过种族的因素。

在本书阐述过的某些影响的作用下，这两种人群可以转变成有机的或心理学意义上的群体。我们把这些有机的群体分为以下两类：

（1）异质性群体

a．无名称的群体（如街头群体）

b . 有名称的群体（如陪审团、议会等）

（2）同质性群体

a . 派别（政治派别、宗教派别等）

b . 身份团体（军人、僧侣、劳工等）

c . 阶级（中产阶级、农民阶级等）

我们将简单地指出这些不同类型群体的特征。

1 . 异质性群体

本书前面研究的一直就是这种群体的特点。它们是由有着任何特点、任何职业、任何智力水平的个人组成的。

我们只根据事实便已知道，人作为行动的群体中的一员，他们的集体心理与他们的个人心理有着本质的差别，而且他们的智力也会受到这种差别的影响。我们已经知道，智力在集体中不起作用，它完全处在无意识情绪的支配之下。

一个基本因素，即种族的因素，使不同的异质性群体几乎完全不同。

我们经常谈到种族的作用，指出它是人们行动最强大的决定因素。它的作用在群体的性格中也有迹可寻。由偶然聚集在一起的个人组成的群体，如果他们全是英国人或中国人，同有着任何不同特征但属于同一个种族的个人——如俄国人、法国人或西班牙人——组成的群体，会有很大的差别。

当环境形成了一个群体，并且——虽然这种情况相当罕见——其中有着不同民族但

比例大体相同的个人时，他们所继承的心理成分给人的感情和思想方式造成的巨大差异，立刻就会变得十分突出，不管让他们聚集在一起的是多么一致的利益，都会发生这种情况。社会主义者试图在大型集会中把不同国家的工人代表集合在一起的努力，最后总是以公开的分歧收场。拉丁民族的群体，不管它多么革命或多么保守，为了实现自己的要求，无一例外地求助于国家的干预。它总是倾向于集权，总是或明或暗地倾向于赞成独裁。相反，英国人或美国人的群体就不拿国家当回事，他们只求助于个人的主动精神。法国的群体特别看重平等，英国的群体则特别看重自由。这些差异解释了为何几乎有多少个国家就有多少种不同形式的社会主义和民主。

由此可见，种族的气质对群体性格有着重大影响。它是一种决定性力量，限制着群体性格的变化。因此可以认为，一条基本定律就是，由于种族精神的强大，群体的次要性格相比之下并不十分重要。群体状态或支配群体的力量类似于野蛮状态，或者说是向这种状态的回归。种族正是通过获得结构稳定的集体精神，才使自身在越来越大的程度上摆脱了缺乏思考的群体力量，走出了野蛮状态。除了种族因素之外，对异质性群体最重要的分类，就是把它们分为无名称的群体——如街头群体——和有名称的群体，如精心组织起来的议会和陪审团。前一种群体缺乏责任感，而后一种群体则发展出了这种责任感，这往往使它们的行动有着很大的不同。

2．同质性群体

同质性群体包括：（1）派别；（2）身份团体；（3）阶级。

派别是同质性群体组织过程的第一步。一个派别包括在教育、职业和社会阶级的归属方面大不相同的个人，把他们联系在一起的是共同的信仰。这方面的例子是宗教和政治派别。身份团体是最易于组织起群体的一个因素。派别中包含着职业、教育

程度和社会环境大不相同的个人，他们仅仅是被共同的信仰联系在一起，而身份团体则由职业相同的个人组成，因此他们也有相似的教养和相当一致的社会地位。这方面的例子如军人和僧侣团体。

阶级是由来源不同的个人组成的，和派别有所不同，使他们结合在一起的不是共同的信仰，也不像身份团体那样，是因为相同的职业，而是某种利益、生活习惯以及几乎相同的教育。这方面的例子是中产阶级和农民阶级。

本书只讨论异质性群体，把同质性群体（派别、身份团体和阶级）放在另一书本里研究，因此我不打算在这里谈论后一种群体的特点。在结束对异质性群体的研究时，我会考察一下几种典型的特殊群体。

第二章 被称为犯罪群体的群体



通常，群体犯罪的动机是一种强烈的暗示，参与这种犯罪的个人事后会坚信他们的行为是在履行责任，这与平常的犯罪大不相同。

提要：被称为犯罪群体的群体/群体犯法时在心理上也许不能称之为犯罪/群体行为绝对是无意识的/九月惨案参与者的心理/他们的逻辑、残忍和道德观念。

在兴奋期过后，群体就会进入一种纯粹自动的无意识状态，在这种状态下，它受着各种暗示的支配，因此似乎很难把它说成是一个犯罪群体。我保留这一错误的定性，是因为最近一些心理学研究使它变得十分流行。不错，群体的一些行为，如果仅就其本身而论，的确是犯罪行为，但是在某些情况下，这种犯罪行为同一只老虎为了消遣而让其幼虎把一个印度人撕得血肉模糊，然后再把它吃掉的行为是一样的。

通常，群体犯罪的动机是一种强烈的暗示，参与这种犯罪的个人事后会坚信他们的行为是在履行责任，这与平常的犯罪大不相同。

群体犯罪的历史说明了实情。

巴士底狱监狱长的遇害可以作为一个典型的事例。在这位监狱长的堡垒被攻破后，一群极度兴奋的人把他团团围住，从四面八方对他拳脚相加。有人建议吊死他，砍下他的头，把他拴在马尾巴上。在反抗过程中，他偶尔踢到了一个在场的人，于是有人建议，让那个挨踢的人割断监狱长的喉咙，他的建议立刻就博得了群众的赞同。

这个人，一个干完活的厨子，来巴士底狱的主要原因是无所事事的好奇心，他只是想来看看发生了什么。然而由于普遍的意见就是如此，于是他也相信这是一种爱国行为，甚至自以为应为杀死一个恶棍而得到一枚勋章。他用一把借来的刀切那裸露出来的脖子，因为武器有些钝了，他没能切动。于是他从自己兜里掏出一把黑柄小刀（既然有厨子的手艺，他对切肉应当很有经验），成功地执行了命令。

以上指出的过程的作用，清楚地反映在这个例子中。我们服从别人的怂恿，它会因为来自集体而更为强大，杀人者认为自己是做了一件很有功德的事情，既然他得到了无数同胞的赞同，他这样想是很自然的。这种事从法律上可以视为犯罪，从心理上却不是犯罪。

犯罪群体的一般特征与我们在所有群体中看到的特征并无不同：易受怂恿，轻信，易变，把良好或恶劣的感情加以夸大，表现出某种道德，等等。

我们会发现，在法国历史上留下最凶残记录的群体，即参与九月惨案的群体中间，这些特征一应俱全。事实上，它与制造圣巴托罗缪惨案的群体十分相似。让我引用泰纳根据当时的文献所作的详细描述。

没有人确切知道是谁下了杀掉犯人、空出监狱的命令。也许是丹东或别的什么人，这并不重要。我们关心的是这样一个事实，即参与屠杀的群体受到了强烈的怂恿。

这个杀人群体杀了大约三百人，而且它完全是个典型的异质性群体。除了少数职业无赖，主要是一些小店主和各行各业的手艺人：靴匠、锁匠、理发的、泥瓦匠、店员、邮差等等。在别人的怂恿下，他们就像前面提到的那个厨子一样，完全相信自己是在完成一项爱国主义任务。他们挤进一间双开门的办公室，既当法官又当执行人，但是他们丝毫不认为自己是犯罪。

他们深信自己肩负着重要使命，着手搭起一座审判台，与这种行动联系在一起的是，他们立刻表现出群体的率直和幼稚的正义感。考虑到受指控的人数众多，他们决定把贵族、僧侣、官员和王室仆役一律处死，没有必要对他们的案件——进行审判——这就是说，在一个杰出的爱国者眼里，对于所有的个人，只凭职业就可证明他是罪犯。其他人将根据他们的个人表现和声誉作出判决。群体幼稚的良知以这种

方式得到了满足。现在可以合法地进行屠杀了，残忍的本能也可以尽情地释放了。我在别处讨论过这种本能的来源，集体总是会将它发挥得淋漓尽致。不过正像群体通常的表现那样，这种本能并不妨碍他们表现出一些相反的感情，他们的善心常常和他们的残忍一样极端。

“他们对巴黎的工人有着极大的同情和敏锐的理解。在阿巴耶，那帮人中的一员在得知囚犯24小时没喝上水后，简直想把狱卒打死，如果不是犯人们为其求情，他是一定会这样做的。当一名囚犯被（临时法庭）宣告无罪后，包括卫兵和刽子手在内的所有人都高兴地与他拥抱，疯狂地鼓掌”，然后开始了大屠杀。在这个过程中，欢快的情绪从未间断。他们围在尸体旁跳舞唱歌，“为女士”安排了长凳，以享观看处死贵族之乐。而且这种表演一直具有一种特殊的正义气氛。

阿巴耶的一名刽子手当时抱怨说，为了让女士们看得真切，把她们安排得太近了，使在场的人中只有很少的人享受了痛打贵族的乐趣。于是决定让受害者在两排刽子手中间慢慢走过，让他们用刀背砍他以延长其受苦的时间。在福斯监狱，受害人被剥得精光，在半小时里施以“凌迟”，直到每个人都看够了以后，再来上一刀切开他们的五腹六脏。

刽子手并非全无顾忌，我们指出过的存在于群体中的道德意识也表现在他们身上。他们拒绝占有受害人的钱财和首饰，把这些东西全都放在会议桌上。

在他们的所有行为中，都可以看到群体头脑特有的那种幼稚的推理方式。因此，在屠杀了1200到1500个民族的敌人之后，有人提议说，那些关着老年人、乞丐和流浪汉的监狱其实是在养着一些没用的人，因此不如把他们全都杀掉，他的建议立刻就被采纳。他们中间当然也有人民的敌人，如一位名叫德拉卢的妇女，一个下毒者的寡妇：“她肯定对坐牢非常愤怒，如果她能办到的话，她会一把火烧掉巴黎。她肯

定这样说过，她已经这样说过了。除掉她算了。”这种说法好像很令人信服，囚犯被无一例外地处死了，其中包括50名12到17岁的儿童，他们当然也变成了人民公敌，于是全都被解决掉了。

当一周的工作结束时，所有这些处决也终于停止，刽子手们想来可以休息一下了。但他们深信自己为祖国立了大功，于是前往政府请赏。最热情的人甚至要求被授予勋章。

1871年巴黎公社的历史也提供了一些类似的事实。既然群体的势力不断增长，政府的权力在它面前节节败退，因此我们一定还会看到许多性质相同的事情。

第三章 刑事案件的陪审团



一群科学家或艺术家，仅仅因为他们组成一个团体这个事实，并不能就一般性问题作出与一群泥瓦匠或杂货商十分不同的判断。

提要：陪审团的一般特点/统计数据显示，它们的判决独立于它们的人员成分/影响陪审团的方法/辩护的形式与作用/说服关键人物的技巧/令陪审团迟疑或严厉的不同罪行/陪审团制度的好处。

由于不可能在这里对所有类型的陪审团——进行研究，因此我只想评价一下最重要

的，即法国刑事法庭的陪审团。这些陪审团为有名称的异质性群体提供了一个极好的例子。我们会看到，它也表现出易受暗示和缺乏推理能力的特点。当它处在群众领袖的影响之下时，也主要受无意识情绪的支配。在这一研究的过程中，我们不时还会看到一些不懂群众心理的人犯下错误的有趣事例。

首先，组成群体的不同成员在作出判决时，其智力水平无关紧要，陪审团为此提供了一个很好的例子。我们已经知道，当一个善于思考的团体要求就某个并非完全技术性的问题发表意见时，智力起不了多少作用。例如，一群科学家或艺术家，仅仅因为他们组成一个团体这个事实，并不能就一般性问题作出与一群泥瓦匠或杂货商十分不同的判断。在不同的时期，尤其是在1848年以前，法国政府规定对召集起来组成陪审团的人要慎加选择，要从有教养的阶层选出陪审员，即选择教授、官员、文人等等。如今，大多数陪审员来自小商人、小资本家或雇员。然而令专家大惑不解的是，无论组成陪审团的是什么人，他们的判决总是一样。甚至那些敌视陪审制度的地方长官，也不得不承认判决的准确性。贝拉·德·格拉热先生是刑事法庭的前庭长，他在自己的《回忆录》中用下面一席话表达了自己的看法：

今天，选择陪审员的权力实际掌握在市议员手里。他们根据自己环境中的政治和选举要求，把人们列入名单或从名单上划掉。……大多数选入陪审团的人都是生意人（但并不是像过去那样重要的人）和属于某个政府部门的雇员。……只要法官的开庭时间表一定，他们的意见和专长便不再有多少作用。许多陪审员有着新手的热情，有着最良好的意图的人，被同时放在了恭顺的处境下，陪审团的精神并未改变：它的判决依然如故。

对于这段话，我们必须记住的是它的结论，而不是那些软弱无力的解释。对这样的解释我们不必感到奇怪，因为法官通常和地方长官一样，对群体心理一窍不通，因

此他们也不了解陪审团。我从一个与刚才提到的这位作者有关的事实中，还发现了一个证据。他认为，刑事法庭最著名的出庭律师之一拉肖先生，处心积虑地利用自己的权利，在所有案件中反对让聪明人出现在名单上。但是经验终究会告诉我们，这种反对是毫无用处的，这可由一个事实来证明，即今天的公诉人和出庭律师，以及所有那些关在巴黎监狱里的人，都已完全放弃了他们反对陪审员的权利，因为正如德·格拉热先生所言，陪审团的判决并无变化，“它们既不更好，也不更差”。

就像群体一样，陪审团也受着感情因素极强烈的影响，很少被证据所打动。一位出庭律师说，“他们见不得有位母亲用乳房喂孩子或者一个孤儿”；德·格拉热则说，“一个妇女只要装出一副唯命是从的样子，就足以赢得陪审团的慈悲心肠。”

陪审团对自己有可能成为其受害者的罪行毫不留情，当然，这些罪行对社会也是最危险的，但是对于一些因为感情原因而违法的案件，陪审团却十分优柔寡断。对未婚母亲的杀婴罪，或者用泼硫酸来对付诱奸或抛弃自己的男人的妇女，他们很少表现得十分严厉，因为他们本能地感到，社会在照常运转，这种犯罪对它没有多大威胁，而且在一个被抛弃的姑娘不受法律保护的国家里，她为自己复仇，非但无害，反而有益，因为这可以事先吓阻那些未来的诱奸者。

陪审团就像任何群体一样，也深受名望的影响，德·格拉热先生十分正确地指出，陪审团的构成虽然十分民主，他们在好恶态度上却很贵族化：“头衔、出身、家财万贯、名望或一位著名律师的帮助，总之，一切不同寻常或能给被告增光的事情，都会使他的处境变得极为有利。”

杰出律师的主要用心所在，就是打动陪审团的感情，而且正如对付一切群体一样，不要作很多论证，或只采用十分幼稚的推理方式。一位在因为刑庭上赢了官司而赫赫有名的英国大律师，总结出以下应当遵循的行为准则：

进行辩护时，他要留心观察陪审团。最有利的机会一直就有。律师依靠自己的眼光和经验，从陪审员的面容上领会每句话的效果，从中得出自己的结论。第一步是要确认，哪些陪审员已经赞同他的理由。确定他们的赞同不必费很多工夫，然后他应把注意力转向那些看来还没有拿定主意的人，努力搞清楚他们为何敌视被告。这是他的工作中十分微妙的一部分，因为指控一个人除了正义感之外，还可以有无限多的理由。

这几句话道出了辩护术的全部奥妙。我们可以理解，事先准备好的演说为何效果甚微，这是因为必须随时根据印象改变措辞。

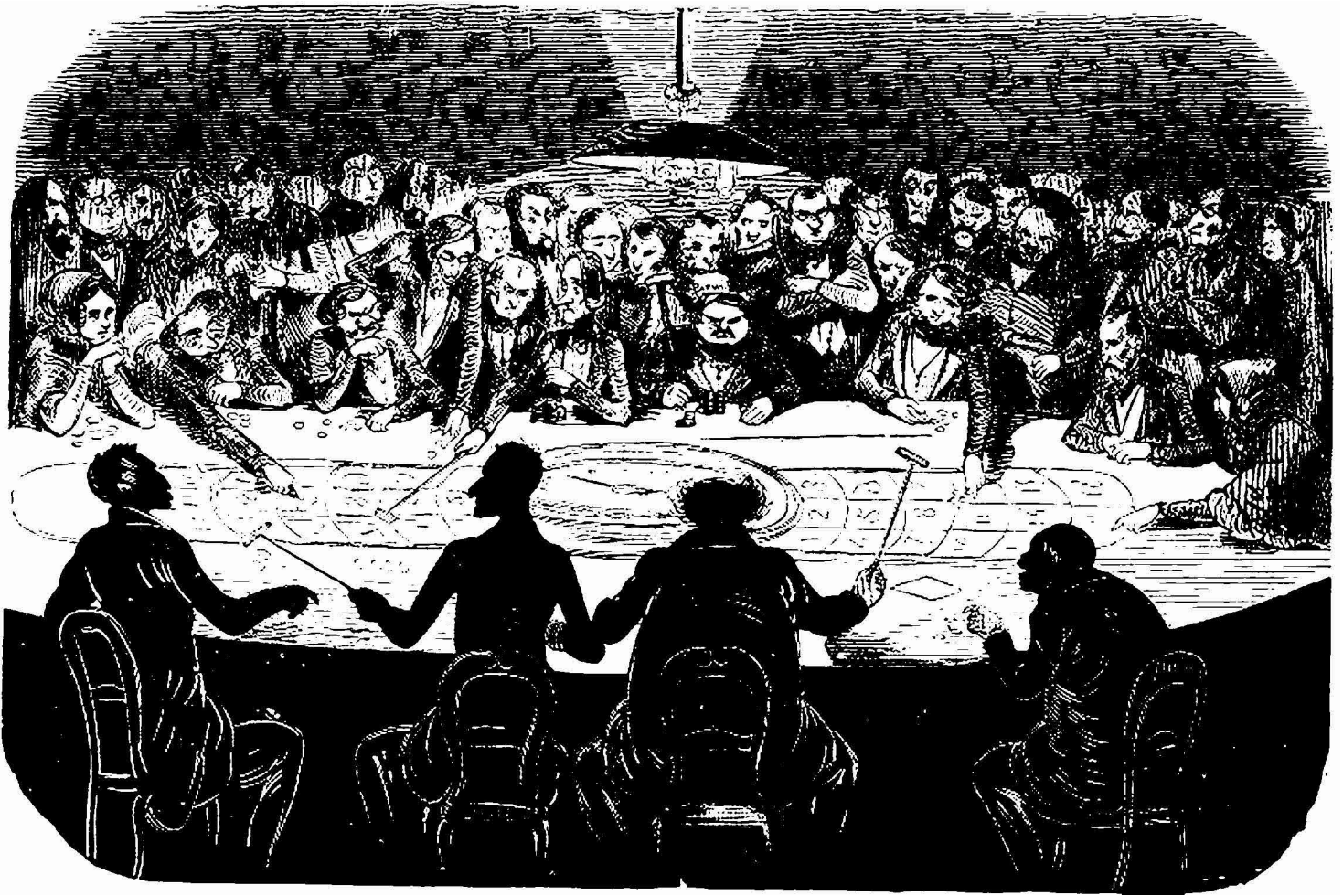
辩护人不必要让陪审团的每个人都接受他的观点，他只争取那些左右着普遍观点的灵魂人物既可。就像一切群体一样，在陪审团里也存在着少数对别人有支配作用的人。“我通过经验发现，”前面提到的那位律师说，“一两个有势力的人物就足以让陪审团的人跟着他们走。”需要用巧妙的暗示取得信任的就是那两三个人。首先，最关键的事情就是取悦于他们。群体中已成功博得其欢心的那个人，是处在一个就要被说服的时刻，这时无论向他提出什么证据，他很可能都会认为十分令人信服。我从有关拉肖的报道中摘录一段反映上述观点的趣闻逸事：

大家都知道，拉肖在刑庭审判过程的一切演说中，绝对不会让自己眼睛离开两三个他知道或感到既有影响又很固执的陪审员。通常他会把这些不易驯服的陪审员争取过来。不过有一次在外省，他不得不对付一个陪审员，他花了大半个小时，采用最狡猾的论辩，此人依然不为所动。这个人是第七陪审员，第二排椅子上的第一人。局面令人沮丧。突然，在激昂的辩论过程中，拉肖停顿了片刻，向法官说：“阁下是否可以命令把前面的窗帘放下来？第七陪审员已经被阳光晒晕了。”那个陪审员脸红起来，他微笑着表达了自己的谢意。他被争取到辩方一边来了。

许多作家，包括一些最出众的作家，最近开展了一场反对陪审制度的强大运动，而面对一个不受控制的团体犯下的错误，这种制度是保护我们免受其害的唯一办法。有些作者主张只从受过教育的阶层招募陪审员，然而我们已经证明，甚至在这种情况下，陪审团的判决也同回到目前的制度没什么两样。还有些作者以陪审团犯下的错误为根据，希望废除陪审团，用法官取而代之。真是令人难以理解，这些一厢情愿的改革家怎么会忘了，被指责为陪审团所犯下的错误，首先是由法官犯下的错误，而且当被告被带到陪审团面前时，一些地方官员、督查官、公诉人和初审法庭已经认定他有罪了。由此可见，如果对被告作出判决的是地方官而不是陪审团，他将失去找回清白的唯一机会。陪审团的错误历来首先是地方官的错误。因此，当出现了特别严重的司法错误时，首先应当受到谴责的是地方官，譬如最近对L医生的指控就是如此。有个愚蠢透顶的督查官根据一位半痴呆的女儿的揭发，对他提出起诉。那个女孩指控医生为了30个法郎，非法地为她做手术。若不是因为惹恼了公众，使最高法院院长立刻给了他自由，他是一定会身陷囹圄的。这个被指控的人得到了自己同胞的赞誉，这一错案的野蛮性由此昭然若揭。那些地方官自己也承认这一点，但是出于身份的考虑，他们极力阻挠签署赦免令。在所有类似的事情上，陪审团在遇到自己无法理解的技术细节时，自然会倾听公诉人的意见，因为他们认为，那些在搞清楚最复杂的事态上训练有素的官员，已经对事件进行了调查。那么，谁是错误的真正制造者？是陪审团还是地方官？我们应当大力维护陪审团，因为它是唯一不能由任何个人来取代的群体类型。只有它能够缓解法律的严酷性。这种对任何人一视同仁的法律，从原则上说既不考虑也不承认特殊情况。法官是冷漠无情的，他除了法律条文不理睬任何事情，出于这种职业的严肃性，他对夜黑中的杀人越货者和因为贫困、因为受到诱奸者的抛弃而杀婴的可怜姑娘，会施以同样的刑罚。而陪审团会本能地感到，与逃避开法网的诱奸者相比，被诱奸的姑娘罪过要小得多，对她应当宽大为怀。

在了解了身份团体的心理，也了解了其他群体的心理之后，对于一个受到错误指控的案件，我不可能仍然认为，我不应当去和陪审团打交道，而应当去找地方官。从前者那里我还有些找回清白的机会，让后者认错的机会却是微乎其微。群体的权力令人生畏，然而有些身份团体的权力更让人害怕。

第四章 选民群体



在社会问题上，由于未知的因素数量众多，从本质上说人们的无知没有什么两样。

提要：选民群体的一般特点/说服他们的办法/候选人应当具备的素质/名望的必要性/工人农民为何很少选举自己的同行/词语和套语对选民的影响/竞选演说的一般特点/选民的意见是如何形成的/政治委员会的权力/它们代表着最可怕的专制/大革命时期的委员会/普选权虽有缺陷，但不能废除/为何即使限制选举权也不会改变选举结果。

选民群体，也就是说，有权选出某人担任官职的集体，属于异质性群体，但是由于他们的行为仅限于一件规定十分明确的事情，即在不同的候选人中作出选择，因此他们只具有前面讲到过的少数特征。在群体特有的特征中，他们表现出极少的推理能力，他们没有批判精神，轻信、易怒并且头脑简单。此外，从他们的决定中也可

以找到群众领袖的影响，和我们列举过的那些因素——断言、重复和传染——的作用。

让我们来看一下说服选民群体的办法。从最成功的办法中，可以很容易发现他们的心理。首先，非常重要的是，候选人应当享有名望。能够取代个人名望的只有财富。才干甚至天才，都不是非常重要的成功要素。

极为重要的另一点是，享有名望的候选人必须能够迫使选民不经讨论就接受自己。选民中的多数都是工人或农民，他们很少选出自己的同伍来代表自己，原因就在于这种人在他们中间没有名望。当他们偶然选出一个和自己相同的人时，一般也是由于一些次要原因，例如为了向某个大人物或有权势的雇主——选民平常要依靠他——泄愤，或是因为通过这种方式他能够一时产生成为其主人的幻觉。

候选人若想保证自己取得成功，只有名望是不够的。选民特别在意他表现出贪婪和虚荣。他必须用最离谱的哄骗手段才能征服选民，要毫不犹豫地向他们作出最令人异想天开的许诺。

如果选民是工人，那就侮辱和中伤雇主，再多也太过分。对于竞选对手，必须利用断言法、重复法和传染法，竭力让人确信他是个十足的无赖，他恶行不断是人尽皆知的事实。为任何表面证据而费心是没有用处的。对手如果不了解群体心理，他会用各种论证为自己辩护，而不是把自己限制在只用断言来对付断言，如此一来，他也就没有任何获胜的机会了。

候选人写成文字的纲领不可过于绝对，不然他的对手将来会用它来对付他。但是在口头纲领中，再夸夸其谈也不过分。可以毫无惧色地承诺最重要的改革。作出这些夸张能够产生巨大的效果，但它们对未来并没有约束力，因为这需要不断地进行观

察，而选民绝对不想为这事操心，他并不想知道自己支持的候选人在实行他所赞成的竞选纲领上走了多远，虽然他以为正是这个纲领使他的选择有了保证。

在以上这种事情中，能够看到我们前面讨论过的所有说服的因素。我们在各种口号和套话——我们已经谈到过这些东西神奇的控制力——所发挥的作用中还会看到它们。一个明白如何利用这些说服手段的演说家，他能够用刀剑成就的事情，用这种方法照样可以办到。像不义之财、卑鄙的剥削者、可敬的劳工、财富的社会化之类的说法，永远会产生同样的效果，尽管它们已经被用得有些陈腐。此外，如果候选人满嘴新词，其含义又极其贫乏，因而能够迎合极不相同的各种愿望，他也必能大获全胜。西班牙1873年那场血腥的革命，就是由这种含义复杂、因而每个人都可以自己作出解释的奇妙说法引起的。当时的一位作者描述了这种说法的出现，值得引用于此：

激进派已经发现集权制的共和国其实是乔装打扮的君主国，于是为了迁就他们，议会全体一致宣告建立一个“联邦共和国”，虽然投票者中谁也解释不清楚自己投票赞成的是什么。然而这个说法却让人皆大欢喜。人们无比高兴并陶醉于其中。美德与幸福的王国就要在地球上揭幕。共和主义者如果被对手拒绝授予联邦主义者名称，会认为自己受到了致命的侮辱。人们在大街上以这样的话互致问候：“联邦共和国万岁！”然后便响起一片赞美之声，对军队没有纪律这种奇怪的美德以及士兵自治大唱赞歌。人们对“联邦共和国”是如何理解的呢？有些人认为它是指各省的解放，即同美国和行政分权制相似的制度；还有些人则认为它意味着消灭一切权力，迅速着手于伟大的社会变革。巴塞罗那和安达路西亚的社会主义者赞成公社权力至上，他们建议在西班牙设立一万个独立的自治区，根据它们自己的要求制定法律，在建立这些自治区的同时禁止警察和军队的存在。在南部各省，叛乱很快便开始从一座城市向另一座城市、一个村庄向另一个村庄蔓延。有个发表了宣言的村

庄，它所做的第一件事情，就是立刻破坏了电报线和铁路，以便切断与相邻地区和马德里的一切关系。处境最可怜的村庄注定只能寄人篱下。联邦制给各立门户大开方便之门，到处都在杀人放火，人们无恶不作。这片土地上充斥着血腥的狂欢。

至于理性对选民的头脑可能产生的影响，要想对这个问题不生任何疑心，千万别去读那些有关选民集会的报道。在这种集会上，言之凿凿、痛骂对手、有时甚至拳脚相加此起彼伏，但绝对听不到论证。即使有片刻安静的时候，也是因为有个享有“粗汉”名声的人在场，宣称自己要用一些让听众开心的麻烦问题难倒候选人。然而反对派的满足是短命的，因为提问者的声音很快就会被对手的叫喊压倒。从报纸的上千个类似事例中选出来的关于公众集会的以下报道，可以作为这方面的典型：

会议的组织者之一请大会选出一名主席，骚乱立刻席卷全场。无政府主义者跳上讲台，粗暴地占领会议桌。社会主义者极力反抗；人们相互扭打，每一派都指责对方是拿了政府佣金的奸细。等等……一个眼睛被打青了的公民离开了会场。

会议总算在喧闹中各就各位，说话的权利转移给了X同志。

这位演讲人开始激烈抨击社会主义者，他们则用“白痴、无赖、流氓！”等等的叫骂声打断他。X同志则针对这些脏话提出一种理论，根据这种理论，社会主义者是“白痴”或“可笑的家伙”。

昨晚，为五一节工人庆祝会的预演，阿勒曼派在福伯格宫大街的商会大厅组织了一次大会。会议的口号是“沉着冷静！”。

G同志——暗指社会主义者是“白痴”和“骗子”。

所有这些恶言恶语都会引起相互攻讦，演讲者和听众甚至会大打出手。椅子、桌子、板凳，全都变成了武器。

等等，不一而足。

千万不要以为，这种描述只适用于固执的选民群体，并且取决于他们的社会地位。在不管是什么样的无名称的集会中，即使参与者全是受过高等教育的人，会上的争论也没什么两样。我已经说过，当人们聚集成一个群体时，一种降低他们智力水平的机制就会发生作用，在所有的场合都可以找到这方面的证明。例如，下面是我从1895年2月13日的《时报》上摘录的有关一次集会的报道：

那个晚上，随着时间的流逝，喧嚣声有增无减。我不相信有哪个演讲者能够说上两句话而不被人打断。每时每刻都有人从这里或那里大声叫喊，或者是喊声四起。掌声中加杂着嘘声，听众中的个别成员也在不断地相互激烈争吵。一些人可怕地挥舞着木棒，另一些人不停地击打地板。打断演说的人引来一片呼喊：“把他轰下去！”或“让他说！”

C先生满嘴都是白痴、懦夫、恶棍、卑鄙无耻、唯利是图、打击报复之类的用语，他宣称要把这些东西统统消灭。

等等，等等。

人们也许会问，处在这种环境里的选民怎么能够形成意见呢？提出这样的问题，等于是集体享有自由的程度这件事上掩盖一个奇怪的谬见。群体持有别人赋予他们的意见，但是他们绝不能夸口自己持有合乎理性的意见。在这里所谈论的事情上，选民的意見和选票是操在选举委员会的手里，而它的领袖人物通常都是些政客，他们向工人许诺好处，因此在这些人中间很有影响。谢乐先生是今天最勇敢的民主斗

士之一，他说：“你可知道什么是选举委员会？它不多不少，是我们各项制度的基石，是政治机器的一件杰作。今日法国就是受着长期选举委员会的统治。”

只要候选人能够被群体所接受，并拥有一定的财源，对群体产生影响并不困难。根据捐款人的招认，300万法郎就足以保证布朗热将军重新当选。

选民群体的心理学就是如此。它和其他群体一样：既不更好也不更差。

因此，我从以上所言并没有得出反对普选的结论。我明白了它的命运，因此出于一些实际的原因，我愿意保留这种办法。事实上，我们是通过对群体心理的调查归纳出了这些原因，基于这些考虑，我要对它们作进一步的阐述。

不必怀疑，普选的弱点十分突出，所以人们很难视而不见。无可否认，文明是少数智力超常的人的产物，他们构成了一个金字塔的顶点。随着这个金字塔各个层次的加宽，智力相应地也越来越少，它们就是一个民族中的群众。一种文明的伟大，如果依靠仅仅以人多势众自夸的低劣成员的选票，是无法让人放心的。另一件无须怀疑的事情是，群众投下的选票往往十分危险。它们已经让我们付出了若干次遭受侵略的代价，我们眼看着群体正在为其铺设道路的社会主义就要大获全胜，异想天开的人民主权论，十有八九会让我们付出更惨重的代价。

然而，这些不同意见虽然从理论上说颇令人信服，在实践中却毫无势力。只要还记得观念变成教条后有着不可征服的力量，我们就会承认这一点。从哲学观点看，群体权力至上的教条就像中世纪的宗教教条一样不堪一驳，但是如今它却拥有和昔日教条一样强大的绝对权力，因此它就像过去我们的宗教观念一样不可战胜。不妨设想有个现代自由思想家被送回了中世纪。难道你会认为，当他发现盛行于当时的宗教观念有着至高无上的权力后，会对它们进行攻击吗？一旦落入一个能够把他送上

火刑柱的法官之手，指控他与魔鬼有约或参与了女巫的飨宴，他还会对存在着魔鬼或女巫提出质疑吗？用讨论的方式与飓风作对，这比群众的信念明智不了多少。普选的教条今天就有着过去宗教的所具有的威力。演说家和作家在提到它时表现出的恭敬与媚态，即使路易十四也无缘享受。因此对于它必须采取和对待宗教教条一样的立场。只有时间能够对它发生影响。

此外，破坏这种教条的努力更是无用，因为它具有一种对自己有利的外表。托克维尔正确地指出，“在平等的时代，人们互不信任，因为他们全都一样，但是这种比喻却使他们几乎毫无节制地信赖公众的判断力，其原因就在于，所有的人同样开明似乎是不太可能的，真理并不会与人数上的优势携手同行。”

对选举权加以限制，如果必要的话，把这种权利限制在聪明人中间，如此便可认为，这样做会改进群众投票的结果吗？我永远也无法承认会出现这种情况，这是基于我已经说过的理由，即一切集体，不管其成员如何，全都患有智力低下症。在群体中，人们总是倾向于变得智力平平，在一般性问题上，40名院士的投票不会比40个卖水人所投的票更高明。我一点都不相信，如果只让有教养的和受过教育的人成为选民，受到谴责的普选的投票结果就会大为不同。一个人不会因为通晓希腊语或数学，因为是个建筑师、兽医、医生或大律师，便掌握了特殊的智力或社会问题。我们的政治经济学家全都受过高等教育，他们大都是教授或学者，然而他们何曾就哪个普遍性问题——贸易保护、双本位制等等——取得过一致意见？原因就在于，他们的学问不过是我们的普遍无知的一种十分弱化了的形势。在社会问题上，由于未知的因素数量众多，从本质上说人们的无知没有什么两样。

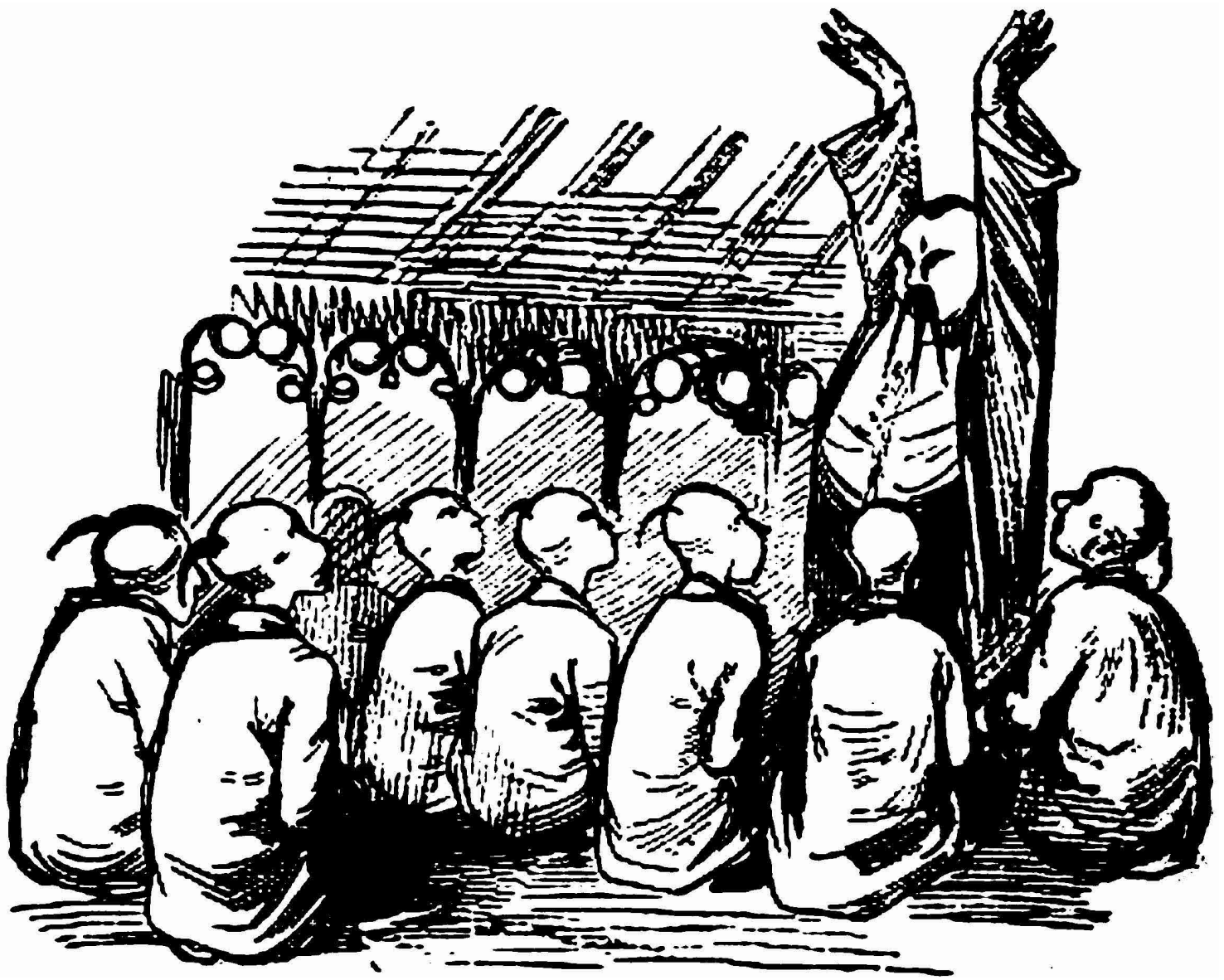
因此，完全由掌握各种学问的人组成的选民，他们的投票结果不会比现在的情况好多少。他们将仍然主要受自己的感情和党派精神的支配。对于那些我们现在必须对

付的困难，我们还是一个也解决不了，而且我们肯定会受到身份团体暴政的压迫。

群众的选举权不管是受到限制还是普遍给予，不管是在共和制还是君主制之下行使这种权利，不管是在法国、比利时、德国、葡萄牙或西班牙，都是一样的；说一千道一万，它所表达的不过是一个种族无意识的向往和需要。在每个国家，当选者的一般意见都反映着种族的禀性，而我们看到，这种禀性从一代人到下一代人，不会有显著的变化。

由此可见，我们一再遇到种族这个基本概念。我们经常遇到它，由此会产生另一种认识，即各种制度和政府对一个民族的生活只能产生很小的影响。民族主要是受其种族的禀性支配，也就是说，是受着某些品质的遗传残余的支配，而所谓禀性，正是这些品质的总和。种族和我们日常所需的枷锁，是决定着命运的神秘主因。

第五章 议会



领袖的影响力只在很小的程度上是因为他们提出的论据，却在很大程度上来自他们的名望。这一点最好的证明是，一旦他们不知因为什么情况威信扫地，他们的影响力也随之消失。

提要：议会中的群体表现出异质性群体的大部分特征/他们的意见的简单化/易受暗示，但有局限性/他们难以改变的意见和易变的意见/议而不决的原因/领袖的作用/他们是议会的真正主人/演讲术的要点/没有名望者的演说劳而无功/议会成员的感情夸张/国民公会的实例/议会失去群体特征的情况/专家在技术性问题上的作用/议会制度的优点和危险/适应现代要求，但会造成财政浪费和对自由的限制/结论。

我们在议会中找到了一个有名称的异质性群体的范例。虽然议会成员的选举方式因时而异，各国之间也有所不同，不过它们都有着十分相似的特征。在这种场合，人们会感到种族的影响或者削弱，或者强化了群体的共同特征，但不会妨碍它们的表现。大不相同的国家，如希腊、意大利、葡萄牙、西班牙、法国和美国，它们的议会在辩论和投票上表现出很大的相似性，使各自的政府面对着同样的困难。

然而，议会制度却是一切现代文明民族的理想。这种制度是一种观念的反映，即在某个问题上，一大群人要比一小撮人更有可能作出明智而独立的决定。这种观念虽然从心理学上说是错误的，却得到普遍的赞同。

在议会中也可以看到群体的一般特征：头脑简单、多变、易受暗示、夸大感情以及少数领袖人物的主导作用。然而，由于其特殊的构成，它们也有一些独特的表现，我们现在就来作一简单的说明。

意见的简单化是他们最重要的特征之一。在所有党派中，尤其是在拉丁民族的党派中，无一例外地存在着一种倾向，即根据适用于一切情况的最简单的抽象原则和普遍规律来解决最复杂的社会问题。当然，原则因党派不同而各有不同，但是，仅仅因为个人是群体的一部分这个事实，他们便总是倾向于夸大自己原则的价值，非要把它贯彻到底不可。由此产生的结果是，议会更严重地代表着各种极端意见。

议会有着特别质朴的简单意见，法国大革命时期的雅各宾党人为此提供了一个最完美的典型。他们用教条和逻辑对待人，头脑里充满各种含糊不清的普遍观念，他们忙不迭地贯彻死板的原则，不关心事实如何。在谈到他们时，人们不无理由地认为，他们经历了一场革命，但并没有看到这场革命。在一些引导着他们的十分简单的教条的帮助下，他们以为自己能够把这个社会从上到下重新改造一遍，结果使一个高度精致的文明倒退到了社会进化更早期的阶段。他们为实现自己的梦想而采用

的办法，与极端质朴的人有着同样的特点。实际上，他们不过是把拦在他们道路上的一切统统毁掉。他们不管是吉伦特派、山岳派还是热月派，全都受着同样的精神的激励。

议会中的群体很容易受暗示的影响，而且就像所有群体一样，暗示都是来自享有名望的领袖。不过，议会群体这种易受暗示的特点，又有着很明确的界限，指出这一点十分重要。

在有关地方或地区的一切问题上，议会中的每个成员都持有牢固而无法改变的意见，任何论证都无法使其动摇。例如在贸易保护或酿酒业特权这类与有势力的选民的利益有关的问题上，即使有狄摩西尼的天赋，也难以改变一位众议员的投票。这些选民在投票期到来之前就发出的暗示，足以压倒来自其他方面的一切取消的建议，使意见的绝对稳定得到了维护。

一涉及一般性问题——推翻一届内阁、开征一种新税等等——就不再有任何固定的意见了，领袖的建议能够发挥影响，虽然与普通群体中的方式有所不同。每个政党都有自己的领袖，他们的势力有时旗鼓相当。结果是，一个众议员有时发现自己被夹在两种对立的建议之间，因此难免迟疑不决。这解释了为什么经常会看到他在一刻钟之内就会作出相反的表决，或为一项法案增加一条使其失效的条款，例如剥夺雇主选择和解雇工人的权利，然后又来上一条几乎废除这一措施的修正案。

出于同样的理由，每届议会也有一些非常稳定的意见和一些十分易变的意见。大体上说，一般性问题数量更多，因此在议会中议而不决的现象司空见惯——所以议而不决，是因为永远存在着对选民的担心，从他们那里收到的建议总是姗姗来迟，这有可能制约领袖的影响力。不过，在无数的辩论中，当涉及的问题议员们没有强烈的先入之见时，处在主导地位的人依然是那些领袖。

这些领袖的必要性是显而易见的，因为在每个国家的议会中，都可以看到他们以团体首领的名义存在着。他们是议会的真正统治者。组成群体的人没了头头便一事无成，因此也可以说，议会中的表决通常只代表极少数人的意见。

领袖的影响力只在很小的程度上是因为他们提出的论据，却在很大程度上来自他们的名望。这一点最好的证明是，一旦他们不知因为什么情况威信扫地，他们的影响力也随之消失。

这些政治领袖的名望只属于他们个人，与头衔或名声无关。关于这个事实，西蒙先生在评论1848年国民议会——他也是其成员之一——的大人物时，为我们提供了一些非常具体的例子：

路易·拿破仑两个月以前还无所不能，如今却完全无足轻重了。

维克多·雨果登上了讲台。他无功而返。人们听他说话，就像听皮阿说话一样，但是他并没有博得多少掌声。“我不喜欢他那些想法”，谈到皮阿，沃拉贝勒对我说，“不过他是法国最了不起的作家之一，也是最伟大的演说家。”基内尽管聪明过人，智力超强，却一点也不受人尊敬。在召开议会之前，他还有些名气，但在议会里他却籍籍无名。

对才华横溢者无动于衷的地方，莫过于政治集会。它所留心的只是那些与时间地点相宜、有利于党派的滔滔辩才，并不在乎它是否对国家有利。若想享有1848年的拉马丁以及1871年的梯也尔得到的那种崇敬，需要有急迫而不可动摇的利益刺激才成。一旦危险消失，议会立刻就会忘记它的感激和受到的惊吓。

我引用上面这些话，是因为其中包含着一些事实，而不是因为它所提供的解释，其中的心理学知识贫乏得很。群体一旦效忠于领袖，不管是党的领袖还是国家的领

袖，它便立刻失去了自己的个性。服从领袖的群体是处在他的名望的影响之下，并且这种服从不受利益或感激之情的支配。

因此，享有足够名望的领袖几乎掌握着绝对权力。一位著名众议员在多年时间里因其名望而拥有巨大的影响力，在上次大选中由于某些金融问题而被击败，此事广为人知。他只消做个手势，内阁便倒台了。有个作家用的下面一席话说明了他的影响程度：

这位X先生，让我们付出了三倍于我们为东京湾付出的惨痛代价，主要是因为他，我们在马达加斯加的地位长期岌岌可危，我们在南尼日尔被骗走了一个帝国，我们失去了在埃及的优势。X先生的谬论让我们丢失的领土，比拿破仑一世的灾难犹过之而无及。

对于这种领袖，我们不必过于苛责。不错，他使我们损失惨重，然而他的大部分影响力都是因为他顺应了民意，而这种民意在殖民地事务上，目前还远没有超越过去的水平。领袖很少超前于民意，他所做的一切几乎总是在顺应民意，因此也会助长其中的所有错误。

我们这里所讨论的领袖进行说服的手段，除了他们的名望之外，还包括一些我们多次提到过的因素。领袖若想巧妙地利用这些手段，他必须做到对群体心理了然于心，至少也要无意识地做到这一点；他还必须知道如何向他们说话。他尤其应当了解各种词汇、套话和形象的神奇力量。他应当具备特殊的辩才，这包括言之凿凿——卸去证明的重负——和生动的形象，并伴之以十分笼统的论证。这种辩才在所有集会中都可以看到，英国议会也不例外，虽然它是所有议会中最严肃的一家。英国哲人梅因说，

在下院的争吵中可以不断看到，整个辩论不过是些软弱无力的大话和盛怒的个人之间的交锋。这种一般公式对纯粹民主的想象有着巨大的影响。让一群人接受用惊人之语表达出来的笼统的断言，从来就不是什么难事，即使它从未得到过证实，大概也不可能得到证实。

