

“Mental Epidemics”: Crowd Psychology and American Culture, 1890-1940

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In 1900, disillusioned with high-powered newspaper work and weary of cities, progressive journalist Ray Stannard Baker quit New York and fled to Arizona. Going west to find himself was a gesture of affiliation sanctified by both national myth and his family folklore of pioneer stock ancestry and his father’s move west to start over after failing in business.

But the Arizona deserts had no power to heal him. In his memoirs he recounted a moment of reckoning with the omnipotence of crowds: he could not forget the congestion that lay just beyond the horizon. For better or worse, to him America was epitomized by suffocating New York:

What a different world I knew from that of my ancestors! They had the wilderness, I had crowds. I found teeming, jostling, restless cities; I found immense smoking, roaring industries; I found a labyrinth of tangled communication. I found hugeness and evil.¹

Baker decided that learning to navigate this world of crowds would be “the prime test” of the modern citizen.

E. A. Ross had a grimmer and more intellectualized encounter with crowds. In 1894, he jotted down “thirty-three distinct means by which society controls its members” in a list that became twenty *American Journal of Sociology* articles and the popular book *Social Control* (1901).² Ross’ work grew from his assumption, shared with Frederick Jackson Turner, that the closing of the frontier would

inaugurate a difficult new epoch for America. There had once been a time, Ross wrote, when order emerged spontaneously from the 'sense of justice' among equals. The conditions for this state of grace appeared briefly in the American West, where men were men and mostly Anglo-Saxons, and where nature was virgin and lavishly bountiful. His prize exhibit was the elemental democracy that supposedly flourished in the first California mining camps.³ Even as he ached for this Eden, Ross acknowledged that progress doomed it. "The equality that gives homesteaders or gold diggers a few Arcadian days without bolt or bar, state or law, soon passes away."⁴ Western land and gold attracted swarms of settlers who required the artifices of social control.

In dense modern cities, Ross believed, people increasingly exhibited a primitive "suggestibility," the disposition to act automatically on ideas offered by their fellows. For certain animals species this kind of imitative behavior was adaptive, enabling them to act collectively to confront danger, but among humans it was dangerous, for it easily degenerated into the hyper-suggestibility that Ross called "the mob mind."

One remedy was to restore the pride and critical faculties of the individual. In an article titled "The Mob Mind" Ross wrote:

Democracy's ideal is a society of men with neither the 'back'-look on the past nor yet the 'out'-look on their fellows, but with the 'in'-look upon reason and conscience. We must hold fast to a sage Emersonian individualism, that . . . shall brace men to stand against the rush of the mass.⁵

In *Social Control*, however, Ross concentrated on showing how the suggestible "mass" could be molded into a post-democratic social order. Americans had long enjoyed the luxury of sneering at leaders. "But when population thickens, interests clash, and difficult problems of mutual adjustment becoming pressing, it is foolish and dangerous not to follow the lead of superior men." The Anglo-Saxon males who had once lorded alone over Western prairies now had to become the brains of a complex and volatile society that included women, children and mongrel breeds.

There was a snag: "The power of the Few to take the role of the social cerebrum depends entirely upon how far the Many capitulate to it." But if the Few could harness the suggestibility of the Many, they could not only resist "the rush of the mass" but capture its energy. Ross painted suggestion as the master instrument by which "the stubborn individual will is bent to the social purpose." It was an instrument of frightening power, for it could "reduce men to uniformity as a steam roller reduces bits of stone to smooth macadam."⁶

For Baker, Ross and others of their class and generation, nostalgia for a prelapsarian age of open spaces, geographical and social, collided with the unblinkable facts of the Many. Alongside the myth of the frontier as defining the America then rapidly being lost, there arose anxious speculations about urban

hordes who would define the American future. Even democrats instinctively recoiled from the crowd and applied to it a vocabulary born of distance and disparagement. "The language of 'masses,'" writes Asa Briggs, ". . . raises awkward separations—between 'them' and 'us'; 'above' and 'below'; 'brains and numbers'; 'individuals and crowds.'" Instinctively, too, men like Baker and Ross adopted a "dominative attitude to communication" that sprang from "the conception of persons as masses," in Raymond Williams' words; for if one's "purpose is manipulation—the persuasion of a large number of people to act, feel, think, know in certain ways—the convenient formula will be that of the masses."⁸ Finally, the quest to understand and control the masses culminated in the invention of "crowd psychology," the first systematic interpretation of what later generations would call "the mass society." My subject is the origins and career of this early effort to come to terms with the Many in modern America.