以上引文中提到的“惊人之语”，不管说得多重要也不能算过分。我们多次谈到词语和套话的特殊力量。在措辞的选择上，必须以能够唤起生动的形象为准。下面这段话摘自我们一位议会领袖的演说，提供了一个极好的范例：

这艘船将驶向我们那片坐落着我们的刑事犯定居点的热病肆虐的殖民地，把名声可疑的政客和目无政府的杀人犯关在一起。这对难兄难弟可以促膝谈心，彼此视为一种社会状态中互助互利的两派。

如此唤起的形象极为鲜活，演说者的所有对手都会觉得自己受着它的威胁。他们的脑海里浮现出两幅画面：一片热病肆虐的国土，一艘可以把他们送走的船。他们不是也有可能被放在那些定义不明确的可怕政客中间吗？他们体验到的恐惧，与当年罗伯斯庇尔用断头台发出威胁的演说给国民公会的人的感觉是一样的。在这种恐惧的影响下，他们肯定会向他投降。

喋喋不休地说些最离谱的大话，永远对领袖有利。我刚才引用过的那位演说家能够断言——并且不会遇到强烈的抗议——金融家和僧侣在资助扔炸弹的人，因此大金融公司的总裁也应受到和无政府主义者一样的惩罚。这种断言永远会在人群中发生作用。再激烈的断言、再可怕的声明也不算过分。要想吓唬住听众，没有比这种辩术更有效的办法。在场的人会担心，假如他们表示抗议，他们也会被当作叛徒或其同伙打倒。

如我所说，这种特殊的辩论术在所有集会中都极为有效。危难时刻它的作用就更加明显。从这个角度看，法国大革命时期各种集会上那些大演说家的讲话，读起来十分有趣。他们无时无刻不认为自己必须先谴责罪恶弘扬美德，然后再对暴君破口大骂，发誓不自由毋宁死。在场的人站起来热烈鼓掌，冷静下来后再回到自己的座位上。

偶尔也有智力高强、受过高等教育的领袖，但是具备这种品质通常对他不但无益反而有害。如果他想说明事情有多么复杂，同意作出解释和促进理解，他的智力就会使他变得宽宏大量，这会大大削弱使徒们所必需的信念的强度与粗暴。在所有的时代，尤其是在大革命时期，伟大的民众领袖头脑之狭隘令人瞠目；但影响力最大的，肯定也是头脑最褊狭的人。

其中最著名的演说，即罗伯斯庇尔的演说，经常有着令人吃惊的自相矛盾，只看这些演说实在搞不明白，这个大权在握的独裁者何以有如此大的影响：

教学法式的常识和废话，糊弄孩子头脑的稀松平常的拉丁文化，攻击和辩护所采用的观点不过是些小学生的歪理。没有思想，没有措辞上令人愉快的变化，也没有切中要害的讥讽。只有令我们生厌的疯狂断言。在经历过一次这种毫无乐趣的阅读之后，人们不免会与和蔼的德穆兰一起，长叹一声：“唉！”

想到与极端狭隘的头脑结合在一起的强烈信念能够给予一个有名望的人什么样的权力，有时真让人心惊肉跳。一个人要想无视各种障碍，表现出极高的意志力，就必须满足这些最起码的条件。群体本能地在精力旺盛信仰坚定的人中间寻找自己的主子，他们永远需要这种人物。

在议会里，一次演说要想取得成功，根本不取决于演说者提出的论证，而是几乎完

全依靠他所具有的名望。这方面最好的证明是，如果一个演说者因为这样或那样的原因失去名望，他同时也就失去了一切影响，即他根据自己的意志影响表决的能力。

当一个籍籍无名的演说者拿着一篇论证充分的讲稿出场时，如果他只有论证，他充其量也只能让人听听而已。一位有心理学见识的众议员，德索布先生，最近用下面这段话描述了一个缺乏名望的众议员：

他走上讲台后，从公文包里拿出一份讲稿，煞有介事地摆在自己面前，十分自信地开始发言。

他曾自我吹嘘说，他能够让听众确信使他本人感到振奋的事情。他一而再再而三地强调自己的论证，对那些数字和证据信心十足。他坚信自己能够说服听众。面对他所引用的证据，任何反对都没用处。他一厢情愿地开讲，相信自己同事的眼力，认为他们理所当然地只会赞同真理。

他一开口便惊异地发现大厅里并不安静，人们发出的噪音让他多少有些恼怒。

为何不能保持安静呢？为何这么不留意他的发言呢？对于正在讲话的人，那些众议员在想些什么？有什么要紧的事情让这个或那个众议员离开了自己的座位？

他脸上掠过一丝不安的神情。他皱着眉头停了下来。在议长的鼓励下，他又提高嗓门开始发言，他加重语气，做出各种手势。周围的噪声越来越大，他连自己的话都听不见了。于是他又停了下来。最后，因为担心自己的沉默会招来可怕的叫喊：“闭嘴！”便又开始说起来。喧闹声变得难以忍受。

当议会极度亢奋时，它也会变得和普通的异质性群体没什么两样，这时它的感情就

会表现出总爱走极端的特点。可以看到它或是做出最伟大的英雄主义举动，或是犯下最恶劣的过失。个人不再是他自己，他会完全失去自我，投票赞成最不符合他本人利益的措施。

法国大革命的历史说明了议会能够多么严重地丧失自我意识，让那些与自己的利益截然对立的建议牵着鼻子走。贵族放弃自己的特权是个巨大的牺牲，但是在国民公会期间那个著名的夜晚，他们毫不犹豫地这样做了。议会成员放弃自己不可侵犯的权利，便使自己永远处在死亡的威胁之下，而他们却迈出了这一步；他们也不害怕在自己的阶层中滥杀无辜，虽然他们很清楚，今天他们把自己的同伙送上断头台，明天这可能就是他们自己的命运。实际上，他们已经进入了我曾描述过的一个完全不由自主的状态，任何想法都无法阻止他们赞成那些已经把他们冲昏了头脑的建议。下面的话摘自他们中间的一个人，比劳凡尔纳的回忆录，极典型地记下了这种情况：“我们一直极力谴责的决定……”他说，“两天前、甚至一天前我们还不想作出的决定，居然就通过了；造成这种情况的是危机，再无其他原因。”再也没有比这更正确的说法了。

在所有情绪激昂的议会上，都可以看到同样的无意识现象。泰纳说：

他们批准并下令执行他们所痛恨的法令。这些法令不只愚蠢透顶，简直就是犯罪——杀害无辜，杀害他们的朋友。在右派的支持下，左派全体一致，在热烈的掌声中把丹东，他们的天然首领，这场革命的伟大发动者和领袖，送上了断头台。在左派的支持下，右派全部一致，在最响亮的掌声中表决通过了革命政府最恶劣的法令。议会全体一致，在一片热烈叫喊的赞扬声中，在对德布瓦、库东和罗伯斯庇尔等人热烈的赞扬声中，不由自主地一再举行改选，使杀人成性的政府留在台上；平原派憎恶它，是因为它嗜杀成性，山岳派憎恶它，是因为它草菅人命。平民派和山

岳派，多数派和少数派，最后都落了个同意为他们的自杀出力的下场。牧月22日，整个议会把自己交给了刽子手；热月8日，在罗伯斯庇尔发言后的一刻钟内，同样的事情又被这个议会做了一次。

这幅画面看起来昏天黑地，但它十分准确。议会若是兴奋和头脑发昏到一定程度，就会表现出同样的特点。它会变成不稳定的流体，受制于一切刺激。下面这段有关1848年议会的描述，来自斯布勒尔先生，一位有着不容怀疑的民主信仰的议员。我从《文学报》上把这段十分典型的文字转引如下。它为我曾经说过的夸张感情这一群体特点、为它的极端多变性——这使它一刻不停地从一种感情转向另一种截然相反的感情——提供了一个例子。

共和派因为自己的分裂、嫉妒和猜疑，也因为它的盲信和无节制的愿望而坠入地狱。它的质朴和天真与它的普遍怀疑不相上下。与毫无法律意识、不知纪律为何物的表现相伴的，是放肆的恐怖和幻想。在这些方面乡下人和孩子也比他们强。他们的冷酷和他们的缺乏耐心一样严重，他们的残暴与驯顺不相上下。这种状态是性格不成熟以及缺乏教养的自然结果。没有什么事情能让这种人吃惊，但任何事情都会让他们慌乱。出于恐惧或出于大无畏的英雄气概，他们既能赴汤蹈火，也会胆小如鼠。

他们不管原因和后果，不在乎事物之间的关系。他们忽而灰心丧气，忽而斗志昂扬，他们很容易受惊慌情绪的影响，不是过于紧张就是过于沮丧，从来不会处在环境所要求的心境或状态中。他们比流水还易变，头脑混乱，行为无常。能指望他们提供什么样的政府基础？

幸运的是，上述这些在议会中看到的特点，并非经常出现。议会只是在某些时刻才会成为一个群体。在大多数情况下，组成议会的个人仍保持着自己的个性，这解释

了议会为何能够制定出十分出色的法律。其实，这些法律的作者都是专家，他们是在自己安静的书房里拟定草稿的，因此，表决通过的法律，其实是个人而不是集体的产物。这些法律自然就是最好的法律。只有当一系列修正案把它们变成集体努力的产物时，它们才有可能产生灾难性的后果。群体的产品不管性质如何，与孤立的个人的产品相比，总是品质低劣。专家阻止着议会通过一些考虑不周全或行不通的政策。在这种情况下，专家是群体暂时的领袖。议会影响不到他，他却可以影响到议会。

议会的运作虽然面对所有这些困难，它仍然是人类迄今为止已经发现的最佳统治方式，尤其是人类已经找到的摆脱个人专制的最佳方式。不管是对于哲学家、思想家、作家、艺术家还是有教养的人，一句话，对于所有构成文明主流的人，议会无疑是理想的统治。

不过，在现实中它们也造成两种严重的危险，一是不可避免的财政浪费，二是对个人自由不断增加的限制。

第一个危险是各种紧迫问题和当选群体缺少远见的必然产物。如果有个议员提出一项显然符合民主理念的政策，譬如说，他在议案中建议保证使所有的工人能得到养老津贴，或建议为所有级别的国家雇员加薪，其他众议员因为害怕自己的选民，就会成为这一提议的牺牲品，他们似乎不敢无视后者的利益，反对这种提议中的政策。虽然他们清楚这是在为预算增加新的负担，必然造成新税种的设立。他们不可能在投票时迟疑不决。增加开支的后果属于遥远的未来，不会给他们自己带来不利的结果，如果投了反对票，当他们为连选连任而露面时，其后果就会清楚地展现在他们面前。

除了这第一个扩大开支的原因外，还有一个同样具有强制性的原因，即必须投票赞

成一切为了地方目的的补助金。一名众议员没办法反对这种补助，因为它们同样反映着选民的迫切需要，也因为每个众议员只有同意自己同僚的类似要求，才有条件为自己的选民争取到这种补助金。

上面提到的第二个危险——议会对自由不可避免的限制——看起来不那么明显，却是十分真实的。这是大量的法律——它们总是一种限制性措施——造成的结果，议会认为自己有义务表决通过，但是由于眼光短浅，它在很大程度上对其结果茫然无知。

这种危险当然是不可避免的，因为即使在英国这个提供了最通行的议会体制、议员对其选民保持了最大独立性的国家，也没有逃脱这种危险。赫伯特·斯宾塞在一本很久以前的著作中就曾指出，表面自由的增加必然伴随着真正自由的减少。他在最近的《人与国家》一书中又谈到了这个问题。在讨论英国议会时，他表达了自己的观点：

自从这个时期以来，立法机构一直遵循着我指出的路线。迅速膨胀的独裁政策不断地倾向于限制个人自由，这表现在两个方面。每年都有大量的法律被制定出来，对一些过去公民行为完全自由的事务进行限制，强迫他做一些过去他可做可不做的事情。同时，日益沉重的公共负担，尤其是地方公共负担，通过减少他可以自由支配的收益份额，增加公共权力取之于他并根据自己的喜好花销的份额，进一步限制了他的自由。

这种对个人自由日益增加的限制，在每个国家都有斯宾塞没有明确指出的各种具体的表现形式。正是这些大量的立法措施——大体上全是些限制性法令——的通过，必然会大大增加负责实施它们的公务员的数量、权力和影响。沿着这个方向走下去，这些公务员有可能成为文明国家的真正主人。他们拥有更大的权力，是因为在

政府不断更换的过程中，只有他们不会受到这种不断变化的触动，只有他们不承担责任，不需要个性，永久地存在。实行压迫性的专制，莫过于具备这三种特点的人。

不断制定一些限制性法规，用最复杂的条条框框把最微不足道的生活行为包围起来，难免会把公民自由活动的空间限制在越来越小的范围之内。各国被一种谬见所骗，认为保障自由与平等的最好办法就是多多地制定法律，因此它们每天都在批准进行一些越来越不堪忍受的束缚。它们已经习惯于给人上套，很快便会达到需要奴才的地步，失去一切自发精神与活力。那时他们不过是些虚幻的人影，消极、顺从、有气无力的行尸走肉。

若是到了这个地步，个人注定要去寻求那种他自己身上已经找不到的外在力量。政府各部门必然与公民的麻木和无望同步增长。因此它们必须表现出私人所没有的主动性、首创性和指导精神。这迫使它们要承担一切，领导一切，把一切都纳入自己的保护之下。于是国家变成了全能的上帝。而经验告诉我们，这种上帝既难以持久，也不十分强大。

在某些民族中，一切自由受到了越来越多的限制，尽管表面上的许可使它们产生一种幻觉，以为自己还拥有这些自由。它们的衰老在造成这种情况上所起的作用，至少和任何具体的制度一样大。这是直到今天任何文明都无法逃脱的衰落期的不祥先兆之一。

根据历史的教训以及各方面都触目惊心的那些先兆判断，我们的一些现代文明已经到达了衰败期之前那些历史上早已有之的时代。所有的民族似乎都不可避免地要经历同样的生存阶段，因为看起来历史是在不断地重复它的过程。

关于文明进化的这些共同阶段，很容易作个简单的说明，我将对它们作一概括，以此为本书作结。这种速记式的说明，也许能够对理解目前群众所掌握的权力的原因有所启发。

如果我们根据主要线索，对我们之前那些文明的伟大与衰败的原因加以评价，我们会发现什么呢？

在文明诞生之初，一群来源不同的人，因为移民、入侵或占领等原因聚集在一起。他们血缘不同，语言和信仰也不同。使这些人结为整体的唯一共同的纽带，是某个头领没有完全得到承认的法律。这些混乱的人群有着十分突出的群体特征。他们有短暂的团结，既表现出英雄主义，也有种种弱点，易冲动而性狂狷。没有什么东西把他们牢固地联系在一起。他们是野蛮人。

漫长的岁月造就了自己的作品。环境的一致、种族间不断出现的通婚和共同生活的必要性发挥了作用。不同的小群体开始融合成一个整体，形成了一个种族，即一个有着共同的特征和感情的群体，它们在遗传的作用下日益稳固。这群人变成了一个民族，这个民族又有能力摆脱它的野蛮状态。但是，只有在经过长期的努力、必然不断重复的斗争以及无数次的反复，从而使它获得了某种理想之后，它才能够完全形成一个民族。这个理想具有什么性质并不十分重要，不管是对罗马的崇拜、雅典的强盛还是真主安拉的胜利，都足以让一个种族中的每个人在感情和思想上形成完全的统一。

在这个阶段，一种包含着各种制度、信念和艺术的新文明便诞生了。这个种族在追求自己理想的过程中，会逐渐得到某些它建立丰功伟业所不可缺少的素质。无需怀疑，它有时仍然是乌合之众，但是在它变幻不定的特征背后，会形成一个稳定的基础，即一个种族的禀性，它决定着一个民族在狭小的范围内的变化，支配着机遇的

作用。

时间在做完它的创造性工作之后，便开始了破坏的过程，不管是神灵还是人，一概无法逃脱它的手掌。一个文明在达到一定的强盛和复杂程度之后，便会止步不前，而一旦止步不前，它注定会进入衰落的过程。这时它的老年期便降临了。

这个不可避免的时刻，总是以作为种族支柱的理想的衰弱为特点。同这种理想的衰弱相对应，在它的激励下建立起的宗教、政治和社会结构也开始发生动摇。

随着这个种族的理想不断消亡，它也日益失去了使自己团结强盛的品质。个人的个性和智力可以增长，但是这个种族集体的自我意识却会被个人自我意识的过度发展所取代，同时会伴随着性格的弱化和行动能力的减少。本来是一个民族、一个联合体、一个整体的人群，最终会变成一群缺乏凝聚力的个人，他们在一段时间里，仅仅因为传统和制度而被人为地聚集在一起。正是在这个阶段，被个人利益和愿望搞得四分五裂的人，已失去了治理自己的能力，因此在最微不足道的事情上也需要领导，于是国家开始发挥引人注目的影响。

随着古老理想的丧失，这个种族的才华也完全消失了。它仅仅是一群独立的个人，因而回了自己的原始状态——即一群乌合之众。它既缺乏统一性，也没有未来，只有乌合之众那些一时的特性。它的文明现在已经失去了稳定性，只能随波逐流。民众就是至上的权力，野蛮风气盛行。文明也许仍然华丽，因为久远的历史赋予它的外表尚存，其实它已成了一座岌岌可危的大厦，它没有任何支撑，下次风暴一来，它便会立刻倾覆。

在追求理想的过程中，从野蛮状态发展到文明状态，然后，当这个理想失去优势时，走向衰落和死亡，这就是一个民族的生命循环过程。

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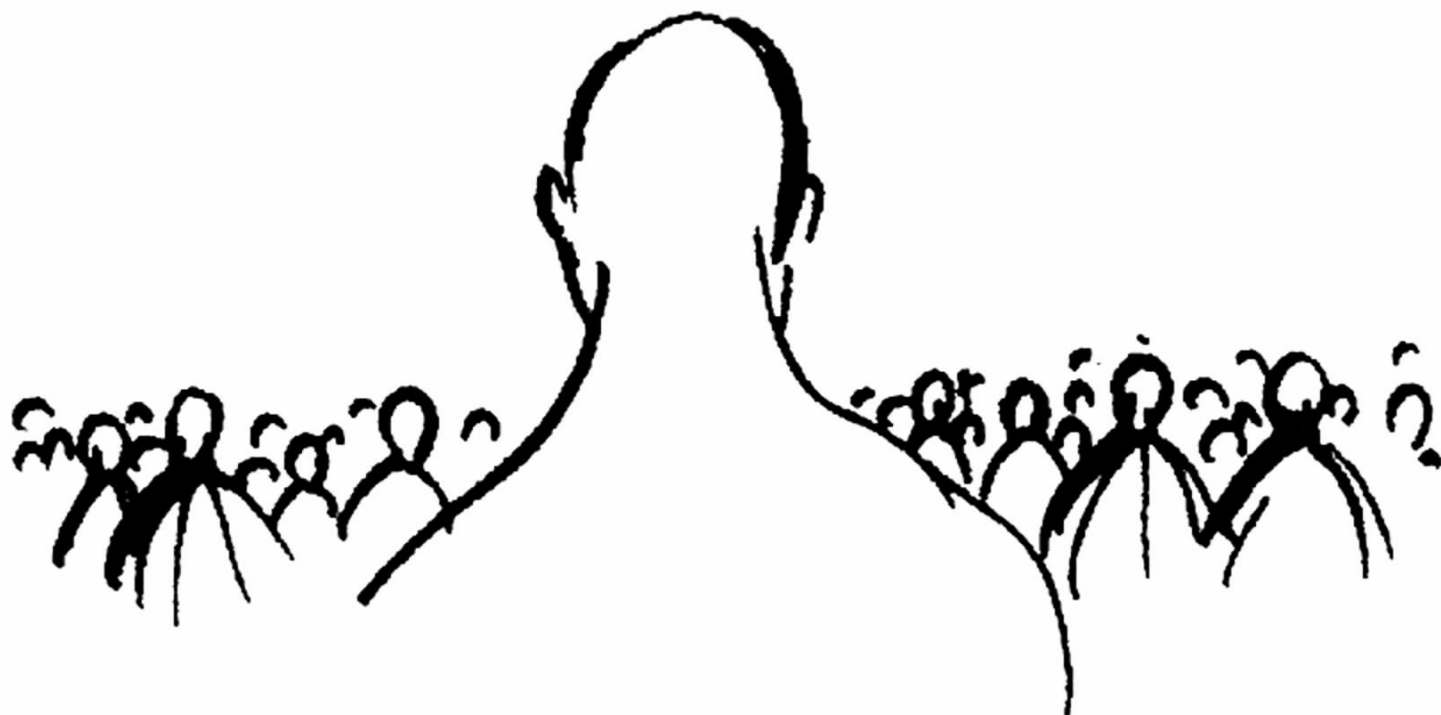


Gustave Le Bon(1841——1931)

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THE CROWD

A Study of the Popular Mind



THE VIKING PRESS, INC., 1960

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The Psychological Mechanisms of

the Transition from Democracy to Dictatorship

A Preface by the Translator of Chinese version

Yan Jian

It' s heard that upright people exist even in the scenario of crooked officials, but it' s never heard that upright officials exist in the scenario of frenetic people.

HanFeizi

What seemed to be love for liberty turns out to be mere hatred of a despot.

Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution

People are bewildered by the voice of utopia. They struggle to enter the gate of the heaven. But when the door behind them is closed, they would suddenly find they are actually in the hell. Such a scenario convinces me that history likes playing jokes.

Milan Kundera, The Joke

Whose role in history is more important, heroes or ordinary people?

Although a question that the historians have been aspired to touch on, it is actually a hard one to answer. There is a Chinese saying "When a hero rises, there always a crowd of lackeys follow" . Its simplistic connotations hit the targets well and relieve us from the painful dialectical thinking on the question. The academic attention devoted respectively to the heroes (or the evil greats) and their followers in history, however, is unbalanced by number. For thousands of years, tremendous amounts of works have been written either to study the heroes or to provide them with suggestions. But before the advent of "mass society" , it is the emperors, generals, ministers and all sorts of powerful figures across the world that steered the history trajectory. The followers of heroes were seldom treated as meaningful subjects for studies. Things began to change only with the advent of the democracy era. In "Democracy as a Life Style" , an unfinished paper concerned with the process of secularization, written just before his death, Karl Mannheim deeply and vividly depicted the silent changes occurring in people' s life attitudes and esthetic tendencies as a result of the changes of folklore, arts and architecture of late medieval age, which consisted of the determinants of upcoming political democratization process. According to Mannheim, one striking outcome of this process was the gradual erosion of secular monarchies, either based on cult or heredity, on demands for equal human rights and broader participation. This heralded a big shift

in the origin of political legitimacy. Hereditary claims, divine right or "Mandate of the Heaven" were all losing their glamour. On the contrary, any ambitious man for the thrones had to seek the "delegation of power" from the populace. Now, the masses started to dominate the central stage.

1. The Forgotten Gustav Le Bon

However, it turns out that the masses' central role in enabling social changes doesn't necessarily bring about positive outcomes as far as its impact on the changes of modern political institutions is concerned. As was proven by the history of both China and other nations, without appropriate constitutional restraints, the democratic power of the masses, like the power wielded by any individual, can easily turn to its flip side and become an abusing power. Starting from Edmund Burke, many thinkers worried about the negative impacts resulting from the hijacked public opinions by plebeian leaders. In this sense, the social psychological works by Gustave Le Bon in the late 19th century, especially his *Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (hereinafter, *The Crowd*), shouldn't have been neglected by us.

Who is Le Bon? This Frenchman of genius wouldn't be a stranger to the Chinese readers. His *The Crowd* has been translated into 17 foreign languages, including Chinese. However, facing strife at

home and aggression threat from the west, the Chinese mind have been preoccupied with the task of "preserving the Chinese nation" since the modern era. So, it was collectivist ideologies such as nationalism and socialism that gained currency in China due to their relevance to China's reality. No surprise that the Anti-collectivism works, like *The Crowd*, were put aside by the Chinese.

Starting from 1894, Le Bon wrote a series of social psychological works, which were enormous in scale and complicated in content. Apart from the aforementioned *The Crowd*, his other works included *The Psychology of Peoples* (1894), *The Psychology of Socialism* (1898), *The French Revolution and the Psychology of Revolution* (1912) as well as *The Psychology of the Great War* (1916). Among them, however, it turned out that *The Crowd* was the most successful one. Since its first publication in 1895, *The Crowd* has been republished at a rate of less than one year once and it already had 29 editions by 1921. On several major online bookstores, we can still browse some webpages on *The Crowd* as well as some fantastic comments from the readers (the full text of *The Crowd* can be downloaded on two websites for free).

George Mead, the founder of social psychology at The University of Chicago, once examined Le Bon's thoughts in one review article in *American Journal of Sociology*. Mead wrote, "He belongs to the group of Frenchmen who almost despair of their national and racial

civilization, and find in the individualism of the Anglo-Saxon the only healthful and promising force for the future of society." As was noticed by Mead, Le Bon was a marginalized "Pro-Britain" figure in the chaotic late 19th Century French academia.

His appreciation for the psychological quality and political institutions of Anglo-Saxon can be easily detected in his works. In terms of comprehensiveness and depth, however, Le Bon's relevant observation is eclipsed by his countrymen like Montesquieu, Tocqueville and even Hippolyte Taine, the latter was one generation older than Le Bon. So, Le Bon's affection for Anglo-Saxon is far from enough to explain the peculiarity of his thoughts as well as their enduring influences. His influence must have other sources.

In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Gordon W. Allport, a towering figure of social psychology in the United States, gave high credit to Le Bon, saying that "perhaps the most influential book ever written in social psychology is Le Bon's *The Crowd*." And Robert Merton, in his lengthy preface to *The Crowd*, argued that "Opponents could contradict what Le Bon had to say but they could not ignore it-- not, at least, without abandoning an interest in problems of social psychology that were evidently basic. For this is the decisive merit of Le Bon's book: almost throughout, it exhibits a sense for the significant problem...Le Bon showed that he had that 'instinct for the jugular' which is found among the rare species

of thinkers who repeatedly identify significant problems for inquiry. Almost without exception, the problems at the focus of Le Bon' s work were destined to become problems of major interest to social psychologists." In his Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, Joseph Schumpeter, a prudent and aloof man, gave special emphasis to the significance of Le Bon' s social psychological study, saying it "was a manifestation of the era" . According to Schumpeter, Le Bon was the first man who elaborated on the fact that "human behavior when under the influence of agglomeration—in particular the sudden disappearance, in a state of excitement, of moral restraints and civilized modes of thinking and feeling, the sudden eruption of primitive impulses, infantilisms and criminal propensities" . In Schumpeter' s words, this "dealt a serious blow to the picture of man' s nature which underlies the classical doctrine of democracy and democratic folklore about revolutions." .These comments are more than words of praise. In fact, if we attempt to look for some psychological explanations on the succeeded or failed popular revolutions in the 20th Century and the catastrophes resulting from them, we can certainly learn a lot from Le Bon.

2 Two Starting points of Le Bon' s Research

It' s not difficult to understand why Le Bon' s study on "the mass mind" has lasting influences on the world: the social context,

under which Le Bon proposed his ideas, not only persisted, but also has become the most important aspect of political life in the 20th Century. Le Bon might look like an "amateur" if judged by academic standards, nevertheless, he exhibited us his instinctive insights into this phenomenon.

According to Le Bon, two fundamental factors are at the base of the transformation from traditional society to a modern one. The first is the destruction of the religious, political, and social beliefs. The second is the dramatic changes in industrial production as the result of modern scientific and technical discoveries. With regard to the political life of the west, this transformation ushered in the emergence of "the masses" as a democratic force. Furthermore, in the evolution of western civilization, "emergence of the crowd" was largely a destiny. Le Bon predicted that the future society, no matter what its organizing principle is, must take into account of a new and overwhelming power, i.e. "the power of the crowds" .

"While all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, the power of the crowds is the only force that nothing menaces, and of which the prestige is continually on the increase." Based on this observation, Le Bon argued that "The age we are about to enter will in truth be the Era of the Crowds." According to Le Bon, in terms of profound modification in the ideas of the peoples, the

most striking characteristics of "the Era of Crowds" were the spreading of democracy and socialism, which scared Le Bon, a man favoring conservatism and elitism. We will touch on this point again in the rest of this preface.

The second starting point of Le Bon's study on the popular mind might be unacceptable to the readers of today, but it was an important factor that evoked Le Bon to write numerous books on this subject. Moreover, it is still unsafe to say that the factor has been discarded to the dustbin of history. Le Bon argued that the common characteristics with which heredity endows all the individuals of a race constitute the genius of the race. The preoccupation with "race endowments" not only is a prevailing phenomenon in the spiritual life of Western Europe more than a century ago, but also left its imprints on many peripheral areas of modernization process. Its impacts can be sensibly felt in Mr. Lu Xun's reflection on "national character" (an analogue of the term "genius of race" by Le Bon) as well as our lingering memory of "survival of the nation". Emanating from "scientific anthropology" in the 19th Century, racism yielded one of its extreme strands represented by Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, one of Le Bon's fellow countrymen. Gobineau advocated "the unity of soul and body", attempting to find some linkages between anatomic features of human races and their modes of "life of the mind" and then

stretch these linkages to explain the differences among races in culture, arts as well as political and social institutions. Under this circumstance, Le Bon was unsurprisingly influenced by racism. He accepted the racist anthropology of Gobineau and others and developed a mystic concept of race, which, in Le Bon's view, determined the fate of every nation. He contended that "the whole of the common characteristics with which heredity endows the individuals of a race constitute the genius of the race." So some scholars' criticism of Le Bon as a racist is not a groundless guess.

But to be fair, Le Bon's racism, which provided the bricks for his "popular mind theory", keeps distance from the biology-obsessed "scientific anthropology". For Le Bon, race was rather a historical and cultural concept.

In "The Ambivalences of Le Bon's The Crowd", Merton argued that Le Bon's nihilist attitude to the science of history turned out to be a lucky contradictory feature of his, since in practice he didn't nullify the role of historical facts. After reading Le Bon's books, however, we tend to believe that Le Bon's racist-oriented cultural standpoint, which stimulated his study on the psychology of the crowds, fits Merton's observation better. In *Psychology of Peoples*, his first book on social psychology (published in 1894), Le Bon went to great lengths to explain why the idea of transferring

among different races couldn't hold their original configuration. For instance, since the British and French had different "genius of a race", they tended to have different and even conflicting understandings on such ideas like "democracy" and "freedom". It is the different fates of nations made by the different "genius of a race", or put it more specifically, it is Le Bon's strong concerns on the fate of the French nation, that prompted him to construct a general theory of the psychology of crowds.

3 Inferior Sentiments of the Crowds

Every race has its own distinctive genius. Based on his observation on several historical upheavals (especially the French Revolution), however, Le Bon found that when a certain number of individuals, no matter to what races they belong, gathered together in a crowd for purposes of action, "from the mere fact of their being assembled, there result certain new psychological characteristics, which are added to the racial characteristics and differ from them at times to a very considerable degree." What Le Bon's overarching contribution to social psychology just lay in his study on these differences? According to Le Bon, individuals in organized crowds will experience some changes, the most interesting aspect of which is changes in individual's way of behavior, which distinguishes itself from that when he is alone. Le Bon provided some evidences to support his observation although they were not based on the proofs

of experimental psychology. But according to Freud, who later advanced Le Bon's study, Le Bon's extraordinary "problem awareness" shielded his arguments from being challenged even from an experimental perspective. Anyone who read *The Crowd* would definitely be impressed by the insights Le Bon shown in this small book, although it also contains lots of biases.

Le Bon often exaggerated the distinctive characteristics of group behavior as opposed to individual behavior. In Le Bon's view, these characteristics were striking. An individual in the crowds will experience some fundamental psychological changes through the mechanism of "collective unconsciousness". Just like "animals, idiots, opportunists, children and savages", an individual in the crowds would unwittingly lose his self-consciousness and become a creature with inferior intelligence. Indeed, Le Bon was in no position to put forward such concepts as "authoritarian personality", but he made it clear that an individual in the crowds would like to replace his own mentality with crowd mentality and be more prone to exhibit some hereditary primitive instincts even without any external coercion. These distinctive characteristics an individual exhibited in the crowds can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, individuals in the crowds tend to exhibit sensible tendency to conform to group sentiments which was summarized by Le Bon as "law of the mental unity of crowds". The tendency towards mental

unity renders some important outcomes, including dogmatism, paranoia, and a sense of invincibility of crowd as well as forfeit of responsibility. In Le Bon's words, "Crowds are only cognizant of simple and extreme sentiments; the opinions, ideas, and beliefs suggested to them are accepted or rejected as a whole, and considered as absolute truths or as not less absolute errors." According to Le Bon, what he described was not a merely modern phenomenon. Staring from ancient times, "everyone is aware of the intolerance that accompanies religious beliefs, and of the despotic empire they exercise on men's minds". Le Bon argued that this is even the basic stimulus of any great civilization.

Due to this sort of simplistic way of thinking, the masses don't believe that truth, especially "social truth", can only "grow out of discussion". On the contrary, they tend to turn very complicated issues into slogan-like simplistic ideas. An individual in frenzied crowds endows his ideal a certainty that grows stronger with the crowd getting more numerous, so he tends to be intolerant of any criticism on his ideals and views: "An individual may accept contradiction and discussion; a crowd will never do so. At public meetings the slightest contradiction on the part of an orator is immediately received with howls of fury and violent invective, soon followed by blows, and expulsion should the orator stick to his point. Without the restraining presence of the

representatives of authority the contradictor, indeed, would often be done to death." Here, Le Bon found another law that regulates the psychology of the crowds: the morality and social mechanisms that restrict individual behaviors tend to become invalid in frenzied crowds. "An isolated individual knows well enough that alone he cannot set fire to a palace or loot a shop, and should he be tempted to do so, he will easily resist the temptation. Making part of a crowd, he is conscious of the power given him by number, and it is sufficient to suggest to him ideas of murder or pillage for him to yield immediately to temptation. An unexpected obstacle will be destroyed with frenzied rage." From the perspective of rule of law, which is based on individual responsibilities, the one who lost his individual interests and objectives in the crowds would become "Mr. Anonymous". His recognition that the law will not punish everybody reassures himself that he would not take responsibilities for his own behaviors. "The violence of the feelings of crowds is also increased, especially in heterogeneous crowds, by the absence of all sense of responsibility. The certainty of impunity, a certainty the stronger as the crowd is more numerous, and the notion of a considerable momentary force due to number, make possible in the case of crowds sentiments and acts impossible for the isolated individual. In crowds the foolish, ignorant, and envious persons are freed from the sense of their insignificance and powerlessness, and are possessed instead by the notion of brutal and

temporary but immense strength."

In this sense, Le Bon's thoughts represented the biggest challenge to the assumption of "rational person" in Enlightenment Philosophy of the 18th Century. In Le Bon's view, "without a doubt human reason would not have availed to spur humanity along the path of civilization with the ardor and hardihood its illusions have done." It is not by reason, but most often in spite of it that those sentiments are created that consist the mainsprings of all civilization -- "sentiments such as honor, self-sacrifice, religious faith, patriotism, and the love of glory". This is why those sophisticated philosophic or scientific ideas have to be vulgarized and simplified in front of the crowds (no matter on what level of intelligence individuals in the crowds might be). In this regard, Le Bon ought to be the teacher of George Orwell. He not only knew there are close linkages between "politics and the debasement of language", but pointed out that "reason and arguments are incapable of combatting certain words and formulas". According to Le Bon, this was not completely the fault of propagandists, because these things "were introduced along with the crowds". The power of ideas is bound up with the images they evoke, and is quite independent of their real significance. Only those ideas that are immune from examination and criticism can be viewed by the crowds as a kind of natural and even

supernatural power. As soon as they have been pronounced, "an expression of respect is visible on every countenance, and all heads are bowed" . "They evoke grandiose and vague images in men's minds, but this very vagueness that wraps them in obscurity augments their mysterious power. They are the mysterious pinnacles hidden behind the tabernacle, which the devout only approach in fear and trembling." Such terms like democracy, socialism, equality, liberty, etc, whose meanings are so vague that bulky volumes do not suffice to precisely fix them, have truly magical power, just because they have become empty political slogans. They could be synthesis of the most profound unconscious aspirations and the hope of their realization.

Thus, it becomes easier for us to understand why great thinkers with political aspirations, like Max Weber and Bertrand Russell, failed in the real world of politics. Thanks to the effects of idea simplification, anyone who is prone to a suspicious spirit, and believe "certainty of truth" is hard to be found in political and social issues, and especially gets used to analyzing questions through reasoning and discussion, has no place in the crowds. Facing fanatic crowds, he would feel especially powerless: he would encounter not only mistaken behavior, but also "the power of the majority" as well as intolerant people. So-called "professional elites" , no matter how intelligent they might be, would feel

frustrated with their reasoning efforts. Facing the crowds imbued with empty ideas, they tend to think themselves pedantic and boring. More lamentably, in front of the ridiculous and frenzied masses, wise people might not make the efforts to reasoning at all, but rather choose to join the crowds and follow suit, only to regret their foolishness and neglect of common sense afterwards. Focusing on the marginalized sense in social community and the internal anxiety as a result of it, Fromm once examined the phenomenon that the individual lose his independent judgment capability. The reason why people prefer to "escape from freedom", according to Fromm, lies in the fact that they tend to give up their individual standpoints under the pressure of internal anxiety. As was examined by Le Bon, the uncertainty induced by skeptical spirit not only is hated by the crowds, but also invites furies that could kill.

4. Morality of the Crowds

Readers might tend to stereotype Le Bon, i.e. he disproportionately emphasized the negative image of the crowds. The effects of "the popular mind" on individual's behavior, however, are more complicated than the "evils" in people's daily life. In Le Bon's words, "the transformation is so profound as to change the miser into a spendthrift, the sceptic into a believer, the honest man into a criminal, and the coward into a hero". As a result, it's hard to define what we observed in the crowds only in terms of criminal

law. It is a much more complicated phenomenon.

Le Bon reiterated that his research was not about "the psychology of criminal crowds", but the general psychological characteristics of all types of crowds, including virtuous and heroic crowds. Not only "intolerant and savage", individuals in the crowds will probably not behave in line with their self-interests as what happens to most criminals, thanks to the inspirations by all sorts of "ideals" that they know little or don't understand at all. Therefore, the behaviors of the crowds may bring about seemingly negative outcomes, but the motivations of the individuals in the crowds could be anything but inferior and wicked self-interests.

When the crowds are motivated by some lofty ideas, they will exhibit higher levels of "morality". However, what kind of "morality" is this? Here, Le Bon made a very important distinction. Taking the word "morality" to mean constant respect for certain social conventions and the permanent repression of selfish impulses, Le Bon argued, it is quite evident that the crowds are too impulsive and too mobile to be moral. If, however, we include in the term "morality" the transitory display of certain qualities such as abnegation, self-sacrifice, disinterestedness, devotion, and the pursuit of equity, the crowds may exhibit at times a very lofty morality. Of course, a crowd of "mobs" could commit appalling crimes that common people lament as the evils. Le Bon's

analysis, however, reminds us that the "human" here more often refers to member of the crowds than to isolated individuals. If a crowd, just like individuals, is motivated by illegal self-interests, then its behaviors must be treated as crimes. Nevertheless, such crowds as mafia or erratic mob groups can by no means be a force of shaping (let alone changing) history. To be a major actor in historic changes, a crowd must more or less "fight for its faith" . In other words, a crowd must exist for some simple but clear beliefs. In an era when people have lost faith on monotheism, Le Bon argued, the most possible and effective motivations for individuals in the crowds are "a nation's honor and fate as well as patriotism" . A crowd is capable of performing very lofty acts of devotion, sacrifice, and disinterestedness, of acts much loftier indeed than those of which the isolated individual is capable. Irrelevant to individual's self-interests, these beliefs motivate the crowds that "have heroically faced death" .

So, Le Bon asserted that all large-scale mass movements are similar to religious endeavors. Much discussion by scholars of the 20th Century about ideology as a substitute of religion is an old topic shared by Le Bon. According to him, "all political, pine, and social creeds only take root among them on the condition of always assuming the religious shape -- a shape which obviates the danger of discussion. Were it possible to induce the masses to adopt

atheism, this belief would exhibit all the intolerant ardor of a religious sentiment and in its exterior forms would soon become a cult". Looking like weird symphonic poems, those mass movements have two main themes, one is cruelty and the other is loftiness. The lofty objectives stir up unrealistic sentiments among the crowds, who attempt to pursue happiness by worship and deference. Mass movements can promote "moral purification" by that an individual tends to look at his or others' death as a natural thing. Crowds are animated by those religious sentiments which necessarily lead those imbued with them to "pitilessly extirpate by fire and sword whoever is opposed to the establishment of the new faith". Thus, the blood of the innocent is not a result of the evils of human nature, but of relentless beliefs and "the working of the soul of the masses".

From the perspective of Kant's moral philosophy, intolerance and fanaticism of the crowds in Le Bon's words is related to the fact that the morality of the crowd has deviated from individual morality. And from the collectivism literature after Le Bon, we further see that one main reason behind temporary disappearance of personal interests and neglect of criminality lies in the replacement of personal objectives by a common collective objective. Under such circumstances, Le Bon's claim that individuals in the crowds can lose their sense of responsibility might not be the case. On

the contrary, apart from the effect of "anonymous crowds", one more plausible reason why individual is less disposed to refrain himself from the sentiment of responsibility lies in the fact that he feels motivated by a "loftier objective" and should take responsibility for it. Imbued with such loftier responsibility, an individual in the crowds will unwittingly deny himself and negate his personal objective with the loftier objective of the crowds. Thus, he takes it for granted that personal objectives of others are similarly worthless.

From Le Bon's aforementioned distinction of moralities, we can have a glimpse of the dilemma one faces when he attempts to judge whether the behavior of the crowds are "moral" or not. Unselfish sacrifice is definitely a virtue and we can't criticize people's enthusiasm for the fate of the nation and society. In this line, however, we would be embarrassed by the conclusion that "the crimes the crowd committed for love of motherland or nation are not crimes". Friedrich von Hayek understands this dilemma well. According to him, "It would, however, be highly unjust to regard the masses of the totalitarian people as devoid of moral fervor because they give unstinted support to a system which to us seems a denial of most moral values. For the great majority of them the opposite is probably true: the intensity of the moral emotions behind a movement like that of National-Socialism or communism can

probably be compared only to those of the great religious movements of history." But the trouble is that an overarching common objective cannot live with the morality based on individual responsibilities. Once you admit that the individual is merely a means to serve the ends of the higher entity called a society or a nation, "most of those features of totalitarian regimes which horrify us follow of necessity. From the collectivist standpoint intolerance and brutal suppression of dissent, the complete disregard of the life and happiness of the individual, are essential and unavoidable consequences of this basic premise" .

5 Heroes and the Masses

Le Bon's gun not merely aimed at the crowds that terrified him. In his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud has criticized "Le Bon not having sufficiently appreciated the importance of the leader in the psychology of the group." But Le Bon's scope was more than the behaviors of the crowds and Freud's criticism may miss the target. He was very clear that a crowd without heroes would degenerate into the ephemeral riffraff in most cases.

The Heroes who are able to inject enormous energies into the crowds are definitely not such figures as ring leaders or chieftains. Consistent with the high-level morality the crowds often exhibit, the heroes are able to cater to the masses by their courage to

sacrifice, strong will and lofty altruism. Through analyzing the emotions of "audiences in theatres" – here Le Bon reminded us of the reactions of Chinese audiences to such films as White-haired Woman--Le Bon found that the masses instinctively expect the heroes could exhibit those virtues that they are not provided with. The virtues, like precious commodities, are rarely seen in daily life, so if the hero can convince the masses that he is the embodiment of virtues, he will be loved and worshipped as a result. Thomas Carlyle's assertion that the masses have the instinct for hero worship could find some support from the economics of scarcity.

Freud criticized that Le Bon's study on the leaders had its drawbacks. He is somewhat right since Le Bon didn't dig as deeper as Freud, who regarded fabricating myths of the leaders as an effective way to release the psychological depression of individuals. But, following the even longer tradition of western political theories, Le Bon examined with his Machiavellian style the interactive relationship between the leaders and the masses. He argued that the leader plays an important role in reaching consensus in the crowds. "His will is the nucleus around which the opinions of the crowd are grouped and attain to identity. He constitutes the first element towards the organization of heterogeneous crowds, and paves the way for their organization in sects". "A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever

doing without a master" . "It was the proudest and most intractable of the Jacobins who acclaimed Bonaparte with greatest energy when he suppressed all liberty and made his hand of iron severely felt" .

The weaknesses of the crowds such as credulousness, bigotry and moodiness predetermine the ceilings of the leader's virtue on the one hand, and provide him with lots of opportunities to motivate the followers on the other. First, the leaders might be intelligent, but the quality of the crowds is inferior. To garner the support of the followers, the leaders couldn't exhibit too much skeptical spirit, which, as a rule, does him more harm than good. "By showing how complex things are, by allowing of explanation and promoting comprehension, intelligence always renders its owner indulgent, and blunts, in a large measure, that intensity and violence of conviction needful for apostles. The great leaders of crowds of all ages and those of the Revolution in particular, have been of lamentably narrow intellect; while it is precisely those whose intelligence has been the most restricted who have exercised the greatest influence." The overtone here is that the psychological process of the crowds is seldom in line with logics. Beyond their familiar living environments, the masses neither enjoy too much experience nor reasonable ability to criticize, a fact that could be utilized by individuals or groups with ulterior motives aiming to win the trust of the masses. They could

be ambitious people or sorts of idealists. What they advocate might not matter. If Le Bon's depiction of human nature in politics is correct, then the leaders can to a larger extent change and even manufacture people's will. As Schumpeter put it when he remarked of Le Bon, "often this artifact [people's will] is all that in reality corresponds to the *volonté générale* of the classical doctrine. So far as this is so, the will of the people is the product and not the motive power of the political process." More importantly, what we encounter in the political arena might not be the genuine will of the people, although the masses think otherwise. They do believe that the things are not manufactured by the leader and his henchmen, but originate from their hearts. Today, this phenomenon is called "brain-washing", a big achievement of modern propaganda skills in which Le Bon also should own his place.

By listing three most important tricks which the leaders used in their attempts to motivate the followers, Le Bon reminds us of George Orwell's 1984. When the leaders attempt to imbue the mind of a crowd with modern social doctrines, Le Bon argued, they have recourse to affirmation, repetition and contagion. According to Le Bon, "Given to exaggeration in its feelings, a crowd is only impressed by excessive sentiments. An orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use of violent affirmations." To exaggerate, to affirm, and to resort to repetitions, and never to attempt to prove

anything by reasoning are methods of argumentation wellknown to speakers at public meetings. So, for most leaders that accomplished great undertakings, the most important quality is not knowledgeability, but "the persistent will-force they possess is an immensely rare and immensely powerful faculty to which everything yields...nothingresists it, neither nature, gods, nor man" . Thanks to the persistent will-force, the ideas and objectives the leaders advocate are applauded by the masses. Probablyleaders are correct at first, but even when great mistakes have been made and laid bare the absurdity of their ideas and goals, their convictions are so strong that all reasoning is lost uponthem. "Contempt and persecution do not affect them, or only serve to excitethem the more. They sacrifice their personal interest, their family—everything. The very instinct of self-preservation is entirely obliterated in them, andso much so that often the only recompense they solicit is that of martyrdom."