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Though Ray Stannard Baker liked to think his ancestors lived in a less volatile and congested America, they too "had crowds" and learned to live with them. In eighteenth-century America riotous crowds enjoyed a tolerance, even a "quasi legitimacy," that derived from Whig principles, the weakness of colonial governments, and their defense of community values. Even Thomas Hutchinson, the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts who was a principal victim of the 1765 Stamp Act riots, could observe that "Mobs, a sort of them, at least, are constitutional."⁹

The Revolution made mobs more controversial. For republicans who revered the principles of Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson, crowds epitomized the egalitarian, voluntary social relations that were replacing the hierarchical and authoritarian patterns of the Old World. For skeptical elites, crowds were the *mobile vulgus*, the face of chaos behind the smiling mask of republicanism. "There are combustibles in every State," George Washington told a correspondent in reference to Shays' Rebellion in 1786, "which a spark might set fire to. . . . I feel . . . infinitely more than I can express to you, for the disorders, which have arisen in these States. Good God! Who, besides a Tory, could have foreseen, or a Briton predicted them?" The case grew more desperate when many of these combustibles showed a taste for the Jacobin principles of the more profound revolution taking place in France.¹⁰

Yet mobs of common folk, often with patrician leaders, had undeniably assisted at the birth of the nation. The identity of the new republic was bound up with the promise that the *hoi polloi* would become full citizens. Wary Federalists joined Jeffersonians in embracing this prospect, albeit with reservations. In 1805 an editorial writer articulated a distinction that would be enshrined at the center of nineteenth-century political culture,

between the *people* and the *mob* or *populace*. By the latter I designate certain of the lowest class in the community, who are

alike destitute of property and principle, and may be emphatically stiled [sic] the *rabble*. . . . By people I mean the great body of American farmers, merchants, mechanics, etc.¹¹

During the first decades of the nineteenth century this distinction proved easy to sustain. Respectable citizens vastly outnumbered the riotous rabble. There were occasional outbreaks of mob violence, notably in Baltimore in 1812, but no recurrence of potentially insurrectionary activity in the manner of Shays' Rebellion or the Whiskey Rebellion.

By the 1820s however, the circumstances that had calmed fears of mobs began to change. Burgeoning cities, the beginnings of a proletariat, creation of an Irish immigrant underclass, Jacksonian politics, and intensifying agitation against slavery, all created social frictions that multiplied crowds and made them more menacing. In a divided society, notes Paul Gilje, "any mob action was anathema because it threatened to loosen the bonds that held the disparate elements of society together. . . ."¹²

Quite apart from the urban rabble and their riots, the great American majority—"the people" themselves—seemed increasingly prone to crowdish behavior. Though farmers, merchants and mechanics seldom rioted, they were alleged to be conformist and suggestible, and democratic notions made them insolent and ambitious as well. They exerted influence by sheer weight of numbers while holding in reserve the weapon of mob coercion. John Stuart Mill described the peril in his essay *On Liberty* (1859):

At present individuals are lost in the crowd. In politics it is almost a triviality to say that public opinion now rules the world. The only power deserving the name is that of masses and of governments while they make themselves the organ of the tendencies and instincts of the masses.¹³

It was this leveling crowd, "a countless mass of similar and equal men who tirelessly gyrate upon themselves in order to procure the vulgar little pleasures with which to fill their souls," that Tocqueville considered the poison fruit of democracy. He decided that the United States had erected adequate constitutional protections against political tyranny of the majority. However, the moral and cultural depredations of the majority were harder to check. In "The American Scholar" of 1837 Emerson voiced a complaint that intellectuals would endlessly elaborate through the rest of the century, and that prefigured critiques of the "mass society" in the century to come: "Men are become of no account. Men in history, men in the world of today, are bugs, are spawn, and are called 'the mass' and 'the herd.'"¹⁴

But in egalitarian and entrepreneurial America such disparagements represented a minority point of view. Though mobs were reviled, the mass had plenty of advocates. Enterprising souls in all walks of life learned to live with it, and

indeed on it. For showmen like P. T. Barnum, for merchandisers like A. T. Stewart, for publishers like James Gordon Bennett, and for virtually every politician after Jackson, the “rush of the mass” pointed the way to wealth, prestige and power.

The career of Henry Ward Beecher is illustrative. While Emerson was quitting his ministry and beckoning young men to come away from the herd, Beecher was rejoicing in his ability to enthrall the multitudes. Newly installed in a pulpit in Indianapolis, Beecher described the society of the Mississippi Valley as a

vast mass of heterogeneous population—sharp minded—and sharp in temper—enterprising—and not discreet—given to excitement and to passions—breaking out into tumults, riots—mobs verging to the very edge of the civil war,

subject to manipulation “by base men, by desperate men, by wolfish demagogues and foxish priests, . . .” But far from fearing chaos in this scene, Beecher defined it as a field of opportunity for his healing oratory. At the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, where he was called in 1845, Beecher replaced the high pulpit with an armchair that brought him closer to the congregation, and eventually he designed an amphitheater of pews into which his preaching platform projected. Years later, this most acclaimed of American clergymen declared that his church was “built on a principle—the principle of social and personal magnetism, which emanates reciprocally from a speaker and from a close throng of hearers. . . . I want them to surround me, so that they will come up on every side, and behind me, so that I shall be in the center of the crowd, and have the people surge all about me!”¹⁵

The Civil War gave Emerson a new respect for the crowd. The firing on Fort Sumter generated a “whirlwind of patriotism” capable of “magnetizing all discordant masses under its terrific unity.” The Sage of Concord told a lecture audience,

. . . now a sentiment mightier than logic, wide as light, strong as gravity, reaches into the college, the bank, the farm-house, and the church. It is the day of the populace; they are wiser than their teachers. . . . I will never again speak lightly of a crowd.¹⁶

Yet in the middle of the War the brutal New York draft riots gave notice that segments of “the discordant masses” were prepared to cast patriotism aside and assert themselves in defense of class interests. During the Gilded Age, mobs again came to be dreaded as rehearsals for insurrection, instigated now by Communists rather than by Jacobins. At the height of the railroad strikes of 1877 the *New York Times* warned,

We are gradually acquiring those elements of vice and lawlessness which we had fondly hoped were confined to the older and less liberal countries of Europe. . . . It is nonsense to talk of the socialist revolt which is the standing danger of older countries being a visionary peril here, when one great city after another falls without a blow under the control of a mob of reckless and law-defying men.¹⁷

Defining rioters as aliens and outlaws, military men thought it superfluous to analyze their motives and futile to reason with them. An authority on riot control noted in 1882 that the old-fashioned kind of riot, a “sudden outburst of passion soon satiated,” had given way to insurrectionary disorders perpetrated by “‘roughs, tramps, and unknown men,’ anarchists and thieves,” which demanded merciless repression. When the moment for use of firepower arrived, he wrote, “all false sympathy should cease, and the offenders be looked upon not as American citizens, but as felons and murderers.”¹⁸

Yet the protestors of the 1890s were too numerous and too various to be shot to pieces. Epic strikes in Pennsylvania and Chicago and the Rockies, the Alliance and Populist crusades, the Bryan campaign, these and other mammoth movements could not be dismissed as the workings of criminality or communism. The spread of the increasingly organized collective behavior of the 1890s inspired inquiries into its causes and dynamics. One informal student of crowds was Ray Stannard Baker, who as a young journalist witnessed many mass protests at close range.

Fresh from the University of Michigan, Baker went to work in 1893 for the *Chicago Record*, which assigned him to cover the “army” being recruited by Jacob Coxey of Massillon, Ohio. Baker soon realized that the “Commonweal of Christ” (the army’s official name) was no apparition from the lunatic fringe. It included few of the “tramps and hangers-on” whom he had regarded as the natural recruits for mobs. Most marchers were simply farmers and industrial wage-earners down on their luck. “I am beginning to feel,” he told his editor, “that the movement has some meaning, that it is a manifestation of the prevailing unrest and dissatisfaction among the laboring classes.”¹⁹