In Fear of Freedom, Fromm once mentioned a quotationof Hitler which, in my view, shed some lighton the relationship between the psychologically weak crowds and the intolerant leaders. It' s not very clear that whether Hitler once read Le Bon, however, he certainly not only owned "strong will and conviction" but knownwell the masses he wanted to agitated. According to Hitler, "the masses like a woman...are always subject to the influence of a vague

emotional longing for the strength that completes her being, and who would rather bow to the strong man than dominate the weakling—in like manner the masses of the people prefer the ruler to the suppliant and are filled with a stronger sense of mental security by a teaching that brooks no rival than by a teaching which offers them a liberal choice. They have very little idea of how to make such a choice and thus they are prone to feel that they have been abandoned. They feel very little shame at being terrorized intellectually and they are scarcely conscious of the fact that their freedom as human beings is impudently abused; and thus they have not the slightest suspicion of the intrinsic fallacy of the whole doctrine.” Here Hitler almost repeated Le Bon’s arguments word by word. If Le Bon foresaw of this, he would have regretted for the Machiavellian mistakes he had made. But this also implied that Le Bon’s analysis on the psychology of crowds have a lot of concerns with the political fate of human beings in the 20th Century. As Hannah Arendt later told us, “Totalitarian movements are possible wherever there are masses who for one reason or another have acquired the appetite for political organization.” The “masses” in Arendt’s words is evidently the same term used by Hitler and Le Bon. Since the French revolution, the new trinity of leader, ideology and crowd in Le Bon’s sense had took the place of religions and hereditary monarchy as the cornerstone of all struggles for the political legitimacy with absence of democratic

and constitutional frameworks. And in the century after Le Bon, this new trinity has given rise to a series of grandiose but bloody tragedies.

6 Concluding Remarks: the Era of Crowds and Democracy

The above discussions on Le Bon's thoughts, including that of his not-too-malicious racism, show us that he has an astonishing foresight hard to deny. The Twentieth Century is a century that the public yearning for political participation surged and democracy slogans persisted, but it is also the bloodiest century in the history of human being. In fact, the mass movements of 19th Century Le Bon described in his book are dwarfed by what happened in the following Century. Thus it may be safely said that the dissemination of democratic ideas, while reflecting people's long aspiration to tame the political power; however, engenders the huge risk that the striving people could be lured and trapped by the political power. As Tocqueville put it more than a century ago, "When I think that this revolution...had it been carried out by a despot, it might have left us less unprepared to become a free nation someday than we were after it had been carried out by the people in the name of their own sovereignty." Le Bon's fright at the emerging masses in the modernization process is actually a continuation of Tocqueville's concerns.

Like many contemporary thinkers (e.g. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche), Le Bon was desperate at the western civilization at the turn of the century. He seemed to have detected some omens of certain historical circle from the emerging crowds. In Le Bon's view, any civilization cannot escape from the circle of rise and fall. When in decline, destroy of this atrophied civilization will become the designated task of the masses. Only at this moment, the overarching mission of the crowds becomes discernible and "that for a while the philosophy of number seems the only philosophy of history". One could put these fatalist ideas aside, but we have reason to believe that Le Bon must hope to end such chaos generated by crisis of authority. His preferred solution is undoubtedly the British model established in the Eighteenth Century. That's why he was so concerned by the fact that Latin peoples, unlike Anglo-Saxon, lack the genius of individual independence. In Le Bon's view, without such kinds of "genius of the race" the crowds would only care about the collective independence of the sect to which they belong. "Among the Latin races the Jacobins of every epoch, from those of the Inquisition downwards, have never been able to attain to a different conception of liberty." Due to the collectivism tendencies exhibited by such collective egoism, the French tend to understand democracy in a manner that advocates the subordination of individual will and autonomy to the social will and autonomy represented by the state. "To the State it is that all

parties without exception, radicals, socialists, or monarchists, constantly appeal". This observation is important for Le Bon to detect the dangerous link between the mass democracy and despotism in the drastic changes the masses bring about on the legitimacy of political power.

Apart from the racism and British conservatism, Le Bon was also definitely influenced by anti-rationalism, a strand of thought increasingly prevalent in Europe since the mid-19th Century. However, it didn't push him to romanticism but instead strengthen his traditionalist position. As mentioned above, Le Bon cast deep doubt on the basic assumption of Enlightenment philosophy, i.e. human are rational animals. Akin to Hayek's viewpoint, Le Bon believed that "the most attentive observation of the facts of history has invariably demonstrated to me that social organisms being every whit as complicated as those of all beings, it is in no wise in our power to force them to undergo on a sudden far-reaching transformations". So, Le Bon objected to radical political and social changes. In his view, any reforms, however excellent they may appear in theory, will not change instantaneously the genius of nations (this power is only possessed by time). To radically implement a blueprint of social transformation by abstract principles would "cause a highly refined civilization to return to a very anterior phase of the social evolution".

That's why Le Bon was so averse to the masses, the leaders, emotional ideas as well as democracy and socialism based on them. Due to his examination on the "era of the crowds", Le Bon mistakenly reached a conclusion similar to that of his contemporary Oswald Spengler: he believed that he was witnessing the decline of Western civilization. Nobody would deny, however, the significance of Le Bon's study on the psychology of crowds outweighs his mistake. If we only focus on his shrouded racist tendency and the arguments that are not in line with "academic standards" (though such criticism is absolutely necessary), then we would have to miss some invaluable thoughts of Le Bon.

At least it may be assumed that the question that Le Bon's study of the crowd psychology touches on cannot be avoided by anyone who think about democracy, whether before or after him. Being an important source of political legitimacy, the popular democracy contains the risk of dictatorship, as discussed by Aristotle early in classic age. Thereafter, thinkers like Edmund Burke, Montesquieu, John S. Mill and Tocqueville further examined this topic, with which we are all pretty familiar. Democracy based on the citizen's direct participation disappeared for more than two thousand years since the classic Athens and there must be the deeper reason of human nature behind this. It would be too simplistic and absurd to blame the period as "the reactionary dark era". Living at the era

of reemergence of the masses, Le Bon astutely felt the dangers hidden in this trend and he candidly spoke them out in psychological terms. In this sense, Le Bon's thoughts transcend ideologies; otherwise we will not be able to understand why various thinkers on the relationship between democracy and autocracy--from the rightist Hayek, the neutral Schumpeter to somewhat leftist Arendt and Fromm--are all influenced by Le Bon's thoughts. This convergence of thoughts highlights a fact that all of them noticed an irrefutable phenomenon, i.e. what distinguishes the cruel and gigantic autocratic systems emerged in the 20th Century from erstwhile autocracy lies in the fact that they all based their legitimacy on certain mass movement.

Max Weber, a political thinker with a stern mind, is well-known for his theory of types of authority. One type, according to Weber, is the "plebiscitary democracy". In his words, "it is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive to the validity of charisma" and it is those "ancient and modern revolutionary dictators" that represent this type of authority in real life. Here Weber seemed to believe that "revolutionary dictators" could also establish "democracy". His wordings would have confused those who don't know the original meanings of democracy. Relatively speaking, Le Bon is more straightforward in this regard. Using almost the same words as Weber's, Le Bon

directly pointed out that the nature of this type of democracy lies in its destruction of individual freedoms: "Popular democracy by no means aims at manufacturing rulers. Dominated entirely by the spirit of equality...and exhibits no anxiety in respect of liberty. No government is conceivable to popular democracy except in the form of an autocracy." It's self-evident that such democracy without respect for liberty will ultimately frustrate those who originally plan to tame the political power through democracy.

After reading Le Bon, shouldn't we become more vigilant when somebody is talking about "representing the interests of the people or of the most"? Lord Acton's admonition "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" has been widely accepted in China (at least the quotation per se). However, few people got the undertone of Lord Acton that any type of political power, no matter whether it's held individually and collectively, needs to be constrained. As to the question of how to achieve this constraint, we will naturally think of the sophisticated constitutional democratic frameworks like check and balance of powers and electoral system etc. After all, Le Bon was not good at answering this question and it is just beyond the scope of this preface.

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The Ambivalences of Le Bon's The Crowd

Robert K. Merton

In the authoritative Handbook of Social Psychology (edited by Gardner Lindzey and published in 1954), Gordon W. Allport, the dean of American social psychologists, hazards the judgment that "perhaps the most influential book ever written in social psychology is Le Ben's The Crowd." Whether the book rightly occupies this position of eminence is a matter that can be and has been debated. But there can be no question that it has exerted a powerful influence upon the thought of men aiming to understand the workings of collective behavior and of social psychology. Nor can we doubt its pertinence for an age when "the lonely crowd" and "faces in the crowd" are adopted by crowds of Americans as apt phrasings of their own condition and experience.

The enduring influence of Le Ben's little book presents us with something of a riddle. When first published in 1895, it might have been fairly described as a vogue book, yet there must be something

singular about a vogue that endures for two thirds of a century. And the riddle deepens as we consider the character of the book. Probably no single truth in it has not been stated elsewhere more cogently than Le Bon managed to state it, sometimes before he wrote it down, and particularly, of course, since. And still the book continues to exert a considerable intellectual influence. To make all this more perplexing, some conceptions set forth in the book are now known to be misdirected, misleading, or mistaken. And yet it remains indispensable reading for all of us who are students of mass behavior. Finally, it is a book containing ill assorted ideologies, and yet one that has been taken seriously by authors of most varied ideological commitments. By trying to unravel this tangled skein of seeming contradictions, perhaps we shall better understand the meaning of the book for us today.

One fact in the life and fortunes of *The Crowd* may help solve the riddle. Le Bon's ideas have made themselves felt almost as much among those who disagreed with them — Freud, for example, in his capacity as social psychologist, and the sociologist Robert Park — as among those — for example, the Populist sociologist E.A. Ross and the psychologist William McDougall — who took them up substantially intact. Opponents could contradict what Le Bon had to say but they could not ignore it — not, at least, without abandoning an interest in problems of social psychology that were evidently

basic.

For this is the decisive merit of Le Bon's book : almost throughout, it exhibits a sense for the significant problem. To adopt Mr. Justice Holmes's remark, in this book Le Bon showed that he had that "instinct for the jugular" which is found among the rare species of thinkers who repeatedly identify significant problems for inquiry. Almost without exception, the problems at the focus of Le Bon's work were destined to become problems of major interest to social psychologists and, indeed, to all men who think about the social world they live in. For despite its deceptively restrictive title this book treats of much that one does not ordinarily associate with "the crowd." Elliptically and sometimes anachronistically it can be said that, at one place or another in the book, Le Bon touches upon such present day concerns as social conformity and overconformity, the leveling of taste, the revolt of the masses, popular culture, the other directed self, mass movements, the self alienation of man, the process of bureaucratization, the escape from freedom into the arms of a Leader, and the role of the unconscious in social behavior. In short, he examines an array of social concerns, subject matters, and conceptions that hold socially enforced interest for men in the modern age. This multiplicity of relevance in one slender book gives it, I believe, a durable significance.

The contemporary meaning of *The Crowd* resides, then, in its function of problem finding rather than in the function of problem solving. That this is so, and that these two functions of the intellect are distinct, although of course related, can be glimpsed by seeing what the book meant to Freud, who provided one of the main conduits through which Le Bon's intellectual influence has flowed into the contemporary mind. When, in the 1920s, Freud turned his attention to group psychology (as it is customary to translate his term *Massenpsychologie*) and published his first monograph on the subject, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, he began by devoting a chapter to Le Bon's book. He begins that chapter by making one judgment — "Le Bon's deservedly famous work, *Psychologie des foules*" — and ends it with another judgment of like kind — "his brilliantly executed picture of the group mind." Sandwiched between these judgments are long passages quoted from *The Crowd*, long enough, with Freud's short gloss upon them, to constitute almost a sixth of the entire monograph.

Yet it soon turns out that Freud does not hold fast to an unequivocally favorable judgment of Le Bon's work. For he begins his next chapter by promptly expunging his earlier tribute to Le Bon's ideas: "...we must now add," he says, "that as a matter of fact none of that author's statements bring forward anything new.... What is more, the description and estimate of the group mind

as they have been given by Le Bon and the rest have not by any means been left undisputed."

This devastating verdict appears a bit ungracious and a little at odds with what Freud had had to say only a few pages before. Yet this double rejection may have been a conscientious rather than an ungracious extravagance of language; hyperbole has long been employed as a device for making a point succinctly. Suppose then we disengage the substance of Freud's judgment from the strong language in which it is expressed, and ask: if nothing that Le Bon wrote is new or true, why devote so much attention to it? Why does Freud, as many other severe critics have done in their turn, regard *The Crowd* with manifest intellectual respect? Why does he take it as a point of departure for his own excursion into social psychology? Freud answers our question with engaging candor: "We have made use of Le Bon's description by way of introduction, because it fits so well with our own Psychology in the emphasis which it lays upon unconscious mental life."

Cogent as it may first seem, Freud's short explanation of his attachment to Le Bon's ideas is of course incomplete. It explains why he finds merit in Le Bon's work, but it does not begin to explain why he denigrates Le Bon's ideas as neither new nor true. More is needed to understand Freud's ambivalence. And that Freud was ambivalent toward Le Bon is beyond reasonable dispute. If

he rejects Le Bon on one page,he reverts to such characterizations as Le Bon's "brilliant psychological character sketch of the group mind" on a later page.

The intellectual,not the psychological,explanation of that ambivalence can be found in Freud's chapter on Le Bon in which,almost in the manner of a cat and mouse Socratic dialogue,he writes the script for both actors.The basis for the ambivalence boils down to this : Le Bon was only the problem finder and Freud was the would be problem solver,uncertain whether Le Bon was professing to be both problem finder and problem solver.In the first capacity,Le Bon merits praise and Freud lavishly bestows it ; in the second,Le Bon is at best inept and at worst thoroughly mistaken,with Freud insisting upon both his ineptitude and his mistakes.As these roles are alternately assigned to Le Bon,Freud oscillates between the poles of his ambivalence.In the end,Freud developed a clear image of all this (though one that requires a violent shift in figure) : Le Bon planted but Freud both watered and gave the increase.

In Freud's view,Le Bon,as problem finder,identified salient aspects of crowd and group life,but did not explain them.

Le Bon spotted the "fundamental" fact of group psychology by dwelling on the "intensification of the emotions" and "the

inhibition of the intellect." But, says Freud, he did not see the explanation in the psychological processes that establish emotional ties between the members of groups.

As problem finder, too, Le Bon saw the great role of "emotional contagion" and suggestibility in the crowd and in the organized group. But he did not see, argues Freud, how this results from the libidinal ties of members of the group to the leader and to the rest of the group.

Le Bon sensed that a "mere collection of people is not a group" so long as there are no ties among them, but he failed to see how these ties become established.

Le Bon particularly noticed the rapid alternation of feelings in the group, the vacillation between love and hate, solidarity and hostility, but he did not understand the psychological dynamics of ambivalence and of idealization (in which the overestimated loved figure is for a time exempt from criticism).

Le Bon "impressively described" the "lack of emotional restraint" in the crowd, and its "incapacity for moderation and delay." But he had no theory that would allow him to see this as regression to an earlier stage. (Even the worthy Freud sometimes nods. He is of course correct in saying that Le Bon had no clear concept of regression. But Le Bon repeatedly compares the

impulsiveness, "incapacity to reason, absence of judgment, and exaggeration of the sentiments" that characterize crowds, to the same tendencies "belonging in inferior forms of evolution — in women, savages and children, for instance." He thus anticipates Freud's own error when he in turn writes of regression to "an earlier stage such as we are not surprised to find among savages \ [sic\] or children," women, evidently, being exempted from this stage.)

Le Bon, says Freud incorrectly and hence unfairly, failed to "appreciate the importance of the leader in the psychology of the group," while Freud is able to show the indispensable role of the leader in the psychological processes of group behavior. Le Bon, Freud neglects to notice, attached great significance to the myth of the hero, just as Freud himself, after discussions with Otto Rank, saw the hero myth as a means for individuals to emancipate themselves from the unremitting rule of the group.

Le Bon saw and emphasized the tendency toward "leveling" in the crowd, the demand for full equality on the depressed level of mediocrity. But, in Freud's judgment, he did not see that this was the outward and visible result of an underlying process in which crowd members "identify themselves with one another by means of a similar love for the same object," the "object," in Freud's technical vocabulary, being in this instance the leader.

Le Bon took dramatic account, in his own phrase, of the "thirst for obedience" that marks the crowd and the crowd man. But he stopped short of recognizing that this takes place by substituting the group ideal, as personified in the leader, for the ego ideal.

Finally, notes Freud in an instructive error, Le Bon, by confining himself to the ephemeral or transitory groups characterized by crowds, had in effect hit upon a most useful subject for study, for it is in temporary aggregations that one can best see how the independence and autonomy of individuals come to be freely abandoned, as they slavishly conform to the requirements of the crowd. That Freud is mistaken in so restricting Le Bon's concept of the crowd can be seen by the simple expedient of reading the pages that follow. But even mistakes by minds of the first rank have a way of being fruitful. Freud's error of interpretation is a *felix culpa*, a lucky error that inadvertently leads to a new truth. For although it is manifestly untrue, despite Freud's claim, that Le Bon's assertions "relate to groups of a short lived character," this error leads Freud to praise Le Bon for having elected to study "these noisy ephemeral groups, which are as it were superimposed upon the others, and \[in which\] we are met by the prodigy of the complete, even though only temporary, disappearance of exactly what we have recognized as individual acquirements." In this remark, Freud has exemplified a principle that is basic to scientific

investigation generally, and one that needs particular emphasis in social science, where it is but seldom recognized. This is the principle of what might be called the quest for the "strategic research site": that is, the search for those objects — in the present case, the ephemeral crowd — which enable one to investigate a scientific problem to particularly good advantage.

Le Bon in part did what Freud supposed him to be doing, but did so unwittingly. He centered on the study of transitory groups but did not confine himself to them. In his usage, "the crowd" is a concept loosely denoting both temporary aggregations of people and the more nearly enduring permanent groups and social strata made up, for example, of parliaments, sects, and classes. But in devoting much attention to the short lived aggregations that form political mobs as well as to longer lived publics and even more enduring social classes. Le Bon in effect seized upon strategic occasions for studying processes of collective behavior by studying them where they are highly visible. There is reason to suppose that Freud was ascribing to Le Bon a rationale of method that he did not explicitly have. Nor does Freud conclude this favorable estimate of Le Bon by noting that he was doing, in a particular case, what scientists all over seek to do; namely, to search out those strategic research materials that effectively exhibit the interplay of variables of broader bearing than the cases under study.

The upshot of Freud's ambivalence toward Le Bon amounts, then, to this: Le Bon had a remarkably apt sense of hitting upon salient aspects of crowd and of group behavior, but he did not satisfactorily account for them. On this estimate, Le Bon emerges as a human counterpart to the truffle dog, who somehow pauses at just those places on the surface of social psychology beneath which lie the theoretically significant truffles, unseen by others. And Freud, in projecting his self image in contrast to this image of Le Bon, sees himself as the master who can dig below the surface, find the truffles of social psychology, and serve them up as a piquant intellectual dish. Neither image does full justice to either man or either man's work, but, again, neither is entirely unjust. Le Bon is primarily a problem finder in the social psychology of groups, and Freud, in one of his phases, is an imaginative problem finder and sometimes a successful problem solver in the same field. By examining the ambivalence of Freud toward Le Bon, we are led to see both the contributions and the limitations of ideas that can be simultaneously described as new and important (but anticipated by others and therefore dispensable) and ideas that are true and significant (yet not profoundly enough true and therefore only suggestive). Ambivalence toward Le Bon's *The Crowd* is a thoroughly apt orientation.

Freud's experience with this book is far from unique. It has been

singled out here,not because any occasion for noting the work of a mind as subtle and creative as Freud's is a source of pleasure for the rest of us,but because his understandings and fruitful misunderstandings of Le Bon can help orient us to the book.If Freud found in it a multiplicity of relevance to his own developing ideas about the behavior of man in society,so,in small degree,can we. It is a lesson for all of us that in it he found much in composite although no single thing he found there seemed rigorously true or entirely new. Le Bon's formulations were far from final ; they were propaedeutic,providing an essential introduction to more advanced versions of the same subject.

The same combination of relevancies that gave point to Freud's reading of the book can give point also to our own reading of it.This requires us to make more of the book than is literally there.By attending not only to what Le Bon says in so many words but also to what he deliberately hints and to what he sometimes implies without seeming intent,the reader can become sensitized to aspects of man's behavior in society that have escaped him before.As with many another book,it is essential to read between the lines,if the reader is to get from this one what is there for the getting.Not least is this true for an understanding of the tendencies toward compliance and conformity that move all of us who make up one crowd or another,particularly the crowds who noisily

profess their (in fact strictly governed) nonconformity.

The multiplicity of relevance, much of it hidden between the lines, does not alone account for the enduring influence of this book. That influence comes also from its main theses being a part of the complex of ideas, still very much with us, that puts emphasis on the irrational and nonrational character of man's behavior. This end of the century portrait of man pictures him as readily susceptible to manipulative control, as a strangely willing victim of deception by others. But this is a manifestly unfinished portrait. For if some men are controlled, other men must control. In the background, then, are those who treat men as means to their own private ends. Along with this is the further assumption that men have an infinite capacity for self deception, enabling them to rationalize evil into good and to reject good for evil. From this portrait of human character, there emerges a social philosophy, as well as a sociology, that makes man out as peculiarly subject to socially induced stupidity in which his native wit is either blunted into mediocrity by his effort to follow the crowd or is put to wicked use by imposing fraud upon his fellows as a supplement to the not altogether effective use of violence and coercion.

This image of man as irrational and selfish, as heavily subject to impulse and caprice or to wicked rationality, as agent and victim of unthinking violence and pious fraud, is not, of course, new to the

time in which Le Bon wrote. From at least the age of The Prince — when the title significantly focused on the controller — to the age of The Crowd — when the title shifts to the controlled — this image has been recurrently projected by the machiavellian authors of each century. But it is also true that, coming into prominence in the last half of the last century, it has persisted to the present day, counteracting if not wholly displacing an earlier image of man as the superbly rational animal.

Le Bon's The Crowd was only one of scores of books and more fugitive pieces put into print by psychologists, sociologists, social philosophers, political theorists, political journalists, and unhappy creative novelists that centered on these unlovely aspects of man and his behavior. That the book should have appeared in the same year, 1895, in which Breuer and Freud published their pathbreaking Studies in Hysteria is an accident of pinpointed timing. That it should have appeared at about the same time is anything but an accident. For the same social conditions that made for a plethora of works emphasizing the irrational in man made it entirely probable that works having this kinship of ideas should appear at almost the same time.

Some would deny this, arguing that every age, with its own time of troubles, manages to persuade itself that it represents the twilight of reason or the dawn of unreason. Yet the argument is false, and it

does not, in any event, account for the rapidity with which this self image of an era caught hold during the last half of the nineteenth century in France. Back in the 1850s, that two man literary committee, the Goncourt brothers, who never settled for less than a unanimous committee opinion, jointly prophesied a savage assault on an anemic European civilization, not by barbarians who were no longer to be found in Europe but by the — to them — uncivilized workers who, they said, would describe the job as "the social revolution." The contemporary humanist intellectuals of France — Taine, Sainte Beuve, the satirist "Gavarni," Renan, and others of the circle in which the Goncourts lived and worked — also deplored the "moral hygiene" of their day and expressed their misgivings about the days that lay ahead. In many respects, their prophecies were not unlike those that Le Bon was to put in his book — Taine's prophecy, for example, that men of the twentieth century would exhibit much activity and little sensibility.

There is more than these vaguely similar forebodings about the imminent rule of the crowd to show that Le Bon's ideas were sociologically destined to find expression, even if Le Bon himself had never lived. For this, there is the best of proof: essentially the same ideas were in fact set forth at the same time by another social psychologist, the Italian Scipio Sighele, just as many of them were stated by the Frenchman Gabriel Tarde. And, as is often the case

when two or more men arrive almost simultaneously at the same ideas, this gave rise to a dispute over priority of conception. This prolonged and bitter dispute explains the otherwise cryptic insistence, in Le Bon's book, on repeating what he said on the subject of "imitation" or "emotional contagion" in crowds fifteen years before. He is carrying out a continued public and — characteristically for Le Bon — a between the lines debate with Sighele who, in his *Psychologie des sectes*, forthrightly and angrily claims priority and describes Le Bon's *The Crowd* "as, in large part, a clever reconstruction of my book," and who, warming to the occasion, in the second edition of *La foule criminelle* goes on to complain that Le Bon "uses my observations on the psychology of crowds without citing me" and adds, "that without any trace of irony, I believe that no higher, or least suspect, praise can be given than by this adoption of my ideas without citing me." Our interest is not, of course, in adjudicating these once lively claims to priority; such posthumous judgments are the office of those status judges of intellectual accomplishment, the historians of thought. The squabble between Sighele, Le Bon, and, to some extent, Tarde holds interest for us only as a case of the multiple and at least partly independent appearance of essentially the same ideas at about the same time, this testifying that the ideas have become almost inevitable as prerequisite kinds of knowledge have accumulated in the cultural heritage and as socially induced interests have

directed the attention of thinkers to the problems and phenomena that give rise to the ideas.

Fairly strict evidence, then, and not a ready made figure of speech, directs the opinion that Le Bon's book expressed in part the cultural atmosphere of his time. To revert to Joseph Glanvill's meteorological metaphor of the seventeenth century which lay inert until A.N. Whitehead reactivated it in the twentieth century, the ideas that make up a climate of opinion do not prove congenial only by chance. They are generally brought about by changes in the underlying social structure, by the creaking stresses and strains in it or by the severe jolts and transformations that give point to the ideas which are taken up and make inapt currently irrelevant ideas (which persist in turning up, since not everything in culture is strictly determined by the social structure and since the same structural stresses have different meanings for people variously located in that structure). In general, the same social conditions make for creativity of thought and for the popular diffusion of that thought. In particular, the consequential historical events that made Le Bon's observations and ideas immediately and immensely popular were, I suggest, the same events that largely led him to those ideas. It is these events, also, that produced the resonance between Le Bon and his public.

Even a few allusions to the historical context in which Le Bon

lived out his long life may be enough to suggest why his image of the crowd man might make sense to him and to his many readers, and why he never found occasion for substantially modifying that image. Le Bon was born in 1841. The presumably revolutionary king, Louis Philippe, was turning thoroughly conservative and so stirring up renewed radicalism and the spread of utopian socialism. Le Bon was only a boy of seven when the barricades went up in Paris and the king quickly abdicated, to be replaced, after the bloody street fighting of the June insurrection, by Prince Louis Napoleon as the President of the Second Republic. Nor could he have yet understood Louis Napoleon's tricky use of plebiscites to transform the President into an Emperor, ruling proudly as Napoleon III over the Second Empire. But later, in the eighteen sixties, Le Bon evidently approved the Emperor's decade of conciliation — designed to ward off a popular revolt, only to have the Paris populace, after the thorough defeat at Sedan, sweep the Empire into oblivion. Le Bon worried over the rise into short lived power of the radicals in the Commune of 1871, with its miscellany of republicans, Proudhonists, and Blanquists, that rebellion which Marx ambivalently described both as a massive political blunder and as the first prophetic symbol of the uprising of the workers in their own right as a prelude to ultimate emancipation. As a mature but not always perspicacious observer, Le Bon witnessed the trials of the Third Republic, from its beginnings in 1870, with governments rising and falling every little

while, and with its complement of demagogues trying (and sometimes succeeding in their effort) to rule the masses. Above all, for the purposes of the book he was soon to write, Le Bon witnessed the swift rise into potential power of that indecisive and jingoist demagogue, General Georges Ernest Jean Marie Boulanger when, on the fourteenth of July, 1886, he rode into history on his black charger, Tunis, as the Man on Horseback.

Le Bon makes only two references to Boulanger in the whole of his book, one by name and the other so oblique an allusion that the translator, uncertain of the reader's historical memory, finds it necessary to append an identifying footnote. The latter allusion suggests the extent to which Le Bon's conception of the crowd and its social psychology, was based upon what he, as a dismayed if not hopelessly frightened conservative, saw going on before him. Le Bon puts it this way :

"A crowd may easily enact the part of an executioner, but not less easily that of a martyr. \[This notation of ambivalence is the sort of observation that endeared Le Bon to Freud.\] It is crowds that have furnished the torrents of blood requisite for the triumph of every belief. \[And then, Le Bon adds, instructively for our purposes\] It is not necessary to go back to the heroic ages to see what crowds are capable of. They are never sparing of their lives in an insurrection, and only a few years ago, a general, suddenly become

popular,might easily have found a hundred thousand men ready to sacrifice their lives for his cause had he demanded it."

The unnamed general is of course Boulanger.Among Americans if not Frenchmen,the Boulanger episode is now half forgotten,just as other threatening,but shortlived,periods of powerful demagoguery that did not result in the eventually legitimized taking over of political power are usually forgotten in the popularly retained historiography of every country.But at the time of his ascendancy with the political crowds of France during the last five years of the 1880s,General Georges Boulanger and the movement called Boulangism usurped the political stage of France in about the same measure that Senator Joseph McCarthy and the movement called McCarthyism usurped the stage in the United States during the first five years of the 1950s.(And to make the parallel complete in absurdly precise details,just as McCarthy died self destructively three years after his political ruin,so Boulanger died,by manifest suicide,three years after he fled from France when threatened with trial for treason.)

This quick allusion to men and movements,generations apart in time and remote in social space,may not be quite the idle historical analogizing it may at first seem.After all,Le Bon was not writing history in *The Crowd*.He was drawing upon history in an effort to discover those uniformities in the character and behavior of crowds

that turn up repeatedly, with differences only of detail. And although there is no evidence in Le Bon's intellectual biography that he turned primarily to the Boulanger episode in order to trace out inductively the social psychology of crowds, it is true that the episode attracted his notice, just as it did that of the more unthinking Frenchmen of his time.

The short inglorious history of the idolized Boulanger reads as though it were the acting out of a socio psychological drama written by Le Bon, reflecting on the relations between the Leader and the Crowd. But since the events came first, it seems a little more reasonable to assume that Le Bon generalized the events rather than that Boulanger, and his followers, prophetically anticipated the book. As both source and supposed confirmation of Le Bon's ideas about the dynamics of crowd behavior, Boulangism is worth our notice.

Having steadily advanced to become the most youthful general in the French Army, Boulanger was moved into the Ministry of War, upon the behind the doors decision of Clemenceau, then the leader of the Radicals. He first gained popular support by conspicuously improving the living conditions of the troops, now no longer a professional army, inured to hardship, but one based upon the universal service of civilians temporarily turned into soldiers. Soon after, he became many things to many men, as the discontented multitudes of the Third

Republic looked upon him as a leader who could undo the principal source of their discontent : the regime. Lacking any political commitments of his own, Boulanger could and did promise to satisfy the opposed interests of many political sects. He promised Déroulède's League of Patriots, with bully boys wielding heavy canes to enforce their chauvinistic opinions, to erase the nation's humiliation by pushing the Germans back across the Rhine ; the Bonapartists, he promised to restore the Empire, and the wellheeled royalists, who kept him financially solvent, to restore the monarchy ; just as he became identified as "their man" by each of the motley political crowds of Socialists, Opportunists, moderate Republicans and dissident Radicals. Held loosely together by their common opposition to the regime, each of these crowds saw in the General the leader of their cause although he himself actually stood for no cause but that of the General. The contradictions of the national crowd were unified in the person of the Leader.

The fast moving drama of political events — the multitudes of Paris at Longchamps on Bastille Day 1886, shouting their preference for the General at the expense of the President ; the electoral triumphs of the General followed by the Parisian crowd's clamoring for him to march on the Elysée ; the compliant behavior of the newspapers, first Rochefort's L'Intransigeant, later Veuillot's Univers, and still later, some of the rest, falling into line to

become publicity sheets for the General and his movement, waiting only to hear "what they are saying in the streets" before coming out with a reaffirmation of what had been said; the quickly enlarged repertoire of popular hymns to "Not' brav' Général Boulanger," "鍗 General Revanche," and "le Général Espoir," songs that both expressed and governed the sentiments of the crowd; the toys, mechanical gadgets, and, idiomatically enough, the liquor that eponymously celebrated the beloved Leader; in short, the brief, intense reign of Boulangist charisma that almost triumphed in a new 18th Brumaire—all this needs no retelling in detail. It is all a leaf out of Le Bon's book. (It is also what lies hidden between the lines of Le Bon's allusion to that anonymous general who "might easily have found a hundred thousand men ready to sacrifice their lives for his cause had he demanded it.")

The rest of the Boulanger story is also in the book, suitably disguised by generalization. Recorded with particular aptness are the rapidly shifting imbalances resulting from the ambivalence of the crowd — in Paris particularly, but in the provinces too — that worshiped Boulanger one day and condemned him the next. Le Bon may have seen in the swift rise of Boulanger evidence of the maxim he employs in the book, which states that in the genesis of prestige nothing succeeds like success, just as he may have seen in Boulanger's sudden fall the correlative but unspoken maxim that in

the precipitous decline of prestige nothing fails like failure. For when the astute politicians of France, chiefly but not only that old pro of politics, the Minister of the Interior, Ernest Constans, went to work on the many vulnerabilities of the popular hero, he was as quick to fall as he had been quick to rise. Frightened by the impending trial for treason, Boulanger fled, with Marguerite de Bonnemains, his beloved mistress of many years, first to Brussels and then, after temporary deportation, to London, later to Jersey, and finally back again to Brussels, where, still naively optimistic in exile, he issued unread manifestoes until he was forced to recognize that the political crowds of France, once more securely in the hands of wily politicians, no longer saw him as their man of destiny. When, in 1891, the blow of political defeat was compounded by the death from tuberculosis of his Marguerite, Boulanger, after two months of unbroken mourning, took his own life in the cemetery at Ixelles where she lay buried.

All this, Le Bon, like his contemporaries, witnessed from a distance, but unlike most of them, he reflected upon what he saw. Midway in the drama, he observed the fickle crowds of Paris promptly forgetting their Hero on Horseback when, in June of 1889, soon after Boulanger had fled, the Universal Exposition opened its gates, its numerous distractions dominated by the great tower of Eiffel, with its open iron work rising three hundred meters into the

sky to announce a new age, in which cities of iron would replace cities of stone. And reflecting on the suggestibility, credulity, and instability of the crowd, Le Bon might have seen in its vengeful attack on the fallen hero evidence for the thesis that the crowd takes "its revenge for having submitted to a superiority whose existence it no longer admits."

All this Le Bon witnessed, noted, and ultimately put, in generalized form, into his book on *The Crowd*. If the Boulanger episode were not enough to provide him with grist for his psycho-social mill, current history conveniently supplied him amply with more. Soon after Boulangism had been played out, there occurred the final act in the drama of Ferdinand de Lesseps, that mover of mountains and "piercer of isthmuses," who, long after the momentous success of Suez, tumbled into the scandal-ridden failure of Panama and, at the age of eighty-eight, while proudly wearing his insignia as a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor, found himself sentenced to five years in prison. Toward this event, Le Bon could preserve neither the appearance nor the substance of scholarly detachment. And so we find, in the pages of this book, an indignant analysis of how it was that the crowd turned upon this one of "the most famous heroes in history."

Climaxing this series of apposite events — and perhaps precipitating the writing of the book; we don't really know — was

what the French, down to the present day, describe, with full understanding of what is meant, as l'Affaire. In the very year that Le Bon was writing his book, occurred the indictment, swift trial in camera, conviction for treason, degradation, and sentencing to lifelong imprisonment on Devil's Island of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the first Jew, and an Alsatian at that, to have been admitted to the General Staff of the Army. Although the behavior of the French crowds, largely initiated and partly controlled by the terrified, shakily authoritative, politically minded, and altogether inept General Staff, was to reach its full climax only later and, as one of its many minor consequences, give renewed intellectual resonance to Le Bon's book, the trial, conviction, and degradation of the outsider in 1894 was enough to release the irresponsible suggestibility of crowds throughout the nation to a degree that could not escape the notice of the most apolitical Frenchman (if this be not a contradiction in terms), let alone the observant eye of a Le Bon.

Perhaps we can now see why it is only customary, rather than entirely correct, to say that Le Bon's book is a social psychology of crowd behavior based primarily on his reading of events in the French Revolution. The prevalent interpretation is only partly true. To be sure, of the fifty or so historically concrete episodes that Le Bon uses to illustrate one or another of his ideas in this

book, some twenty refer to the days of the French Revolution, and another handful to Napoleon. But for the rest, and these make up about half of them all, Le Bon draws upon events, almost entirely in France, that occurred under his very eyes. What is more, the references to the Revolution may owe something to the episodes in Le Bon's own time. Like so many other Frenchmen, Le Bon was haunted by the Great Revolution, but there are numerous intimations in his work that he was alerted to apposite events in the Revolution by the crowd behavior he was observing about him. His social psychology of the French Revolution was often retroactive, prompted by insights into the crowd life swarming in late nineteenth century France. He was, in short, often analyzing the behavior of crowds in the Third Republic under the guise of examining the behavior of crowds during the Revolution.

As we know, Le Bon sometimes reads as though he had himself lived through the French Revolution only to have his hopes betrayed by the Second Empire and completely shattered by the Third Republic. But it was not really so. He lived for only ninety years and this book, for which he is best known, was published in his fifty fifth year. But in his time he saw enough of the behavior of crowds in France to form the basis for his social psychology. Had he been so minded, Le Bon might have paraphrased the inscription in honor of Christopher Wren at the entrance to the choir in St. Paul's, saying

to his contemporaries, "If you need the evidence for my opinions, look about you."

That this is so, that the historical events of a past age were neither the exclusive source nor the major empirical confirmation of Le Bon's theories of crowd behavior, is at least suggested by his thoroughly ambivalent feelings about the use of history for scholarly purposes. In this book, he finds it possible to dismiss history, or more precisely historiography, as an authentic record of the complex contemporaneities, and sequences of man's experience in society. In this aspect, Le Bon, in stated principle, although not at all in recorded practice, adopted the opinion, later made notorious (it is said) by Henry Ford, that "history is bunk." If Ford actually propounded this mot, he only said succinctly and ignorantly what Le Bon had said at greater length and not quite as ignorantly. In this one of his moods, Le Bon believed that "works of history must be considered as works of pure imagination. They are fanciful accounts of ill observed facts, accompanied by explanations \[that are\] the result of reflection. To write such books is the most absolute waste of time." To arrive at this nihilistic judgment, Le Bon began by seeing historiography as twice cursed: first, by the absence or by the loss of the evidence needed to write an authentic account of historical happenings, and, second, by the tendentious selection from the documents that prove haphazardly

available which he believed to be inevitable for historians.

In another of his moods, this one evidently lasting long enough for him to waste his time by writing a small library of allegedly historical works, Le Bon found that he could not write about the behavior of crowds (or any other kinds of human behavior) without drawing heavily upon history. By 1912, when he published *La révolution française et la psychologie des révolutions*, Le Bon had only changed his practice without changing his opinion about the absurdity of claiming to write authentic history.

Like most men struggling with ambivalence, Le Bon evolved a reconciliatory doctrine. This enabled him to live with history while denying the fact of this intellectual cohabitation. The rationalizing doctrine was engagingly simple. True, we are not "in possession of a single word of truth concerning the lives of the great men who have played preponderating parts in the history of humanity—men such as Hercules \[no doubt, Le Bon is gently spoofing us here\], Buddha, or Mahomet." But, says Le Bon, the "real lives" of men such as these are of only little importance to us. "Our interest is to know what our great men were as they are presented by popular legend. It is legendary heroes, and not for a moment real heroes, who have impressed the minds of crowds."

We may question the cogency of this seeming reconciliation between

history as it essentially was and history as effective legend, but we must sympathize with Le Bon's predicament as he alternated between the opposed tendencies of his ambivalence toward history. He is groping toward the idea, later developed with somewhat more rigor and veridicality, that it is not so much what men "really" were as it is how they are perceived and experienced by others that determines their place in history. And the two, the actuality (presumably as it is flawlessly seen by the creator of it all) and the outward appearance, need not, although they sometimes do, coincide. In wrestling with his mixed feelings about history, Le Bon was pushing himself toward what might be called the Thomas Theorem (the eponym being derived from the onetime dean of twentieth century American sociologists, William Isaac Thomas) that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." He was reaching out toward a conception of what has since come to be known as the "public image" of men and the role of this imagery in affecting the behavior of the "crowds" who adopt it. Worried into thought by his incompatible attitudes toward history, Le Bon almost, but not quite, worked through to a sound insight about the ways in which history as legend helps shape subsequent history as social reality.

Although he marshaled all his intellectual forces (and these were far from negligible), Le Bon could not achieve a comparable near

victory over the scholars who denied that, in the notoriously vague last analysis, history provided the basic materials for the discovery of uniformities in the life of man in society. Like so many of his contemporaries and regrettably like so many of his successors, Le Bon held, in a phrase ambiguous enough to seem true, that history is the occurrence and historiography the record of unique events. If this is strictly so, if historical data can provide no sufficient basis for detecting uniformities in the development of man's behavior and in the development of his social institutions and social structure, then, of course, Le Bon has been wasting his time and ours. For this crude and mistaken opinion, he can be blamed only by those who enjoy the unearned increment of posterity: wisdom through hindsight. [A half dozen years after the publication of *The Crowd*, the distinguished German philosophers Heinrich Rickert and Wilhelm Windelband were still explaining why historical science could achieve only individualized depictions, unlike the uniformities that could be detected in the physical and biological sciences. It remained for a later day to reject the mock distinction between the nomothetic (or generalizing) sciences and the idiographic (or individualizing) sciences, as for example, in the observation by Pareto: "That 'history never repeats itself' identically is just as certain as it is that history is 'always repeating itself' in certain respects that we may call the main respects."]

Fortunately, Le Bon continued to deny in practice what he affirmed in principle. He made use of history to arrive at hypothetical uniformities in the behavior of men by abstracting from the indubitably unique concretions of history those aspects that are, in some degree, repeated. In noting this, however, we must not do Le Bon the injustice of ascribing more intellectual prescience to him than he actually displayed. As can be seen from a reading of this book, Le Bon's was not a conspicuously methodical mind. His work remains unencumbered by systematically assembled evidence, sufficient to put his ideas to fair (that is to say, unbiased) test. His is the method of social philosophers, social psychologists, and social observers, prevalent in his own day and far from absent in ours: the method of using historical anecdotes as a source of ideas under the illusion that the source somehow authenticates the interpretation stemming from them. Yet, although his method is faulty, some of his ideas, as we have seen, are sound, albeit crude and requiring much pedestrian hard work by those social scientists of a later time who do not leap from one ideational peak to another, but trudge through the intervening valleys of methodical inquiry before considering themselves ready to climb again.

The proliferation of ideas, without their author's supplying a sufficient basis for choosing among those that are sound and those that are merely noisy, comes easily to minds such as Le Bon's. The

criterion that distinguishes the spuriously from the authentically creative mind, in the realm of social ideas as in the realm of other ideas, is of course the proportion of these ideas that turns out to be viable and approximately (rather than precisely) true. In this respect, and that too may help explain the persisting influence of the book, Le Bon seems to have a fairly high batting average. On occasion, as Freud has intimated, he strikes out ingloriously at the very times that he is convinced he has won the game. But, not infrequently, he makes his mark in the sport of social philosophers and delivers a home run in the pinch.

To describe Le Bon as at once the hero of a distinct intellectual sport and as a sociological prophet would seem to be compounding a new sin: mixing figures of speech and indulging in anachronism (for baseball was surely no part of Le Bon's world). Yet the mixture of figures can be defended. Le Bon walked up to a series of baffling problems, tried his hand at solving each of them, and ended by a series of sociological assertions that helped his successors do better with these difficult problems than was possible for Le Bon himself. Moreover, some of Le Bon's successors among those who study the behavior of man in the mass have independently adopted this profane analogy between sport and science, the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the social philosopher Ortega y Gasset having independently done so, each in complete innocence that the other had

misbehaved in comparable fashion. In the Language of Social Research, Lazarsfeld attributes the continual bettering of sports records in Olympic games, not to Darwinian or Lamarckian changes in the capacities of homo athleticus, but to the historically improved training of those capacities, such that each generation witnesses improved performance among men whose native capacities are no better than the capacities of their predecessors. And in The Revolt of the Masses, one of the books that improve upon Le Bon by having learned from him. Ortega y Gasset makes the same observation about the cumulative improvement of sports records, and notes that something similar happens in the case of science. In all domains of human culture, except possibly the fine arts and morality, reality catches up with this once old fashioned idea of "progress," in the severely limited sense of cumulative knowledge and enlarged capacities for instrumental thought and action. So it happens that Le Bon's observations in The Crowd have been improved upon by minds not necessarily better than his and sometimes not as good, but advantaged by having come after.

For some readers, Le Bon's ideas will seem prescient ones. When he writes prophetically that "the age we are about to enter will in truth be the era of crowds" he is noting the entrance of the masses into history in such a way that their opinion begins to count whereas once it scarcely counted at all, a conception greatly

developed by a later array of writers on mass society of such varied ideological provenience as Enrico Corradini, Emil Lederer, Ortega y Gasset, Franz Neumann, Erich Fromm, and Hannah Arendt.

Reasonably prophetic, too, is Le Bon's image of crowd man as progressively engulfed in popular culture that installs mediocrity and vulgarity as the measure of topmost worth. And his portrait of crowd man as one peculiarly susceptible to the judgments and tastes of others around him, more than was the case (Le Bon believed) in an earlier society, is more than a little reminiscent of present day concern with the alleged loss of autonomous judgment by contemporary man.

Le Bon foresaw our time of mass movements, as the sociologists Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess recognize, and depicted some of the essential features of these movements in a fashion taken up and substantially developed by sociological investigations of the subject.

As one last instance of Le Bon's prescience, take his conception of the growing importance of the dispersed "crowd," the unaggregated people who separately attend to the same social stimuli and, in some measure, exhibit the same psychosocial behavior as the aggregated crowd standing face to back in the same area. Le Bon could not of

course foresee the new influential mass media of communication in radio and television (for he was not really a prophet). But he did take note of the influence exerted upon mass opinion by editors of newspapers who first catered to the sentiments of the masses and then tried to canalize those sentiments into particular channels of action.

All these "insights," to use the appropriate cant term, show that even crudely fashioned ideas that identify recurrent aspects of man's behavior in society can catch up aspects of events still to come. It was not, as some would have it, that Le Bon was a prophet. A prophet is one who claims to foretell concrete events, in much if not all of their concreteness. If he is a good prophet, he will tell just when and where these events are to happen. He describes them in unmistakable detail. In contrast, the student of society, the analyst of its workings, the sociological investigator, does not elect to take up this difficult charge. He is not a prophet, although he is often mistaken for one or is judged as though he were claiming to be one. He undertakes only — and this is difficult enough — to find out so far as he can the conditions under which we may reasonably expect certain aspects of social behavior and social change to occur. When he has a particular problem well in hand, he gingerly tries contingent predictions of limited and specified aspects of future events. These predictions are contingent not only

because the social scientist is less assured than the social prophet (who, after all, has the substantial benefit of knowing that he has private access to future history shared by few others or even by no others at all). It is not merely ritualized caution and uncertainty that leads the social scientist to make his predictions — say, about the impending consequences of vast increases in human populations — contingent. It is, rather, that although he is sometimes prepared to say what might be reasonably expected to occur under specified conditions, he is often not in a position to say when, or even whether, these conditions, indispensable to the predicted outcome, will themselves occur.

The social scientist engaged in prediction differs from his distant and only seeming counterpart, the social prophet, in yet another respect. He tries to learn from his failures. If the anticipated outcome does not occur when the social scientist had reason to suppose it would, and if investigation shows that the posited conditions had in fact occurred but without the expected outcome, he sits down to re-examine his evidence and to overhaul his ideas, just as much as seems indicated. The prophet, of course, treats his unfulfilled prophecy more humanely. He does not throw it into the discard nor rearrange his basic conceptions of how things work. Instead, he habitually explains away the discrepancy between the prophesied and actual outcome, so that the prophecy, immune from

countervailing evidence, remains undamaged. The successful prophet will do this effectively; he will, as the ancient phrase has it, "save the appearances of the phenomena" with such masterly rationalizations that his followers are often quick to see in each seeming failure of prophecy only that much more proof of his profound powers of seership.