By the time the Commonweal of Christ arrived in Washington, Baker’s initial skepticism had turned into a guarded admiration. When Coxey’s chief lieutenant tried to break through police lines at the Capital, mounted officers “dashed into the wildly shrieking crowd. . . . Some of them [the police] completely lost their heads and used their clubs right and left.” His lieutenant was collared, Coxey was arrested, and the bedraggled Commonweal “vanished in thin air.” Before it disappeared, Coxey’s army had blurred for Baker the boundary between mobs and the authorities who defined them as mobs.²⁰

The boundary held firm, however, when protesting crowds were made up of strikers. Covering a walkout by Slavic employees of the Frick Coke Company in Pennsylvania, Baker saw mobs acting as stereotypes of alien proletarians had

trained him to expect. "Its [sic] not a pleasant job to track around after a mob of half-drunken, bloodthirsty Huns and Slavs who can't speak a word of English," he told his father. At one point Baker was "captured" by strikers, like a scout grabbed by Plains Indians, and "narrowly escaped being mobbed myself." Back in Chicago in July 1894, Baker initially professed sympathy for the American Railway Union as it battled the Pullman Company, perhaps because few ARU members were "Huns and Slavs." However,

when I saw huge mobs running wild, defying the officers of the law, putting the torch to millions of dollars' worth of property—I was still more perplexed. Could such anarchy be permitted in a civilized society?²¹

Another kind of crowd behavior that dismayed Baker was the adulation bestowed on William Jennings Bryan. Bryan had a charismatic appeal that seemed capable of mobilizing millions of aggrieved Americans. But what was it? Baker later remembered trying to write up an impromptu speech he heard Bryan give in a packed hotel room during the 1896 presidential campaign:

. . . I was surprised to find how little there was to get hold of. It had appreciation and devotion and inspiration, and a 'clarion call to battle,' as he himself expressed it, and it went straight to the hearts of his hearers—without hurting their heads.²²

In Bryan's vapid demagoguery, as in other kinds of crowd phenomena, there seemed more magic than reason. Baker's observations imbued in him a cautious skepticism regarding the shibboleths about mobs and masses, but gave him no key to understanding them.

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As Ray Stannard Baker was discovering the mysteries of crowds, a new "scientific" instrument for interpreting collective behavior was just beginning to gain public attention. In December 1894, a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* observed,

The 'psychology of crowds,' which has recently begun to enlist the attention of Italian and French psycho-physiologists, is destined, haply, to throw a great deal of light on the far-reaching results of every personal state of mind; on the manner in which we all, normally, hang together.

Three months later the *Atlantic* published the first contribution to "crowd psychology" written in America, an essay titled "A Study of the Mob" by a Russian immigrant and Harvard graduate named Boris Sidis. Bearing the

prestige of science, crowd psychology was quickly recruited to defend the interests of patriotism, property and order on both sides of the Atlantic.²³

To the degree that crowd psychology had an authentic scientific foundation, it lay in studies of suggestibility and hypnotism conducted by French investigators during the 1880s. The alleged human disposition to respond automatically to “suggestions,” demonstrated most vividly in hypnotic states, was then the great new continent being mapped by explorers of the unconscious. By comparison Eros had barely been sighted. “The rise of hypnotism in late years,” wrote the Princeton psychologist James Mark Baldwin in 1895, “has opened the way in an entirely new method of mental study.” John Dewey later recalled that the “suggestibility school” dominated the whole field of social psychology and “almost sociology” as well during the decade before World War I.²⁴

Investigators agreed that hypnotism produced a state in which a person’s attention became focused on the hypnotist, causing him or her automatically to heed the hypnotist’s commands or “suggestions.” But on the essential nature of hypnotic trance there was sharp division. Jean Martin Charcot, celebrated neurologist at the Salpêtrière Hospital and leader of the “Paris school,” concluded that only diseased minds could be hypnotized. He regarded hypnosis as an important symptom of hysteria. A. A. Liebeault and Hippolyte Bernheim, leaders of the “Nancy school,” contended that anyone could be hypnotized because hypnosis was merely an exaggerated expression of the mind’s normal “ideodynamism,” the natural tendency to believe any idea or perform any action unless contrary ideas intervene.²⁵

By 1890 the Nancy school had triumphed over Paris. Even Charcot’s chief disciple, Pierre Janet, conceded that suggestibility was part of the mind’s normal repertoire of tendencies and need not be symptomatic of disease. To the contrary, Bernheim and others hailed suggestibility as a miraculous therapeutic tool. Using hypnotic suggestions they claimed they could cure a host of physical and psychological maladies.²⁶

Suggestion theory was also summoned to diagnose and cure a very different sort of ailment, the alleged vulnerability of modern societies to collective frenzies. The seminal text of the new “crowd psychology” came not from psychology but from history: Hippolyte Taine’s bitterly anti-Jacobin *Origins of Contemporary France*, which portrayed the French Revolution as a calamitous reversion to savagery. In a crowd, wrote Taine, “mutual contagion inflames the passions; crowds. . . end in a state of drunkenness, from which nothing can issue but vertigo and blind rage.”²⁷ Though his subject was the Revolution of 1789, Taine’s interpretation of crowds also drew upon bitter memories of Parisian mobs in 1830, 1848 and especially in 1871, when the Commune had briefly resurrected the specter of the Revolution.

The crowd psychologists argued that collective hypnosis explained the behavior of Taine’s crowds. In 1895 Gustave Le Bon published the most imaginative and widely-read exposition of crowd psychology, titled simply *The Crowd*. According to Le Bon

An individual immersed [sic] for some length of time in a crowd soon finds himself. . . in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotized individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotizer.

Passing under the dominion of a primitive “unconscious personality,” a person in a crowd becomes “an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.”²⁸

Le Bon and other crowd psychologists professed interest in behavioral traits common to all human aggregations. But the crowds that most concerned them were assemblies of the newly enfranchised masses. It was invariably groups of plebeians (especially workers) and democratic politicians (especially parliaments) that furnished the crowd psychologists with their examples of collective behavior, and invariably those examples were described as criminal, pathological or degenerate.

In reality crowd psychology owed less to psychology than to conservative politics. Le Bon’s images of the mob (like Taine’s before them) inverted Marxist images of a heroic working class. Crowd psychology denied to working people the dignity, autonomy and revolutionary creativity that Marx and other thinkers of the Left conferred on them. Hypnotic explanations stigmatized crowds; they turned motives into impulses and politics into pathology.²⁹

The French crowd psychologists were particularly disturbed by rebellious stirrings of the working class that included huge strikes in 1884 and 1886, socialist-sponsored demonstrations on the first May Day in 1890, a massacre of striking textile workers at Fourmies on May Day of 1891, and the election of fifty socialists to the Chamber of Deputies in 1893. All of these events and trends were ascribed to a veritable epidemic of crowd madness. Gustave Le Bon succinctly stated the thesis of his book *The Crowd*: “The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age.”³⁰

In the hands of its shrewder adepts, crowd psychology became an instrument of adaptation to the new regime of enfranchised masses. According to Le Bon, crowds were fundamentally conservative organisms, because the primitive unconscious that rose to the surface in crowds housed not just a fickle suggestibility, but also the “genius of the race,” “mysterious forces which the ancients denominated destiny, nature, or providence. . . .” Hypnotized by a Robespierre or a socialist agitator, the crowd was despicable; but under the spell of a leader who could summon forth the race-genius, the crowd became creative, even heroic. “The world’s masters . . . have always been unconscious psychologists, possessed of an instinctive and often very sure knowledge of the characteristics of crowds. . . .” Le Bon presented himself as a Machiavellian counselor to modern princes who possessed the courage and will to reimpose order on the straying masses.³¹

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Many American academics greeted European crowd theories with skepticism. James Mark Baldwin called "the attempt to build a fruitful conception of society" on observations of crowd behavior "crude and unphilosophical in the extreme." In a review of *The Crowd* William James rejected Le Bon's insinuation that "all the feelings that move men together . . . are more or less irrational and insane." Moreover, in American politics the democratic ethos militated against crowd psychology; here there were no parties of reaction to espouse Le Bonian principles.³²

Nonetheless, the appeal of crowd theories grew in proportion to the prevalence of collective behavior in American life. Crowd psychology enjoyed a brief vogue in the fledgling disciplines of social psychology and sociology at the turn of the century. More significant was the part that crowd psychology played in delegitimizing working-class protests and mass entertainment. Notions about the irrational suggestibility of people in groups became staples of popular lore about the mind, and crowd psychology as a whole paved the way for theories of the "mass society" that emerged later in the century.