This quick comparison of the social prophet and the social scientist is less of a digression than it may seem. The point is that in rereading Le Bon's *The Crowd* today some of us might be tempted to see in what he had to say in 1895 a prophetic account of much that has happened since. This would not only be a mistake; it would be a distinct disservice to Le Bon. It would mean casting him in the role of a prophet, a role that he only occasionally coveted and then put aside as unfitting. In his fashion, and in the fashion that prevailed toward the end of the last century, he was trying to be a social scientist. To be sure, unlike his younger French contemporaries — Émile Durkheim, for example, who ushered in a new era of sociological thought and investigation — Le Bon had never learned how to assemble and analyze sociological data methodically and in a way that allowed the data to deny the truth of his ideas, if they were in fact untrue. This phase of sociological study was still largely to come (and is, of course, only in its early stages even now). Le Bon had the purposes of a sociologist but had

not acquired the intellectually ascetic ways of work required to make his inquiry methodical and reasonably compelling. He was sociological in intent and essayistic in fact. Nevertheless, since he had an instinct for the sociological jugular, he managed to say many things that, as we have since learned, were worth saying.

Le Bon also managed to say many things that were not worth saying. As we have seen, the book is an uneven one, uneven in quality of observation and in quality of inference from observation. It is full of ideas: some of these sound and fruitful; some sound but still to bear fruit; some decidedly unsound but provocative of other ideas that have proved valid; and, finally, some in the unhappy condition of being both unsound and fruitless. So far as we can tell, Le Bon, like many of the rest of us, was unable to distinguish the status of the ideas he put forward. They were all his brainchildren and so, apparently, he loved them all equally. The good ideas and the bad ones, the fruitful ones and the sterile ones, are all accorded pretty much the same loving care by their progenitor. In fact, he acts almost as the parable of the prodigal son would have us all act. If he favors any of the intellectual offspring he brings forth in this book, he favors those sinful ones that we now know to be unsound at the core, and by Le Bon's own sense of values, dangerous. (We shall see some examples of this in a moment.) Yet even here his good sense prevails in the end.

Possibly because Le Bon was writing a social psychology, rather than a chronological history, of crowds, his book contains much that is anything but alien to our own time.

Strewn throughout this little book are evidences of Le Bon's curious admixture of ideological images and commitments. He is an apprehensive conservative, worried by the growth of the proletariat with its socialist orientation. Yet the recurrent traces of political conservatism, an unrelenting hostility to every aspect of socialism, a distinct kind of racial imagery, and a picture of woman as weak and acquiescent, unreasoning and unreasonable, given to impulse and therefore thoroughly unstable and capricious, deprived of morality, and altogether but not unpleasantly inferior to man—all these ideas lie only on the surface of the book. Once these are cleared away as so much ideological debris, Le Bon's fundamental conceptions of crowd behavior remain reasonably intact, though incomplete.

Consider only one of these ideological notions. Le Bon shared with many others of his time what he called "the fundamental notion of race" as one of the "mysterious master causes that rule our destiny." Yet, as it turns out, this is anything but the kind of racism that a mid century Gobineau made basic to the permanent ethnocentrism that furnishes the rationale for exploiting the "inferior races." "Race," for Le Bon, was an ill conceived idea

corresponding loosely to what has since been described as "national character structure." We see this, for example, when Le Bon refers to the "hereditary instincts of the Spanish race" or when he casually remarks on the "feminine characteristics" of crowds everywhere, but finds "Latin crowds to be the most feminine of all." "Race" is a loosely defined tag hung on nations and peoples, reflecting Le Bon's anthropological ignorance rather than his ethnocentric malevolence.

A vogue book, repeatedly germane to Le Bon's time and ours, never entirely new nor strictly true but in composite endlessly perceptive, better at its best and worse at its worst than the author had any way of knowing, written between the lines almost as much as in them, alternately provincial and cosmopolitan in outlook, alternately prophetic and backward looking, using history effectively in practice while rejecting its truth and utility in principle, crystallizing into uniformities of human behavior the dramatic events of his time that exhibited these uniformities, and cluttered with ideological curiosities that do not affect its substance, Le Bon's *The Crowd* is still a book worth reading.

Columbia University January 1960

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Preface.



Crowds, doubtless, are always unconscious, but this very unconsciousness is perhaps one of the secrets of their strength.

The following work is devoted to an account of the characteristics of crowds.

The whole of the common characteristics with which heredity endows the individuals of a race constitute the genius of the race. When, however, a certain number of these individuals are gathered together in a crowd for purposes of action, observation proves that, from the mere fact of their being assembled, there result certain new

psychological characteristics, which are added to the racial characteristics and differ from them at times to a very considerable degree.

Organised crowds have always played an important part in the life of peoples, but this part has never been of such moment as at present. The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age.

I have endeavoured to examine the difficult problem presented by crowds in a purely scientific manner — that is, by making an effort to proceed with method, and without being influenced by opinions, theories, and doctrines. This, I believe, is the only mode of arriving at the discovery of some few particles of truth, especially when dealing, as is the case here, with a question that is the subject of impassioned controversy. A man of science bent on verifying a phenomenon is not called upon to concern himself with the interests his verifications may hurt. In a recent publication an eminent thinker, M. Goblet d'Alviela, made the remark that, belonging to none of the contemporary schools, I am occasionally found in opposition of sundry of the conclusions of all of them. I hope this new work will merit a similar observation. To belong to a school is necessarily to espouse its prejudices and preconceived opinions.

Still I should explain to the reader why he will find me draw conclusions from my investigations which it might be thought at first sight they do not bear; why, for instance, after noting the extreme mental inferiority of crowds, picked assemblies included, I yet affirm it would be dangerous to meddle with their organisation, notwithstanding this inferiority.

The reason is, that the most attentive observation of the facts of history has invariably demonstrated to me that social organisms being every whit as complicated as those of all beings, it is in no wise in our power to force them to undergo on a sudden far-reaching transformations. Nature has recourse at times to radical measures, but never after our fashion, which explains how it is that nothing is more fatal to a people than the mania for great reforms, however excellent these reforms may appear theoretically. They would only be useful were it possible to change instantaneously the genius of nations. This power, however, is only possessed by time. Men are ruled by ideas, sentiments, and customs — matters which are of the essence of ourselves. Institutions and laws are the outward manifestation of our character, the expression of its needs. Being its outcome, institutions and laws cannot change this character.

The study of social phenomena cannot be separated from that of the peoples among whom they have come into existence. From the philosophic point of view these phenomena may have an absolute

value; in practice they have only a relative value.

It is necessary, in consequence, when studying a social phenomenon, to consider it successively under two very different aspects. It will then be seen that the teachings of pure reason are very often contrary to those of practical reason. There are scarcely any data, even physical, to which this distinction is not applicable. From the point of view of absolute truth a cube or a circle are invariable geometrical figures, rigorously defined by certain formulas. From the point of view of the impression they make on our eye these geometrical figures may assume very varied shapes. By perspective the cube may be transformed into a pyramid or a square, the circle into an ellipse or a straight line. Moreover, the consideration of these fictitious shapes is far more important than that of the real shapes, for it is they and they alone that we see and that can be reproduced by photography or in pictures. In certain cases there is more truth in the unreal than in the real. To present objects with their exact geometrical forms would be to distort nature and render it unrecognisable. If we imagine a world whose inhabitants could only copy or photograph objects, but were unable to touch them, it would be very difficult for such persons to attain to an exact idea of their form. Moreover, the knowledge of this form, accessible only to a small number of learned men, would present but a very minor interest.

The philosopher who studies social phenomena should bear in mind that side by side with their theoretical value they possess a practical value, and that this latter, so far as the evolution of civilisation is concerned, is alone of importance. The recognition of this fact should render him very circumspect with regard to the conclusions that logic would seem at first to enforce upon him.

There are other motives that dictate to him a like reserve. The complexity of social facts is such, that it is impossible to grasp them as a whole and to foresee the effects of their reciprocal influence. It seems, too, that behind the visible facts are hidden at times thousands of invisible causes. Visible social phenomena appear to be the result of an immense, unconscious working, that as a rule is beyond the reach of our analysis. Perceptible phenomena may be compared to the waves, which are the expression on the surface of the ocean of deep-lying disturbances of which we know nothing. So far as the majority of their acts are considered, crowds display a singularly inferior mentality; yet there are other acts in which they appear to be guided by those mysterious forces which the ancients denominated destiny, nature, or providence, which we call the voices of the dead, and whose power it is impossible to overlook, although we ignore their essence. It would seem, at times, as if there were latent forces in the inner being of nations which serve to guide them. What, for instance, can be

more complicated, more logical, more marvellous than a language? Yet whence can this admirably organised production have arisen, except it be the outcome of the unconscious genius of crowds? The most learned academics, the most esteemed grammarians can do no more than note down the laws that govern languages; they would be utterly incapable of creating them. Even with respect to the ideas of great men are we certain that they are exclusively the offspring of their brains? No doubt such ideas are always created by solitary minds, but is it not the genius of crowds that has furnished the thousands of grains of dust forming the soil in which they have sprung up?

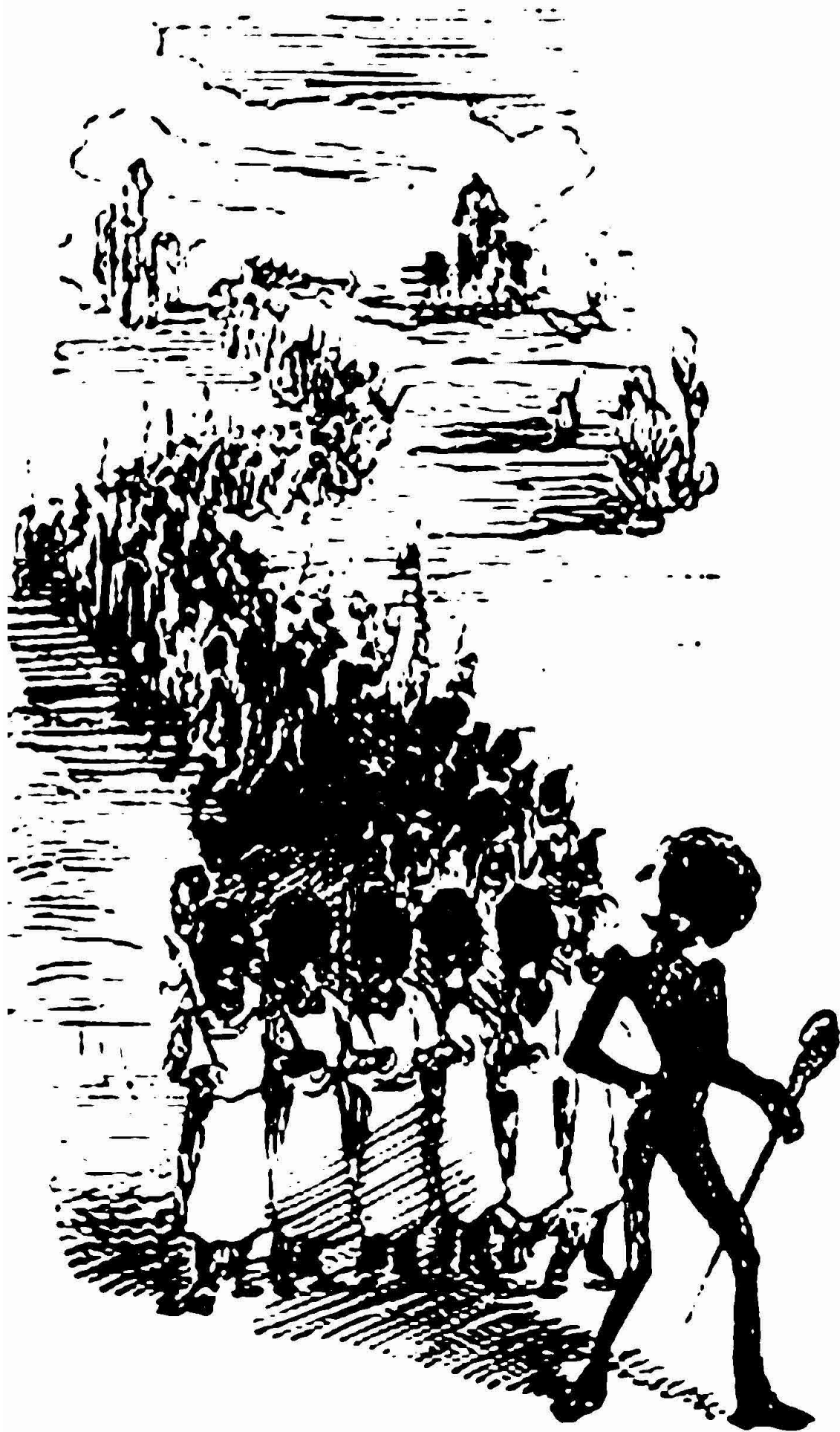
Crowds, doubtless, are always unconscious, but this very unconsciousness is perhaps one of the secrets of their strength. In the natural world beings exclusively governed by instinct accomplish acts whose marvellous complexity astounds us. Reason is an attribute of humanity of too recent date and still too imperfect to reveal to us the laws of the unconscious, and still more to take its place. The part played by the unconscious in all our acts is immense, and that played by reason very small. The unconscious acts like a force still unknown.

If we wish, then, to remain within the narrow but safe limits within which science can attain to knowledge, and not to wander in the domain of vague conjecture and vain hypothesis, all we must do

is simply to take note of such phenomena as are accessible to us, and confine ourselves to their consideration. Every conclusion drawn from our observation is, as a rule, premature, for behind the phenomena which we see clearly are other phenomena that we see indistinctly, and perhaps behind these latter, yet others which we do not see at all.

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Introduction: The Era of Crowds.



Up to now these thoroughgoing destructions of a worn-out civilisation have constituted the most obvious task of the masses. It is not indeed to-day merely that this can be traced. History tells us, that from the moment when the moral forces on which a civilisation rested have lost their strength, its final dissolution is brought about by those unconscious and brutal crowds known, justifiably enough, as barbarians.

Abstract: The evolution of the present age—The great changes in civilisation are the consequence of changes in National thought—Modern belief in the power of crowds—It transforms the traditional policy of the European states—How the rise of the popular classes comes about, and the manner in which they exercise their power—The necessary consequences of the power of the crowd—Crowds unable to play a part other than destructive—The dissolution of worn-out civilisations is the work of the crowd—General ignorance of the psychology of crowds—Importance of the study of crowds for legislators and statesmen.

The great upheavals which precede changes of civilisations such as the fall of the Roman Empire and the foundation of the Arabian Empire, seem at first sight determined more especially by political transformations, foreign invasion, or the overthrow of dynasties. But a more attentive study of these events shows that behind their

apparent causes the real cause is generally seen to be a profound modification in the ideas of the peoples. The true historical upheavals are not those which astonish us by their grandeur and violence. The only important changes whence the renewal of civilisations results, affect ideas, conceptions, and beliefs. The memorable events of history are the visible effects of the invisible changes of human thought. The reason these great events are so rare is that there is nothing so stable in a race as the inherited groundwork of its thoughts.

The present epoch is one of these critical moments in which the thought of mankind is undergoing a process of transformation.

Two fundamental factors are at the base of this transformation. The first is the destruction of those religious, political, and social beliefs in which all the elements of our civilisation are rooted. The second is the creation of entirely new conditions of existence and thought as the result of modern scientific and industrial discoveries.

The ideas of the past, although half destroyed, being still very powerful, and the ideas which are to replace them being still in process of formation, the modern age represents a period of transition and anarchy.

It is not easy to say as yet what will one day be evolved from this

necessarily somewhat chaotic period. What will be the fundamental ideas on which the societies that are to succeed our own will be built up? We do not at present know. Still it is already clear that on whatever lines the societies of the future are organised, they will have to count with a new power, with the last surviving sovereign force of modern times, the power of crowds. On the ruins of so many ideas formerly considered beyond discussion, and to-day decayed or decaying, of so many sources of authority that successive revolutions have destroyed, this power, which alone has arisen in their stead, seems soon destined to absorb the others. While all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, the power of the crowd is the only force that nothing menaces, and of which the prestige is continually on the increase. The age we are about to enter will in truth be the Era of Crowds.

Scarcely a century ago the traditional policy of European states and the rivalries of sovereigns were the principal factors that shaped events. The opinion of the masses scarcely counted, and most frequently indeed did not count at all. To-day it is the traditions which used to obtain in politics, and the individual tendencies and rivalries of rulers which do not count; while, on the contrary, the voice of the masses has become preponderant. It is this voice that dictates their conduct to kings, whose endeavour is to take note of

its utterances. The destinies of nations are elaborated at present in the heart of the masses, and no longer in the councils of princes.

The entry of the popular classes into political life — that is to say, in reality, their progressive transformation into governing classes — is one of the most striking characteristics of our epoch of transition. The introduction of universal suffrage, which exercised for a long time but little influence, is not, as might be thought, the distinguishing feature of this transference of political power. The progressive growth of the power of the masses took place at first by the propagation of certain ideas, which have slowly implanted themselves in men' s minds, and afterwards by the gradual association of individuals bent on bringing about the realisation of theoretical conceptions. It is by association that crowds have come to procure ideas with respect to their interests which are very clearly defined if not particularly just, and have arrived at a consciousness of their strength. The masses are founding syndicates before which the authorities capitulate one after the other; they are also founding labour unions, which in spite of all economic laws tend to regulate the conditions of labour and wages. They return to assemblies in which the Government is vested, representatives utterly lacking initiative and independence, and reduced most often to nothing else than the

spokesmen of the committees that have chosen them.

To-day the claims of the masses are becoming more and more sharply defined, and amount to nothing less than a determination to utterly destroy society as it now exists, with a view to making it hark back to that primitive communism which was the normal condition of all human groups before the dawn of civilisation. Limitations of the hours of labour, the nationalisation of mines, railways, factories, and the soil, the equal distribution of all products, the elimination of all the upper classes for the benefit of the popular classes, &c., such are these claims.

Little adapted to reasoning, crowds, on the contrary, are quick to act. As the result of their present organisation their strength has become immense. The dogmas whose birth we are witnessing will soon have the force of the old dogmas; that is to say, the tyrannical and sovereign force of being above discussion. The prime right of the masses is about to replace the prime right of kings.

The writers who enjoy the favour of our middle classes, those who best represent their rather narrow ideas, their somewhat prescribed views, their rather superficial scepticism, and their at times somewhat excessive egoism, display profound alarm at this new power which they see growing; and to combat the disorder in men's minds they are addressing despairing appeals to those moral forces of the

Church for which they formerly professed so much disdain. They talk to us of the bankruptcy of science, go back in penitence to Rome, and remind us of the teachings of revealed truth. These new converts forget that it is too late. Had they been really touched by grace, a like operation could not have the same influence on minds less concerned with the preoccupations which beset these recent adherents to religion. The masses repudiate to-day the gods which their admonishers repudiated yesterday and helped to destroy. There is no power, Divine or human, that can oblige a stream to flow back to its source.

There has been no bankruptcy of science, and science has had no share in the present intellectual anarchy, nor in the making of the new power which is springing up in the midst of this anarchy. Science promised us truth, or at least a knowledge of such relations as our intelligence can seize: it never promised us peace or happiness. Sovereignly indifferent to our feelings, it is deaf to our lamentations. It is for us to endeavour to live with science, since nothing can bring back the illusions it has destroyed.

Universal symptoms, visible in all nations, show us the rapid growth of the power of crowds, and do not admit of our supposing that it is destined to cease growing at an early date. Whatever fate it may reserve for us, we shall have to submit to it. All

reasoning against it is a mere vain war of words. Certainly it is possible that the advent to power of the masses marks one of the last stages of Western civilisation, a complete return to those periods of confused anarchy which seem always destined to precede the birth of every new society. But may this result be prevented?

Up to now these thoroughgoing destructions of a worn-out civilisation have constituted the most obvious task of the masses. It is not indeed to-day merely that this can be traced. History tells us, that from the moment when the moral forces on which a civilisation rested have lost their strength, its final dissolution is brought about by those unconscious and brutal crowds known, justifiably enough, as barbarians. Civilisations as yet have only been created and directed by a small intellectual aristocracy, never by crowds. Crowds are only powerful for destruction. Their rule is always tantamount to a barbarian phase. A civilisation involves fixed rules, discipline, a passing from the instinctive to the rational state, forethought for the future, an elevated degree of culture — all of them conditions that crowds, left to themselves, have invariably shown themselves incapable of realising. In consequence of the purely destructive nature of their power crowds act like those microbes which hasten the dissolution of enfeebled or dead bodies. When the structure of a civilisation is rotten, it is always the masses that bring about its downfall.

It is at such a juncture that their chief mission is plainly visible, and that for a while the philosophy of number seems the only philosophy of history.

Is the same fate in store for our civilisation? There is ground to fear that this is the case, but we are not as yet in a position to be certain of it.

However this may be, we are bound to resign ourselves to the reign of the masses, since want of foresight has in succession overthrown all the barriers that might have kept the crowd in check.

We have a very slight knowledge of these crowds which are beginning to be the object of so much discussion. Professional students of psychology, having lived far from them, have always ignored them, and when, as of late, they have turned their attention in this direction it has only been to consider the crimes crowds are capable of committing. Without a doubt criminal crowds exist, but virtuous and heroic crowds, and crowds of many other kinds, are also to be met with. The crimes of crowds only constitute a particular phase of their psychology. The mental constitution of crowds is not to be learnt merely by a study of their crimes, any more than that of an individual by a mere description of his vices.

However, in point of fact, all the world's masters, all the founders of religions or empires, the apostles of all beliefs,

eminent statesmen, and, in a more modest sphere, the mere chiefs of small groups of men have always been unconscious psychologists, possessed of an instinctive and often very sure knowledge of the character of crowds, and it is their accurate knowledge of this character that has enabled them to so easily establish their mastery. Napoleon had a marvellous insight into the psychology of the masses of the country over which he reigned, but he, at times, completely misunderstood the psychology of crowds belonging to other races;¹ and it is because he thus misunderstood it that he engaged in Spain, and notably in Russia, in conflicts in which his power received blows which were destined within a brief space of time to ruin it. A knowledge of the psychology of crowds is to-day the last resource of the statesman who wishes not to govern them — that is becoming a very difficult matter — but at any rate not to be too much governed by them.

It is only by obtaining some sort of insight into the psychology of crowds that it can be understood how slight is the action upon them of laws and institutions, how powerless they are to hold any opinions other than those which are imposed upon them, and that it is not with rules based on theories of pure equity that they are to be led, but by seeking what produces an impression on them and what seduces them. For instance, should a legislator, wishing to impose a new tax, choose that which would be theoretically the most just?

By no means. In practice the most unjust may be the best for the masses. Should it at the same time be the least obvious, and apparently the least burdensome, it will be the most easily tolerated. It is for this reason that an indirect tax, however exorbitant it be, will always be accepted by the crowd, because, being paid daily in fractions of a farthing on objects of consumption, it will not interfere with the habits of the crowd, and will pass unperceived. Replace it by a proportional tax on wages or income of any other kind, to be paid in a lump sum, and were this new imposition theoretically ten times less burdensome than the other, it would give rise to unanimous protest. This arises from the fact that a sum relatively high, which will appear immense, and will in consequence strike the imagination, has been substituted for the unperceived fractions of a farthing. The new tax would only appear light had it been saved farthing by farthing, but this economic proceeding involves an amount of foresight of which the masses are incapable.

The example which precedes is of the simplest. Its appositeness will be easily perceived. It did not escape the attention of such a psychologist as Napoleon, but our modern legislators, ignorant as they are of the characteristics of a crowd, are unable to appreciate it. Experience has not taught them as yet to a sufficient degree that men never shape their conduct upon the

teaching of pure reason.

Many other practical applications might be made of the psychology of crowds. A knowledge of this science throws the most vivid light on a great number of historical and economic phenomena totally incomprehensible without it. I shall have occasion to show that the reason why the most remarkable of modern historians, Taine, has at times so imperfectly understood the events of the great French Revolution is, that it never occurred to him to study the genius of crowds. He took as his guide in the study of this complicated period the descriptive method resorted to by naturalists; but the moral forces are almost absent in the case of the phenomena which naturalists have to study. Yet it is precisely these forces that constitute the true mainsprings of history.

In consequence, merely looked at from its practical side, the study of the psychology of crowds deserved to be attempted. Were its interest that resulting from pure curiosity only, it would still merit attention. It is as interesting to decipher the motives of the actions of men as to determine the characteristics of a mineral or a plant. Our study of the genius of crowds can merely be a brief synthesis, a simple summary of our investigations. Nothing more must be demanded of it than a few suggestive views. Others will work the ground more thoroughly. To-day we only touch the surface of a still almost virgin soil.

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Book I. The Mind of Crowds.

Chapter I. General Characteristics of
Crowds. — Psychological Law of Their Mental
Unity.



A thousand individuals accidentally gathered in a public place without any determined object in no way constitute a crowd from the psychological point of view.

Abstract: What constitutes a crowd from the psychological point of view—A numerically strong agglomeration of individuals does not suffice to form a crowd—Special characteristics of psychological crowds—The turning in a fixed direction of the ideas and sentiments of individuals composing such a crowd, and the disappearance of their personality—The crowd is always dominated by considerations of which it is unconscious—The disappearance of brain activity and the predominance of medullar activity—The lowering of the intelligence and the complete transformation of the sentiments—The transformed sentiments may be better or worse than

those of the individuals of which the crowd is composed—A crowd is as easily heroic as criminal.

In its ordinary sense the word "crowd" means a gathering of individuals of whatever nationality, profession, or sex, and whatever be the chances that have brought them together. From the psychological point of view the expression "crowd" assumes quite a different signification. Under certain given circumstances, and only under those circumstances, an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it. The sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed, doubtless transitory, but presenting very clearly defined characteristics. The gathering has thus become what, in the absence of a better expression, I will call an organised crowd, or, if the term is considered preferable, a psychological crowd. It forms a single being, and is subjected to the law of the mental unity of crowds.

It is evident that it is not by the mere fact of a number of individuals finding themselves accidentally side by side that they acquire the character of an organised crowd. A thousand individuals accidentally gathered in a public place without any determined object in no way constitute a crowd from the psychological point of view. To acquire the special characteristics of such a crowd, the

influence is necessary of certain predisposing causes of which we shall have to determine the nature.

The disappearance of conscious personality and the turning of feelings and thoughts in a definite direction, which are the primary characteristics of a crowd about to become organised, do not always involve the simultaneous presence of a number of individuals on one spot. Thousands of isolated individuals may acquire at certain moments, and under the influence of certain violent emotions — such, for example, as a great national event — the characteristics of a psychological crowd. It will be sufficient in that case that a mere chance should bring them together for their acts to at once assume the characteristics peculiar to the acts of a crowd. At certain moments half a dozen men might constitute a psychological crowd, which may not happen in the case of hundreds of men gathered together by accident. On the other hand, an entire nation, though there may be no visible agglomeration, may become a crowd under the action of certain influences.

A psychological crowd once constituted, it acquires certain provisional but determinable general characteristics. To these general characteristics there are adjoined particular characteristics which vary according to the elements of which the crowd is composed, and may modify its mental constitution. Psychological crowds, then, are susceptible of classification; and

when we come to occupy ourselves with this matter, we shall see that a heterogeneous crowd — that is, a crowd composed of dissimilar elements — presents certain characteristics in common with homogeneous crowds — that is, with crowds composed of elements more or less akin (sects, castes, and classes) — and side by side with these common characteristics particularities which permit of the two kinds of crowds being differentiated.

But before occupying ourselves with the different categories of crowds, we must first of all examine the characteristics common to them all. We shall set to work like the naturalist, who begins by describing the general characteristics common to all the members of a family before concerning himself with the particular characteristics which allow the differentiation of the genera and species that the family includes.

It is not easy to describe the mind of crowds with exactness, because its organisation varies not only according to race and composition, but also according to the nature and intensity of the exciting causes to which crowds are subjected. The same difficulty, however, presents itself in the psychological study of an individual. It is only in novels that individuals are found to traverse their whole life with an unvarying character. It is only the uniformity of the environment that creates the apparent uniformity of characters. I have shown elsewhere that all mental constitutions

contain possibilities of character which may be manifested in consequence of a sudden change of environment. This explains how it was that among the most savage members of the French Convention were to be found inoffensive citizens who, under ordinary circumstances, would have been peaceable notaries or virtuous magistrates. The storm past, they resumed their normal character of quiet, law-abiding citizens. Napoleon found amongst them his most docile servants.

It being impossible to study here all the successive degrees of organisation of crowds, we shall concern ourselves more especially with such crowds as have attained to the phase of complete organisation. In this way we shall see what crowds may become, but not what they invariably are. It is only in this advanced phase of organisation that certain new and special characteristics are superposed on the unvarying and dominant character of the race; then takes place that turning already alluded to of all the feelings and thoughts of the collectivity in an identical direction. It is only under such circumstances, too, that what I have called above the psychological law of the mental unity of crowds comes into play.

Among the psychological characteristics of crowds there are some that they may present in common with isolated individuals, and others, on the contrary, which are absolutely peculiar to them and

are only to be met with in collectivities. It is these special characteristics that we shall study, first of all, in order to show their importance.

The most striking peculiarity presented by a psychological crowd is the following: Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike be their mode of life, their occupations, their character, or their intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation. There are certain ideas and feelings which do not come into being, or do not transform themselves into acts except in the case of individuals forming a crowd. The psychological crowd is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements, which for a moment are combined, exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly.

Contrary to an opinion which one is astonished to find coming from the pen of so acute a philosopher as Herbert Spencer, in the aggregate which constitutes a crowd there is in no sort a summing-up of or an average struck between its elements. What really takes place is a combination followed by the creation of new

characteristics, just as in chemistry certain elements, when brought into contact — bases and acids, for example — combine to form a new body possessing properties quite different from those of the bodies that have served to form it.

It is easy to prove how much the individual forming part of a crowd differs from the isolated individual, but it is less easy to discover the causes of this difference.

To obtain at any rate a glimpse of them it is necessary in the first place to call to mind the truth established by modern psychology, that unconscious phenomena play an altogether preponderating part not only in organic life, but also in the operations of the intelligence. The conscious life of the mind is of small importance in comparison with its unconscious life. The most subtle analyst, the most acute observer, is scarcely successful in discovering more than a very small number of the unconscious motives that determine his conduct. Our conscious acts are the outcome of an unconscious substratum created in the mind in the main by hereditary influences. This substratum consists of the innumerable common characteristics handed down from generation to generation, which constitute the genius of a race. Behind the avowed causes of our acts there undoubtedly lie secret causes that we do not avow, but behind these secret causes there are many others more secret still which we ourselves ignore. The greater

part of our daily actions are the result of hidden motives which escape our observation.

It is more especially with respect to those unconscious elements which constitute the genius of a race that all the individuals belonging to it resemble each other, while it is principally in respect to the conscious elements of their character — the fruit of education, and yet more of exceptional hereditary conditions — that they differ from each other. Men the most unlike in the matter of their intelligence possess instincts, passions, and feelings that are very similar. In the case of every thing that belongs to the realm of sentiment— religion, politics, morality, the affections and antipathies, &c. — the most eminent men seldom surpass the standard of the most ordinary individuals. From the intellectual point of view an abyss may exist between a great mathematician and his boot maker, but from the point of view of character the difference is most often slight or non-existent.

It is precisely these general qualities of character, governed by forces of which we are unconscious, and possessed by the majority of the normal individuals of a race in much the same degree — it is precisely these qualities, I say, that in crowds become common property. In the collective mind the intellectual aptitudes of the individuals, and in consequence their individuality, are weakened. The heterogeneous is swamped by the homogeneous, and the unconscious

qualities obtain the upper hand.

This very fact that crowds possess in common ordinary qualities explains why they can never accomplish acts demanding a high degree of intelligence. The decisions affecting matters of general interest come to by an assembly of men of distinction, but specialists in different walks of life, are not sensibly superior to the decisions that would be adopted by a gathering of imbeciles. The truth is, they can only bring to bear in common on the work in hand those mediocre qualities which are the birthright of every average individual. In crowds it is stupidity and not mother-wit that is accumulated. It is not all the world, as is so often repeated, that has more wit than Voltaire, but assuredly Voltaire that has more wit than all the world, if by "all the world" crowds are to be understood.

If the individuals of a crowd confined themselves to putting in common the ordinary qualities of which each of them has his share, there would merely result the striking of an average, and not, as we have said is actually the case, the creation of new characteristics. How is it that these new characteristics are created? This is what we are now to investigate.

Different causes determine the appearance of these characteristics peculiar to crowds, and not possessed by isolated individuals. The

first is that the individual forming part of a crowd acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would perforce have kept under restraint. He will be the less disposed to check himself from the consideration that, a crowd being anonymous, and in consequence irresponsible, the sentiment of responsibility which always controls individuals disappears entirely.

The second cause, which is contagion, also intervenes to determine the manifestation in crowds of their special characteristics, and at the same time the trend they are to take. Contagion is a phenomenon of which it is easy to establish the presence, but that it is not easy to explain. It must be classed among those phenomena of a hypnotic order, which we shall shortly study. In a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest. This is an aptitude very contrary to his nature, and of which a man is scarcely capable, except when he makes part of a crowd.

A third cause, and by far the most important, determines in the individuals of a crowd special characteristics which are quite contrary at times to those presented by the isolated individual. I allude to that suggestibility of which, moreover, the contagion mentioned above is neither more nor less than an effect.

To understand this phenomenon it is necessary to bear in mind certain recent physiological discoveries. We know to-day that by various processes an individual may be brought into such a condition that, having entirely lost his conscious personality, he obeys all the suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it, and commits acts in utter contradiction with his character and habits. The most careful observations seem to prove that an individual immersed for some length of time in a crowd in action soon finds himself — either in consequence of the magnetic influence given out by the crowd, or from some other cause of which we are ignorant — in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotised individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotiser. The activity of the brain being paralysed in the case of the hypnotised subject, the latter becomes the slave of all the unconscious activities of his spinal cord, which the hypnotiser directs at will. The conscious personality has entirely vanished; will and discernment are lost. All feelings and thoughts are bent in the direction determined by the hypnotiser.

Such also is approximately the state of the individual forming part of a psychological crowd. He is no longer conscious of his acts. In his case, as in the case of the hypnotised subject, at the same time that certain faculties are destroyed, others may be brought to a high degree of exaltation. Under the influence of a suggestion,

he will undertake the accomplishment of certain acts with irresistible impetuosity. This impetuosity is the more irresistible in the case of crowds than in that of the hypnotised subject, from the fact that, the suggestion being the same for all the individuals of the crowd, it gains in strength by reciprocity. The individualities in the crowd who might possess a personality sufficiently strong to resist the suggestion are too few in number to struggle against the current. At the utmost, they may be able to attempt a diversion by means of different suggestions. It is in this way, for instance, that a happy expression, an image opportunely evoked, have occasionally deterred crowds from the most bloodthirsty acts.

We see, then, that the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts; these, we see, are the principal characteristics of the individual forming part of a crowd. He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.

Moreover, by the mere fact that he forms part of an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a

barbarian — that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images — which would be entirely without action on each of the isolated individuals composing the crowd — and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best-known habits. An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will.

It is for these reasons that juries are seen to deliver verdicts of which each individual juror would disapprove, that parliamentary assemblies adopt laws and measures of which each of their members would disapprove in his own person. Taken separately, the men of the Convention were enlightened citizens of peaceful habits. United in a crowd, they did not hesitate to give their adhesion to the most savage proposals, to guillotine individuals most clearly innocent, and, contrary to their interests, to renounce their inviolability and to decimate themselves.

It is not only by his acts that the individual in a crowd differs essentially from himself. Even before he has entirely lost his independence, his ideas and feelings have undergone a transformation, and the transformation is so profound as to change the miser into a spendthrift, the sceptic into a believer, the

honest man into a criminal, and the coward into a hero. The renunciation of all its privileges which the nobility voted in a moment of enthusiasm during the celebrated night of August 4, 1789, would certainly never have been consented to by any of its members taken singly.

The conclusion to be drawn from what precedes is, that the crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual, but that, from the point of view of feelings and of the acts these feelings provoke, the crowd may, according to circumstances, be better or worse than the individual. All depends on the nature of the suggestion to which the crowd is exposed. This is the point that has been completely misunderstood by writers who have only studied crowds from the criminal point of view. Doubtless a crowd is often criminal, but also it is often heroic. It is crowds rather than isolated individuals that may be induced to run the risk of death to secure the triumph of a creed or an idea, that may be fired with enthusiasm for glory and honour, that are led on — almost without bread and without arms, as in the age of the Crusades — to deliver the tomb of Christ from the infidel, or, as in '93, to defend the fatherland. Such heroism is without doubt somewhat unconscious, but it is of such heroism that history is made. Were peoples only to be credited with the great actions performed in cold blood, the annals of the world would register but few of them.

Chapter II. The Sentiments and Morality of Crowds.



Given to exaggeration in its feelings, a crowd is only impressed by excessive sentiments. An orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use of violent affirmations. To exaggerate, to affirm, to resort to repetitions, and never to attempt to prove anything by reasoning are methods of argument well known to speakers at public meetings.

Abstract: 1. Impulsiveness, mobility, and irritability of crowds. The crowd is at the mercy of all exterior exciting causes, and reflects their incessant variations — The impulses which the crowd obeys are so imperious as to annihilate the feeling of personal interest — Premeditation is absent from crowds — Racial influence. 2. Crowds are credulous and readily influenced by suggestion. The obedience of crowds to suggestions — The images evoked in the mind of crowds are accepted by them as realities — Why these images are identical for all the individuals composing a crowd — The equality of the educated and the ignorant man in a crowd — Various examples of the illusions to which the individuals in a crowd are subject — The impossibility of according belief to the testimony of crowds — The unanimity of numerous witnesses is one of the worst proofs that can be invoked to establish a fact — The slight value of works of history. 3. The exaggeration and ingenuousness of the sentiments of crowds. Crowds do not admit doubt or uncertainty, and always go to extremes — Their sentiments always excessive. 4. The intolerance, dictatorialness, and conservatism of crowds. The reasons of these sentiments — The servility of crowds in the face of a strong authority — The momentary revolutionary instincts of crowds do not prevent them from being extremely conservative — Crowds instinctively hostile to changes and progress. 5. The morality of crowds. The morality of crowds, according to the suggestions under which they act, may be much lower or much higher than that of the

individuals composing them — Explanation and examples — Crowds rarely guided by those considerations of interest which are most often the exclusive motives of the isolated individual — The moralising role of crowds.

Having indicated in a general way the principal characteristics of crowds, it remains to study these characteristics in detail.

It will be remarked that among the special characteristics of crowds there are several — such as impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides — which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution — in women, savages, and children, for instance. However, I merely indicate this analogy in passing; its demonstration is outside the scope of this work. It would, moreover, be useless for persons acquainted with the psychology of primitive beings, and would scarcely carry conviction to those in ignorance of this matter.

I now proceed to the successive consideration of the different characteristics that may be observed in the majority of crowds.

1. Impulsiveness, Mobility, and Irritability of Crowds

When studying the fundamental characteristics of a crowd we stated

that it is guided almost exclusively by unconscious motives. Its acts are far more under the influence of the spinal cord than of the brain. In this respect a crowd is closely akin to quite primitive beings. The acts performed may be perfect so far as their execution is concerned, but as they are not directed by the brain, the individual conducts himself according as the exciting causes to which he is submitted may happen to decide. A crowd is at the mercy of all external exciting causes, and reflects their incessant variations. It is the slave of the impulses which it receives. The isolated individual may be submitted to the same exciting causes as the man in a crowd, but as his brain shows him the inadvisability of yielding to them, he refrains from yielding. This truth may be physiologically expressed by saying that the isolated individual possesses the capacity of dominating his reflex actions, while a crowd is devoid of this capacity.

The varying impulses to which crowds obey may be, according to their exciting causes, generous or cruel, heroic or cowardly, but they will always be so imperious that the interest of the individual, even the interest of self-preservation, will not dominate them. The exciting causes that may act on crowds being so varied, and crowds always obeying them, crowds are in consequence extremely mobile. This explains how it is that we see them pass in a moment from the most bloodthirsty ferocity to the most extreme generosity and heroism. A

crowd may easily enact the part of an executioner, but not less easily that of a martyr. It is crowds that have furnished the torrents of blood requisite for the triumph of every belief. It is not necessary to go back to the heroic ages to see what crowds are capable of in this latter direction. They are never sparing of their life in an insurrection, and not long since a general, becoming suddenly popular, might easily have found a hundred thousand men ready to sacrifice their lives for his cause had he demanded it.

Any display of premeditation by crowds is in consequence out of the question. They may be animated in succession by the most contrary sentiments, but they will always be under the influence of the exciting causes of the moment. They are like the leaves which a tempest whirls up and scatters in every direction and then allows to fall. When studying later on certain revolutionary crowds we shall give some examples of the variability of their sentiments.

This mobility of crowds renders them very difficult to govern, especially when a measure of public authority has fallen into their hands. Did not the necessities of everyday life constitute a sort of invisible regulator of existence, it would scarcely be possible for democracies to last. Still, though the wishes of crowds are frenzied they are not durable. Crowds are as incapable of willing as of thinking for any length of time.

A crowd is not merely impulsive and mobile. Like a savage, it is not prepared to admit that anything can come between its desire and the realisation of its desire. It is the less capable of understanding such an intervention, in consequence of the feeling of irresistible power given it by its numerical strength. The notion of impossibility disappears for the individual in a crowd. An isolated individual knows well enough that alone he cannot set fire to a palace or loot a shop, and should he be tempted to do so, he will easily resist the temptation. Making part of a crowd, he is conscious of the power given him by number, and it is sufficient to suggest to him ideas of murder or pillage for him to yield immediately to temptation. An unexpected obstacle will be destroyed with frenzied rage. Did the human organism allow of the perpetuity of furious passion, it might be said that the normal condition of a crowd balked in its wishes is just such a state of furious passion.

The fundamental characteristics of the race, which constitute the unvarying source from which all our sentiments spring, always exert an influence on the irritability of crowds, their impulsiveness and their mobility, as on all the popular sentiments we shall have to study. All crowds are doubtless always irritable and impulsive, but with great variations of degree. For instance, the difference between a Latin and an Anglo-Saxon crowd is striking. The most

recent facts in French history throw a vivid light on this point. The mere publication, twenty-five years ago, of a telegram, relating an insult supposed to have been offered an ambassador, was sufficient to determine an explosion of fury, whence followed immediately a terrible war. Some years later the telegraphic announcement of an insignificant reverse at Langson provoked a fresh explosion which brought about the instantaneous overthrow of the government. At the same moment a much more serious reverse undergone by the English expedition to Khartoum produced only a slight emotion in England, and no ministry was overturned. Crowds are everywhere distinguished by feminine characteristics, but Latin crowds are the most feminine of all. Whoever trusts in them may rapidly attain a lofty destiny, but to do so is to be perpetually skirting the brink of a Tarpeian rock, with the certainty of one day being precipitated from it.

2. The Suggestibility and Credulity of Crowds

When defining crowds, we said that one of their general characteristics was an excessive suggestibility, and we have shown to what an extent suggestions are contagious in every human agglomeration; a fact which explains the rapid turning of the sentiments of a crowd in a definite direction. However indifferent it may be supposed, a crowd, as a rule, is in a state of expectant attention, which renders suggestion easy. The first suggestion

formulated which arises implants itself immediately by a process of contagion in the brains of all assembled, and the identical bent of the sentiments of the crowd is immediately an accomplished fact.

As is the case with all persons under the influence of suggestion, the idea which has entered the brain tends to transform itself into an act. Whether the act is that of setting fire to a palace, or involves self-sacrifice, a crowd lends itself to it with equal facility. All will depend on the nature of the exciting cause, and no longer, as in the case of the isolated individual, on the relations existing between the act suggested and the sum total of the reasons which may be urged against its realisation.

In consequence, a crowd perpetually hovering on the borderland of unconsciousness, readily yielding to all suggestions, having all the violence of feeling peculiar to beings who cannot appeal to the influence of reason, deprived of all critical faculty, cannot be otherwise than excessively credulous. The improbable does not exist for a crowd, and it is necessary to bear this circumstance well in mind to understand the facility with which are created and propagated the most improbable legends and stories.

The creation of the legends which so easily obtain circulation in crowds is not solely the consequence of their extreme credulity. It is also the result of the prodigious perversions that events

undergo in the imagination of a throng. The simplest event that comes under the observation of a crowd is soon totally transformed. A crowd thinks in images, and the image itself immediately calls up a series of other images, having no logical connection with the first. We can easily conceive this state by thinking of the fantastic succession of ideas to which we are sometimes led by calling up in our minds any fact. Our reason shows us the incoherence there is in these images, but a crowd is almost blind to this truth, and confuses with the real event what the deforming action of its imagination has superimposed thereon. A crowd scarcely distinguishes between the subjective and the objective. It accepts as real the images evoked in its mind, though they most often have only a very distant relation with the observed fact.

The ways in which a crowd perverts any event of which it is a witness ought, it would seem, to be innumerable and unlike each other, since the individuals composing the gathering are of very different temperaments. But this is not the case. As the result of contagion the perversions are of the same kind, and take the same shape in the case of all the assembled individuals.

The first perversion of the truth effected by one of the individuals of the gathering is the starting point of the contagious suggestion. Before St. George appeared on the walls of Jerusalem to all the Crusaders he was certainly perceived in the first instance

by one of those present. By dint of suggestion and contagion the miracle signalled by a single person was immediately accepted by all.

Such is always the mechanism of the collective hallucinations so frequent in history — hallucinations which seem to have all the recognised characteristics of authenticity, since they are phenomena observed by thousands of persons.

To combat what precedes, the mental quality of the individuals composing a crowd must not be brought into consideration. This quality is without importance. From the moment that they form part of a crowd the learned man and the ignoramus are equally incapable of observation.

This thesis may seem paradoxical. To demonstrate it beyond doubt it would be necessary to investigate a great number of historical facts, and several volumes would be insufficient for the purpose.

Still, as I do not wish to leave the reader under the impression of unproved assertions, I shall give him some examples taken at hazard from the immense number of those that might be quoted.

The following fact is one of the most typical, because chosen from among collective hallucinations of which a crowd is the victim, in which are to be found individuals of every kind, from the most

ignorant to the most highly educated. It is related incidentally by Julian Felix, a naval lieutenant, in his book on "Sea Currents," and has been previously cited by the Revue Scientifique.

The frigate, the Belle Poule, was cruising in the open sea for the purpose of finding the cruiser Le Berceau, from which she had been separated by a violent storm. It was broad daylight and in full sunshine. Suddenly the watch signalled a disabled vessel; the crew looked in the direction signalled, and every one, officers and sailors, clearly perceived a raft covered with men towed by boats which were displaying signals of distress. Yet this was nothing more than a collective hallucination. Admiral Desfosses lowered a boat to go to the rescue of the wrecked sailors. On nearing the object sighted, the sailors and officers on board the boat saw "masses of men in motion, stretching out their hands, and heard the dull and confused noise of a great number of voices." When the object was reached those in the boat found themselves simply and solely in the presence of a few branches of trees covered with leaves that had been swept out from the neighbouring coast. Before evidence so palpable the hallucination vanished.

The mechanism of a collective hallucination of the kind we have explained is clearly seen at work in this example. On the one hand we have a crowd in a state of expectant attention, on the other a suggestion made by the watch signalling a disabled vessel at sea, a

suggestion which, by a process of contagion, was accepted by all those present, both officers and sailors.