Ironically, it was William James who nurtured America's only original crowd psychologist, the Russian emigre Boris Sidis, who earned a doctorate under James' direction in 1897. The early career of crowd psychology in America was closely bound up with Sidis' ideas.

Born in Kiev in 1867, Sidis grew up a rebel against his family's Judaism and the Romanov dynasty. After being imprisoned for anti-Czarist agitation and then put under police surveillance, Sidis emigrated, first to France and then, in 1887, to the United States. Supporting himself as a shirtmaker and a tutor to fellow immigrants, he entered Harvard as a special student in 1892. The philosopher Josiah Royce wrote a satiric sketch of his dealings with the ambitious young immigrant:

He has read absolutely everything radical, and in Russian too, so that you cannot refute him. He is already a terror of my life. After lectures he gathers around me, outstays all other questioners, and talks Darwin, Spencer, idealism, mathematics, socialism,—everything, till I flee. Then he accompanies me homewards. My brain whirls, I groan inwardly, I long for a little deep interstellar silence,—but in vain. At last, as I hurry and hobble along, hastening to be free, he says kindly, 'But I detain you.' 'No, no,' I cry, and to prove it take to my heels. . . . At night, whenever the floors crack, I lie dreading the emissaries of the Russian police who, as I doubt not, are already spying on this ill-starred intimacy.³³

After earning his B. A., Sidis took up graduate study in psychology under James and Hugo Munsterberg. He published his thesis in 1898 as *The Psychology*

of *Suggestion*. The book bore a generous introduction by James, who privately told his young protegee that the work was “bold, original, and radical like yourself, and I like it.”³⁴

Sidis began a career in psychopathology that quickly vindicated the faith of his mentor. His second book, on mental dissociation, was based on years of clinical studies. In 1904 Sidis returned to Harvard to take a medical degree, after which a wealthy patroness helped him open his own Psychotherapeutic Institute in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He published prolifically on topics ranging from multiple personality to the function of laughter and joined a circle of Boston psychiatrists grouped around Morton Prince’s new *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*.³⁵

Prince acclaimed Sidis as the only American explorer of the unconscious fit to stand alongside such eminent Europeans as Charcot, Janet, Breuer and Freud. But Sidis’ reputation disintegrated after he chose to make a prudish stand against the Freudians. He called psychoanalysis “but another aspect of the pious quack literature on sexual subjects” and a “worship of Venus and Priapus.” Unable to halt the Freudian tide, Sidis lived long enough to see it drown his own prestige and influence.³⁶

In *The Psychology of Suggestion* Sidis advanced the theory that virtually all social behavior is the product of suggestibility. Building on the work of Bernheim, Janet and Alfred Binet, Sidis reported that he had confirmed the existence in the mind of a “subwaking self” by 3000 experiments, 800 of them performed on himself. It is this subwaking self, lurking beneath the rational consciousness or “waking self,” that is the “highway of suggestibility.” As long as the waking self is intact and the mental “cleft” that separates it from the subwaking self remains shallow, the waking self polices its alter ego and prevents it from accepting most suggestions. When, however, the two selves drift apart, becoming highly “disaggregated” as they do under the influence of hysteria or hypnosis, the waking self loses control. Freed of censorship, the subwaking self takes command of the mind, and “normal suggestibility” gives way to abnormality.³⁷

Sidis used images of trespass, subversion and cannibalism to describe the working of the suggestible subwaking self. It is a lesion prone to social infection, an “evil Jinnee,” a chameleon that

lacks all personality and individuality; it is absolutely servile; it works according to no maxim; it has no moral law, no law at all. . . . The subwaking self has no will; it is blown hither and thither by all sorts of incoming suggestions.³⁸

It is this part of the mind that opens it to every kind of social influence and betrays it to the mob. “Out of the subwaking selves the mob-self springs into being,” Sidis declared. As James remarked, *The Psychology of Suggestion* provided one of the first and fullest expositions of crowd psychology in English.³⁹