It is not necessary that a crowd should be numerous for the faculty of seeing what is taking place before its eyes to be destroyed and for the real facts to be replaced by hallucinations unrelated to them. As soon as a few individuals are gathered together they constitute a crowd, and, though they should be distinguished men of learning, they assume all the characteristics of crowds with regard to matters outside their speciality. The faculty of observation and the critical spirit possessed by each of them individually at once disappears. An ingenious psychologist, Mr. Davey, supplies us with a very curious example in point, recently cited in the *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, and deserving of relation here. Mr. Davey, having convoked a gathering of distinguished observers, among them one of the most prominent of English scientific men, Mr. Wallace, executed in their presence, and after having allowed them to examine the objects and to place seals where they wished, all the regulation spiritualistic phenomena, the materialisation of spirits, writing on slates, & c. Having subsequently obtained from these distinguished observers written reports admitting that the phenomena observed could only have been obtained by supernatural means, he revealed to them that they were the result of very simple tricks. "The most astonishing feature of Monsieur Davey's

investigation," writes the author of this account, "is not the marvelousness of the tricks themselves, but the extreme weakness of the reports made with respect to them by the non-initiated witnesses. It is clear, then," he says, "that witnesses even in number may give circumstantial relations which are completely erroneous, but whose result is that, if their descriptions are accepted as exact, the phenomena they describe are inexplicable by trickery. The methods invented by Mr. Davey were so simple that one is astonished that he should have had the boldness to employ them; but he had such a power over the mind of the crowd that he could persuade it that it saw what it did not see." Here, as always, we have the power of the hypnotiser over the hypnotised. Moreover, when this power is seen in action on minds of a superior order and previously invited to be suspicious, it is understandable how easy it is to deceive ordinary crowds.

Analogous examples are innumerable. As I write these lines the papers are full of the story of two little girls found drowned in the Seine. These children, to begin with, were recognised in the most unmistakable manner by half a dozen witnesses. All the affirmations were in such entire concordance that no doubt remained in the mind of the juge d'instruction. He had the certificate of death drawn up, but just as the burial of the children was to have been proceeded with, a mere chance brought about the discovery that the

supposed victims were alive, and had, moreover, but a remote resemblance to the drowned girls. As in several of the examples previously cited, the affirmation of the first witness, himself a victim of illusion, had sufficed to influence the other witnesses.

In parallel cases the starting point of the suggestion is always the illusion produced in an individual by more or less vague reminiscences, contagion following as the result of the affirmation of this initial illusion. If the first observer be very impressionable, it will often be sufficient that the corpse he believes he recognises should present — apart from all real resemblance — some peculiarity, a scar, or some detail of toilet which may evoke the idea of another person. The idea evoked may then become the nucleus of a sort of crystallisation which invades the understanding and paralyses all critical faculty. What the observer then sees is no longer the object itself, but the image evoked in his mind. In this way are to be explained erroneous recognitions of the dead bodies of children by their own mother, as occurred in the following case, already old, but which has been recently recalled by the newspapers. In it are to be traced precisely the two kinds of suggestion of which I have just pointed out the mechanism.

“The child was recognised by another child, who was mistaken. The series of unwarranted recognitions then began.

"An extraordinary thing occurred. The day after a schoolboy had recognised the corpse a woman exclaimed, 'Good Heavens, it is my child!'

"She was taken up to the corpse; she examined the clothing, and noted a scar on the forehead. 'It is certainly,' she said, 'my son who disappeared last July. He has been stolen from me and murdered.'

"The woman was concierge in the Rue du Four; her name was Chavandret. Her brother-in-law was summoned, and when questioned he said, 'That is the little Filibert.' Several persons living in the street recognised the child found at La Villette as Filibert Chavandret, among them being the boy's schoolmaster, who based his opinion on a medal worn by the lad.

"Nevertheless, the neighbours, the brother-in-law, the schoolmaster, and the mother were mistaken. Six weeks later the identity of the child was established. The boy, belonging to Bordeaux, had been murdered there and brought by a carrying company to Paris."

It will be remarked that these recognitions are most often made by women and children — that is to say, by precisely the most impressionable persons. They show us at the same time what is the worth in law courts of such witnesses. As far as children, more

especially,are concerned,their statements ought never to be invoked. Magistrates are in the habit of repeating that children do not lie. Did they possess a psychological culture a little less rudimentary than is the case they would know that,on the contrary,children invariably lie; the lie is doubtless innocent,but it is none the less a lie. It would be better to decide the fate of an accused person by the toss of a coin than,as has been so often done,by the evidence of a child.

To return to the faculty of observation possessed by crowds,our conclusion is that their collective observations are as erroneous as possible,and that most often they merely represent the illusion of an individual who,by a process of contagion,has suggestioned his fellows. Facts proving that the most utter mistrust of the evidence of crowds is advisable might be multiplied to any extent. Thousands of men were present twenty-five years ago at the celebrated cavalry charge during the battle of Sedan,and yet it is impossible,in the face of the most contradictory ocular testimony,to decide by whom it was commanded. The English general, Lord Wolseley,has proved in a recent book that up to now the gravest errors of fact have been committed with regard to the most important incidents of the battle of Waterloo — facts that hundreds of witnesses had nevertheless attested.

Such facts show us what is the value of the testimony of crowds.

Treatises on logic include the unanimity of numerous witnesses in the category of the strongest proofs that can be invoked in support of the exactness of a fact. Yet what we know of the psychology of crowds shows that treatises on logic need on this point to be rewritten. The events with regard to which there exists the most doubt are certainly those which have been observed by the greatest number of persons. To say that a fact has been simultaneously verified by thousands of witnesses is to say, as a rule, that the real fact is very different from the accepted account of it.

It clearly results from what precedes that works of history must be considered as works of pure imagination. They are fanciful accounts of ill-observed facts, accompanied by explanations the result of reflection. To write such books is the most absolute waste of time. Had not the past left us its literary, artistic, and monumental works, we should know absolutely nothing in reality with regard to bygone times. Are we in possession of a single word of truth concerning the lives of the great men who have played preponderating parts in the history of humanity — men such as Hercules, Buddha, or Mahomet? In all probability we are not. In point of fact, moreover, their real lives are of slight importance to us. Our interest is to know what our great men were as they are presented by popular legend. It is legendary heroes, and not for a moment real heroes, who have impressed the minds of crowds.

Unfortunately, legends — even although they have been definitely put on record by books — have in themselves no stability. The imagination of the crowd continually transforms them as the result of the lapse of time and especially in consequence of racial causes. There is a great gulf fixed between the sanguinary Jehovah of the Old Testament and the God of Love of Sainte Thérèse, and the Buddha worshipped in China has no traits in common with that venerated in India.

It is not even necessary that heroes should be separated from us by centuries for their legend to be transformed by the imagination of the crowd. The transformation occasionally takes place within a few years. In our own day we have seen the legend of one of the greatest heroes of history modified several times in less than fifty years. Under the Bourbons Napoleon became a sort of idyllic and liberal philanthropist, a friend of the humble who, according to the poets, was destined to be long remembered in the cottage. Thirty years afterwards this easy-going hero had become a sanguinary despot, who, after having usurped power and destroyed liberty, caused the slaughter of three million men solely to satisfy his ambition. At present we are witnessing a fresh transformation of the legend. When it has undergone the influence of some dozens of centuries the learned men of the future, face to face with these contradictory accounts, will perhaps doubt the very existence of the hero, as some

of them now doubt that of Buddha, and will see in him nothing more than a solar myth or a development of the legend of Hercules. They will doubtless console themselves easily for this uncertainty, for, better initiated than we are to-day in the characteristics and psychology of crowds, they will know that history is scarcely capable of preserving the memory of anything except myths.

3. The Exaggeration and Ingenuousness of the Sentiments of Crowds

Whether the feelings exhibited by a crowd be good or bad, they present the double character of being very simple and very exaggerated. On this point, as on so many others, an individual in a crowd resembles primitive beings. Inaccessible to fine distinctions, he sees things as a whole, and is blind to their intermediate phases. The exaggeration of the sentiments of a crowd is heightened by the fact that any feeling when once it is exhibited communicating itself very quickly by a process of suggestion and contagion, the evident approbation of which it is the object considerably increases its force.

The simplicity and exaggeration of the sentiments of crowds have for result that a throng knows neither doubt nor uncertainty. Like women, it goes at once to extremes. A suspicion transforms itself as soon as announced into incontrovertible evidence. A commencement of

antipathy or disapprobation, which in the case of an isolated individual would not gain strength, becomes at once furious hatred in the case of an individual in a crowd.

The violence of the feelings of crowds is also increased, especially in heterogeneous crowds, by the absence of all sense of responsibility. The certainty of impunity, a certainty the stronger as the crowd is more numerous, and the notion of a considerable momentary force due to number, make possible in the case of crowds sentiments and acts impossible for the isolated individual. In crowds the foolish, ignorant, and envious persons are freed from the sense of their insignificance and powerlessness, and are possessed instead by the notion of brutal and temporary but immense strength.

Unfortunately, this tendency of crowds towards exaggeration is often brought to bear upon bad sentiments. These sentiments are atavistic residuum of the instincts of the primitive man, which the fear of punishment obliges the isolated and responsible individual to curb. Thus it is that crowds are so easily led into the worst excesses.

Still this does not mean that crowds, skilfully influenced, are not capable of heroism and devotion and of evincing the loftiest virtues; they are even more capable of showing these qualities than the isolated individual. We shall soon have occasion to revert to this point when we come to study the morality of crowds.

Given to exaggeration in its feelings, a crowd is only impressed by excessive sentiments. An orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use of violent affirmations. To exaggerate, to affirm, to resort to repetitions, and never to attempt to prove anything by reasoning are methods of argument well known to speakers at public meetings.

Moreover, a crowd exacts a like exaggeration in the sentiments of its heroes. Their apparent qualities and virtues must always be amplified. It has been justly remarked that on the stage a crowd demands from the hero of the piece a degree of courage, morality, and virtue that is never to be found in real life.

Quite rightly importance has been laid on the special standpoint from which matters are viewed in the theatre. Such a standpoint exists no doubt, but its rules for the most part have nothing to do with common sense and logic. The art of appealing to crowds is no doubt of an inferior order, but it demands quite special aptitudes. It is often impossible on reading plays to explain their success. Managers of theatres when accepting pieces are themselves, as a rule, very uncertain of their success, because to judge the matter it would be necessary that they should be able to transform themselves into a crowd.

Here, once more, were we able to embark on more extensive

explanations, we should show the preponderating influence of racial considerations. A play which provokes the enthusiasm of the crowd in one country has sometimes no success in another, or has only a partial and conventional success, because it does not put in operation influences capable of working on an altered public.

I need not add that the tendency to exaggeration in crowds is only present in the case of sentiments and not at all in the matter of intelligence. I have already shown that, by the mere fact that an individual forms part of a crowd, his intellectual standard is immediately and considerably lowered. A learned magistrate, M. Tarde, has also verified this fact in his researches on the crimes of crowds. It is only, then, with respect to sentiment that crowds can rise to a very high or, on the contrary, descend to a very low level.

4. The Intolerance, Dictatorialness and Conservatism of Crowds

Crowds are only cognizant of simple and extreme sentiments; the opinions, ideas, and beliefs suggested to them are accepted or rejected as a whole, and considered as absolute truths or as not less absolute errors. This is always the case with beliefs induced by a process of suggestion instead of engendered by reasoning. Every one is aware of the intolerance that accompanies religious beliefs, and of the despotic empire they exercise on men's minds.

Being in doubt as to what constitutes truth or error, and having, on the other hand, a clear notion of its strength, a crowd is as disposed to give authoritative effect to its inspirations as it is intolerant. An individual may accept contradiction and discussion; a crowd will never do so. At public meetings the slightest contradiction on the part of an orator is immediately received with howls of fury and violent invective, soon followed by blows, and expulsion should the orator stick to his point. Without the restraining presence of the representatives of authority the contradictor, indeed, would often be done to death.

Dictatorialness and intolerance are common to all categories of crowds, but they are met with in a varying degree of intensity. Here, once more, reappears that fundamental notion of race which dominates all the feelings and all the thoughts of men. It is more especially in Latin crowds that authoritativeness and intolerance are found developed in the highest measure. In fact, their development is such in crowds of Latin origin that they have entirely destroyed that sentiment of the independence of the individual so powerful in the Anglo-Saxon. Latin crowds are only concerned with the collective independence of the sect to which they belong, and the characteristic feature of their conception of independence is the need they experience of bringing those who are in disagreement with themselves into immediate and violent

subjection to their beliefs. Among the Latin races the Jacobins of every epoch, from those of the Inquisition downwards, have never been able to attain to a different conception of liberty.

Authoritativeness and intolerance are sentiments of which crowds have a very clear notion, which they easily conceive and which they entertain as readily as they put them in practice when once they are imposed upon them. Crowds exhibit a docile respect for force, and are but slightly impressed by kindness, which for them is scarcely other than a form of weakness. Their sympathies have never been bestowed on easy-going masters, but on tyrants who vigorously oppressed them. It is to these latter that they always erect the loftiest statues. It is true that they willingly trample on the despot whom they have stripped of his power, but it is because, having lost his strength, he has resumed his place among the feeble, who are to be despised because they are not to be feared. The type of hero dear to crowds will always have the semblance of a Caesar. His insignia attracts them, his authority overawes them, and his sword instils them with fear.

A crowd is always ready to revolt against a feeble, and to bow down servilely before a strong authority. Should the strength of an authority be intermittent, the crowd, always obedient to its extreme sentiments, passes alternately from anarchy to servitude, and from servitude to anarchy.

However, to believe in the predominance among crowds of revolutionary instincts would be to entirely misconstrue their psychology. It is merely their tendency to violence that deceives us on this point. Their rebellious and destructive outbursts are always very transitory. Crowds are too much governed by unconscious considerations, and too much subject in consequence to secular hereditary influences not to be extremely conservative. Abandoned to themselves, they soon weary of disorder, and instinctively turn to servitude. It was the proudest and most untractable of the Jacobins who acclaimed Bonaparte with greatest energy when he suppressed all liberty and made his hand of iron severely felt.

It is difficult to understand history, and popular revolutions in particular, if one does not take sufficiently into account the profoundly conservative instincts of crowds. They may be desirous, it is true, of changing the names of their institutions, and to obtain these changes they accomplish at times even violent revolutions, but the essence of these institutions is too much the expression of the hereditary needs of the race for them not invariably to abide by it. Their incessant mobility only exerts its influence on quite superficial matters. In fact they possess conservative instincts as indestructible as those of all primitive beings. Their fetish like respect for all traditions is absolute; their unconscious horror of all novelty capable of changing the

essential conditions of their existence is very deeply rooted. Had democracies possessed the power they wield to-day at the time of the invention of mechanical looms or of the introduction of steam-power and of railways, the realisation of these inventions would have been impossible, or would have been achieved at the cost of revolutions and repeated massacres. It is fortunate for the progress of civilisation that the power of crowds only began to exist when the great discoveries of science and industry had already been effected.

5. The Morality of Crowds

Taking the word "morality" to mean constant respect for certain social conventions, and the permanent repression of selfish impulses, it is quite evident that crowds are too impulsive and too mobile to be moral. If, however, we include in the term morality the transitory display of certain qualities such as abnegation, self-sacrifice, disinterestedness, devotion, and the need of equity, we may say, on the contrary, that crowds may exhibit at times a very lofty morality.

The few psychologists who have studied crowds have only considered them from the point of view of their criminal acts, and noticing how frequent these acts are, they have come to the conclusion that the moral standard of crowds is very low.

Doubtless this is often the case; but why? Simply because our savage,destructive instincts are the inheritance left dormant in all of us from the primitive ages. In the life of the isolated inpidual it would be dangerous for him to gratify these instincts,while his absorption in an irresponsible crowd,in which in consequence he is assured of impunity,gives him entire liberty to follow them. Being unable,in the ordinary course of events,to exercise these destructive instincts on our fellow✓men,we confine ourselves to exercising them on animals. The passion,so widespread,for the chase and the acts of ferocity of crowds proceed from one and the same source. A crowd which slowly slaughters a defenceless victim displays a very cowardly ferocity; but for the philosopher this ferocity is very closely related to that of the huntsmen who gather in dozens for the pleasure of taking part in the pursuit and killing of a luckless stag by their hounds.

A crowd may be guilty of murder,incendiarism,and every kind of crime,but it is also capable of very lofty acts of devotion,sacrifice,and disinterestedness,of acts much loftier indeed than those of which the isolated inpidual is capable. Appeals to sentiments of glory,honour,and patriotism are particularly likely to influence the inpidual forming part of a crowd,and often to the extent of obtaining from him the sacrifice of his life. History is rich in examples analogous to those

furnished by the Crusaders and the volunteers of 1793.

Collectivities alone are capable of great disinterestedness and great devotion. How numerous are the crowds that have heroically faced death for beliefs, ideas, and phrases that they scarcely understood! The crowds that go on strike do so far more in obedience to an order than to obtain an increase of the slender salary with which they make shift. Personal interest is very rarely a powerful motive force with crowds, while it is almost the exclusive motive of the conduct of the isolated individual. It is assuredly not self-interest that has guided crowds in so many wars, incomprehensible as a rule to their intelligence — wars in which they have allowed themselves to be massacred as easily as the larks hypnotised by the mirror of the hunter.

Even in the case of absolute scoundrels it often happens that the mere fact of their being in a crowd endows them for the moment with very strict principles of morality. Taine calls attention to the fact that the perpetrators of the September massacres deposited on the table of the committees the pocket-books and jewels they had found on their victims, and with which they could easily have been able to make away. The howling, swarming, ragged crowd which invaded the Tuileries during the revolution of 1848 did not lay hands on any of the objects that excited its astonishment, and one of which would have meant bread for many days.

This moralisation of the individual by the crowd is not certainly a constant rule, but it is a rule frequently observed. It is even observed in circumstances much less grave than those I have just cited. I have remarked that in the theatre a crowd exacts from the hero of the piece exaggerated virtues, and it is a commonplace observation that an assembly, even though composed of inferior elements, shows itself as a rule very prudish. The debauchee, the souteneur, the rough often break out into murmurs at a slightly risky scene or expression, though they be very harmless in comparison with their customary conversation.

If, then, crowds often abandon themselves to low instincts, they also set the example at times of acts of lofty morality. If disinterestedness, resignation, and absolute devotion to a real or chimerical ideal are moral virtues, it may be said that crowds often possess these virtues to a degree rarely attained by the wisest philosophers. Doubtless they practice them unconsciously, but that is of small import. We should not complain too much that crowds are more especially guided by unconscious considerations and are not given to reasoning. Had they, in certain cases, reasoned and consulted their immediate interests, it is possible that no civilisation would have grown up on our planet and humanity would have had no history.

Chapter III. The Ideas, Reasoning Power, and Imagination of Crowds



It is not, then, the facts in themselves that strike the popular imagination, but the way in which they take place and are brought

under notice.

Abstract:1. The ideas of crowds. Fundamental and accessory ideas — How contradictory ideas may exist simultaneously — The transformation that must be undergone by lofty ideas before they are accessible to crowds — The social influence of ideas is independent of the degree of truth they may contain. 2. The reasoning power of crowds. Crowds are not to be influenced by reasoning — The reasoning of crowds is always of a very inferior order — There is only the appearance of analogy or succession in the ideas they associate. 3. The imagination of crowds. Strength of the imagination of crowds — Crowds think in images, and these images succeed each other without any connecting link — Crowds are especially impressed by the marvellous — Legends and the marvellous are the real pillars of civilisation — The popular imagination has always been the basis of the power of statesmen — The manner in which facts capable of striking the imagination of crowds present themselves for observation.

1. The Ideas of Crowds

When studying in a preceding work the part played by ideas in the evolution of nations, we showed that every civilisation is the outcome of a small number of fundamental ideas that are very rarely renewed. We showed how these ideas are implanted in the minds of

crowds,with what difficulty the process is effected,and the power possessed by the ideas in question when once it has been accomplished. Finally we saw that great historical perturbations are the result,as a rule,of changes in these fundamental ideas.

Having treated this subject at sufficient length,I shall not return to it now,but shall confine myself to saying a few words on the subject of such ideas as are accessible to crowds,and of the forms under which they conceive them.

They may be pided into two classes. In one we shall place accidental and passing ideas created by the influences of the moment: infatuation for an inpidual or a doctrine,for instance. In the other will be classed the fundamental ideas,to which the environment,the laws of heredity and public opinion give a very great stability; such ideas are the religious beliefs of the past and the social and democratic ideas of to▼day.

These fundamental ideas resemble the volume of the water of a stream slowly pursuing its course; the transitory ideas are like the small waves,for ever changing,which agitate its surface,and are more visible than the progress of the stream itself although without real importance.

At the present day the great fundamental ideas which were the mainstay of our fathers are tottering more and more. They have lost

all solidity, and at the same time the institutions resting upon them are severely shaken. Every day there are formed a great many of those transitory minor ideas of which I have just been speaking; but very few of them to all appearance seem endowed with vitality and destined to acquire a preponderating influence.

Whatever be the ideas suggested to crowds they can only exercise effective influence on condition that they assume a very absolute, uncompromising, and simple shape. They present themselves then in the guise of images, and are only accessible to the masses under this form. These imagelike ideas are not connected by any logical bond of analogy or succession, and may take each other's place like the slides of a magic lantern which the operator withdraws from the groove in which they were placed one above the other. This explains how it is that the most contradictory ideas may be seen to be simultaneously current in crowds. According to the chances of the moment, a crowd will come under the influence of one of the various ideas stored up in its understanding, and is capable, in consequence, of committing the most dissimilar acts. Its complete lack of the critical spirit does not allow of its perceiving these contradictions.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to crowds. It is to be observed in many isolated individuals, not only among primitive beings, but in the case of all those — the fervent sectaries of a religious faith, for

instance — who by one side or another of their intelligence are akin to primitive beings. I have observed its presence to a curious extent in the case of educated Hindoos brought up at our European universities and having taken their degree. A number of Western ideas had been superposed on their unchangeable and fundamental hereditary or social ideas. According to the chances of the moment, the one or the other set of ideas showed themselves each with their special accompaniment of acts or utterances, the same individual presenting in this way the most flagrant contradictions. These contradictions are more apparent than real, for it is only hereditary ideas that have sufficient influence over the isolated individual to become motives of conduct. It is only when, as the result of the intermingling of different races, a man is placed between different hereditary tendencies that his acts from one moment to another may be really entirely contradictory. It would be useless to insist here on these phenomena, although their psychological importance is capital. I am of opinion that at least ten years of travel and observation would be necessary to arrive at a comprehension of them.

Ideas being only accessible to crowds after having assumed a very simple shape must often undergo the most thoroughgoing transformations to become popular. It is especially when we are dealing with somewhat lofty philosophic or scientific ideas that we

see how far-reaching are the modifications they require in order to lower them to the level of the intelligence of crowds. These modifications are dependent on the nature of the crowds, or of the race to which the crowds belong, but their tendency is always belittling and in the direction of simplification. This explains the fact that, from the social point of view, there is in reality scarcely any such thing as a hierarchy of ideas — that is to say, as ideas of greater or less elevation. However great or true an idea may have been to begin with, it is deprived of almost all that which constituted its elevation and its greatness by the mere fact that it has come within the intellectual range of crowds and exerts an influence upon them.

Moreover, from the social point of view the hierarchical value of an idea, its intrinsic worth, is without importance. The necessary point to consider is the effects it produces. The Christian ideas of the Middle Ages, the democratic ideas of the last century, or the social ideas of to-day are assuredly not very elevated. Philosophically considered, they can only be regarded as somewhat sorry errors, and yet their power has been and will be immense, and they will count for a long time to come among the most essential factors that determine the conduct of States.

Even when an idea has undergone the transformations which render it accessible to crowds, it only exerts influence when, by various

processes which we shall examine elsewhere, it has entered the domain of the unconscious, when indeed it has become a sentiment, for which much time is required.

For it must not be supposed that merely because the justness of an idea has been proved it can be productive of effective action even on cultivated minds. This fact may be quickly appreciated by noting how slight is the influence of the clearest demonstration on the majority of men. Evidence, if it be very plain, may be accepted by an educated person, but the convert will be quickly brought back by his unconscious self to his original conceptions. See him again after the lapse of a few days and he will put forward afresh his old arguments in exactly the same terms. He is in reality under the influence of anterior ideas, that have become sentiments, and it is such ideas alone that influence the more recondite motives of our acts and utterances. It cannot be otherwise in the case of crowds.

When by various processes an idea has ended by penetrating into the minds of crowds, it possesses an irresistible power, and brings about a series of effects, opposition to which is bootless. The philosophical ideas which resulted in the French Revolution took nearly a century to implant themselves in the mind of the crowd. Their irresistible force, when once they had taken root, is known. The striving of an entire nation towards the conquest of social equality, and the realisation of abstract rights and ideal

liberties, caused the tottering of all thrones and profoundly disturbed the Western world. During twenty years the nations were engaged in internecine conflict, and Europe witnessed hecatombs that would have terrified Ghengis Khan and Tamerlane. The world had never seen on such a scale what may result from the promulgation of an idea.

A long time is necessary for ideas to establish themselves in the minds of crowds, but just as long a time is needed for them to be eradicated. For this reason crowds, as far as ideas are concerned, are always several generations behind learned men and philosophers. All statesmen are well aware to-day of the admixture of error contained in the fundamental ideas I referred to a short while back, but as the influence of these ideas is still very powerful they are obliged to govern in accordance with principles in the truth of which they have ceased to believe.

2. The Reasoning Power of Crowds

It cannot absolutely be said that crowds do not reason and are not to be influenced by reasoning.

However, the arguments they employ and those which are capable of influencing them are, from a logical point of view, of such an inferior kind that it is only by way of analogy that they can be described as reasoning.

The inferior reasoning of crowds is based, just as is reasoning of a high order, on the association of ideas, but between the ideas associated by crowds there are only apparent bonds of analogy or succession. The mode of reasoning of crowds resembles that of the Esquimaux who, knowing from experience that ice, a transparent body, melts in the mouth, concludes that glass, also a transparent body, should also melt in the mouth; or that of the savage who imagines that by eating the heart of a courageous foe he acquires his bravery; or of the workman who, having been exploited by one employer of labour, immediately concludes that all employers exploit their men.

The characteristics of the reasoning of crowds are the association of dissimilar things possessing a merely apparent connection between each other, and the immediate generalisation of particular cases. It is arguments of this kind that are always presented to crowds by those who know how to manage them. They are the only arguments by which crowds are to be influenced. A chain of logical argumentation is totally incomprehensible to crowds, and for this reason it is permissible to say that they do not reason or that they reason falsely and are not to be influenced by reasoning. Astonishment is felt at times on reading certain speeches at their weakness, and yet they had an enormous influence on the crowds which listened to them, but it is forgotten that they were intended to

persuade collectivities and not to be read by philosophers. An orator in intimate communication with a crowd can evoke images by which it will be seduced. If he is successful his object has been attained, and twenty volumes of harangues — always the outcome of reflection — are not worth the few phrases which appealed to the brains it was required to convince.

It would be superfluous to add that the powerlessness of crowds to reason aright prevents them displaying any trace of the critical spirit, prevents them, that is, from being capable of discerning truth from error, or of forming a precise judgment on any matter.

Judgments accepted by crowds are merely judgments forced upon them and never judgments adopted after discussion. In regard to this matter the individuals who do not rise above the level of a crowd are numerous. The ease with which certain opinions obtain general acceptance results more especially from the impossibility experienced by the majority of men of forming an opinion peculiar to themselves and based on reasoning of their own.

3. The Imagination of Crowds

Just as is the case with respect to persons in whom the reasoning power is absent, the figurative imagination of crowds is very powerful, very active and very susceptible of being keenly impressed. The images evoked in their mind by a personage, an

event,an accident,are almost as lifelike as the reality. Crowds are to some extent in the position of the sleeper whose reason,suspended for the time being,allows the arousing in his mind of images of extreme intensity which would quickly be dissipated could they be submitted to the action of reflection. Crowds,being incapable both of reflection and of reasoning,are devoid of the notion of improbability; and it is to be noted that in a general way it is the most improbable things that are the most striking.

This is why it happens that it is always the marvellous and legendary side of events that more specially strike crowds. When a civilisation is analysed it is seen that,in reality,it is the marvellous and the legendary that are its true supports. Appearances have always played a much more important part than reality in history,where the unreal is always of greater moment than the real.

Crowds being only capable of thinking in images are only to be impressed by images. It is only images that terrify or attract them and become motives of action.

For this reason theatrical representations,in which the image is shown in its most clearly visible shape,always have an enormous influence on crowds. Bread and spectacular shows constituted for the plebeians of ancient Rome the ideal of happiness,and they asked

for nothing more. Throughout the successive ages this ideal has scarcely varied. Nothing has a greater effect on the imagination of crowds of every category than theatrical representations. The entire audience experiences at the same time the same emotions, and if these emotions are not at once transformed into acts, it is because the most unconscious spectator cannot ignore that he is the victim of illusions, and that he has laughed or wept over imaginary adventures. Sometimes, however, the sentiments suggested by the images are so strong that they tend, like habitual suggestions, to transform themselves into acts. The story has often been told of the manager of a popular theatre who, in consequence of his only playing sombre dramas, was obliged to have the actor who took the part of the traitor protected on his leaving the theatre, to defend him against the violence of the spectators, indignant at the crimes, imaginary though they were, which the traitor had committed. We have here, in my opinion, one of the most remarkable indications of the mental state of crowds, and especially of the facility with which they are suggestioned. The unreal has almost as much influence on them as the real. They have an evident tendency not to distinguish between the two.

The power of conquerors and the strength of States is based on the popular imagination. It is more particularly by working upon this imagination that crowds are led. All great historical facts, the

rise of Buddhism,of Christianity,of Islamism,the Reformation,the French Revolution,and,in our own time,the threatening invasion of Socialism are the direct or indirect consequences of strong impressions produced on the imagination of the crowd.

Moreover,all the great statesmen of every age and every country,including the most absolute despots,have regarded the popular imagination as the basis of their power,and they have never attempted to govern in opposition to it "It was by becoming a Catholic," said Napoleon to the Council of State, "that I terminated the Vendéen war. By becoming a Mussulman that I obtained a footing in Egypt. By becoming an Ultramontane that I won over the Italian priests,and had I to govern a nation of Jews I would rebuild Solomon's temple." Never perhaps since Alexander and Caesar has any great man better understood how the imagination of the crowd should be impressed. His constant preoccupation was to strike it. He bore it in mind in his victories,in his harangues,in his speeches,in all his acts. On his deathbed it was still in his thoughts.

How is the imagination of crowds to be impressed? We shall soon see. Let us confine ourselves for the moment to saying that the feat is never to be achieved by attempting to work upon the intelligence or reasoning faculty,that is to say,by way of demonstration. It was not by means of cunning rhetoric that Antony

succeeded in making the populace rise against the murderers of Cæsar; it was by reading his will to the multitude and pointing to his corpse.

Whatever strikes the imagination of crowds presents itself under the shape of a startling and very clear image, freed from all accessory explanation, or merely having as accompaniment a few marvellous or mysterious facts: examples in point are a great victory, a great miracle, a great crime, or a great hope. Things must be laid before the crowd as a whole, and their genesis must never be indicated. A hundred petty crimes or petty accidents will not strike the imagination of crowds in the least, whereas a single great crime or a single great accident will profoundly impress them, even though the results be infinitely less disastrous than those of the hundred small accidents put together. The epidemic of influenza, which caused the death but a few years ago of five thousand persons in Paris alone, made very little impression on the popular imagination. The reason was that this veritable hecatomb was not embodied in any visible image, but was only learnt from statistical information furnished weekly. An accident which should have caused the death of only five hundred instead of five thousand persons, but on the same day and in public, as the outcome of an accident appealing strongly to the eye, by the fall, for instance, of the Eiffel Tower, would have produced, on the contrary, an immense

impression on the imagination of the crowd. The probable loss of a transatlantic steamer that was supposed, in the absence of news, to have gone down in mid-ocean profoundly impressed the imagination of the crowd for a whole week. Yet official statistics show that 850 sailing vessels and 203 steamers were lost in the year 1894 alone. The crowd, however, was never for a moment concerned by these successive losses, much more important though they were as far as regards the destruction of life and property, than the loss of the Atlantic liner in question could possibly have been.

It is not, then, the facts in themselves that strike the popular imagination, but the way in which they take place and are brought under notice. It is necessary that by their condensation, if I may thus express myself, they should produce a startling image which fills and besets the mind. To know the art of impressing the imagination of crowds is to know at the same time the art of governing them.

Chapter IV. A Religious Shape Assumed by All the Convictions of Crowds



All political, pine, and social creeds only take root among them on the condition of always assuming the religious shape — a shape which obviates the danger of discussion. Were it possible to induce the masses to adopt atheism, this belief would exhibit all the intolerant ardour of a religious sentiment, and in its exterior forms would soon become a cult.

Abstract: What is meant by the religious sentiment — It is independent of the worship of a pinity — Its characteristics — The strength of convictions assuming a religious shape — Various examples — Popular gods have never disappeared — New forms under which they are revived — Religious forms of atheism — Importance

of these notions from the historical point of view — The Reformation, Saint Bartholomew, the Terror, and all analogous events are the result of the religious sentiments of crowds and not of the will of isolated individuals.

We have shown that crowds do not reason, that they accept or reject ideas as a whole, that they tolerate neither discussion nor contradiction, and that the suggestions brought to bear on them invade the entire field of their understanding and tend at once to transform themselves into acts. We have shown that crowds suitably influenced are ready to sacrifice themselves for the ideal with which they have been inspired. We have also seen that they only entertain violent and extreme sentiments, that in their case sympathy quickly becomes adoration, and antipathy almost as soon as it is aroused is transformed into hatred. These general indications furnish us already with a presentiment of the nature of the convictions of crowds.

When these convictions are closely examined, whether at epochs marked by fervent religious faith, or by great political upheavals such as those of the last century, it is apparent that they always assume a peculiar form which I cannot better define than by giving it the name of a religious sentiment.

This sentiment has very simple characteristics, such as worship of a

being supposed superior, fear of the power with which the being is credited, blind submission to its commands, inability to discuss its dogmas, the desire to spread them, and a tendency to consider as enemies all by whom they are not accepted. Whether such a sentiment apply to an invisible God, to a wooden or stone idol, to a hero or to a political conception, provided that it presents the preceding characteristics, its essence always remains religious. The supernatural and the miraculous are found to be present to the same extent. Crowds unconsciously accord a mysterious power to the political formula or the victorious leader that for the moment arouses their enthusiasm.

A person is not religious solely when he worships a pinity, but when he puts all the resources of his mind, the complete submission of his will, and the whole-souled ardour of fanaticism at the service of a cause or an individual who becomes the goal and guide of his thoughts and actions.

Intolerance and fanaticism are the necessary accompaniments of the religious sentiment. They are inevitably displayed by those who believe themselves in the possession of the secret of earthly or eternal happiness. These two characteristics are to be found in all men grouped together when they are inspired by a conviction of any kind. The Jacobins of the Reign of Terror were at bottom as religious as the Catholics of the Inquisition, and their cruel

ardour proceeded from the same source.

The convictions of crowds assume those characteristics of blind submission, fierce intolerance, and the need of violent propaganda which are inherent in the religious sentiment, and it is for this reason that it may be said that all their beliefs have a religious form. The hero acclaimed by a crowd is a veritable god for that crowd. Napoleon was such a god for fifteen years, and a pivity never had more fervent worshippers or sent men to their death with greater ease. The Christian and Pagan Gods never exercised a more absolute empire over the minds that had fallen under their sway.

All founders of religious or political creeds have established them solely because they were successful in inspiring crowds with those fanatical sentiments which have as result that men find their happiness in worship and obedience and are ready to lay down their lives for their idol. This has been the case at all epochs. Fustel de Coulanges, in his excellent work on Roman Gaul, justly remarks that the Roman Empire was in no wise maintained by force, but by the religious admiration it inspired. "It would be without a parallel in the history of the world," he observes rightly, "that a form of government held in popular detestation should have lasted for five centuries.... It would be inexplicable that the thirty legions of the Empire should have constrained a hundred million men to obedience." The reason of their obedience was that the Emperor, who

personified the greatness of Rome, was worshipped like a deity by unanimous consent. There were altars in honour of the Emperor in the smallest townships of his realm. "From one end of the Empire to the other a new religion was seen to arise in those days which had for its deities the emperors themselves. Some years before the Christian era the whole of Gaul, represented by sixty cities, built in common a temple near the town of Lyons in honour of Augustus.... Its priests, elected by the united Gallic cities, were the principal personages in their country.... It is impossible to attribute all this to fear and servility. Whole nations are not servile, and especially for three centuries. It was not the courtiers who worshipped the prince, it was Rome, and it was not Rome merely, but it was Gaul, it was Spain, it was Greece and Asia."

Today the majority of the great men who have swayed men's minds no longer have altars, but they have statues, or their portraits are in the hands of their admirers, and the cult of which they are the object is not notably different from that accorded to their predecessors. An understanding of the philosophy of history is only to be got by a thorough appreciation of this fundamental point of the psychology of crowds. The crowd demands a god before everything else.

It must not be supposed that these are the superstitions of a bygone age which reason has definitely banished. Sentiment has

never been vanquished in its eternal conflict with reason. Crowds will hear no more of the words pinity and religion, in whose name they were so long enslaved; but they have never possessed so many fetishes as in the last hundred years, and the old pinities have never had so many statues and altars raised in their honour. Those who in recent years have studied the popular movement known under the name of Boulangism have been able to see with what ease the religious instincts of crowds are ready to revive. There was not a country inn that did not possess the hero's portrait. He was credited with the power of remedying all injustices and all evils, and thousands of men would have given their lives for him. Great might have been his place in history had his character been at all on a level with his legendary reputation.

It is thus a very useless commonplace to assert that a religion is necessary for the masses, because all political, pine, and social creeds only take root among them on the condition of always assuming the religious shape — a shape which obviates the danger of discussion. Were it possible to induce the masses to adopt atheism, this belief would exhibit all the intolerant ardour of a religious sentiment, and in its exterior forms would soon become a cult. The evolution of the small Positivist sect furnishes us a curious proof in point. What happened to the Nihilist whose story is related by that profound thinker Dostoevsky has quickly

happened to the Positivists. Illumined one day by the light of reason he broke the images of pinities and saints that adorned the altar of a chapel,extinguished the candles,and,without losing a moment,replaced the destroyed objects by the works of atheistic philosophers such as Büchner and Moleschott,after which he piously relighted the candles. The object of his religious beliefs had been transformed,but can it be truthfully said that his religious sentiments had changed?

Certain historical events — and they are precisely the most important — I again repeat,are not to be understood unless one has attained to an appreciation of the religious form which the convictions of crowds always assume in the long run. There are social phenomena that need to be studied far more from the point of view of the psychologist than from that of the naturalist. The great historian Taine has only studied the Revolution as a naturalist,and on this account the real genesis of events has often escaped him. He has perfectly observed the facts,but from want of having studied the psychology of crowds he has not always been able to trace their causes. The facts having appalled him by their bloodthirsty,anarchic,and ferocious side,he has scarcely seen in the heroes of the great drama anything more than a horde of epileptic savages abandoning themselves without restraint to their instincts. The violence of the Revolution,its massacres,its need of

propaganda, its declarations of war upon all things, are only to be properly explained by reflecting that the Revolution was merely the establishment of a new religious belief in the mind of the masses. The Reformation, the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, the French religious wars, the Inquisition, the Reign of Terror are phenomena of an identical kind, brought about by crowds animated by those religious sentiments which necessarily lead those imbued with them to pitilessly extirpate by fire and sword whoever is opposed to the establishment of the new faith. The methods of the Inquisition are those of all whose convictions are genuine and sturdy. Their convictions would not deserve these epithets did they resort to other methods.

Upheavals analogous to those I have just cited are only possible when it is the soul of the masses that brings them about. The most absolute despots could not cause them. When historians tell us that the massacre of Saint Bartholomew was the work of a king, they show themselves as ignorant of the psychology of crowds as of that of sovereigns. Manifestations of this order can only proceed from the soul of crowds. The most absolute power of the most despotic monarch can scarcely do more than hasten or retard the moment of their apparition. The massacre of Saint Bartholomew or the religious wars were no more the work of kings than the Reign of Terror was the work of Robespierre, Danton, or Saint Just. At the

bottom of such events is always to be found the working of the soul of the masses, and never the power of potentates.

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Book II. The Opinions and Beliefs of Crowds

Chapter I. Remote Factors of the Opinions and Beliefs of Crowds



There have had no difficulty in showing that instruction neither renders a man more moral nor happier, that it changes neither his instincts nor his hereditary passions, and that at times — for this to happen it need only be badly directed — it is much more pernicious than useful.

Abstract: Preparatory factors of the beliefs of crowds — The origin of the beliefs of crowds is the consequence of a preliminary process of elaboration — Study of the different factors of these beliefs. 1. Race. The predominating influence it exercises — It represents the suggestions of ancestors. 2. Traditions. They are the synthesis of the soul of the race — Social importance of traditions — How, after having been necessary, they become harmful — Crowds are the most obstinate maintainers of traditional ideas.

3. Time. It prepares in succession the establishment of beliefs and then their destruction. It is by the aid of this factor that order may proceed from chaos. 4. Political and Social Institutions. Erroneous idea of their part — Their influence extremely weak — They are effects, not causes — Nations are incapable of choosing what appear to them the best institutions — Institutions are labels which shelter the most dissimilar things under the same title — How institutions may come to be created — Certain institutions theoretically bad, such as centralization obligatory for certain nations. 5. Institutions and education. Falsity of prevalent ideas as to the influence of instruction on crowds — Statistical indications — Demoralising effect of Latin system of education — Part instruction might play — Examples furnished by various peoples.

Having studied the mental constitution of crowds and become acquainted with their modes of feeling, thinking, and reasoning, we shall now proceed to examine how their opinions and beliefs arise and become established.

The factors which determine these opinions and beliefs are of two kinds: remote factors and immediate factors.

The remote factors are those which render crowds capable of adopting certain convictions and absolutely refractory to the

acceptance of others. These factors prepare the ground in which are suddenly seen to germinate certain new ideas whose force and consequences are a cause of astonishment, though they are only spontaneous in appearance. The outburst and putting in practice of certain ideas among crowds present at times a startling suddenness. This is only a superficial effect, behind which must be sought a preliminary and preparatory action of long duration.

The immediate factors are those which, coming on the top of this long, preparatory working, in whose absence they would remain without effect, serve as the source of active persuasion on crowds; that is, they are the factors which cause the idea to take shape and set it loose with all its consequences. The resolutions by which collectivities are suddenly carried away arise out of these immediate factors; it is due to them that a riot breaks out or a strike is decided upon, and to them that enormous majorities invest one man with power to overthrow a government.

The successive action of these two kinds of factors is to be traced in all great historical events. The French Revolution — to cite but one of the most striking of such events — had among its remote factors the writings of the philosophers, the exactions of the nobility, and the progress of scientific thought. The mind of the masses, thus prepared, was then easily roused by such immediate factors as the speeches of orators, and the resistance of the court

party to insignificant reforms.

Among the remote factors there are some of a general nature, which are found to underlie all the beliefs and opinions of crowds. They are race, traditions, time, institutions, and education.

We now proceed to study the influence of these different factors.

1. Race

This factor, race, must be placed in the first rank, for in itself it far surpasses in importance all the others. We have sufficiently studied it in another work; it is therefore needless to deal with it again.

We showed, in a previous volume, what an historical race is, and how, its character once formed, it possesses, as the result of the laws of heredity such power that its beliefs, institutions, and arts — in a word, all the elements of its civilisation — are merely the outward expression of its genius. We showed that the power of the race is such that no element can pass from one people to another without undergoing the most profound transformations.

Environment, circumstances, and events represent the social suggestions of the moment. They may have a considerable influence, but this influence is always momentary if it be contrary to the suggestions of the race; that is, to those which are

inherited by a nation from the entire series of its ancestors.

We shall have occasion in several of the chapters of this work to touch again upon racial influence, and to show that this influence is so great that it dominates the characteristics peculiar to the genius of crowds. It follows from this fact that the crowds of different countries offer very considerable differences of beliefs and conduct and are not to be influenced in the same manner.

2. Traditions

Traditions represent the ideas, the needs, and the sentiments of the past. They are the synthesis of the race, and weigh upon us with immense force.

The biological sciences have been transformed since embryology has shown the immense influence of the past on the evolution of living beings; and the historical sciences will not undergo a less change when this conception has become more widespread. As yet it is not sufficiently general, and many statesmen are still no further advanced than the theorists of the last century, who believed that a society could break off with its past and be entirely recast on lines suggested solely by the light of reason.

A people is an organism created by the past, and, like every other organism, it can only be modified by slow hereditary accumulations.

It is tradition that guides men, and more especially so when they are in a crowd. The changes they can effect in their traditions with any ease, merely bear, as I have often repeated, upon names and outward forms.

This circumstance is not to be regretted. Neither a national genius nor civilisation would be possible without traditions. In consequence man's two great concerns since he has existed have been to create a network of traditions which he afterwards endeavours to destroy when their beneficial effects have worn themselves out. Civilisation is impossible without traditions, and progress impossible without the destruction of those traditions. The difficulty, and it is an immense difficulty, is to find a proper equilibrium between stability and variability. Should a people allow its customs to become too firmly rooted, it can no longer change, and becomes, like China, incapable of improvement. Violent revolutions are in this case of no avail; for what happens is that either the broken fragments of the chain are pieced together again and the past resumes its empire without change, or the fragments remain apart and decadence soon succeeds anarchy.

The ideal for a people is in consequence to preserve the institutions of the past, merely changing them insensibly and little by little. This ideal is difficult to realise. The Romans in ancient and the English in modern times are almost alone in having

realised it.

It is precisely crowds that cling the most tenaciously to traditional ideas and oppose their being changed with the most obstinacy. This is notably the case with the category of crowds constituting castes. I have already insisted upon the conservative spirit of crowds, and shown that the most violent rebellions merely end in a changing of words and terms. At the end of the last century, in the presence of destroyed churches, of priests expelled the country or guillotined, it might have been thought that the old religious ideas had lost all their strength, and yet a few years had barely lapsed before the abolished system of public worship had to be re-established in deference to universal demands.

Blotted out for a moment, the old traditions had resumed their sway.

No example could better display the power of tradition on the mind of crowds. The most redoubtable idols do not dwell in temples, nor the most despotic tyrants in palaces; both the one and the other can be broken in an instant. But the invisible masters that reign in our innermost selves are safe from every effort at revolt, and only yield to the slow wearing away of centuries.

3. Time

In social as in biological problems time is one of the most

energetic factors. It is the sole real creator and the sole great destroyer. It is time that has made mountains with grains of sand and raised the obscure cell of geological eras to human dignity. The action of centuries is sufficient to transform any given phenomenon. It has been justly observed that an ant with enough time at its disposal could level Mount Blanc. A being possessed of the magical force of varying time at his will would have the power attributed by believers to God.

In this place, however, we have only to concern ourselves with the influence of time on the genesis of the opinions of crowds. Its action from this point of view is still immense. Dependent upon it are the great forces such as race, which cannot form themselves without it. It causes the birth, the growth, and the death of all beliefs. It is by the aid of time that they acquire their strength and also by its aid that they lose it.

It is time in particular that prepares the opinions and beliefs of crowds, or at least the soil on which they will germinate. This is why certain ideas are realisable at one epoch and not at another. It is time that accumulates that immense detritus of beliefs and thoughts on which the ideas of a given period spring up. They do not grow at hazard and by chance; the roots of each of them strike down into a long past. When they blossom it is time that has prepared their blooming; and to arrive at a notion of their genesis

it is always back in the past that it is necessary to search. They are the daughters of the past and the mothers of the future, but throughout the slaves of time.

Time, in consequence, is our veritable master, and it suffices to leave it free to act to see all things transformed. At the present day we are very uneasy with regard to the threatening aspirations of the masses and the destructions and upheavals foreboded thereby. Time, without other aid, will see to the restoration of equilibrium.

"No form of government," M. Lavissee very properly writes, "was founded in a day. Political and social organisations are works that demand centuries. The feudal system existed for centuries in a shapeless, chaotic state before it found its laws; absolute monarchy also existed for centuries before arriving at regular methods of government, and these periods of expectancy were extremely troubled."

4. Political and Social Institutions

The idea that institutions can remedy the defects of societies, that national progress is the consequence of the improvement of institutions and governments, and that social changes can be effected by decrees — this idea, I say, is still generally accepted. It was the starting-point of the French Revolution, and the social theories of the present day are based upon it.

The most continuous experience has been unsuccessful in shaking this grave delusion. Philosophers and historians have endeavoured in vain to prove its absurdity, but yet they have had no difficulty in demonstrating that institutions are the outcome of ideas, sentiments, and customs, and that ideas, sentiments, and customs are not to be recast by recasting legislative codes. A nation does not choose its institutions at will any more than it chooses the colour of its hair or its eyes. Institutions and governments are the product of the race. They are not the creators of an epoch, but are created by it. Peoples are not governed in accordance with their caprices of the moment, but as their character determines that they shall be governed. Centuries are required to form a political system and centuries needed to change it. Institutions have no intrinsic virtue: in themselves they are neither good nor bad. Those which are good at a given moment for a given people may be harmful in the extreme for another nation.

Moreover, it is in no way in the power of a people to really change its institutions. Undoubtedly, at the cost of violent revolutions, it can change their name, but in their essence they remain unmodified. The names are mere futile labels with which an historian who goes to the bottom of things need scarcely concern himself. It is in this way, for instance, that England, the most democratic country in the world, lives, nevertheless, under a monarchical régime, whereas

the countries in which the most oppressive despotism is rampant are the Spanish-American Republics, in spite of their republican constitutions. The destinies of peoples are determined by their character and not by their government. I have endeavoured to establish this view in my previous volume by setting forth categorical examples.

To lose time in the manufacture of cut-and-dried constitutions is, in consequence, a puerile task, the useless labour of an ignorant rhetorician. Necessity and time undertake the charge of elaborating constitutions when we are wise enough to allow these two factors to act. This is the plan the Anglo-Saxons have adopted, as their great historian, Macaulay, teaches us in a passage that the politicians of all Latin countries ought to learn by heart. After having shown all the good that can be accomplished by laws which appear from the point of view of pure reason a chaos of absurdities and contradictions, he compares the scores of constitutions that have been engulfed in the convulsions of the Latin peoples with that of England, and points out that the latter has only been very slowly changed part by part, under the influence of immediate necessities and never of speculative reasoning.

"To think nothing of symmetry and much of convenience; never to remove an anomaly merely because it is an anomaly; never to innovate except when some grievance is felt; never to innovate

except so far as to get rid of the grievance; never to lay down any proposition of wider extent than the particular case for which it is necessary to provide; these are the rules which have, from the age of John to the age of Victoria, generally guided the deliberations of our two hundred and fifty Parliaments."

It would be necessary to take one by one the laws and institutions of each people to show to what extent they are the expression of the needs of each race and are incapable, for that reason, of being violently transformed. It is possible, for instance, to indulge in philosophical dissertations on the advantages and disadvantages of centralisation; but when we see a people composed of very different races devote a thousand years of efforts to attaining to this centralisation; when we observe that a great revolution, having for object the destruction of all the institutions of the past, has been forced to respect this centralisation, and has even strengthened it; under these circumstances we should admit that it is the outcome of imperious needs, that it is a condition of the existence of the nation in question, and we should pity the poor mental range of politicians who talk of destroying it. Could they by chance succeed in this attempt, their success would at once be the signal for a frightful civil war, which, moreover, would immediately bring back a new system of centralisation much more oppressive than the old.

The conclusion to be drawn from what precedes is, that it is not in

institutions that the means is to be sought of profoundly influencing the genius of the masses. When we see certain countries, such as the United States, reach a high degree of prosperity under democratic institutions, while others, such as the Spanish-American Republics, are found existing in a pitiable state of anarchy under absolutely similar institutions, we should admit that these institutions are as foreign to the greatness of the one as to the decadence of the others. Peoples are governed by their character, and all institutions which are not intimately modelled on that character merely represent a borrowed garment, a transitory disguise. No doubt sanguinary wars and violent revolutions have been undertaken, and will continue to be undertaken, to impose institutions to which is attributed, as to the relics of saints, the supernatural power of creating welfare. It may be said, then, in one sense, that institutions react on the mind of the crowd inasmuch as they engender such upheavals. But in reality it is not the institutions that react in this manner, since we know that, whether triumphant or vanquished, they possess in themselves no virtue. It is illusions and words that have influenced the mind of the crowd, and especially words — words which are as powerful as they are chimerical, and whose astonishing sway we shall shortly demonstrate.

5. Instruction and Education

Foremost among the dominant ideas of the present epoch is to be found the notion that instruction is capable of considerably changing men, and has for its unfailing consequence to improve them and even to make them equal. By the mere fact of its being constantly repeated, this assertion has ended by becoming one of the most steadfast democratic dogmas. It would be as difficult now to attack it as it would have been formerly to have attacked the dogmas of the Church.

On this point, however, as on many others, democratic ideas are in profound disagreement with the results of psychology and experience. Many eminent philosophers, among them Herbert Spencer, have had no difficulty in showing that instruction neither renders a man more moral nor happier, that it changes neither his instincts nor his hereditary passions, and that at times — for this to happen it need only be badly directed — it is much more pernicious than useful. Statisticians have brought confirmation of these views by telling us that criminality increases with the generalisation of instruction, or at any rate of a certain kind of instruction, and that the worst enemies of society, the anarchists, are recruited among the prize-winners of schools; while in a recent work a distinguished magistrate, M. Adolphe Guillaud, made the observation that at present 3,000 educated criminals are met with for every 1,000 illiterate delinquents, and that in fifty years

the criminal percentage of the population has passed from 227 to 552 for every 100,000 inhabitants,an increase of 133 percent. He has also noted in common with his colleagues that criminality is particularly on the increase among young persons,for whom,as is known,gratuitous and obligatory schooling has — in France — replaced apprenticeship.

It is not assuredly — and nobody has ever maintained this proposition — that well-directed instruction may not give very useful practical results,if not in the sense of raising the standard of morality,at least in that of developing professional capacity. Unfortunately the Latin peoples,especially in the last twenty-five years,have based their systems of instruction on very erroneous principles,and in spite of the observations of the most eminent minds,such as Bréal,Fustel de Coulanges,Taine,and many others,they persist in their lamentable mistakes. I have myself shown,in a work published some time ago,that the French system of education transforms the majority of those who have undergone it into enemies of society,and recruits numerous disciples for the worst forms of socialism.

The primary danger of this system of education — very properly qualified as Latin — consists in the fact that it is based on the fundamental psychological error that the intelligence is developed by the learning by heart of text-books. Adopting this view,the

endeavour has been made to enforce a knowledge of as many hand-books as possible. From the primary school till he leaves the university a young man does nothing but acquire books by heart without his judgment or personal initiative being ever called into play. Education consists for him in reciting by heart and obeying.

"Learning lessons, knowing by heart a grammar or a compendium, repeating well and imitating well — that," writes a former Minister of Public Instruction, M. Jules Simon, "is a ludicrous form of education whose every effort is an act of faith tacitly admitting the infallibility of the master, and whose only results are a belittling of ourselves and a rendering of us impotent."

Were this education merely useless, one might confine one's self to expressing compassion for the unhappy children who, instead of making needful studies at the primary school, are instructed in the genealogy of the sons of Clotaire, the conflicts between Neustria and Austrasia, or zoological classifications. But the system presents a far more serious danger. It gives those who have been submitted to it a violent dislike to the state of life in which they were born, and an intense desire to escape from it. The working man no longer wishes to remain a working man, or the peasant to continue a peasant, while the most humble members of the middle classes admit of no possible career for their sons except that of

State-paid functionaries. Instead of preparing men for life French schools solely prepare them to occupy public functions, in which success can be attained without any necessity for self-direction or the exhibition of the least glimmer of personal initiative. At the bottom of the social ladder the system creates an army of proletarians discontented with their lot and always ready to revolt, while at the summit it brings into being a frivolous bourgeoisie, at once sceptical and credulous, having a superstitious confidence in the State, whom it regards as a sort of Providence, but without forgetting to display towards it a ceaseless hostility, always laying its own faults to the door of the Government, and incapable of the least enterprise without the intervention of the authorities.

The State, which manufactures by dint of textbooks all these persons possessing diplomas, can only utilise a small number of them, and is forced to leave the others without employment. It is obliged in consequence to resign itself to feeding the first mentioned and to having the others as its enemies. From the top to the bottom of the social pyramid, from the humblest clerk to the professor and the prefect, the immense mass of persons boasting diplomas besiege the professions. While a business man has the greatest difficulty in finding an agent to represent him in the colonies, thousands of candidates solicit the most modest official posts. There are 20,000

schoolmasters and mistresses without employment in the department of the Seine alone, all of them persons who, disdaining the fields or the workshops, look to the State for their livelihood. The number of the chosen being restricted, that of the discontented is perforce immense. The latter are ready for any revolution, whoever be its chiefs and whatever the goal they aim at. The acquisition of knowledge for which no use can be found is a sure method of driving a man to revolt.

It is evidently too late to retrace our steps. Experience alone, that supreme educator of peoples, will be at pains to show us our mistake. It alone will be powerful enough to prove the necessity of replacing our odious text-books and our pitiable examinations by industrial instruction capable of inducing our young men to return to the fields, to the workshop, and to the colonial enterprise which they avoid to-day at all costs.

The professional instruction which all enlightened minds are now demanding was the instruction received in the past by our forefathers. It is still in vigour at the present day among the nations who rule the world by their force of will, their initiative, and their spirit of enterprise. In a series of remarkable pages, whose principal passages I reproduce further on, a great thinker, M. Taine, has clearly shown that our former system of education was approximately that in vogue today in England and

America, and in a remarkable parallel between the Latin and Anglo-Saxon systems he has plainly pointed out the consequences of the two methods.

One might consent, perhaps, at a pinch, to continue to accept all the disadvantages of our classical education, although it produced nothing but discontented men, and men unfitted for their station in life, did the superficial acquisition of so much knowledge, the faultless repeating by heart of so many text-books, raise the level of intelligence. But does it really raise this level? Alas, no! The conditions of success in life are the possession of judgment, experience, initiative, and character — qualities which are not bestowed by books. Books are dictionaries, which it is useful to consult, but of which it is perfectly useless to have lengthy portions in one's head.

How is it possible for professional instruction to develop the intelligence in a measure quite beyond the reach of classical instruction? This has been well shown by M. Taine.

"Ideas, he says, are only formed in their natural and normal surroundings; the promotion of the growth is effected by the innumerable impressions appealing to the senses which a young man receives daily in the workshop, the mine, the law court, the study, the builder's yard, the hospital; at the sight of tools, materials, and

operations; in the presence of customers, workers, and labour, of work well or ill done, costly or lucrative. In such a way are obtained those trifling perceptions of detail of the eyes, the ear, the hands, and even the sense of smell, which, picked up involuntarily, and silently elaborated, take shape within the learner, and suggest to him sooner or, later this or that new combination, simplification, economy, improvement, or invention. The young Frenchman is deprived, and precisely at the age when they are most fruitful, of all these precious contacts, of all these indispensable elements of assimilation. For seven or eight years on end he is shut up in a school, and is cut off from that direct personal experience which would give him a keen and exact notion of men and things and of the various ways of handling them."

"... At least nine out of ten have wasted their time and pains during several years of their life — telling, important, even decisive years. Among such are to be counted, first of all, the half or two-thirds of those who present themselves for examination — I refer to those who are rejected; and then among those who are successful, who obtain a degree, a certificate, a diploma, there is still a half or two-thirds — I refer to the overworked. Too much has been demanded of them by exacting that on a given day, on a chair or before a board, they should, for two hours in succession, and with respect to a group of sciences, be living repertories of all

human knowledge. In point of fact they were that, or nearly so, for two hours on that particular day, but a month later they are so no longer. They could not go through the examination again. Their too numerous and too burdensome acquisitions slip incessantly from their mind, and are not replaced. Their mental vigour has declined, their fertile capacity for growth has dried up, the fully-developed man appears, and he is often a used up man. Settled down, married, resigned to turning in a circle, and indefinitely in the same circle, he shuts himself up in his confined function, which he fulfils adequately, but nothing more. Such is the average yield: assuredly the receipts do not balance the expenditure. In England or America, where, as in France previous to 1789, the contrary proceeding is adopted, the outcome obtained is equal or superior."

The illustrious psychologist subsequently shows us the difference between our system and that of the Anglo-Saxons. The latter do not possess our innumerable special schools. With them instruction is not based on book-learning, but on object lessons. The engineer, for example, is trained in a workshop, and never at a school; a method which allows of each individual reaching the level his intelligence permits of. He becomes a workman or a foreman if he can get no further, an engineer if his aptitudes take him as far. This manner of proceeding is much more democratic and of much greater benefit to society than that of making the whole career of an individual

depend on an examination,lasting a few hours,and undergone at the age of nineteen or twenty.

"In the hospital,the mine,the factory,in the architect's or the lawyer's office,the student,who makes a start while very young,goes through his apprenticeship,stage by stage,much as does with us a law clerk in his office,or an artist in his studio. Previously,and before making a practical beginning,he has had an opportunity of following some general and summary course of instruction,so as to have a framework ready prepared in which to store the observations he is shortly to make. Furthermore he is able,as a rule,to avail himself of sundry technical courses which he can follow in his leisure hours,so as to coordinate step by step the daily experience he is gathering. Under such a system the practical capabilities increase and develop of themselves in exact proportion to the faculties of the student,and in the direction requisite for his future task and the special work for which from now onwards he desires to fit himself. By this means in England or the United States a young man is quickly in a position to develop his capacity to the utmost. At twenty-five years of age,and much sooner if the material and the parts are there,he is not merely a useful performer,he is capable also of spontaneous enterprise; he is not only a part of a machine,but also a motor. In France,where the contrary system prevails — in France,which with each succeeding

generation is falling more and more into line with China — the sum total of the wasted forces is enormous.”

The great philosopher arrives at the following conclusion with respect to the growing incongruity between our Latin system of education and the requirements of practical life: —

“In the three stages of instruction, those of childhood, adolescence and youth, the theoretical and pedagogic preparation by books on the school benches has lengthened out and become overcharged in view of the examination, the degree, the diploma, and the certificate, and solely in this view, and by the worst methods, by the application of an unnatural and anti-social régime, by the excessive postponement of the practical apprenticeship, by our boarding-school system, by artificial training and mechanical cramming, by overwork, without thought for the time that is to follow, for the adult age and the functions of the man, without regard for the real world on which the young man will shortly be thrown, for the society in which we move and to which he must be adapted or be taught to resign himself in advance, for the struggle in which humanity is engaged, and in which to defend himself and to keep his footing he ought previously to have been equipped, armed, trained, and hardened. This indispensable equipment, this acquisition of more importance than any other, this sturdy common sense and nerve and will-power our schools do not procure the young Frenchman; on the contrary, far from qualifying

him for his approaching and definite state, they disqualify him. In consequence, his entry into the world and his first steps in the field of action are most often merely a succession of painful falls, whose effect is that he long remains wounded and bruised, and sometimes disabled for life. The test is severe and dangerous. In the course of it the mental and moral equilibrium is affected, and runs the risk of not being re-established. Too sudden and complete disillusion has supervened. The deceptions have been too great, the disappointments too keen."

Have we digressed in what precedes from the psychology of crowds? Assuredly not. If we desire to understand the ideas and beliefs that are germinating to-day in the masses, and will spring up tomorrow, it is necessary to know how the ground has been prepared. The instruction given the youth of a country allows of a knowledge of what that country will one day be. The education accorded the present generation justifies the most gloomy provisions. It is in part by instruction and education that the mind of the masses is improved or deteriorated. It was necessary in consequence to show how this mind has been fashioned by the system in vogue, and how the mass of the indifferent and the neutral has become progressively an army of the discontented ready to obey all the suggestions of utopians and rhetoricians. It is in the schoolroom that socialists and anarchists are found nowadays, and that the way is being paved

for the approaching period of decadence for the Latin peoples.

Chapter II. The Immediate Factors of the Opinions of Crowds



When studying the imagination of crowds we saw that it is particularly open to the impressions produced by images. These images do not always lie ready to hand, but it is possible to evoke them by the judicious employment of words and formulas.

Abstract:1. Images, words, and formulas. The magical power of words and formulas — The power of words bound up with the images they evoke, and independent of their real sense — These images vary from age to age, and from race to race — The wear and tear of words — Examples of the considerable variations of sense of much-used words — The political utility of baptizing old things with new names when the words by which they were designated produced an unfavourable impression on the masses — Variations of the sense of words in consequence of race differences — The different meanings of the word "democracy" in Europe and America. 2. Illusions. Their importance — They are to be found at the root of all civilisations — The social necessity of illusions — Crowds always prefer them to truths. 3. Experience. Experience alone can fix in the mind of crowds truths become necessary and destroy illusions grown dangerous — Experience is only effective on the condition that it be frequently repeated — The cost of the experiences requisite to persuade crowds. 4. Reason. The nullity of its influence on crowds — Crowds only to be influenced by their unconscious sentiments — The role of logic in history — The

secret causes of improbable events.

We have just investigated the remote and preparatory factors which give the mind of crowds a special receptivity, and make possible therein the growth of certain sentiments and certain ideas. It now remains for us to study the factors capable of acting in a direct manner. We shall see in a forthcoming chapter how these factors should be put in force in order that they may produce their full effect.

In the first part of this work we studied the sentiments, ideas, and methods of reasoning of collective bodies, and from the knowledge thus acquired it would evidently be possible to deduce in a general way the means of making an impression on their mind. We already know what strikes the imagination of crowds, and are acquainted with the power and contagiousness of suggestions, of those especially that are presented under the form of images. However, as suggestions may proceed from very different sources, the factors capable of acting on the minds of crowds may differ considerably. It is necessary, then, to study them separately. This is not a useless study. Crowds are somewhat like the sphinx of ancient fable: it is necessary to arrive at a solution of the problems offered by their psychology or to resign ourselves to being devoured by them.

1. Images, Words, and Formulas

When studying the imagination of crowds we saw that it is particularly open to the impressions produced by images. These images do not always lie ready to hand, but it is possible to evoke them by the judicious employment of words and formulas. Handled with art, they possess in sober truth the mysterious power formerly attributed to them by the adepts of magic. They cause the birth in the minds of crowds of the most formidable tempests, which in turn they are capable of stilling. A pyramid far loftier than that of old Cheops could be raised merely with the bones of men who have been victims of the power of words and formulas.

The power of words is bound up with the images they evoke, and is quite independent of their real significance. Words whose sense is the most ill-defined are sometimes those that possess the most influence. Such, for example, are the terms democracy, socialism, equality, liberty, & c., whose meaning is so vague that bulky volumes do not suffice to precisely fix it. Yet it is certain that a truly magical power is attached to those short syllables, as if they contained the solution of all problems. They synthesise the most perverse unconscious aspirations and the hope of their realisation.

Reason and arguments are incapable of combatting certain words and formulas. They are uttered with solemnity in the presence of crowds, and as soon as they have been pronounced an expression of

respect is visible on every countenance, and all heads are bowed. By many they are considered as natural forces, as supernatural powers. They evoke grandiose and vague images in men's minds, but this very vagueness that wraps them in obscurity augments their mysterious power. They are the mysterious pinities hidden behind the tabernacle, which the devout only approach in fear and trembling.

The images evoked by words being independent of their sense, they vary from age to age and from people to people, the formulas remaining identical. Certain transitory images are attached to certain words: the word is merely as it were the button of an electric bell that calls them up.

All words and all formulas do not possess the power of evoking images, while there are some which have once had this power, but lose it in the course of use, and cease to waken any response in the mind. They then become vain sounds, whose principal utility is to relieve the person who employs them of the obligation of thinking. Armed with a small stock of formulas and commonplaces learnt while we are young, we possess all that is needed to traverse life without the tiring necessity of having to reflect on anything whatever.

If any particular language be studied, it is seen that the words of which it is composed change rather slowly in the course of ages, while the images these words evoke or the meaning attached to

them changes ceaselessly. This is the reason why, in another work, I have arrived at the conclusion that the absolute translation of a language, especially of a dead language, is totally impossible. What do we do in reality when we substitute a French for a Latin, Greek, or Sanscrit expression, or even when we endeavour to understand a book written in our own tongue two or three centuries back? We merely put the images and ideas with which modern life has endowed our intelligence in the place of absolutely distinct notions and images which ancient life had brought into being in the mind of races submitted to conditions of existence having no analogy with our own. When the men of the Revolution imagined they were copying the Greeks and Romans, what were they doing except giving to ancient words a sense the latter had never had? What resemblance can possibly exist between the institutions of the Greeks and those designated today by corresponding words? A republic at that epoch was an essentially aristocratic institution, formed of a reunion of petty despots ruling over a crowd of slaves kept in the most absolute subjection. These communal aristocracies, based on slavery, could not have existed for a moment without it.

The word "liberty," again, what signification could it have in any way resembling that we attribute to it today at a period when the possibility of the liberty of thought was not even suspected, and

when there was no greater and more exceptional crime than that of discussing the gods, the laws and the customs of the city? What did such a word as "fatherland" signify to an Athenian or Spartan unless it were the cult of Athens or Sparta, and in no wise that of Greece, composed of rival cities always at war with each other? What meaning had the same word "fatherland" among the ancient Gauls, divided into rival tribes and races, and possessing different languages and religions, and who were easily vanquished by Caesar because he always found allies among them? It was Rome that made a country of Gaul by endowing it with political and religious unity. Without going back so far, scarcely two centuries ago, is it to be believed that this same notion of a fatherland was conceived to have the same meaning as at present by French princes like the great Condé, who allied themselves with the foreigner against their sovereign? And yet again, the same word had it not a sense very different from the modern for the French royalist emigrants, who thought they obeyed the laws of honour in fighting against France, and who from their point of view did indeed obey them, since the feudal law bound the vassal to the lord and not to the soil, so that where the sovereign was there was the true fatherland?

Numerous are the words whose meaning has thus profoundly changed from age to age — words which we can only arrive at understanding in the sense in which they were formerly understood after a long

effort. It has been said with truth that much study is necessary merely to arrive at conceiving what was signified to our great grandfathers by such words as the "king" and the "royal family." What, then, is likely to be the case with terms still more complex?

Words, then, have only mobile and transitory significations which change from age to age and people to people; and when we desire to exert an influence by their means on the crowd what it is requisite to know is the meaning given them by the crowd at a given moment, and not the meaning which they formerly had or may yet have for individuals of a different mental constitution.

Thus, when crowds have come, as the result of political upheavals or changes of belief, to acquire a profound antipathy for the images evoked by certain words, the first duty of the true statesman is to change the words without, of course, laying hands on the things themselves, the latter being too intimately bound up with the inherited constitution to be transformed. The judicious Tocqueville long ago made the remark that the work of the consulate and the empire consisted more particularly in the clothing with new words of the greater part of the institutions of the past — that is to say, in replacing words evoking disagreeable images in the imagination of the crowd by other words of which the novelty prevented such evocations. The "taille" or tallage has become the

land tax; the "gabelle," the tax on salt; the "aids," the indirect contributions and the consolidated duties; the tax on trade companies and guilds, the license, & c.

One of the most essential functions of statesmen consists, then, in baptizing with popular or, at any rate, indifferent words things the crowd cannot endure under their old names. The power of words is so great that it suffices to designate in well-chosen terms the most odious things to make them acceptable to crowds. Taine justly observes that it was by invoking liberty and fraternity — words very popular at the time — that the Jacobins were able "to install a despotism worthy of Dahomey, a tribunal similar to that of the Inquisition, and to accomplish human hecatombs akin to those of ancient Mexico." The art of those who govern, as is the case with the art of advocates, consists above all in the science of employing words. One of the greatest difficulties of this art is, that in one and the same society the same words most often have very different meanings for the different social classes, who employ in appearance the same words, but never speak the same language.

In the preceding examples it is especially time that has been made to intervene as the principal factor in the changing of the meaning of words. If, however, we also make race intervene, we shall then see that, at the same period, among peoples equally civilised but of different race, the same words very often correspond to extremely

dissimilar ideas. It is impossible to understand these differences without having travelled much, and for this reason I shall not insist upon them. I shall confine myself to observing that it is precisely the words most often employed by the masses which among different peoples possess the most different meanings. Such is the case, for instance, with the words "democracy" and "socialism" in such frequent use nowadays.

In reality they correspond to quite contrary ideas and images in the Latin and Anglo-Saxon mind. For the Latin peoples the word "democracy" signifies more especially the subordination of the will and the initiative of the individual to the will and the initiative of the community represented by the State. It is the State that is charged, to a greater and greater degree, with the direction of everything, the centralisation, the monopolisation, and the manufacture of everything. To the State it is that all parties without exception, radicals, socialists, or monarchists, constantly appeal. Among the Anglo-Saxons and notably in America this same word "democracy" signifies, on the contrary, the intense development of the will of the individual, and as complete a subordination as possible of the State, which, with the exception of the police, the army, and diplomatic relations, is not allowed the direction of anything, not even of public instruction. It is seen, then, that the same word which signifies for one people the

subordination of the will and the initiative of the individual and the preponderance of the State, signifies for another the excessive development of the will and the initiative of the individual and the complete subordination of the State.

2. Illusions

From the dawn of civilisation onwards crowds have always undergone the influence of illusions. It is to the creators of illusions that they have raised more temples, statues, and altars than to any other class of men. Whether it be the religious illusions of the past or the philosophic and social illusions of the present, these formidable sovereign powers are always found at the head of all the civilisations that have successively flourished on our planet. It is in their name that were built the temples of Chaldea and Egypt and the religious edifices of the Middle Ages, and that a vast upheaval shook the whole of Europe a century ago, and there is not one of our political, artistic, or social conceptions that is free from their powerful impress. Occasionally, at the cost of terrible disturbances, man overthrows them, but he seems condemned to always set them up again. Without them he would never have emerged from his primitive barbarian state, and without them again he would soon return to it. Doubtless they are futile shadows; but these children of our dreams have forced the nations to create whatever the arts may boast of splendour or civilisation of greatness.

"If one destroyed in museums and libraries,if one hurled down on the flagstones before the churches all the works and all the monuments of art that religions have inspired,what would remain of the great dreams of humanity? To give to men that portion of hope and illusion without which they cannot live,such is the reason for the existence of gods,heroes,and poets. During fifty years science appeared to undertake this task. But science has been compromised in hearts hungering after the ideal,because it does not dare to be lavish enough of promises,because it cannot lie."

The philosophers of the last century devoted themselves with fervour to the destruction of the religious,political,and social illusions on which our forefathers had lived for a long tale of centuries. By destroying them they have dried up the springs of hope and resignation. Behind the immolated chimeras they came face to face with the blind and silent forces of nature,which are inexorable to weakness and ignore pity.

Notwithstanding all its progress,philosophy has been unable as yet to offer the masses any ideal that can charm them; but,as they must have their illusions at all cost,they turn instinctively,as the insect seeks the light,to the rhetoricians who accord them what they want. Not truth,but error has always been the chief factor in the evolution of nations,and the reason why socialism is so powerful today is that it constitutes the last illusion that is

still vital. In spite of all scientific demonstrations it continues on the increase. Its principal strength lies in the fact that it is championed by minds sufficiently ignorant of things as they are in reality to venture boldly to promise mankind happiness. The social illusion reigns today upon all the heaped-up ruins of the past, and to it belongs the future. The masses have never thirsted after truth. They turn aside from evidence that is not to their taste, preferring to deify error, if error seduce them. Whoever can supply them with illusions is easily their master; whoever attempts to destroy their illusions is always their victim.

3. Experience

Experience constitutes almost the only effective process by which a truth may be solidly established in the mind of the masses, and illusions grown too dangerous be destroyed. To this end, however, it is necessary that the experience should take place on a very large scale, and be very frequently repeated. The experiences undergone by one generation are useless, as a rule, for the generation that follows, which is the reason why historical facts, cited with a view to demonstration, serve no purpose. Their only utility is to prove to what an extent experiences need to be repeated from age to age to exert any influence, or to be successful in merely shaking an erroneous opinion when it is solidly implanted in the mind of the masses.

Our century and that which preceded it will doubtless be alluded to by historians as an era of curious experiments, which in no other age have been tried in such number.

The most gigantic of these experiments was the French Revolution. To find out that a society is not to be refashioned from top to bottom in accordance with the dictates of pure reason, it was necessary that several millions of men should be massacred and that Europe should be profoundly disturbed for a period of twenty years. To prove to us experimentally that dictators cost the nations who acclaim them dear, two ruinous experiences have been required in fifty years, and in spite of their clearness they do not seem to have been sufficiently convincing. The first, nevertheless, cost three millions of men and an invasion, the second involved a loss of territory, and carried in its wake the necessity for permanent armies. A third was almost attempted not long since, and will assuredly be attempted one day. To bring an entire nation to admit that the huge German army was not, as was currently alleged thirty years ago, a sort of harmless national guard, the terrible war which cost us so dear had to take place. To bring about the recognition that Protection ruins the nations who adopt it, at least twenty years of disastrous experience will be needful. These examples might be indefinitely multiplied.

4. Reason

In enumerating the factors capable of making an impression on the minds of crowds all mention of reason might be dispensed with, were it not necessary to point out the negative value of its influence.

We have already shown that crowds are not to be influenced by reasoning, and can only comprehend rough-and-ready associations of ideas. The orators who know how to make an impression upon them always appeal in consequence to their sentiments and never to their reason. The laws of logic have no action on crowds. To bring home conviction to crowds it is necessary first of all to thoroughly comprehend the sentiments by which they are animated, to pretend to share these sentiments, then to endeavour to modify them by calling up, by means of rudimentary associations, certain eminently suggestive notions, to be capable, if need be, of going back to the point of view from which a start was made, and, above all, to pine from instant to instant the sentiments to which one's discourse is giving birth. This necessity of ceaselessly varying one's language in accordance with the effect produced at the moment of speaking deprives from the outset a prepared and studied harangue of all efficaciousness. In such a speech the orator follows his own line of thought, not that of his hearers, and from this fact alone his influence is annihilated.

Logical minds, accustomed to be convinced by a chain of somewhat close reasoning, cannot avoid having recourse to this mode of

persuasion when addressing crowds, and the inability of their arguments always surprises them. "The usual mathematical consequences based on the syllogism — that is, on associations of identities — are imperative ..." writes a logician. "This imperativeness would enforce the assent even of an inorganic mass were it capable of following associations of identities." This is doubtless true, but a crowd is no more capable than an inorganic mass of following such associations, nor even of understanding them. If the attempt be made to convince by reasoning primitive minds — savages or children, for instance — the slight value possessed by this method of arguing will be understood.

It is not even necessary to descend so low as primitive beings to obtain an insight into the utter powerlessness of reasoning when it has to fight against sentiment. Let us merely call to mind how tenacious, for centuries long, have been religious superstitions in contradiction with the simplest logic. For nearly two thousand years the most luminous geniuses have bowed before their laws, and modern times have to be reached for their veracity to be merely contested. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance possessed many enlightened men, but not a single man who attained by reasoning to an appreciation of the childish side of his superstitions, or who promulgated even a slight doubt as to the misdeeds of the devil or the necessity of burning sorcerers.

Should it be regretted that crowds are never guided by reason? We would not venture to affirm it. Without a doubt human reason would not have availed to spur humanity along the path of civilisation with the ardour and hardihood its illusions have done. These illusions, the offspring of those unconscious forces by which we are led, were doubtless necessary. Every race carries in its mental constitution the laws of its destiny, and it is, perhaps, these laws that it obeys with a resistless impulse, even in the case of those of its impulses which apparently are the most unreasoned. It seems at times as if nations were submitted to secret forces analogous to those which compel the acorn to transform itself into an oak or a comet to follow its orbit.

What little insight we can get into these forces must be sought for in the general course of the evolution of a people, and not in the isolated facts from which this evolution appears at times to proceed. Were these facts alone to be taken into consideration, history would seem to be the result of a series of improbable chances. It was improbable that a Galilean carpenter should become for two thousand years an all-powerful God in whose name the most important civilisations were founded; improbable, too, that a few bands of Arabs, emerging from their deserts, should conquer the greater part of the old Graco-Roman world, and establish an empire greater than that of Alexander;

improbable, again, that in Europe, at an advanced period of its development, and when authority throughout it had been systematically hierarchised, an obscure lieutenant of artillery should have succeeded in reigning over a multitude of peoples and kings.

Let us leave reason, then, to philosophers, and not insist too strongly on its intervention in the governing of men. It is not by reason, but most often in spite of it, that are created those sentiments that are the mainsprings of all civilisation — sentiments such as honour, self-sacrifice, religious faith, patriotism, and the love of glory.

Chapter III. The Leaders of Crowds and Their Means of Persuasion



Affirmation pure and simple, kept free of all reasoning and all proof, is one of the surest means of making an idea enter the mind of crowds. The conciser an affirmation is, the more destitute of every appearance of proof and demonstration, the more weight it carries.

Abstract:1. The leaders of crowds. The instinctive need of all beings forming a crowd to obey a leader — The psychology of the

leaders of crowds — They alone can endow crowds with faith and organise them — The leaders forcibly despotic — Classification of the leaders — The part played by the will.² The means of action of the leaders. Affirmation, repetition, contagion — The respective part of these different factors — The way in which contagion may spread from the lower to the upper classes in a society — A popular opinion soon becomes a general opinion. 3. Prestige. Definition of prestige and classification of its different kinds — Acquired prestige and personal prestige — Various examples — The way in which prestige is destroyed.

We are now acquainted with the mental constitution of crowds, and we also know what are the motives capable of making an impression on their mind. It remains to investigate how these motives may be set in action, and by whom they may usefully be turned to practical account.

1. The Leaders of Crowds

As soon as a certain number of living beings are gathered together, whether they be animals or men, they place themselves instinctively under the authority of a chief.

In the case of human crowds the chief is often nothing more than a ringleader or agitator, but as such he plays a considerable part. His will is the nucleus around which the opinions of the crowd are

grouped and attain to identity. He constitutes the first element towards the organisation of heterogeneous crowds, and paves the way for their organisation in sects; in the meantime he directs them. A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master.

The leader has most often started as one of the led. He has himself been hypnotised by the idea, whose apostle he has since become. It has taken possession of him to such a degree that everything outside it vanishes, and that every contrary opinion appears to him an error or a superstition. An example in point is Robespierre, hypnotised by the philosophical ideas of Rousseau, and employing the methods of the Inquisition to propagate them.

The leaders we speak of are more frequently men of action than thinkers. They are not gifted with keen foresight, nor could they be, as this quality generally conduces to doubt and inactivity. They are especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous, excitable, half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness. However absurd may be the idea they uphold or the goal they pursue, their convictions are so strong that all reasoning is lost upon them. Contempt and persecution do not affect them, or only serve to excite them the more. They sacrifice their personal interest, their family — everything. The very instinct of self-preservation is entirely obliterated in them, and so much so that

often the only recompense they solicit is that of martyrdom. The intensity of their faith gives great power of suggestion to their words. The multitude is always ready to listen to the strong-willed man, who knows how to impose himself upon it. Men gathered in a crowd lose all force of will, and turn instinctively to the person who possesses the quality they lack.

Nations have never lacked leaders, but all of the latter have by no means been animated by those strong convictions proper to apostles. These leaders are often subtle rhetoricians, seeking only their own personal interest, and endeavouring to persuade by flattering base instincts. The influence they can assert in this manner may be very great, but it is always ephemeral. The men of ardent convictions who have stirred the soul of crowds, the Peter the Hermits, the Luthers, the Savonarolas, the men of the French Revolution, have only exercised their fascination after having been themselves fascinated first of all by a creed. They are then able to call up in the souls of their fellows that formidable force known as faith, which renders a man the absolute slave of his dream.

The arousing of faith — whether religious, political, or social, whether faith in a work, in a person, or an idea — has always been the function of the great leaders of crowds, and it is on this account that their influence is always very great. Of all the forces at the disposal of humanity, faith has always been one of the

most tremendous, and the gospel rightly attributes to it the power of moving mountains. To endow a man with faith is to multiply his strength tenfold. The great events of history have been brought about by obscure believers, who have had little beyond their faith in their favour. It is not by the aid of the learned or of philosophers, and still less of sceptics, that have been built up the great religions which have swayed the world, or the vast empires which have spread from one hemisphere to the other.

In the cases just cited, however, we are dealing with great leaders, and they are so few in number that history can easily reckon them up. They form the summit of a continuous series, which extends from these powerful masters of men down to the workman who, in the smoky atmosphere of an inn, slowly fascinates his comrades by ceaselessly drumming into their ears a few set phrases, whose purport he scarcely comprehends, but the application of which, according to him, must surely bring about the realisation of all dreams and of every hope.

In every social sphere, from the highest to the lowest, as soon as a man ceases to be isolated he speedily falls under the influence of a leader. The majority of men, especially among the masses, do not possess clear and reasoned ideas on any subject whatever outside their own speciality. The leader serves them as guide. It is just possible that he may be replaced, though very inefficiently, by the

periodical publications which manufacture opinions for their readers and supply them with ready-made phrases which dispense them of the trouble of reasoning.

The leaders of crowds wield a very despotic authority, and this despotism indeed is a condition of their obtaining a following. It has often been remarked how easily they extort obedience, although without any means of backing up their authority, from the most turbulent section of the working classes. They fix the hours of labour and the rate of wages, and they decree strikes, which are begun and ended at the hour they ordain.

At the present day these leaders and agitators tend more and more to usurp the place of the public authorities in proportion as the latter allow themselves to be called in question and shorn of their strength. The tyranny of these new masters has for result that the crowds obey them much more docilely than they have obeyed any government. If in consequence of some accident or other the leaders should be removed from the scene the crowd returns to its original state of a collectivity without cohesion or force of resistance. During the last strike of the Parisian omnibus employés the arrest of the two leaders who were directing it was at once sufficient to bring it to an end. It is the need not of liberty but of servitude that is always predominant in the soul of crowds. They are so bent on obedience that they instinctively submit to whoever declares

himself their master.

These ringleaders and agitators may be pided into two clearly defined classes. The one includes the men who are energetic and possess, but only intermittently, much strength of will, the other the men, far rarer than the preceding, whose strength of will is enduring. The first mentioned are violent, brave, and audacious. They are more especially useful to direct a violent enterprise suddenly decided on, to carry the masses with them in spite of danger, and to transform into heroes the men who but yesterday were recruits. Men of this kind were Ney and Murat under the First Empire, and such a man in our own time was Garibaldi, a talentless but energetic adventurer who succeeded with a handful of men in laying hands on the ancient kingdom of Naples, defended though it was by a disciplined army.

Still, though the energy of leaders of this class is a force to be reckoned with, it is transitory, and scarcely outlasts the exciting cause that has brought it into play. When they have returned to their ordinary course of life the heroes animated by energy of this description often evince, as was the case with those I have just cited, the most astonishing weakness of character. They seem incapable of reflection and of conducting themselves under the simplest circumstances, although they had been able to lead others. These men are leaders who cannot exercise their function except on

the condition that they be led themselves and continually stimulated, that they have always as their beacon a man or an idea, that they follow a line of conduct clearly traced. The second category of leaders, that of men of enduring strength of will, have, in spite of a less brilliant aspect, a much more considerable influence. In this category are to be found the true founders of religions and great undertakings: St.

Paul, Mahomet, Christopher Columbus, and de Lesseps, for example.

Whether they be intelligent or narrow-minded is of no importance: the world belongs to them. The persistent will-force they possess is an immensely rare and immensely powerful faculty to which everything yields. What a strong and continuous will is capable of is not always properly appreciated. Nothing resists it; neither nature, gods, nor man.

The most recent example of what can be effected by a strong and continuous will is afforded us by the illustrious man who separated the Eastern and Western worlds, and accomplished a task that during three thousand years had been attempted in vain by the greatest sovereigns. He failed later in an identical enterprise, but then had intervened old age, to which everything, even the will, succumbs.

When it is desired to show what may be done by mere strength of will, all that is necessary is to relate in detail the history of the difficulties that had to be surmounted in connection with the

cutting of the Suez Canal. An ocular witness, Dr. Cazalis, has summed up in a few striking lines the entire story of this great work, recounted by its immortal author.

"From day to day, episode by episode, he told the stupendous story of the canal. He told of all he had had to vanquish, of the impossible he had made possible, of all the opposition he encountered, of the coalition against him, and the disappointments, the reverses, the defeats which had been unavailing to discourage or depress him. He recalled how England had combatted him, attacking him without cessation, how Egypt and France had hesitated, how the French Consul had been foremost in his opposition to the early stages of the work, and the nature of the opposition he had met with, the attempt to force his workmen to desert from thirst by refusing them fresh water; how the Minister of Marine and the engineers, all responsible men of experienced and scientific training, had naturally all been hostile, were all certain on scientific grounds that disaster was at hand, had calculated its coming, foretelling it for such a day and hour as an eclipse is foretold."

The book which relates the lives of all these great leaders would not contain many names, but these names have been bound up with the most important events in the history of civilisation.

2. The Means of Action of the Leaders:

Affirmation, Repetition, Contagion

When it is wanted to stir up a crowd for a short space of time, to induce it to commit an act of any nature — to pillage a palace, or to die in defence of a stronghold or a barricade, for instance — the crowd must be acted upon by rapid suggestion, among which example is the most powerful in its effect. To attain this end, however, it is necessary that the crowd should have been previously prepared by certain circumstances, and, above all, that he who wishes to work upon it should possess the quality to be studied farther on, to which I give the name of prestige.

When, however, it is proposed to imbue the mind of a crowd with ideas and beliefs — with modern social theories, for instance — the leaders have recourse to different expedients. The principal of them are three in number and clearly defined — affirmation, repetition, and contagion. Their action is somewhat slow, but its effects, once produced, are very lasting.

Affirmation pure and simple, kept free of all reasoning and all proof, is one of the surest means of making an idea enter the mind of crowds. The conciser an affirmation is, the more destitute of every appearance of proof and demonstration, the more weight it carries. The religious books and the legal codes of all ages have

always resorted to simple affirmation. Statesmen called upon to defend a political cause, and commercial men pushing the sale of their products by means of advertising are acquainted with the value of affirmation.

Affirmation, however, has no real influence unless it be constantly repeated, and so far as possible in the same terms. It was Napoleon, I believe, who said that there is only one figure in rhetoric of serious importance, namely, repetition. The thing affirmed comes by repetition to fix itself in the mind in such a way that it is accepted in the end as a demonstrated truth.

The influence of repetition on crowds is comprehensible when the power is seen which it exercises on the most enlightened minds. This power is due to the fact that the repeated statement is embedded in the long run in those profound regions of our unconscious selves in which the motives of our actions are forged. At the end of a certain time we have forgotten who is the author of the repeated assertion, and we finish by believing it. To this circumstance is due the astonishing power of advertisements. When we have read a hundred, a thousand, times that X's chocolate is the best, we imagine we have heard it said in many quarters, and we end by acquiring the certitude that such is the fact. When we have read a thousand times that Y's flour has cured the most illustrious persons of the most obstinate maladies, we are tempted at last to

try it when suffering from an illness of a similar kind. If we always read in the same papers that A is an arrant scamp and B a most honest man we finish by being convinced that this is the truth, unless, indeed, we are given to reading another paper of the contrary opinion, in which the two qualifications are reversed. Affirmation and repetition are alone powerful enough to combat each other. When an affirmation has been sufficiently repeated and there is unanimity in this repetition — as has occurred in the case of certain famous financial undertakings rich enough to purchase every assistance — what is called a current of opinion is formed and the powerful mechanism of contagion intervenes.

Ideas, sentiments, emotions, and beliefs possess in crowds a contagious power as intense as that of microbes. This phenomenon is very natural, since it is observed even in animals when they are together in number. Should a horse in a stable take to biting his manger the other horses in the stable will imitate him. A panic that has seized on a few sheep will soon extend to the whole flock. In the case of men collected in a crowd all emotions are very rapidly contagious, which explains the suddenness of panics. Brain disorders, like madness, are themselves contagious. The frequency of madness among doctors who are specialists for the mad is notorious. Indeed, forms of madness have recently been cited — agoraphobia, for instance — which are communicable from men to animals.

For individuals to succumb to contagion their simultaneous presence on the same spot is not indispensable. The action of contagion may be felt from a distance under the influence of events which give all minds an individual trend and the characteristics peculiar to crowds. This is especially the case when men's minds have been prepared to undergo the influence in question by those remote factors of which I have made a study above. An example in point is the revolutionary movement of 1848, which, after breaking out in Paris, spread rapidly over a great part of Europe and shook a number of thrones.

Imitation, to which so much influence is attributed in social phenomena, is in reality a mere effect of contagion. Having shown its influence elsewhere, I shall confine myself to reproducing what I said on the subject fifteen years ago. My remarks have since been developed by other writers in recent publications.

"Man, like animals, has a natural tendency to imitation. Imitation is a necessity for him, provided always that the imitation is quite easy. It is this necessity that makes the influence of what is called fashion so powerful. Whether in the matter of opinions, ideas, literary manifestations, or merely of dress, how many persons are bold enough to run counter to the fashion? It is by examples not by arguments that crowds are guided. At every period there exists a small number of individualities which react upon the

remainder and are imitated by the unconscious mass. It is needful however, that these individualities should not be in too pronounced disagreement with received ideas. Were they so, to imitate them would be too difficult and their influence would be nil. For this very reason men who are too superior to their epoch are generally without influence upon it. The line of separation is too strongly marked. For the same reason too Europeans, in spite of all the advantages of their civilisation, have so insignificant an influence on Eastern people; they differ from them to too great an extent.

"The dual action of the past and of reciprocal imitation renders, in the long run, all the men of the same country and the same period so alike that even in the case of individuals who would seem destined to escape this double influence, such as philosophers, learned men, and men of letters, thought and style have a family air which enables the age to which they belong to be immediately recognised. It is not necessary to talk for long with an individual to attain to a thorough knowledge of what he reads, of his habitual occupations, and of the surroundings amid which he lives.

Contagion is so powerful that it forces upon individuals not only certain opinions, but certain modes of feeling as well. Contagion is the cause of the contempt in which, at a given period, certain works are held — the example of "Tannhäuser" may be cited — which, a

few years later, for the same reason are admired by those who were foremost in criticising them.

The opinions and beliefs of crowds are specially propagated by contagion, but never by reasoning. The conceptions at present rife among the working classes have been acquired at the public-house as the result of affirmation, repetition, and contagion, and indeed the mode of creation of the beliefs of crowds of every age has scarcely been different. Renan justly institutes a comparison between the first founders of Christianity and "the socialist working men spreading their ideas from public-house to public-house" ; while Voltaire had already observed in connection with the Christian religion that "for more than a hundred years it was only embraced by the vilest riff-raff."

It will be noted that in cases analogous to those I have just cited, contagion, after having been at work among the popular classes, has spread to the higher classes of society. This is what we see happening at the present day with regard to the socialist doctrines which are beginning to be held by those who will yet be their first victims. Contagion is so powerful a force that even the sentiment of personal interest disappears under its action.

This is the explanation of the fact that every opinion adopted by the populace always ends in implanting itself with great vigour in

the highest social strata, however obvious be the absurdity of the triumphant opinion. This reaction of the lower upon the higher social classes is the more curious, owing to the circumstance that the beliefs of the crowd always have their origin to a greater or less extent in some higher idea, which has often remained without influence in the sphere in which it was evolved. Leaders and agitators, subjugated by this higher idea, take hold of it, distort it and create a sect which distorts it afresh, and then propagates it amongst the masses, who carry the process of deformation still further. Become a popular truth the idea returns, as it were, to its source and exerts an influence on the upper classes of a nation. In the long run it is intelligence that shapes the destiny of the world, but very indirectly. The philosophers who evolve ideas have long since returned to dust, when, as the result of the process I have just described, the fruit of their reflection ends by triumphing.