Sidis traced his initial interest in collective behavior to memories of pogroms in his native Russia. Mob conduct must be understood, he asserted, as the result of “social hypnotization.” “The man of the mob” undergoes the same “entire loss of his personal self” and lapses into the same obedient state that is observed in hypnotized individuals. According to Sidis, any limits on individuals’ freedom of action may breed hypnosis and mob behavior. Thus Czarist tyranny and rigid class barriers helped to make Russia “an immense theatre for hypnotic scenes,” including the horrific assaults on the Jews.⁴⁰

Sidis soon decided that the mob menace transcended conditions peculiar to Russia. In *The Psychology of Suggestion* he introduced a startling new analysis of collective behavior: “Society in general and democracy in particular” generate mob phenomena. Sidis now suggested that democratic social controls could crush individuality and induce hypnotic trances just as efficiently as the Romanov police. Any complex society, in fact, required the kind of restraints on personal freedom that the hypnotist imposes. From this Sidis concluded, “The laws of hypnosis work on a great scale in society. . . . *Society and mental epidemics are intimately related.* . . .”⁴¹

Warming to his theme, Sidis showed how virtually every kind of popular movement in Western history, from the crusades to financial crazes, could be interpreted as a mental epidemic caused by “extreme suggestibility.” He warned Americans against supposing themselves immune to such follies. Reviewing the record of revivals and other movements in his adopted country, Sidis proclaimed that the United States seemed “*to suffer from circular insanity.*”⁴²

This was strong stuff, but no one called Sidis a crackpot. In the intellectual climate of the time, extremism in defense of the waking self was no vice. Moreover, Sidis came armed with the imprimaturs of James, Harvard and empirical science (the 3000 experiments). *The Psychology of Suggestion* contributed substantially to the vogue of what Dewey called “the suggestibility school” in the American social sciences during the first years of the new century.

Sidis’ doctrines gained their largest audience through the writings of E. A. Ross, the most widely-read social scientist of his day. Ross’ 1897 article on “The Mob Mind” depended heavily on Sidis’ early magazine pieces, and *The Psychology of Suggestion* furnished the theoretical foundations for Ross’ chapters on suggestibility in *Social Control* (1901). For his popular 1908 textbook *Social Psychology*, Ross relied principally on Gabriel Tarde, but he also borrowed liberally (usually without attribution) from *The Psychology of Suggestion*. For example, Ross treated suggestibility in unmistakably Sidisian terms as a weakness that betrays the waking self to social influence. When the “captain of the ship” manages to

fight back the mutinous crew that swarm up from the fore-castles—the appetites and passions—and to hold the ship to her course in spite of sidewinds and cross-currents—suggestions from without—we have a character. If, now, this primary

self is overthrown or put to sleep, the subwaking self becomes master of the ship.⁴³

Ross' pupils also drew upon Sidis. In 1919 Robert Gault wrote a vigorous defense of suggestibility as a sociological concept, citing *The Psychology of Suggestion* as a seminal text. Gault published his own *Social Psychology*, heavily indebted to Ross and Sidis, in 1923. The following year Emory S. Bogardus brought out another text, dedicated to Ross, that gave respectful attention to Sidis.⁴⁴

Students of religious psychology were especially intrigued by Sidis' analysis of the "mob mind." Both Edwin Diller Starbuck and Frederick Davenport found in *The Psychology of Suggestion* a persuasive model for explaining the irrationalism of evangelical piety.⁴⁵

But if contemporaries borrowed selected propositions from Sidis, they shied away from his alarmist generalizations. And outside of the academy, Sidis' writings on crowd psychology had less impact than those of Gustave Le Bon. This was true in large part because *The Psychology of Suggestion* was a book published slightly behind its time. It appears two years after the climactic national election in which McKinley and Mark Hanna turned back Bryan, a symbolic triumph by the legions of patriotism, capitalism and order over the anarchic mob menace. By 1898, Populists, radical labor organizations and other dissident groups were in disarray, the depression was over, and much of the nation had been distracted from domestic dissension by a more congenial preoccupation with the war against Spain. Sidis implicitly acknowledged the taming of the American mob by picking revivals—a politically innocuous form of collective behavior—as his main illustration of modern "mental epidemics," while ignoring strikes and the other expressions of working-class militancy that had caused consternation since the 1870s.