3. Prestige

Great power is given to ideas propagated by affirmation, repetition, and contagion by the circumstance that they acquire in time that mysterious force known as prestige.

Whatever has been a ruling power in the world, whether it be ideas or men, has in the main enforced its authority by means of that

irresistible force expressed by the word "prestige." The term is one whose meaning is grasped by everybody, but the word is employed in ways too different for it to be easy to define it. Prestige may involve such sentiments as admiration or fear. Occasionally even these sentiments are its basis, but it can perfectly well exist without them. The greatest measure of prestige is possessed by the dead, by beings, that is, of whom we do not stand in fear — by Alexander, Cæsar, Mahomet, and Buddha, for example. On the other hand, there are fictive beings whom we do not admire — the monstrous pinities of the subterranean temples of India, for instance — but who strike us nevertheless as endowed with a great prestige.

Prestige in reality is a sort of domination exercised on our mind by an individual, a work, or an idea. This domination entirely paralyses our critical faculty, and fills our soul with astonishment and respect. The sentiment provoked is inexplicable, like all sentiments, but it would appear to be of the same kind as the fascination to which a magnetised person is subjected. Prestige is the mainspring of all authority. Neither gods, kings, nor women have ever reigned without it.

The various kinds of prestige may be grouped under two principal heads: acquired prestige and personal prestige. Acquired prestige is that resulting from name, fortune, and reputation. It may be

independent of personal prestige. Personal prestige, on the contrary, is something essentially peculiar to the individual; it may coexist with reputation, glory, and fortune, or be strengthened by them, but it is perfectly capable of existing in their absence.

Acquired or artificial prestige is much the most common. The mere fact that an individual occupies a certain position, possesses a certain fortune, or bears certain titles, endows him with prestige, however slight his own personal worth. A soldier in uniform, a judge in his robes, always enjoys prestige. Pascal has very properly noted the necessity for judges of robes and wigs. Without them they would be stripped of half their authority. The most unbending socialist is always somewhat impressed by the sight of a prince or a marquis; and the assumption of such titles makes the robbing of tradesmen an easy matter.

The prestige of which I have just spoken is exercised by persons; side by side with it may be placed that exercised by opinions, literary and artistic works, & c. Prestige of the latter kind is most often merely the result of accumulated repetitions. History, literary and artistic history especially, being nothing more than the repetition of identical judgments, which nobody endeavours to verify, every one ends by repeating what he learnt at school, till there come to be names and things which nobody would venture to meddle with. For a modern reader the perusal of Homer results

incontestably in immense boredom; but who would venture to say so? The Parthenon, in its present state, is a wretched ruin, utterly destitute of interest, but it is endowed with such prestige that it does not appear to us as it really is, but with all its accompaniment of historic memories. The special characteristic of prestige is to prevent us seeing things as they are and to entirely paralyse our judgment. Crowds always, and individuals as a rule, stand in need of ready-made opinions on all subjects. The popularity of these opinions is independent of the measure of truth or error they contain, and is solely regulated by their prestige.

I now come to personal prestige. Its nature is very different from that of artificial or acquired prestige, with which I have just been concerned. It is a faculty independent of all titles, of all authority, and possessed by a small number of persons whom it enables to exercise a veritably magnetic fascination on those around them, although they are socially their equals, and lack all ordinary means of domination. They force the acceptance of their ideas and sentiments on those about them, and they are obeyed as is the tamer of wild beasts by the animal that could easily devour him.

The great leaders of crowds, such as Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet, Joan of Arc, and Napoleon, have possessed this form of prestige in a high degree, and to this endowment is more particularly due the position

they attained. Gods, heroes, and dogmas win their way in the world of their own inward strength. They are not to be discussed: they disappear, indeed, as soon as discussed.

The great personages I have just cited were in possession of their power of fascination long before they became illustrious, and would never have become so without it. It is evident, for instance, that Napoleon at the zenith of his glory enjoyed an immense prestige by the mere fact of his power, but he was already endowed in part with this prestige when he was without power and completely unknown. When, an obscure general, he was sent, thanks to influential protection, to command the army of Italy, he found himself among rough generals who were of a mind to give a hostile reception to the young intruder dispatched them by the Directory. From the very beginning, from the first interview, without the aid of speeches, gestures, or threats, at the first sight of the man who was to become great they were vanquished. Taine furnishes a curious account of this interview taken from contemporary memoirs.

"The generals of pision, amongst others Augereau, a sort of swashbuckler, uncouth and heroic, proud of his height and his bravery, arrive at the staff quarters very badly disposed towards the little upstart dispatched them from Paris. On the strength of the description of him that has been given them, Augereau is inclined to be insolent and insubordinate; a favourite of Barras, a

general who owes his rank to the events of Vendémiaire who has won his grade by street-fighting, who is looked upon as bearish, because he is always thinking in solitude, of poor aspect, and with the reputation of a mathematician and dreamer. They are introduced, and Bonaparte keeps them waiting. At last he appears, girt with his sword; he puts on his hat, explains the measures he has taken, gives his orders, and dismisses them. Augereau has remained silent; it is only when he is outside that he regains his self-possession and is able to deliver himself of his customary oaths. He admits with Masséna that this little devil of a general has inspired him with awe; he cannot understand the ascendancy by which from the very first he has felt himself overwhelmed."

Become a great man, his prestige increased in proportion as his glory grew, and came to be at least equal to that of a pivity in the eyes of those devoted to him. General Vandamme, a rough, typical soldier of the Revolution, even more brutal and energetic than Augereau, said of him to Marshal d'Arnano in 1815, as on one occasion they mounted together the stairs of the Tuileries: "That devil of a man exercises a fascination on me that I cannot explain even to myself, and in such a degree that, though I fear neither God nor devil, when I am in his presence I am ready to tremble like a child, and he could make me go through the eye of a needle to throw myself into the fire." Napoleon exercised a like fascination on

all who came into contact with him.

Davoust used to say,talking of Maret's devotion and of his own:

"Had the Emperor said to us, 'It is important in the interest of my policy that Paris should be destroyed without a single person leaving it or escaping,' Maret I am sure would have kept the secret,but he could not have abstained from compromising himself by seeing that his family got clear of the city. On the other hand,I,for fear of letting the truth leak out,would have let my wife and children stay."

It is necessary to bear in mind the astounding power exerted by fascination of this order to understand that marvellous return from the Isle of Elba,that lightning-like conquest of France by an isolated man confronted by all the organised forces of a great country that might have been supposed weary of his tyranny. He had merely to cast a look at the generals sent to lay hands on him,and who had sworn to accomplish their mission. All of them submitted without discussion.

"Napoleon," writes the English General Wolseley, "lands in France almost alone,a fugitive from the small island of Elba which was his kingdom,and succeeded in a few weeks,without bloodshed,in upsetting all organised authority in France under its legitimate king; is it possible for the personal ascendancy of a man to affirm itself in a

more astonishing manner? But from the beginning to the end of this campaign, which was his last, how remarkable too is the ascendancy he exercised over the Allies, obliging them to follow his initiative, and how near he came to crushing them!"

His prestige outlived him and continued to grow. It is his prestige that made an emperor of his obscure nephew. How powerful is his memory still is seen in the resurrection of his legend in progress at the present day. Ill-treat men as you will, massacre them by millions, be the cause of invasion upon invasion, all is permitted you if you possess prestige in a sufficient degree and the talent necessary to uphold it. I have invoked, no doubt, in this case a quite exceptional example of prestige, but one it was useful to cite to make clear the genesis of great religions, great doctrines, and great empires. Were it not for the power exerted on the crowd by prestige, such growths would be incomprehensible.

Prestige, however, is not based solely on personal ascendancy, military glory, and religious terror; it may have a more modest origin and still be considerable. Our century furnishes several examples. One of the most striking ones that posterity will recall from age to age will be supplied by the history of the illustrious man who modified the face of the globe and the commercial relations of the nations by separating two continents. He succeeded in his enterprise owing to his immense strength of

will, but also owing to the fascination he exercised on those surrounding him. To overcome the unanimous opposition he met with, he had only to show himself. He would speak briefly, and in face of the charm he exerted his opponents became his friends. The English in particular strenuously opposed his scheme; he had only to put in an appearance in England to rally all suffrages. In later years, when he passed Southampton, the bells were rung on his passage; and at the present day a movement is on foot in England to raise a statue in his honour.

"Having vanquished whatever there is to vanquish, men and things, marshes, rocks, and sandy wastes," he had ceased to believe in obstacles, and wished to begin Suez over again at Panama. He began again with the same methods as of old; but he had aged, and, besides, the faith that moves mountains does not move them if they are too lofty. The mountains resisted, and the catastrophe that ensued destroyed the glittering aureole of glory that enveloped the hero. His life teaches how prestige can grow and how it can vanish. After rivalling in greatness the most famous heroes of history, he was lowered by the magistrates of his country to the ranks of the vilest criminals. When he died his coffin, unattended, traversed an indifferent crowd. Foreign sovereigns are alone in rendering homage to his memory as to that of one of the greatest men that history has known.

Still, the various examples that have just been cited represent extreme cases. To fix in detail the psychology of prestige, it would be necessary to place them at the extremity of a series, which would range from the founders of religions and empires to the private individual who endeavours to dazzle his neighbours by a new coat or a decoration.

Between the extreme limits of this series would find a place all the forms of prestige resulting from the different elements composing a civilisation — sciences, arts, literature, & c. — and it would be seen that prestige constitutes the fundamental element of persuasion. Consciously or not, the being, the idea, or the thing possessing prestige is immediately imitated in consequence of contagion, and forces an entire generation to adopt certain modes of feeling and of giving expression to its thought. This imitation, moreover, is, as a rule, unconscious, which accounts for the fact that it is perfect. The modern painters who copy the pale colouring and the stiff attitudes of some of the Primitives are scarcely alive to the source of their inspiration. They believe in their own sincerity, whereas, if an eminent master had not revived this form of art, people would have continued blind to all but its naïve and inferior sides. Those artists who, after the manner of another illustrious master, inundate their canvasses with violet shades do not see in nature more violet than was detected there

fifty years ago; but they are influenced, "suggestioned," by the personal and special impressions of a painter who, in spite of this eccentricity, was successful in acquiring great prestige. Similar examples might be brought forward in connection with all the elements of civilisation.

It is seen from what precedes that a number of factors may be concerned in the genesis of prestige; among them success was always one of the most important. Every successful man, every idea that forces itself into recognition, ceases, ipso facto, to be called in question. The proof that success is one of the principal stepping-stones to prestige is that the disappearance of the one is almost always followed by the disappearance of the other. The hero whom the crowd acclaimed yesterday is insulted today should he have been overtaken by failure. The reaction, indeed, will be the stronger in proportion as the prestige has been great. The crowd in this case considers the fallen hero as an equal, and takes its revenge for having bowed to a superiority whose existence it no longer admits. While Robespierre was causing the execution of his colleagues and of a great number of his contemporaries, he possessed an immense prestige. When the transposition of a few votes deprived him of power, he immediately lost his prestige, and the crowd followed him to the guillotine with the self-same imprecations with which shortly before it had pursued his victims. Believers always break

the statues of their former gods with every symptom of fury.

Prestige lost by want of success disappears in a brief space of time. It can also be worn away, but more slowly by being subjected to discussion.

This latter power, however, is exceedingly sure. From the moment prestige is called in question it ceases to be prestige. The gods and men who have kept their prestige for long have never tolerated discussion. For the crowd to admire, it must be kept at a distance.

Chapter IV. Limitations of the Variability of the Beliefs and Opinions of Crowds



Men are guided in their conduct above all by their beliefs and by the customs that are the consequence of those beliefs. These beliefs and customs regulate the smallest acts of our existence, and the most independent spirit cannot escape their influence.

Abstract:1. Fixed Beliefs. The invariability of certain general beliefs — They shape the course of a civilisation — The difficulty of uprooting them — In what respect intolerance is a virtue in a people — The philosophic absurdity of a belief cannot interfere with its spreading. 2. The Changeable Opinions of Crowds. The extreme mobility of opinions which do not arise from general beliefs — Apparent variations of ideas and beliefs in less than a

century — The real limits of these variations — The matters effected by the variation — The disappearance at present in progress of general beliefs, and the extreme diffusion of the newspaper press, have for result that opinions are nowadays more and more changeable — Why the opinions of crowds tend on the majority of subjects towards indifference — Governments now powerless to direct opinion as they formerly did — Opinions prevented today from being tyrannical on account of their exceeding pergency.

1. Fixed Beliefs

A close parallel exists between the anatomical and psychological characteristics of living beings.

In these anatomical characteristics certain invariable, or slightly variable, elements are met with, to change which the lapse is necessary of geological ages. Side by side with these fixed, indestructible features are to be found others extremely changeable, which the art of the breeder or horticulturist may easily modify, and at times to such an extent as to conceal the fundamental characteristics from an observer at all inattentive.

The same phenomenon is observed in the case of moral characteristics. Alongside the unalterable psychological elements of a race, mobile and changeable elements are to be encountered. For this reason, in studying the beliefs and opinions of a people, the

presence is always detected of a fixed groundwork on which are engrafted opinions as changing as the surface sand on a rock.

The opinions and beliefs of crowds may be pided,then,into two very distinct classes. On the one hand we have great permanent beliefs,which endure for several centuries,and on which an entire civilisation may rest. Such,for instance,in the past were feudalism,Christianity,and Protestantism; and such,in our own time,are the nationalist principle and contemporary democratic and social ideas. In the second place,there are the transitory,changing opinions,the outcome,as a rule,of general conceptions,of which every age sees the birth and disappearance; examples in point are the theories which mould literature and the arts — those,for instance,which produced romanticism,naturalism,mysticism,& c. Opinions of this order are as superficial,as a rule,as fashion,and as changeable. They may be compared to the ripples which ceaselessly arise and vanish on the surface of a deep lake.

The great generalised beliefs are very restricted in number. Their rise and fall form the culminating points of the history of every historic race. They constitute the real framework of civilisation.

It is easy to imbue the mind of crowds with a passing opinion,but very difficult to implant therein a lasting belief. However,a belief of this latter description once established,it is equally

difficult to uproot it. It is usually only to be changed at the cost of violent revolutions. Even revolutions can only avail when the belief has almost entirely lost its sway over men's minds. In that case revolutions serve to finally sweep away what had already been almost cast aside, though the force of habit prevented its complete abandonment. The beginning of a revolution is in reality the end of a belief.

The precise moment at which a great belief is doomed is easily recognisable; it is the moment when its value begins to be called in question. Every general belief being little else than a fiction, it can only survive on the condition that it be not subjected to examination.

But even when a belief is severely shaken, the institutions to which it has given rise retain their strength and disappear but slowly. Finally, when the belief has completely lost its force, all that rested upon it is soon involved in ruin. As yet a nation has never been able to change its beliefs without being condemned at the same time to transform all the elements of its civilisation. The nation continues this process of transformation until it has alighted on and accepted a new general belief: until this juncture it is perforce in a state of anarchy. General beliefs are the indispensable pillars of civilisations; they determine the trend of ideas. They alone are capable of inspiring faith and creating a

sense of duty.

Nations have always been conscious of the utility of acquiring general beliefs, and have instinctively understood that their disappearance would be the signal for their own decline. In the case of the Romans, the fanatical cult of Rome was the belief that made them masters of the world, and when the belief had died out Rome was doomed to die. As for the barbarians who destroyed the Roman civilisation, it was only when they had acquired certain commonly accepted beliefs that they attained a measure of cohesion and emerged from anarchy.

Plainly it is not for nothing that nations have always displayed intolerance in the defence of their opinions. This intolerance, open as it is to criticism from the philosophic standpoint, represents in the life of a people the most necessary of virtues. It was to found or uphold general beliefs that so many victims were sent to the stake in the Middle Ages and that so many inventors and innovators have died in despair even if they have escaped martyrdom. It is in defence, too, of such beliefs that the world has been so often the scene of the direst disorder, and that so many millions of men have died on the battlefield, and will yet die there.

There are great difficulties in the way of establishing a general belief, but when it is definitely implanted its power is for a long

time to come invincible, and however false it be philosophically it imposes itself upon the most luminous intelligence. Have not the European peoples regarded as incontrovertible for more than fifteen centuries religious legends which, closely examined, are as barbarous as those of Moloch? The frightful absurdity of the legend of a God who revenges himself for the disobedience of one of his creatures by inflicting horrible tortures on his son remained unperceived during many centuries. Such potent geniuses as a Galileo, a Newton, and a Leibnitz never supposed for an instant that the truth of such dogmas could be called in question. Nothing can be more typical than this fact of the hypnotising effect of general beliefs, but at the same time nothing can mark more decisively the humiliating limitations of our intelligence.

As soon as a new dogma is implanted in the mind of crowds it becomes the source of inspiration whence are evolved its institutions, arts, and mode of existence. The sway it exerts over men's minds under these circumstances is absolute. Men of action have no thought beyond realising the accepted belief, legislators beyond applying it, while philosophers, artists, and men of letters are solely preoccupied with its expression under various shapes.

From the fundamental belief transient accessory ideas may arise, but they always bear the impress of the belief from which they have sprung. The Egyptian civilisation, the European civilisation of the

Middle Ages, the Mussulman civilisation of the Arabs are all the outcome of a small number of religious beliefs which have left their mark on the least important elements of these civilisations and allow of their immediate recognition.

Thus it is that, thanks to general beliefs, the men of every age are enveloped in a network of traditions, opinions, and customs which render them all alike, and from whose yoke they cannot extricate themselves. Men are guided in their conduct above all by their beliefs and by the customs that are the consequence of those beliefs. These beliefs and customs regulate the smallest acts of our existence, and the most independent spirit cannot escape their influence. The tyranny exercised unconsciously on men's minds is the only real tyranny, because it cannot be fought against.

Tiberius, Ghengis Khan, and Napoleon were assuredly redoubtable tyrants, but from the depth of their graves Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Mahomet have exerted on the human soul a far profounder despotism. A conspiracy may overthrow a tyrant, but what can it avail against a firmly established belief? In its violent struggle with Roman Catholicism it is the French Revolution that has been vanquished, and this in spite of the fact that the sympathy of the crowd was apparently on its side, and in spite of recourse to destructive measures as pitiless as those of the Inquisition. The only real tyrants that humanity has known have always been the

memories of its dead or the illusions it has forged itself.

The philosophic absurdity that often marks general beliefs has never been an obstacle to their triumph. Indeed the triumph of such beliefs would seem impossible unless on the condition that they offer some mysterious absurdity. In consequence, the evident weakness of the socialist beliefs of today will not prevent them triumphing among the masses. Their real inferiority to all religious beliefs is solely the result of this consideration, that the ideal of happiness offered by the latter being realisable only in a future life, it was beyond the power of anybody to contest it. The socialist ideal of happiness being intended to be realised on earth, the vanity of its promises will at once appear as soon as the first efforts towards their realisation are made, and simultaneously the new belief will entirely lose its prestige. Its strength, in consequence, will only increase until the day when, having triumphed, its practical realisation shall commence. For this reason, while the new religion exerts to begin with, like all those that have preceded it, a destructive influence, it will be unable, in the future, to play a creative part.

2. The Changeable Opinions of Crowds

Above the substratum of fixed beliefs, whose power we have just demonstrated, is found an overlying growth of opinions, ideas, and

thoughts which are incessantly springing up and dying out. Some of them exist but for a day, and the more important scarcely outlive a generation. We have already noted that the changes which supervene in opinions of this order are at times far more superficial than real, and that they are always affected by racial considerations. When examining, for instance, the political institutions of France we showed that parties to all appearance utterly distinct — royalists, radicals, imperialists, socialists, & c. — have an ideal absolutely identical, and that this ideal is solely dependent on the mental structure of the French race, since a quite contrary ideal is found under analogous names among other races. Neither the name given to opinions nor deceptive adaptations alter the essence of things. The men of the Great Revolution, saturated with Latin literature, who (their eyes fixed on the Roman Republic), adopted its laws, its fasces, and its togas, did not become Romans because they were under the empire of a powerful historical suggestion. The task of the philosopher is to investigate what it is which subsists of ancient beliefs beneath their apparent changes, and to identify amid the moving flux of opinions the part determined by general beliefs and the genius of the race.

In the absence of this philosophic test it might be supposed that crowds change their political or religious beliefs frequently and at will. All history, whether political, religious, artistic, or

literary, seems to prove that such is the case. As an example, let us take a very short period of French history, merely that from 1790 to 1820, a period of thirty years' duration, that of a generation. In the course of it we see the crowd at first monarchical become very revolutionary, then very imperialist, and again very monarchical. In the matter of religion it gravitates in the same lapse of time from Catholicism to atheism, then towards deism, and then returns to the most pronounced forms of Catholicism. These changes take place not only amongst the masses, but also amongst those who direct them. We observe with astonishment the prominent men of the Convention, the sworn enemies of kings, men who would have neither gods nor masters, become the humble servants of Napoleon, and afterwards, under Louis XVIII, piously carry candles in religious processions.

Numerous, too, are the changes in the opinions of the crowd in the course of the following seventy years. The "Perfidious Albion" of the opening of the century is the ally of France under Napoleon's heir; Russia, twice invaded by France, which looked on with satisfaction at French reverses, becomes its friend.

In literature, art, and philosophy the successive evolutions of opinion are more rapid still. Romanticism, naturalism, mysticism, & c., spring up and die out in turn. The artist and the writer applauded yesterday are treated on the morrow with profound contempt.

When, however, we analyse all these changes in appearance so far reaching, what do we find? All those that are in opposition with the general beliefs and sentiments of the race are of transient duration, and the perted stream soon resumes its course. The opinions which are not linked to any general belief or sentiment of the race, and which in consequence cannot possess stability, are at the mercy of every chance, or, if the expression be preferred, of every change in the surrounding circumstances. Formed by suggestion and contagion, they are always momentary; they crop up and disappear as rapidly on occasion as the sandhills formed by the wind on the sea-coast.

At the present day the changeable opinions of crowds are greater in number than they ever were, and for three different reasons.

The first is that as the old beliefs are losing their influence to a greater and greater extent, they are ceasing to shape the ephemeral opinions of the moment as they did in the past. The weakening of general beliefs clears the ground for a crop of haphazard opinions without a past or a future.

The second reason is that the power of crowds being on the increase, and this power being less and less counterbalanced, the extreme mobility of ideas, which we have seen to be a peculiarity of crowds, can manifest itself without let or hindrance.

Finally, the third reason is the recent development of the newspaper press, by whose agency the most contrary opinions are being continually brought before the attention of crowds. The suggestions that might result from each individual opinion are soon destroyed by suggestions of an opposite character. The consequence is that no opinion succeeds in becoming widespread, and that the existence of all of them is ephemeral. An opinion nowadays dies out before it has found a sufficiently wide acceptance to become general.

A phenomenon quite new in the world's history, and most characteristic of the present age, has resulted from these different causes; I allude to the powerlessness of governments to direct opinion.

In the past, and in no very distant past, the action of governments and the influence of a few writers and a very small number of newspapers constituted the real reflectors of public opinion. Today the writers have lost all influence, and the newspapers only reflect opinion. As for statesmen, far from directing opinion, their only endeavour is to follow it. They have a dread of opinion, which amounts at times to terror, and causes them to adopt an utterly unstable line of conduct.

The opinion of crowds tends, then, more and more to become the supreme guiding principle in politics. It goes so far today as to

force on alliances,as has been seen recently in the case of the Franco-Russian alliance,which is solely the outcome of a popular movement. A curious symptom of the present time is to observe popes,kings,and emperors consent to be interviewed as a means of submitting their views on a given subject to the judgment of crowds. Formerly it might have been correct to say that politics were not a matter of sentiment. Can the same be said to-day,when politics are more and more swayed by the impulse of changeable crowds,who are uninfluenced by reason and can only be guided by sentiment?

As to the press,which formerly directed opinion,it has had,like governments,to humble itself before the power of crowds. It wields,no doubt,a considerable influence,but only because it is exclusively the reflection of the opinions of crowds and of their incessant variations. Become a mere agency for the supply of information,the press has renounced all endeavour to enforce an idea or a doctrine. It follows all the changes of public thought,obliged to do so by the necessities of competition under pain of losing its readers. The old staid and influential organs of the past,such as the Constitutionnel,the Débats,or the Siècle,which were accepted as oracles by the preceding generation,have disappeared or have become typical modern papers,in which a maximum of news is sandwiched in between light

articles,society gossip,and financial puffs. There can be no question today of a paper rich enough to allow its contributors to air their personal opinions,and such opinions would be of slight weight with readers who only ask to be kept informed or to be amused,and who suspect every affirmation of being prompted by motives of speculation. Even the critics have ceased to be able to assure the success of a book or a play. They are capable of doing harm,but not of doing a service. The papers are so conscious of the uselessness of everything in the shape of criticism or personal opinion,that they have reached the point of suppressing literary criticism,confining themselves to citing the title of a book,and appending a "puff" of two or three lines. In twenty years' time the same fate will probably have overtaken theatrical criticism.

The close watching of the course of opinion has become today the principal preoccupation of the press and of governments. The effect produced by an event,a legislative proposal,a speech,is without intermission what they require to know,and the task is not easy,for nothing is more mobile and changeable than the thought of crowds,and nothing more frequent than to see them execrate today what they applauded yesterday.

This total absence of any sort of direction of opinion,and at the same time the destruction of general beliefs,have had for final result an extreme pergency of convictions of every order,and a

growing indifference on the part of crowds to everything that does not plainly touch their immediate interests. Questions of doctrine, such as socialism, only recruit champions boasting genuine convictions among the quite illiterate classes, among the workers in mines and factories, for instance. Members of the lower middle class, and working men possessing some degree of instruction, have either become utterly sceptical or extremely unstable in their opinions.

The evolution which has been effected in this direction in the last twenty-five years is striking. During the preceding period, comparatively near us though it is, opinions still had a certain general trend; they had their origin in the acceptance of some fundamental belief. By the mere fact that an individual was a monarchist he possessed inevitably certain clearly defined ideas in history as well as in science, while by the mere fact that he was a republican, his ideas were quite contrary. A monarchist was well aware that men are not descended from monkeys, and a republican was not less well aware that such is in truth their descent. It was the duty of the monarchist to speak with horror, and of the republican to speak with veneration, of the great Revolution. There were certain names, such as those of Robespierre and Marat, that had to be uttered with an air of religious devotion, and other names, such as those of Cæsar, Augustus, or Napoleon, that ought never to be

mentioned unaccompanied by a torrent of invective. Even in the French Sorbonne this ingenuous fashion of conceiving history was general. There are pages in the books of the French official professors of history that are very curious from this point of view. They prove too how little the critical spirit is developed by the system of university education in vogue in France. I cite as an example the following extracts from the "French Revolution" of M. Rambaud, professor of history at the Sorbonne:

"The taking of the Bastille was a culminating event in the history not only of France, but of all Europe; and inaugurated a new epoch in the history of the world!"

With respect to Robespierre, we learn with stupefaction that "his dictatorship was based more especially on opinion, persuasion, and moral authority; it was a sort of pontificate in the hands of a virtuous man!" (pp. 91 and 220.)

At the present day, as the result of discussion and analysis, all opinions are losing their prestige; their distinctive features are rapidly worn away, and few survive capable of arousing our enthusiasm. The man of modern times is more and more a prey to indifference.

The general wearing away of opinions should not be too greatly deplored. That it is a symptom of decadence in the life of a people

cannot be contested. It is certain that men of immense, of almost supernatural insight, that apostles, leaders of crowds — men, in a word, of genuine and strong convictions — exert a far greater force than men who deny, who criticise, or who are indifferent, but it must not be forgotten that, given the power possessed at present by crowds, were a single opinion to acquire sufficient prestige to enforce its general acceptance, it would soon be endowed with so tyrannical a strength that everything would have to bend before it, and the era of free discussion would be closed for a long time. Crowds are occasionally easy-going masters, as were Heliogabalus and Tiberius, but they are also violently capricious. A civilisation, when the moment has come for crowds to acquire a high hand over it, is at the mercy of too many chances to endure for long. Could anything postpone for a while the hour of its ruin, it would be precisely the extreme instability of the opinions of crowds and their growing indifference with respect to all general beliefs.

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Book III. The Classification and Description of the Different Kinds of Crowds

Chapter I. The Classification of Crowds



The crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual, but that, from the point of view of feelings and of the acts these feelings provoke, the crowd may, according to circumstances, be better or worse than the individual.

Abstract: The general positions of crowds — The classification. 1. Heterogeneous crowds. Different varieties of them — The influence of race — The spirit of the crowd is weak in proportion as the spirit of the race is strong — The spirit of the race represents the civilised state and the spirit of the crowd the barbarian state. 2. Homogeneous crowds. Their different varieties — Sects, castes, and classes.

We have sketched in this work the general characteristics common to psychological crowds. It remains to point out the particular characteristics which accompany those of a general order in the different categories of collectivities, when they are transformed into a crowd under the influences of the proper exciting causes. We will, first of all, set forth in a few words a classification of crowds.

Our starting-point will be the simple multitude. Its most inferior form is met with when the multitude is composed of individuals belonging to different races. In this case its only common bond of union is the will, more or less respected of a chief. The barbarians

of very diverse origin who during several centuries invaded the Roman Empire, may be cited as a specimen of multitudes of this kind.

On a higher level than these multitudes composed of different races are those which under certain influences have acquired common characteristics, and have ended by forming a single race. They present at times characteristics peculiar to crowds, but these characteristics are overruled to a greater or less extent by racial considerations.

These two kinds of multitudes may, under certain influences investigated in this work, be transformed into organised or psychological crowds. We shall break up these organised crowds into the following divisions: —

A. Heterogeneous crowds.

1. Anonymous crowds (street crowds, for example).
2. Crowds not anonymous (juries, parliamentary assemblies, & c.).

B. Homogeneous crowds.

1. Sects (political sects, religious sects, & c.).
2. Castes (the military caste, the priestly caste, the working caste, & c.).

3. Classes (the middle classes,the peasant classes,& c.).

We will point out briefly the distinguishing characteristics of these different categories of crowds.

1. Heterogeneous Crowds

It is these collectivities whose characteristics have been studied in this volume. They are composed of individuals of any description,of any profession,and any degree of intelligence.

We are now aware that by the mere fact that men form part of a crowd engaged in action,their collective psychology differs essentially from their individual psychology,and their intelligence is affected by this differentiation. We have seen that intelligence is without influence in collectivities,they being solely under the sway of unconscious sentiments.

A fundamental factor,that of race,allows of a tolerably thorough differentiation of the various heterogeneous crowds.

We have often referred already to the part played by race,and have shown it to be the most powerful of the factors capable of determining men's actions. Its action is also to be traced in the character of crowds. A crowd composed of individuals assembled at haphazard,but all of them Englishmen or Chinamen,will differ widely from another crowd also composed of individuals of any and every

description, but of other races — Russians, Frenchmen, or Spaniards, for example.

The wide divergencies which their inherited mental constitution creates in men's modes of feeling and thinking at once come into prominence when, which rarely happens, circumstances gather together in the same crowd and in fairly equal proportions individuals of different nationality, and this occurs, however identical in appearance be the interests which provoked the gathering. The efforts made by the socialists to assemble in great congresses the representatives of the working-class populations of different countries, have always ended in the most pronounced discord. A Latin crowd, however revolutionary or however conservative it be supposed, will invariably appeal to the intervention of the State to realise its demands. It is always distinguished by a marked tendency towards centralisation and by a leaning, more or less pronounced, in favour of a dictatorship. An English or an American crowd, on the contrary, sets no store on the State, and only appeals to private initiative. A French crowd lays particular weight on equality and an English crowd on liberty. These differences of race explain how it is that there are almost as many different forms of socialism and democracy as there are nations.

The genius of the race, then, exerts a paramount influence upon the dispositions of a crowd. It is the powerful underlying force that

limits its changes of humour. It should be considered as an essential law that the inferior characteristics of crowds are the less accentuated in proportion as the spirit of the race is strong. The crowd state and the domination of crowds is equivalent to the barbarian state, or to a return to it. It is by the acquisition of a solidly constituted collective spirit that the race frees itself to a greater and greater extent from the unreflecting power of crowds, and emerges from the barbarian state. The only important classification to be made of heterogeneous crowds, apart from that based on racial considerations, is to separate them into anonymous crowds, such as street crowds, and crowds not anonymous — deliberative assemblies and juries, for example. The sentiment of responsibility absent from crowds of the first description and developed in those of the second often gives a very different tendency to their respective acts.

2. Homogeneous Crowds

Homogeneous crowds include: 1. Sects; 2. Castes; 3. Classes.

The sect represents the first step in the process of organisation of homogeneous crowds. A sect includes individuals differing greatly as to their education, their professions, and the class of society to which they belong, and with their common beliefs as the connecting link. Examples in point are religious and political sects.

The caste represents the highest degree of organisation of which the crowd is susceptible. While the sect includes individuals of very different professions, degrees of education and social surrounding, who are only linked together by the beliefs they hold in common, the caste is composed of individuals of the same profession, and in consequence similarly educated and of much the same social status. Examples in point are the military and priestly castes.

The class is formed of individuals of diverse origin, linked together not by a community of beliefs, as are the members of a sect, or by common professional occupations, as are the members of a caste, but by certain interests and certain habits of life and education almost identical. The middle class and the agricultural class are examples.

Being only concerned in this work with heterogeneous crowds, and reserving the study of homogeneous crowds (sects, castes, and classes) for another volume, I shall not insist here on the characteristics of crowds of this latter kind. I shall conclude this study of heterogeneous crowds by the examination of a few typical and distinct categories of crowds.

Chapter II. Crowds Termed Criminal Crowds



The usual motive of the crimes of crowds is a powerful suggestion, and the individuals who take part in such crimes are afterwards convinced that they have acted in obedience to duty, which is far

from being the case with the ordinary criminal.

Abstract: Crowds termed criminal crowds — A crowd may be legally yet not psychologically criminal — The absolute unconsciousness of the acts of crowds — Various examples — Psychology of the authors of the September massacres — Their reasoning, their sensibility, their ferocity and their morality.

Owing to the fact that crowds, after a period of excitement, enter upon a purely automatic and unconscious state, in which they are guided by suggestion, it seems difficult to qualify them in any case as criminal. I only retain this erroneous qualification because it has been definitely brought into vogue by recent psychological investigations. Certain acts of crowds are assuredly criminal, if considered merely in themselves, but criminal in that case in the same way as the act of a tiger devouring a Hindoo, after allowing its young to maul him for their amusement.

The usual motive of the crimes of crowds is a powerful suggestion, and the individuals who take part in such crimes are afterwards convinced that they have acted in obedience to duty, which is far from being the case with the ordinary criminal.

The history of the crimes committed by crowds illustrates what precedes.

The murder of M.de Launay,the governor of the Bastille,may be cited as a typical example. After the taking of the fortress the governor,surrounded by a very excited crowd,was dealt blows from every direction. It was proposed to hang him,to cut off his head,to tie him to a horse's tail. While struggling,he accidentally kicked one of those present. Some one proposed,and his suggestion was at once received with acclamation by the crowd,that the individual who had been kicked should cut the governor's throat.

"The individual in question,a cook out of work,whose chief reason for being at the Bastille was idle curiosity as to what was going on,esteems,that since such is the general opinion,the action is patriotic and even believes he deserves a medal for having destroyed a monster. With a sword that is lent him he strikes the bared neck,but the weapon being somewhat blunt and not cutting,he takes from his pocket a small black-handled knife and (in his capacity of cook he would be experienced in cutting up meat) successfully effects the operation."

The working of the process indicated above is clearly seen in this example. We have obedience to a suggestion,which is all the stronger because of its collective origin,and the murderer's conviction that he has committed a very meritorious act,a conviction the more natural seeing that he enjoys the unanimous approval of his fellow-citizens. An act of this kind may be

considered crime legally but not psychologically.

The general characteristics of criminal crowds are precisely the same as those we have met with in all crowds: openness to suggestion, credulity, mobility, the exaggeration of the sentiments good or bad, the manifestation of certain forms of morality, & c.

We shall find all these characteristics present in a crowd which has left behind it in French history the most sinister memories — the crowd which perpetrated the September massacres. In point of fact it offers much similarity with the crowd that committed the Saint Bartholomew massacres. I borrow the details from the narration of M. Taine, who took them from contemporary sources.

It is not known exactly who gave the order or made the suggestion to empty the prisons by massacring the prisoners. Whether it was Danton, as is probable, or another does not matter; the one interesting fact for us is the powerful suggestion received by the crowd charged with the massacre.

The crowd of murderers numbered some three hundred persons, and was a perfectly typical heterogeneous crowd. With the exception of a very small number of professional scoundrels, it was composed in the main of shopkeepers and artisans of every trade:

bootmakers, locksmiths, hairdressers, masons, clerks, messengers, & c.

Under the influence of the suggestion received they are perfectly

convinced,as was the cook referred to above,that they are accomplishing a patriotic duty. They fill a double office,being at once judge and executioner,but they do not for a moment regard themselves as criminals.

Deeply conscious of the importance of their duty,they begin by forming a sort of tribunal,and in connection with this act the ingenuousness of crowds and their rudimentary conception of justice are seen immediately. In consideration of the large number of the accused,it is decided that,to begin with,the nobles,priests,officers,and members of the king's household — in a word,all the individuals whose mere profession is proof of their guilt in the eyes of a good patriot — shall be slaughtered in a body,there being no need for a special decision in their case. The remainder shall be judged on their personal appearance and their reputation. In this way the rudimentary conscience of the crowd is satisfied. It will now be able to proceed legally with the massacre,and to give free scope to those instincts of ferocity whose genesis I have set forth elsewhere,they being instincts which collectivities always have it in them to develop to a high degree. These instincts,however — as is regularly the case in crowds — will not prevent the manifestation of other and contrary sentiments,such as a tenderheartedness often as extreme as the ferocity.

"They have the expansive sympathy and prompt sensibility of the Parisian working man. At the Abbaye, one of the federates, learning that the prisoners had been left without water for twenty-six hours, was bent on putting the gaoler to death, and would have done so but for the prayers of the prisoners themselves. When a prisoner is acquitted (by the improvised tribunal) every one, guards and slaughterers included, embraces him with transports of joy and applauds frantically," after which the wholesale massacre is recommenced. During its progress a pleasant gaiety never ceases to reign. There is dancing and singing around the corpses, and benches are arranged "for the ladies," delighted to witness the killing of aristocrats. The exhibition continues, moreover, of a special description of justice.

A slaughterer at the Abbaye having complained that the ladies placed at a little distance saw badly, and that only a few of those present had the pleasure of striking the aristocrats, the justice of the observation is admitted, and it is decided that the victims shall be made to pass slowly between two rows of slaughterers, who shall be under the obligation to strike with the back of the sword only so as to prolong the agony. At the prison de la Force the victims are stripped stark naked and literally "carved" for half an hour, after which, when every one has had a good view, they are finished off by a blow that lays bare their entrails.

The slaughterers,too,have their scruples and exhibit that moral sense whose existence in crowds we have already pointed out. They refuse to appropriate the money and jewels of the victims,taking them to the table of the committees.

Those rudimentary forms of reasoning,characteristic of the mind of crowds,are always to be traced in all their acts. Thus,after the slaughter of the 1,200 or 1,500 enemies of the nation,some one makes the remark,and his suggestion is at once adopted,that the other prisons,those containing aged beggars,vagabonds,and young prisoners,hold in reality useless mouths,of which it would be well on that account to get rid. Besides,among them there should certainly be enemies of the people,a woman of the name of Delarue,for instance,the widow of a poisoner:

"She must be furious at being in prison,if she could she would set fire to Paris: she must have said so,she has said so. Another good riddance." The demonstration appears convincing,and the prisoners are massacred without exception,included in the number being some fifty children of from twelve to seventeen years of age,who,of course,might themselves have become enemies of the nation,and of whom in consequence it was clearly well to be rid.

At the end of a week's work,all these operations being brought to an end,the slaughterers can think of reposing themselves.

Profoundly convinced that they have deserved well of their country, they went to the authorities and demanded a recompense. The most zealous went so far as to claim a medal.

The history of the Commune of 1871 affords several facts analogous to those which precede. Given the growing influence of crowds and the successive capitulations before them of those in authority, we are destined to witness many others of a like nature.

Chapter III. Criminal Juries



A gathering of scientific men or of artists, owing to the mere fact that they form an assemblage, will not deliver judgments on general subjects sensibly different from those rendered by a gathering of masons or grocers.

Abstract:Criminal juries — General characteristics of juries — Statistics show that their decisions are independent of their composition — The manner in which an impression may be made on

juries — The style and influence of argument — The methods of persuasion of celebrated counsel — The nature of those crimes for which juries are respectively indulgent or severe — The utility of the jury as an institution, and the danger that would result from its place being taken by magistrates.

Being unable to study here every category of jury, I shall only examine the most important — that of the juries of the Court of Assize. These juries afford an excellent example of the heterogeneous crowd that is not anonymous. We shall find them display suggestibility and but slight capacity for reasoning, while they are open to the influence of the leaders of crowds, and they are guided in the main by unconscious sentiments. In the course of this investigation we shall have occasion to observe some interesting examples of the errors that may be made by persons not versed in the psychology of crowds.

Juries, in the first place, furnish us a good example of the slight importance of the mental level of the different elements composing a crowd, so far as the decisions it comes to are concerned. We have seen that when a deliberative assembly is called upon to give its opinion on a question of a character not entirely technical, intelligence stands for nothing. For instance, a gathering of scientific men or of artists, owing to the mere fact that they form an assemblage, will not deliver judgments on general subjects

sensibly different from those rendered by a gathering of masons or grocers. At various periods, and in particular previous to 1848, the French administration instituted a careful choice among the persons summoned to form a jury, picking the jurors from among the enlightened classes; choosing professors, functionaries, men of letters, & c. At the present day jurors are recruited for the most part from among small tradesmen, petty capitalists, and employés. Yet, to the great astonishment of specialist writers, whatever the composition of the jury has been, its decisions have been identical. Even the magistrates, hostile as they are to the institution of the jury, have had to recognise the exactness of the assertion. M. Bérard des Glajeux, a former President of the Court of Assizes, expresses himself on the subject in his "Memoirs" in the following terms: —

"The selection of jurymen is today in reality in the hands of the municipal councillors, who put people down on the list or eliminate them from it in accordance with the political and electoral preoccupations inherent in their situation.... The majority of the jurors chosen are persons engaged in trade, but persons of less importance than formerly, and employés belonging to certain branches of the administration.... Both opinions and professions counting for nothing once the rôle of judge assumed, many of the jurymen having the ardour of neophytes, and men of the best

intentions being similarly disposed in humble situations, the spirit of the jury has not changed: its verdicts have remained the same."

Of the passage just cited the conclusions, which are just, are to be borne in mind and not the explanations, which are weak. Too much astonishment should not be felt at this weakness, for, as a rule, counsel equally with magistrates seem to be ignorant of the psychology of crowds and, in consequence, of juries. I find a proof of this statement in a fact related by the author just quoted. He remarks that Lachaud, one of the most illustrious barristers practising in the Court of Assize, made systematic use of his right to object to a juror in the case of all individuals of intelligence on the list. Yet experience — and experience alone — has ended by acquainting us with the utter uselessness of these objections. This is proved by the fact that at the present day public prosecutors and barristers, at any rate those belonging to the Parisian bar, have entirely renounced their right to object to a juror; still, as M. des Glajeux remarks, the verdicts have not changed, "they are neither better nor worse."

Like all crowds, juries are very strongly impressed by sentimental considerations, and very slightly by argument. "They cannot resist the sight," writes a barrister, "of a mother giving its child the breast, or of orphans." "It is sufficient that a woman should be of agreeable appearance," says M. des Glajeux, "to win the

benevolence of the jury."

Without pity for crimes of which it appears possible they might themselves be the victims — such crimes, moreover, are the most dangerous for society — juries, on the contrary, are very indulgent in the case of breaches of the law whose motive is passion. They are rarely severe on infanticide by girl-mothers, or hard on the young woman who throws vitriol at the man who has seduced and deserted her, for the reason that they feel instinctively that society runs but slight danger from such crimes, and that in a country in which the law does not protect deserted girls the crime of the girl who avenges herself is rather useful than harmful, inasmuch as it frightens future seducers in advance.

Juries, like all crowds, are profoundly impressed by prestige, and President des Glajeux very properly remarks that, very democratic as juries are in their composition, they are very aristocratic in their likes and dislikes: "Name, birth, great wealth, celebrity, the assistance of an illustrious counsel, everything in the nature of distinction or that lends brilliancy to the accused, stands him in extremely good stead."

The chief concern of a good counsel should be to work upon the feelings of the jury, and, as with all crowds, to argue but little, or only to employ rudimentary modes of reasoning. An English

barrister, famous for his successes in the assize courts, has well set forth the line of action to be followed: —

“While pleading he would attentively observe the jury. The most favourable opportunity has been reached. By dint of insight and experience the counsel reads the effect of each phrase on the faces of the jurymen, and draws his conclusions in consequence. His first step is to be sure which members of the jury are already favourable to his cause. It is short work to definitely gain their adhesion, and having done so he turns his attention to the members who seem, on the contrary, ill-disposed, and endeavours to discover why they are hostile to the accused. This is the delicate part of his task, for there may be an infinity of reasons for condemning a man, apart from the sentiment of justice.”

These few lines résumé the entire mechanism of the art of oratory, and we see why the speech prepared in advance has so slight an effect, it being necessary to be able to modify the terms employed from moment to moment in accordance with the impression produced.

The orator does not require to convert to his views all the members of a jury, but only the leading spirits among it who will determine the general opinion. As in all crowds, so in juries there are a small number of individuals who serve as guides to the rest. “I have

found by experience," says the counsel cited above, "that one or two energetic men suffice to carry the rest of the jury with them." It is those two or three whom it is necessary to convince by skilful suggestions. First of all, and above all, it is necessary to please them. The man forming part of a crowd whom one has succeeded in pleasing is on the point of being convinced, and is quite disposed to accept as excellent any arguments that may be offered him. I detach the following anecdote from an interesting account of M. Lachaud, alluded to above: —

"It is well known that during all the speeches he would deliver in the course of an assize sessions, Lachaud never lost sight of the two or three jurymen whom he knew or felt to be influential but obstinate. As a rule he was successful in winning over these refractory jurors. On one occasion, however, in the provinces, he had to deal with a jurymen whom he plied in vain for three-quarters of an hour with his most cunning arguments; the man was the seventh jurymen, the first on the second bench. The case was desperate. Suddenly, in the middle of a passionate demonstration, Lachaud stopped short, and addressing the President of the court said:

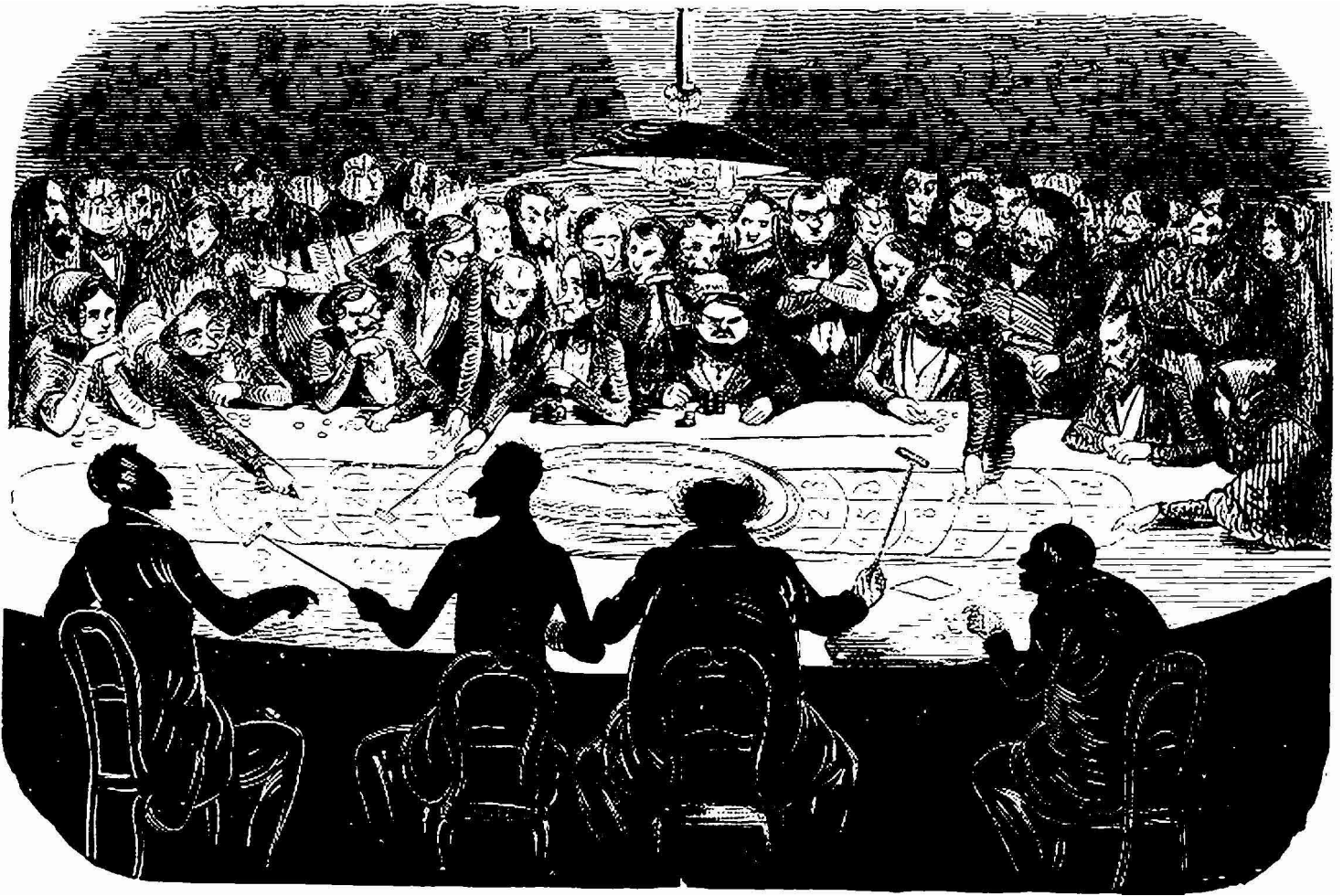
'Would you give instructions for the curtain there in front to be drawn? The seventh jurymen is blinded by the sun.' The jurymen in question reddened, smiled, and expressed his thanks. He was won over for the defence."

Many writers, some of them most distinguished, have started of late a strong campaign against the institution of the jury, although it is the only protection we have against the errors, really very frequent, of a caste that is under no control. A portion of these writers advocate a jury recruited solely from the ranks of the enlightened classes; but we have already proved that even in this case the verdicts would be identical with those returned under the present system. Other writers, taking their stand on the errors committed by juries, would abolish the jury and replace it by judges. It is difficult to see how these would-be reformers can forget that the errors for which the jury is blamed were committed in the first instance by judges, and that when the accused person comes before a jury he has already been held to be guilty by several magistrates, by the juge d'instruction, the public prosecutor, and the Court of Arraignment. It should thus be clear that were the accused to be definitely judged by magistrates instead of by jurymen, he would lose his only chance of being admitted innocent. The errors of juries have always been first of all the errors of magistrates. It is solely the magistrates, then, who should be blamed when particularly monstrous judicial errors crop up, such, for instance, as the quite recent condemnation of Dr. L — who, prosecuted by a juge d'instruction, of excessive stupidity, on the strength of the denunciation of a half-idiot girl, who accused the doctor of having performed an illegal

operation upon her for thirty francs,would have been sent to penal servitude but for an explosion of public indignation,which had for result that he was immediately set at liberty by the Chief of the State. The honourable character given the condemned man by all his fellow-citizens made the grossness of the blunder self-evident. The magistrates themselves admitted it,and yet out of caste considerations they did all they could to prevent the pardon being signed. In all similar affairs the jury,confronted with technical details it is unable to understand,naturally hearkens to the public prosecutor,arguing that,after all,the affair has been investigated by magistrates trained to unravel the most intricate situations. Who,then,are the real authors of the error — the jurymen or the magistrates? We should cling vigorously to the jury. It constitutes,perhaps,the only category of crowd that cannot be replaced by any individuality. It alone can temper the severity of the law,which,equal for all,ought in principle to be blind and to take no cognisance of particular cases. Inaccessible to pity,and heeding nothing but the text of the law,the judge in his professional severity would visit with the same penalty the burglar guilty of murder and the wretched girl whom poverty and her abandonment by her seducer have driven to infanticide. The jury,on the other hand,instinctively feels that the seduced girl is much less guilty than the seducer,who,however,is not touched by the law,and that she deserves every indulgence.

Being well acquainted with the psychology of castes, and also with the psychology of other categories of crowds, I do not perceive a single case in which, wrongly accused of a crime, I should not prefer to have to deal with a jury rather than with magistrates. I should have some chance that my innocence would be recognised by the former and not the slightest chance that it would be admitted by the latter. The power of crowds is to be dreaded, but the power of certain castes is to be dreaded yet more. Crowds are open to conviction; castes never are.

Chapter IV. Electoral Crowds



With regard to social problems, owing to the number of unknown quantities they offer, men are substantially, equally ignorant.

Abstract: General characteristics of electoral crowds — The manner of persuading them — The qualities that should be possessed by a candidate — Necessity of prestige — Why working men and peasants so rarely choose candidates from their own class — The influence of words and formulas on the elector — The general aspect of election oratory — How the opinions of the elector are formed — The power of political committees — They represent the most redoubtable form of tyranny — The committees of the Revolution — Universal suffrage cannot be replaced in spite of its slight

psychological value — Why it is that the votes recorded would remain the same even if the right of voting were restricted to a limited class of citizens — Of what universal suffrage is the expression in all countries.

Electoral crowds — that is to say,collectivities invested with the power of electing the holders of certain functions — constitute heterogeneous crowds,but as their action is confined to a single clearly determined matter,namely,to choosing between different candidates,they present only a few of the characteristics previously described. Of the characteristics peculiar to crowds,they display in particular but slight aptitude for reasoning,the absence of the critical spirit,irritability,credulity,and simplicity. In their decision,moreover,is to be traced the influence of the leaders of crowds and the part played by the factors we have enumerated: affirmation,repitition,prestige,and contagion.

Let us examine by what methods electoral crowds are to be persuaded. It will be easy to deduce their psychology from the methods that are most successful.

It is of primary importance that the candidate should possess prestige. Personal prestige can only be replaced by that resulting from wealth. Talent and even genius are not elements of success of

serious importance.

Of capital importance, on the other hand, is the necessity for the candidate of possessing prestige, of being able, that is, to force himself upon the electorate without discussion. The reason why the electors, of whom a majority are working men or peasants, so rarely choose a man from their own ranks to represent them is that such a person enjoys no prestige among them. When, by chance, they do elect a man who is their equal, it is as a rule for subsidiary reasons — for instance, to spite an eminent man, or an influential employer of labour on whom the elector is in daily dependence, and whose master he has the illusion he becomes in this way for a moment.

The possession of prestige does not suffice, however, to assure the success of a candidate. The elector stickles in particular for the flattery of his greed and vanity. He must be overwhelmed with the most extravagant blandishments, and there must be no hesitation in making him the most fantastic promises. If he is a working man it is impossible to go too far in insulting and stigmatising employers of labour. As for the rival candidate, an effort must be made to destroy his chance by establishing by dint of affirmation, repetition, and contagion that he is an arrant scoundrel, and that it is a matter of common knowledge that he has been guilty of several crimes. It is, of course, useless to trouble about any semblance of proof. Should the adversary be ill-

acquainted with the psychology of crowds he will try to justify himself by arguments instead of confining himself to replying to one set of affirmations by another; and he will have no chance whatever of being successful.

The candidate's written programme should not be too categorical, since later on his adversaries might bring it up against him; in his verbal programme, however, there cannot be too much exaggeration. The most important reforms maybe fearlessly promised. At the moment they are made these exaggerations produce a great effect, and they are not binding for the future, it being a matter of constant observation that the elector never troubles himself to know how far the candidate he has returned has followed out the electoral programme he applauded, and in virtue of which the election was supposed to have been secured.

In what precedes, all the factors of persuasion which we have described are to be recognised. We shall come across them again in the action exerted by words and formulas, whose magical sway we have already insisted upon. An orator who knows how to make use of these means of persuasion can do what he will with a crowd. Expressions such as infamous capital, vile exploiters, the admirable working man, the socialisation of wealth, & c., always produce the same effect, although already somewhat worn by use. But the candidate who hits on a new formula as devoid as possible of precise meaning, and

apt in consequence to flatter the most varied aspirations, infallibly obtains a success. The sanguinary Spanish revolution of 1873 was brought about by one of these magical phrases of complex meaning on which everybody can put his own interpretation. A contemporary writer has described the launching of this phrase in terms that deserve to be quoted: —

“The radicals have made the discovery that a centralised republic is a monarchy in disguise, and to humour them the Cortes had unanimously proclaimed a federal republic, though none of the voters could have explained what it was he had just voted for. This formula, however, delighted everybody; the joy was intoxicating, delirious. The reign of virtue and happiness had just been inaugurated on earth. A republican whose opponent refused him the title of federalist considered himself to be mortally insulted. People addressed each other in the streets with the words: ‘Long live the federal republic!’ After which the praises were sung of the mystic virtue of the absence of discipline in the army, and of the autonomy of the soldiers. What was understood by the ‘federal republic?’ There were those who took it to mean the emancipation of the provinces, institutions akin to those of the United States and administrative decentralisation; others had in view the abolition of all authority and the speedy commencement of the great social liquidation. The socialists of Barcelona and Andalusia stood

out for the absolute sovereignty of the communes; they proposed to endow Spain with ten thousand independent municipalities, to legislate on their own account, and their creation to be accompanied by the suppression of the police and the army. In the southern provinces the insurrection was soon seen to spread from town to town and village to village.

Directly a village had made its pronunciamiento its first care was to destroy the telegraph wires and the railway lines so as to cut off all communication with its neighbours and Madrid. The sorriest hamlet was determined to stand on its own bottom. Federation had given place to cantonalism, marked by massacres, incendiarism, and every description of brutality, and bloody saturnalia were celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the land."

With respect to the influence that may be exerted by reasoning on the minds of electors, to harbour the least doubt on this subject can only be the result of never having read the reports of an electioneering meeting. In such a gathering affirmations, invectives, and sometimes blows are exchanged, but never arguments. Should silence be established for a moment it is because some one present, having the reputation of a "tough customer," has announced that he is about to heckle the candidate by putting him one of those embarrassing questions which are always the joy of the audience. The satisfaction, however, of the opposition party is

shortlived,for the voice of the questioner is soon drowned in the uproar made by his adversaries. The following reports of public meetings,chosen from hundreds of similar examples,and taken from the daily papers,may be considered as typical: —

“One of the organisers of the meeting having asked the assembly to elect a president,the storm bursts. The anarchists leap on to the platform to take the committee table by storm. The socialists make an energetic defence; blows are exchanged,and each party accuses the other of being spies in the pay of the Government,& c.... A citizen leaves the hall with a black eye.

“The committee is at length installed as best it may be in the midst of the tumult,and the right to speak devolves upon

‘Comrade’ X.

“The orator starts a vigorous attack on the socialists,who interrupt him with shouts of ‘Idiot,scoundrel,blackguard!’ & c.,epithets to which Comrade X. replies by setting forth a theory according to which the socialists are ‘idiots’ or ‘jokers.’ ”

“The Allemanist party had organised yesterday evening,in the Hall of Commerce,in the Rue du Faubourg-du-Temple,a great meeting,preliminary to the workers’ fête of the 1st of May. The watchword of the meeting was ‘Calm and Tranquillity!’

"Comrade G — alludes to the socialists as 'idiots' and 'humbugs.'

"At these words there is an exchange of invectives and orators and audience come to blows. Chairs, tables, and benches are converted into weapons," & c., & c.

It is not to be imagined for a moment that this description of discussion is peculiar to a determined class of electors and dependent on their social position. In every anonymous assembly whatever, though it be composed exclusively of highly educated persons, discussion always assumes the same shape. I have shown that when men are collected in a crowd there is a tendency towards their mental levelling at work, and proof of this is to be found at every turn. Take, for example, the following extract from a report of a meeting composed exclusively of students, which I borrow from the Temps of 13th of February, 1895: —

"The tumult only increased as the evening went on; I do not believe that a single orator succeeded in uttering two sentences without being interrupted. At every instant there came shouts from this or that direction or from every direction at once. Applause was intermingled with hissing, violent discussions were in progress between individual members of the audience, sticks were brandished threateningly, others beat a tattoo on the floor, and the

interrupters were greeted with yells of 'Put him out!' or 'Let him speak!'

"M.C — lavished such epithets as odious and cowardly, monstrous, vile, venal and vindictive, on the Association, which he declared he wanted to destroy," & c., & c.

How, it may be asked, can an elector form an opinion under such conditions? To put such a question is to harbour a strange delusion as to the measure of liberty that may be enjoyed by a collectivity. Crowds have opinions that have been imposed upon them, but they never boast reasoned opinions. In the case under consideration the opinions and votes of the electors are in the hands of the election committees, whose leading spirits are, as a rule, publicans, their influence over the working men, to whom they allow credit, being great. "Do you know what an election committee is?" writes M. Schérer, one of the most valiant champions of present-day democracy. "It is neither more nor less than the corner-stone of our institutions, the masterpiece of the political machine. France is governed today by the election committees."

To exert an influence over them is not difficult, provided the candidate be in himself acceptable and possess adequate financial resources. According to the admissions of the donors, three millions of francs sufficed to secure the repeated elections of General

Boulanger.

Such is the psychology of electoral crowds. It is identical with that of other crowds: neither better nor worse.

In consequence I draw no conclusion against universal suffrage from what precedes. Had I to settle its fate, I should preserve it as it is for practical reasons, which are to be deduced in point of fact from our investigation of the psychology of crowds. On this account I shall proceed to set them forth.

No doubt the weak side of universal suffrage is too obvious to be overlooked. It cannot be gainsaid that civilisation has been the work of a small minority of superior intelligences constituting the culminating point of a pyramid, whose stages, widening in proportion to the decrease of mental power, represent the masses of a nation. The greatness of a civilisation cannot assuredly depend upon the votes given by inferior elements boasting solely numerical strength. Doubtless, too, the votes recorded by crowds are often very dangerous. They have already cost us several invasions, and in view of the triumph of socialism, for which they are preparing the way, it is probable that the vagaries of popular sovereignty will cost us still more dearly.

Excellent, however, as these objections are in theory, in practice they lose all force, as will be admitted if the invincible strength

be remembered of ideas transformed into dogmas. The dogma of the sovereignty of crowds is as little defensible, from the philosophical point of view, as the religious dogmas of the Middle Ages, but it enjoys at present the same absolute power they formerly enjoyed. It is as unattackable in consequence as in the past were our religious ideas. Imagine a modern freethinker miraculously transported into the midst of the Middle Ages. Do you suppose that, after having ascertained the sovereign power of the religious ideas that were then in force, he would have been tempted to attack them? Having fallen into the hands of a judge disposed to send him to the stake, under the imputation of having concluded a pact with the devil, or of having been present at the witches sabbath, would it have occurred to him to call in question the existence of the devil or of the sabbath? It were as wise to oppose cyclones with discussion as the beliefs of crowds. The dogma of universal suffrage possesses today the power the Christian dogmas formerly possessed. Orators and writers allude to it with a respect and adulation that never fell to the share of Louis XIV. In consequence the same position must be taken up with regard to it as with regard to all religious dogmas. Time alone can act upon them.

Besides, it would be the more useless to attempt to undermine this dogma, inasmuch as it has an appearance of reasonableness in its favour. "In an era of equality," Tocqueville justly remarks, "men

have no faith in each other on account of their being all alike; yet this same similitude gives them an almost limitless confidence in the judgment of the public, the reason being that it does not appear probable that, all men being equally enlightened, truth and numerical superiority should not go hand in hand."

Must it be believed that with a restricted suffrage — a suffrage restricted to those intellectually capable if it be desired — an improvement would be effected in the votes of crowds? I cannot admit for a moment that this would be the case, and that for the reasons I have already given touching the mental inferiority of all collectivities, whatever their composition. In a crowd men always tend to the same level, and, on general questions, a vote, recorded by forty academicians is no better than that of forty water-carriers. I do not in the least believe that any of the votes for which universal suffrage is blamed — the re-establishment of the Empire, for instance — would have fallen out differently had the voters been exclusively recruited among learned and liberally educated men. It does not follow because an individual knows Greek or mathematics, is an architect, a veterinary surgeon, a doctor, or a barrister, that he is endowed with a special intelligence of social questions. All our political economists are highly educated, being for the most part professors or academicians, yet is there a single general question — protection, bimetallism, & c. — on which they

have succeeded in agreeing? The explanation is that their science is only a very attenuated form of our universal ignorance. With regard to social problems,owing to the number of unknown quantities they offer,men are substantially,equally ignorant.

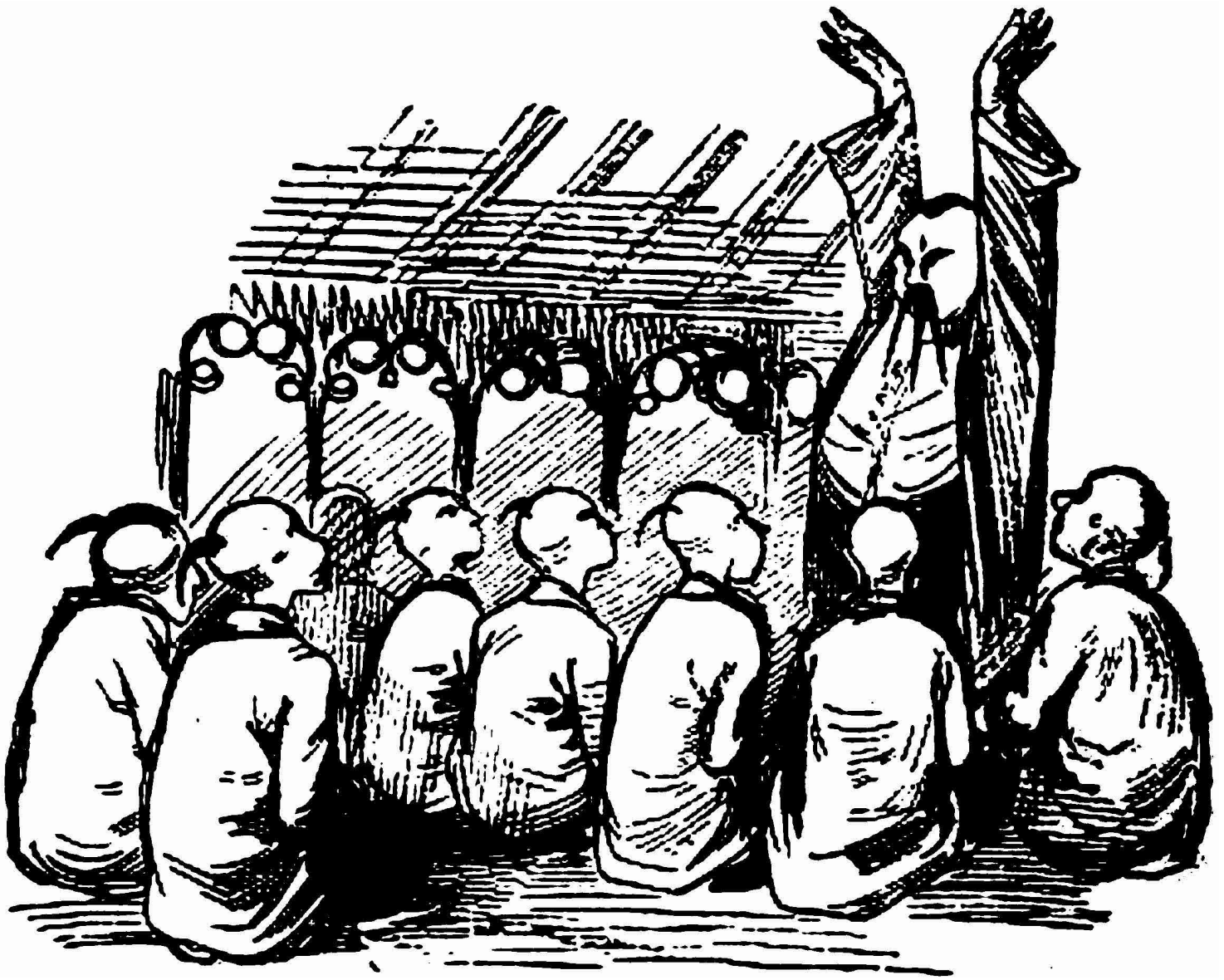
In consequence,were the electorate solely composed of persons stuffed with sciences their votes would be no better than those emitted at present. They would be guided in the main by their sentiments and by party spirit. We should be spared none of the difficulties we now have to contend with,and we should certainly be subjected to the oppressive tyranny of castes.

Whether the suffrage of crowds be restricted or general,whether it be exercised under a republic or a monarchy,in France,in Belgium,in Greece,in Portugal,or in Spain,it is everywhere identical; and,when all is said and done,it is the expression of the unconscious aspirations and needs of the race. In each country the average opinions of those elected represent the genius of the race,and they will be found not to alter sensibly from one generation to another.

It is seen,then,that we are confronted once more by the fundamental notion of race,which we have come across so often,and on this other notion,which is the outcome of the first,that institutions and governments play but a small part in the life of a people. Peoples are guided in the main by the genius of their race,that is,by that

inherited residue of qualities of which the genius is the sum total. Race and the slavery of our daily necessities are the mysterious master-causes that rule our destiny.

Chapter V. Parliamentary Assemblies



The influence of the leaders is due in very small measure to the arguments they employ, but in a large degree to their prestige. The best proof of this is that, should they by any circumstance lose their prestige, their influence disappears.

Abstract:Parliamentary crowds present most of the characteristics common to heterogeneous crowds that are not anonymous — The simplicity of their opinions — Their suggestibility and its limits — Their indestructible, fixed opinions and their changed opinions

— The reason of the predominance of indecision — The role of the leaders — The reason of their prestige — They are the true masters of an assembly whose votes, on that account, are merely those of a small minority — The absolute power they exercise — The elements of their oratorical art — Phrases and images — The psychological necessity the leaders are under of being in a general way of stubborn convictions and narrow-minded — It is impossible for a speaker without prestige to obtain recognition for his arguments — The exaggeration of the sentiments, whether good or bad, of assemblies — At certain moments they become automatic — The sittings of the Convention — Cases in which an assembly loses the characteristics of crowds — The influence of specialists when technical questions arise — The advantages and dangers of a parliamentary system in all countries — It is adapted to modern needs; but it involves financial waste and the progressive curtailment of all liberty — Conclusion.

In parliamentary assemblies we have an example of heterogeneous crowds that are not anonymous. Although the mode of election of their members varies from epoch to epoch, and from nation to nation, they present very similar characteristics. In this case the influence of the race makes itself felt to weaken or exaggerate the characteristics common to crowds, but not to prevent their manifestation. The parliamentary assemblies of the most widely

different countries, of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, France, and America present great analogies in their debates and votes, and leave the respective governments face to face with identical difficulties.

Moreover, the parliamentary system represents the ideal of all modern civilised peoples. The system is the expression of the idea, psychologically erroneous, but generally admitted, that a large gathering of men is much more capable than a small number of coming to a wise and independent decision on a given subject.

The general characteristics of crowds are to be met with in parliamentary assemblies: intellectual simplicity, irritability, suggestibility, the exaggeration of the sentiments and the preponderating influence of a few leaders. In consequence, however, of their special composition parliamentary crowds offer some distinctive features, which we shall point out shortly.

Simplicity in their opinions is one of their most important characteristics. In the case of all parties, and more especially so far as the Latin peoples are concerned, an invariable tendency is met with in crowds of this kind to solve the most complicated social problems by the simplest abstract principles and general laws applicable to all cases. Naturally the principles vary with

the party; but owing to the mere fact that the individual members are a part of a crowd, they are always inclined to exaggerate the worth of their principles, and to push them to their extreme consequences. In consequence parliaments are more especially representative of extreme opinions.

The most perfect example of the ingenuous simplification of opinions peculiar to assemblies is offered by the Jacobins of the French Revolution. Dogmatic and logical to a man, and their brains full of vague generalities, they busied themselves with the application of fixed-principles without concerning themselves with events. It has been said of them, with reason, that they went through the Revolution without witnessing it. With the aid of the very simple dogmas that served them as guide, they imagined they could recast society from top to bottom, and cause a highly refined civilisation to return to a very anterior phase of the social evolution. The methods they resorted to to realise their dream wore the same stamp of absolute ingenuousness. They confined themselves, in reality, to destroying what stood in their way.

All of them, moreover — Girondists, the Men of the Mountain, the Thermidorians, & c. — were alike animated by the same spirit.

Parliamentary crowds are very open to suggestion; and, as in the case of all crowds, the suggestion comes from leaders possessing

prestige; but the suggestibility of parliamentary assemblies has very clearly defined limits, which it is important to point out.

On all questions of local or regional interest every member of an assembly has fixed, unalterable opinions, which no amount of argument can shake. The talent of a Demosthenes would be powerless to change the vote of a Deputy on such questions as protection or the privilege of distilling alcohol, questions in which the interests of influential electors are involved. The suggestion emanating from these electors and undergone before the time to vote arrives, sufficiently outweighs suggestions from any other source to annul them and to maintain an absolute fixity of opinion.

On general questions — the overthrow of a Cabinet, the imposition of a tax, & c. — there is no longer any fixity of opinion, and the suggestions of leaders can exert an influence, though not in quite the same way as in an ordinary crowd. Every party has its leaders, who possess occasionally an equal influence. The result is that the Deputy finds himself placed between two contrary suggestions, and is inevitably made to hesitate. This explains how it is that he is often seen to vote in contrary fashion in an interval of a quarter of an hour or to add to a law an article which nullifies it; for instance, to withdraw from employers of labour the right of choosing and dismissing their workmen, and then to very nearly annul this measure by an amendment.

It is for the same reason that every Chamber that is returned has some very stable opinions, and other opinions that are very shifting. On the whole, the general questions being the more numerous, indecision is predominant in the Chamber — the indecision which results from the ever-present fear of the elector, the suggestion received from whom is always latent, and tends to counterbalance the influence of the leaders.

Still, it is the leaders who are definitely the masters in those numerous discussions, with regard to the subject-matter of which the members of an assembly are without strong preconceived opinions.

The necessity for these leaders is evident, since, under the name of heads of groups, they are met with in the assemblies of every country. They are the real rulers of an assembly. Men forming a crowd cannot do without a master, whence it results that the votes of an assembly only represent, as a rule, the opinions of a small minority.

The influence of the leaders is due in very small measure to the arguments they employ, but in a large degree to their prestige. The best proof of this is that, should they by any circumstance lose their prestige, their influence disappears.

The prestige of these political leaders is individual, and independent of name or celebrity: a fact of which M. Jules Simon gives us some

very curious examples in his remarks on the prominent men of the Assembly of 1848, of which he was a member: —

“Two months before he was all-powerful, Louis Napoleon was entirely without the least importance.

“Victor Hugo mounted the tribune. He failed to achieve success. He was listened to as Félix Pyat was listened to, but he did not obtain as much applause. ‘I don't like his ideas,’ Vaublanc said to me, speaking of Félix Pyat, ‘but he is one of the greatest writers and the greatest orator of France.’ Edgar Quinet, in spite of his exceptional and powerful intelligence, was held in no esteem whatever. He had been popular for awhile before the opening of the Assembly; in the Assembly he had no popularity.

“The splendour of genius makes itself less felt in political assemblies than anywhere else. They only give heed to eloquence appropriate to the time and place and to party services, not to services rendered the country. For homage to be rendered Lamartine in 1848 and Thiers in 1871, the stimulant was needed of urgent, inexorable interest. As soon as the danger was passed the parliamentary world forgot in the same instant its gratitude and its fright.”

I have quoted the preceding passage for the sake of the facts it contains, not of the explanations it offers, their psychology being

somewhat poor. A crowd would at once lose its character of a crowd were it to credit its leaders with their services, whether of a party nature or rendered their country. The crowd that obeys a leader is under the influence of his prestige, and its submission is not dictated by any sentiment of interest or gratitude.

In consequence the leader endowed with sufficient prestige wields almost absolute power. The immense influence exerted during a long series of years, thanks to his prestige, by a celebrated Deputy, beaten at the last general election in consequence of certain financial events, is well known. He had only to give the signal and Cabinets were overthrown. A writer has clearly indicated the scope of his action in the following lines: —

"It is due, in the main, to M.X — that we paid three times as dearly as we should have done for Tonkin, that we remained so long on a precarious footing in Madagascar, that we were defrauded of an empire in the region of the Lower Niger, and that we have lost the preponderating situation we used to occupy in Egypt. The theories of M.X — have cost us more territories than the disasters of Napoleon I."

We must not harbour too bitter a grudge against the leader in question. It is plain that he has cost us very dear; but a great part of his influence was due to the fact that he followed public

opinion, which, in colonial matters, was far from being at the time what it has since become. A leader is seldom in advance of public opinion; almost always all he does is to follow it and to espouse all its errors.

The means of persuasion of the leaders we are dealing with, apart from their prestige, consist in the factors we have already enumerated several times. To make a skilful use of these resources a leader must have arrived at a comprehension, at least in an unconscious manner, of the psychology of crowds, and must know how to address them. He should be aware, in particular, of the fascinating influence of words, phrases, and images. He should possess a special description of eloquence, composed of energetic affirmations — unburdened with proofs — and impressive images, accompanied by very summary arguments. This is a kind of eloquence that is met with in all assemblies, the English Parliament included, the most serious though it is of all.

"Debates in the House of Commons," says the English philosopher Maine, "may be constantly read in which the entire discussion is confined to an exchange of rather weak generalities and rather violent personalities. General formulas of this description exercise a prodigious influence on the imagination of a pure democracy. It will always be easy to make a crowd accept general assertions, presented in striking terms, although they have never

been verified, and are perhaps not susceptible of verification."

Too much importance cannot be attached to the "striking terms" alluded to in the above quotation. We have already insisted, on several occasions, on the special power of words and formulas. They must be chosen in such a way as to evoke very vivid images. The following phrase, taken from a speech by one of the leaders of our assemblies, affords an excellent example: —

"When the same vessel shall bear away to the fever-haunted lands of our penitentiary settlements the politician of shady reputation and the anarchist guilty of murder, the pair will be able to converse together, and they will appear to each other as the two complementary aspects of one and the same state of society."

The image thus evoked is very vivid, and all the adversaries of the speaker felt themselves threatened by it. They conjured up a double vision of the fever-haunted country and the vessel that may carry them away; for is it not possible that they are included in the somewhat ill-defined category of the politicians menaced? They experienced the lurking fear that the men of the Convention must have felt whom the vague speeches of Robespierre threatened with the guillotine, and who, under the influence of this fear, invariably yielded to him.

It is all to the interest of the leaders to indulge in the most

improbable exaggerations. The speaker of whom I have just cited a sentence was able to affirm, without arousing violent protestations, that bankers and priests had subsidised the throwers of bombs, and that the directors of the great financial companies deserve the same punishment as anarchists. Affirmations of this kind are always effective with crowds. The affirmation is never too violent, the declamation never too threatening. Nothing intimidates the audience more than this sort of eloquence. Those present are afraid that if they protest they will be put down as traitors or accomplices.

As I have said, this peculiar style of eloquence has ever been of sovereign effect in all assemblies. In times of crisis its power is still further accentuated. The speeches of the great orators of the assemblies of the French Revolution are very interesting reading from this point of view. At every instant they thought themselves obliged to pause in order to denounce crime and exalt virtue, after which they would burst forth into imprecations against tyrants, and swear to live free men or perish. Those present rose to their feet, applauded furiously, and then, calmed, took their seats again.

On occasion, the leader may be intelligent and highly educated, but the possession of these qualities does him, as a rule, more harm than good. By showing how complex things are, by allowing of explanation and promoting comprehension, intelligence always renders its owner

indulgent, and blunts, in a large measure, that intensity and violence of conviction needful for apostles. The great leaders of crowds of all ages, and those of the Revolution in particular, have been of lamentably narrow intellect; while it is precisely those whose intelligence has been the most restricted who have exercised the greatest influence.

The speeches of the most celebrated of them, of Robespierre, frequently astound one by their incoherence: by merely reading them no plausible explanation is to be found of the great part played by the powerful dictator: —

"The commonplaces and redundancies of pedagogic eloquence and Latin culture at the service of a mind childish rather than undistinguished, and limited in its notions of attack and defence to the defiant attitude of schoolboys. Not an idea, not a happy turn of phrase, or a telling hit: a storm of declamation that leaves us bored. After a dose of this unexhilarating reading one is attempted to exclaim 'Oh!' with the amiable Camille Desmoulins."

It is terrible at times to think of the power that strong conviction combined with extreme narrowness of mind gives a man possessing prestige. It is none the less necessary that these conditions should be satisfied for a man to ignore obstacles and display strength of will in a high measure.

Crowds instinctively recognise in men of energy and conviction the masters they are always in need of.

In a parliamentary assembly the success of a speech depends almost solely on the prestige possessed by the speaker, and not at all on the arguments he brings forward. The best proof of this is that when for one cause or another a speaker loses his prestige, he loses simultaneously all his influence, that is, his power of influencing votes at will.

When an unknown speaker comes forward with a speech containing good arguments, but only arguments, the chances are that he will only obtain a hearing. A Deputy who is a psychologist of insight, M. Desaubes, has recently traced in the following lines the portrait of the Deputy who lacks prestige: —

“When he takes his place in the tribune he draws a document from his portfolio, spreads it out methodically before him, and makes a start with assurance.

“He flatters himself that he will implant in the minds of his audience the conviction by which he is himself animated. He has weighed and reweighed his arguments; he is well primed with figures and proofs; he is certain he will convince his hearers. In the face of the evidence he is to adduce all resistance would be futile. He begins, confident in the justice of his cause, and relying upon the

attention of his colleagues, whose only anxiety, of course, is to subscribe to the truth.

"He speaks, and is at once surprised at the restlessness of the House, and a little annoyed by the noise that is being made.

"How is it silence is not kept? Why this general inattention? What are those Deputies thinking about who are engaged in conversation? What urgent motive has induced this or that Deputy to quit his seat?

"An expression of uneasiness crosses his face; he frowns and stops. Encouraged by the President, he begins again, raising his voice. He is only listened to all the less. He lends emphasis to his words, and gesticulates: the noise around him increases. He can no longer hear himself, and again stops; finally, afraid that his silence may provoke the dreaded cry, 'The Closure!' he starts off again. The clamour becomes unbearable."

When parliamentary assemblies reach a certain pitch of excitement they become identical with ordinary heterogeneous crowds, and their sentiments in consequence present the peculiarity of being always extreme. They will be seen to commit acts of the greatest heroism or the worst excesses. The individual is no longer himself, and so entirely is this the case that he will vote measures most adverse to his personal interests.

The history of the French Revolution shows to what an extent assemblies are capable of losing their self-consciousness, and of obeying suggestions most contrary to their interests. It was an enormous sacrifice for the nobility to renounce its privileges, yet it did so without hesitation on a famous night during the sittings of the Constituent Assembly. By renouncing their inviolability the men of the Convention placed themselves under a perpetual menace of death and yet they took this step, and were not afraid to decimate their own ranks, though perfectly aware that the scaffold to which they were sending their colleagues today might be their own fate tomorrow. The truth is they had attained to that completely automatic state which I have described elsewhere, and no consideration would hinder them from yielding to the suggestions by which they were hypnotised. The following passage from the memoirs of one of them, Billaud-Varennès, is absolutely typical on this score: "The decisions with which we have been so reproached," he says, "were not desired by us two days, a single day before they were taken: it was the crisis and nothing else that gave rise to them." Nothing can be more accurate.

The same phenomena of unconsciousness were to be witnessed during all the stormy sittings of the Convention.

"They approved and decreed measures," says Taine, "which they held in horror — measures which were not only stupid and

foolish, but measures that were crimes — the murder of innocent men, the murder of their friends. The Left, supported by the Right, unanimously and amid loud applause, sent to the scaffold Danton, its natural chief, and the great promoter and leader of the Revolution. Unanimously and amid the greatest applause the Right, supported by the Left, votes the worst decrees of the revolutionary government. Unanimously and amid cries of admiration and enthusiasm, amid demonstrations of passionate sympathy for Collot d'Herbois, Couthon, and Robespierre, the Convention by spontaneous and repeated re-elections keeps in office the homicidal government which the Plain detests because it is homicidal, and the Mountain detests because it is decimated by it. The Plain and the Mountain, the majority and the minority, finish by consenting to help on their own suicide. The 22 Prairial the entire Convention offered itself to the executioner; the 8 Thermidor, during the first quarter of an hour that followed Robespierre's speech, it did the same thing again."

This picture may appear sombre. Yet it is accurate. Parliamentary assemblies, sufficiently excited and hypnotised, offer the same characteristics. They become an unstable flock, obedient to every impulsion. The following description of the Assembly of 1848 is due to M. Spuller, a parliamentarian whose faith in democracy is above suspicion. I reproduce it from the *Revue littéraire*, and it is

thoroughly typical. It offers an example of all the exaggerated sentiments which I have described as characteristic of crowds, and of that excessive changeableness which permits of assemblies passing, from moment to moment, from one set of sentiments to another entirely opposite.

"The Republican party was brought to its perdition by its pisions, its jealousies, its suspicions, and, in turn, its blind confidence and its limitless hopes. Its ingenuousness and candour were only equalled by its universal mistrust. An absence of all sense of legality, of all comprehension of discipline, together with boundless terrors and illusions; the peasant and the child are on a level in these respects. Their calm is as great as their impatience; their ferocity is equal to their docility. This condition is the natural consequence of a temperament that is not formed and of the lack of education. Nothing astonishes such persons, and everything disconcerts them. Trembling with fear or brave to the point of heroism, they would go through fire and water or fly from a shadow.

"They are ignorant of cause and effect and of the connecting links between events. They are as promptly discouraged as they are exalted, they are subject to every description of panic, they are always either too highly strung or too downcast, but never in the mood or the measure the situation would require. More fluid than

water they reflect every line and assume every shape. What sort of a foundation for a government can they be expected to supply?"

Fortunately all the characteristics just described as to be met with in parliamentary assemblies are in no wise constantly displayed. Such assemblies only constitute crowds at certain moments. The individuals composing them retain their individuality in a great number of cases, which explains how it is that an assembly is able to turn out excellent technical laws. It is true that the author of these laws is a specialist who has prepared them in the quiet of his study, and that in reality the law voted is the work of an individual and not of an assembly. These laws are naturally the best. They are only liable to have disastrous results when a series of amendments has converted them into the outcome of a collective effort. The work of a crowd is always inferior, whatever its nature, to that of an isolated individual. It is specialists who safeguard assemblies from passing ill-advised or unworkable measures. The specialist in this case is a temporary leader of crowds. The Assembly is without influence on him, but he has influence over the Assembly.

In spite of all the difficulties attending their working, parliamentary assemblies are the best form of government mankind has discovered as yet, and more especially the best means it has found to escape the yoke of personal tyrannies. They constitute

assuredly the ideal government at any rate for philosophers, thinkers, writers, artists, and learned men — in a word, for all those who form the cream of a civilisation.

Moreover, in reality they only present two serious dangers, one being inevitable financial waste, and the other the progressive restriction of the liberty of the individual.

The first of these dangers is the necessary consequence of the exigencies and want of foresight of electoral crowds. Should a member of an assembly propose a measure giving apparent satisfaction to democratic ideas, should he bring in a Bill, for instance, to assure old-age pensions to all workers, and to increase the wages of any class of State employés, the other Deputies, victims of suggestion in their dread of their electors, will not venture to seem to disregard the interests of the latter by rejecting the proposed measure, although well aware they are imposing a fresh strain on the Budget and necessitating the creation of new taxes. It is impossible for them to hesitate to give their votes. The consequences of the increase of expenditure are remote and will not entail disagreeable consequences for them personally, while the consequences of a negative vote might clearly come to light when they next present themselves for re-election.

In addition to this first cause of an exaggerated expenditure there

is another not less imperative — the necessity of voting all grants for local purposes. A Deputy is unable to oppose grants of this kind because they represent once more the exigencies of the electors, and because each individual Deputy can only obtain what he requires for his own constituency on the condition of acceding to similar demands on the part of his colleagues.

The second of the dangers referred to above — the inevitable restrictions on liberty consummated by parliamentary assemblies — is apparently less obvious, but is, nevertheless, very real. It is the result of the innumerable laws — having always a restrictive action — which parliaments consider themselves obliged to vote and to whose consequences, owing to their shortsightedness, they are in a great measure blind.

The danger must indeed be most inevitable, since even England itself, which assuredly offers the most popular type of the parliamentary régime, the type in which the representative is most independent of his elector, has been unable to escape it. Herbert Spencer has shown, in a work already old, that the increase of apparent liberty must needs be followed by the decrease of real liberty. Returning to this contention in his recent book, "The Individual versus the State," he thus expresses himself with regard to the English Parliament: —

"Legislation since this period has followed the course,I pointed out. Rapidly multiplying dictatorial measures have continually tended to restrict individual liberties,and this in two ways. Regulations have been established every year in greater number,imposing a constraint on the citizen in matters in which his acts were formerly completely free,and forcing him to accomplish acts which he was formerly at liberty to accomplish or not to accomplish at will. At the same time heavier and heavier public,and especially local,burdens have still further restricted his liberty by diminishing the portion of his profits he can spend as he chooses,and by augmenting the portion which is taken from him to be spent according to the good pleasure of the public authorities."

This progressive restriction of liberties shows itself in every country in a special shape which Herbert Spencer has not pointed out; it is that the passing of these innumerable series of legislative measures,all of them in a general way of a restrictive order,conduces necessarily to augment the number,the power,and the influence of the functionaries charged with their application. These functionaries tend in this way to become the veritable masters of civilised countries. Their power is all the greater owing to the fact that,amidst the incessant transfer of authority,the administrative caste is alone in being untouched by these changes,is alone in possessing

irresponsibility, impersonality, and perpetuity. There is no more oppressive despotism than that which presents itself under this triple form.

This incessant creation of restrictive laws and regulations, surrounding the pettiest actions of existence with the most complicated formalities, inevitably has for its result the confining within narrower and narrower limits of the sphere in which the citizen may move freely. Victims of the delusion that equality and liberty are the better assured by the multiplication of laws, nations daily consent to put up with trammels increasingly burdensome. They do not accept this legislation with impunity. Accustomed to put up with every yoke, they soon end by desiring servitude, and lose all spontaneousness and energy. They are then no more than vain shadows, passive, unresisting and powerless automata.

Arrived at this point, the individual is bound to seek outside himself the forces he no longer finds within him. The functions of governments necessarily increase in proportion as the indifference and helplessness of the citizens grow. They it is who must necessarily exhibit the initiative, enterprising, and guiding spirit in which private persons are lacking. It falls on them to undertake everything, direct everything, and take everything under their protection. The State becomes an all-powerful god. Still experience shows that the power of such gods was never either very durable or

very strong.

This progressive restriction of all liberties in the case of certain peoples, in spite of an outward license that gives them the illusion that these liberties are still in their possession, seems at least as much a consequence of their old age as of any particular system. It constitutes one of the precursory symptoms of that decadent phase which up to now no civilisation has escaped.

Judging by the lessons of the past, and by the symptoms that strike the attention on every side, several of our modern civilisations have reached that phase of extreme old age which precedes decadence. It seems inevitable that all peoples should pass through identical phases of existence, since history is so often seen to repeat its course.

It is easy to note briefly these common phases of the evolution of civilisations, and I shall terminate this work with a summary of them. This rapid sketch will perhaps throw some gleams of light on the causes of the power at present wielded by crowds.

If we examine in their main lines the genesis of the greatness and of the fall of the civilisations that preceded our own, what do we see?

At the dawn of civilisation a swarm of men of various

origin,brought together by the chances of migrations,invasions,and conquests. Of different blood,and of equally different languages and beliefs,the only common bond of union between these men is the half-recognised law of a chief. The psychological characteristics of crowds are present in an eminent degree in these confused agglomerations. They have the transient cohesion of crowds,their heroism,their weaknesses,their impulsiveness,and their violence. Nothing is stable in connection with them. They are barbarians.

At length time accomplishes its work. The identity of surroundings,the repeated intermingling of races,the necessities of life in common exert their influence. The assemblage of dissimilar units begins to blend into a whole,to form a race; that is,an aggregate possessing common characteristics and sentiments to which heredity will give greater and greater fixity. The crowd has become a people,and this people is able to emerge from its barbarous state. However,it will only entirely emerge therefrom when,after long efforts,struggles necessarily repeated,and innumerable recommencements,it shall have acquired an ideal. The nature of this ideal is of slight importance; whether it be the cult of Rome,the might of Athens,or the triumph of Allah,it will suffice to endow all the individuals of the race that is forming with perfect unity of sentiment and thought.

At this stage a new civilisation,with its institutions,its

beliefs, and its arts, may be born. In pursuit of its ideal, the race will acquire in succession the qualities necessary to give it splendour, vigour, and grandeur. At times no doubt it will still be a crowd, but henceforth, beneath the mobile and changing characteristics of crowds, is found a solid substratum, the genius of the race which confines within narrow limits the transformations of a nation and overrules the play of chance.

After having exerted its creative action, time begins that work of destruction from which neither gods nor men escape. Having reached a certain level of strength and complexity a civilisation ceases to grow, and having ceased to grow it is condemned to a speedy decline. The hour of its old age has struck.

This inevitable hour is always marked by the weakening of the ideal that was the mainstay of the race. In proportion as this ideal pales all the religious, political, and social structures inspired by it begin to be shaken.

With the progressive perishing of its ideal the race loses more and more the qualities that lent it its cohesion, its unity, and its strength. The personality and intelligence of the individual may increase, but at the same time this collective egoism of the race is replaced by an excessive development of the egoism of the individual, accompanied by a weakening of character and a lessening of

the capacity for action. What constituted a people, a unity, a whole, becomes in the end an agglomeration of individualities lacking cohesion, and artificially held together for a time by its traditions and institutions. It is at this stage that men, guided by their interests and aspirations, and incapable any longer of self-government, require directing in their petty acts, and that the State exerts an absorbing influence.

With the definite loss of its old ideal the genius of the race entirely disappears; it is a mere swarm of isolated individuals and returns to its original state — that of a crowd. Without consistency and without a future, it has all the transitory characteristics of crowds. Its civilisation is now without stability, and at the mercy of every chance. The populace is sovereign, and the tide of barbarism mounts. The civilisation may still seem brilliant because it possesses an outward front, the work of a long past, but it is in reality an edifice crumbling to ruin, which nothing supports, and destined to fall in at the first storm.

To pass in pursuit of an ideal from the barbarous to the civilised state, and then, when this ideal has lost its virtue, to decline and die, such is the cycle of the life of a people.

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