This supposition that violent collective behavior was waning in America had hardly any truth to it. Certainly there was no sign that lynch mobs, the most vicious kind of crowds, were dying out. To the contrary, more lynchings (of whites as well as blacks) were recorded during the 1890s than in any other decade, and though lynchings would diminish somewhat during the following decade, the frequency of major race riots would actually increase. Despite courageous anti-lynching campaigns led by Ida Wells-Barnett and others, a profoundly racist society continued to tolerate lynch mobs as justifiable means of defending community norms.⁴⁶ It appears, then, that hyperbolic crowd theories of the kind purveyed by Sidis fell from favor less because they contradicted facts than because they collided with political fashion. And at the turn of the century a rising fashion, promoted by a wishful progressivism, was to assert that American society had evolved to a state of maturity that made violent protests and wayward crowds obsolete.

The principal threats to civilization were no longer deemed to be the collective frenzies that Sidis professed to explain. Attention was shifting back to

the great sluggish mass whose Philistinism and intolerance had troubled Tocqueville and Emerson. Now that overt disorders had supposedly passed, a torpid and suffocating *order* was identified as the imminent peril. The “mental epidemic” looming over the new century was not a revolutionary mob but a relentless mass, not a bomb but a steamroller.

It was by offering to help define and control this new entity—what a later generation would call the “mass society”—that crowd psychology made its deepest impression in the United States. Ideas borrowed from crowd psychology helped sponsor a momentous transition in American social criticism, from preoccupation with the strikers and rebels of the 1890s to fascination with the Babbitts and movie fans of the 1910s and 1920s.

It is difficult to document this transition because the concepts and terms applied to collective behavior remained highly imprecise. The epithets “crowd” and “mob” were stuck indiscriminately on both concentrations of people (the mob proper) and bodies of physically separated individuals (the mass). To a degree this promiscuity of terms reflected the belief that these two kinds of aggregates shared characteristics. Both mob and mass were described as anonymous, unorganized, gullible and low in taste. The mass was sometimes conceived as the soil in which the seeds of mob behavior lay dormant.⁴⁷

On the whole, however, after the tumultuous 1890s the accent was thrown on *differences* between mob and mass that recalled the old distinction between “rabble” and “people.” Whereas the mob was physically compact, homogeneous, frenetic, and fickle, the mass was dispersed, heterogeneous, phlegmatic and resistant to change. Neither mob nor mass showed human nature in a flattering light. But in one crucial respect the mass seemed clearly superior: Whereas a mob was anarchic, the mass could be managed. For this reason many commentators saw in the rise of the “mass society” a pledge of progress, contingent on the capacity of elites to learn the new arts of mass persuasion.

The leading theorist of the mass (though he never used that term) was Gustave Le Bon’s rival in the French academy, the criminologist and sociologist Gabriel Tarde. In an 1898 article that he would later expand into a book, Tarde castigated Le Bon for exaggerating the significance of crowds. Modern means of communication and transportation were rapidly replacing the “primitive congregation of crowds” with a new kind of social entity that he called the “public.” Tarde defined the public as an “intellectual collectivity, a scattering of physically separated individuals whose cohesion is only mental.” Like a crowd, a public exhibited marked suggestibility of ideas and emotions, but its suggestibility made for cohesion rather than disruption. This was true because in the physically dispersed public there was “contagion without contact”—enough interaction among individuals to unify them, not enough to excite them. “The formation of a public,” wrote Tarde, “presupposes a mental and social evolution much more advanced than the formation of a crowd”; the public was more rational, pacific and respectable. Thus the public was resistant to anarchy. But it was vulnerable to tyranny, Tarde believed, for its very stability and passivity

increased its serviceability as a medium of suggestion. Lacking structure and natural leaders, the public's defenselessness fostered "mass manipulation on an unprecedented scale." Tarde was especially sensitive to the dangers of a "homogenization of culture through the press." At the turn of the century this critique of democratic mass society, with its Tocquevillian emphasis on the dangers of majority tyranny, seemed more relevant to the American situation than Sidis' paranoid rantings.⁴⁸

After the turn of the century, troops of Emersonian moralists filled the middle-class monthlies with dyspeptic reflections on the mediocrity and timorousness of the mass. Schools, department stores, the press and other organs of social homogenization had grown so efficient, one writer typically warned in 1904, that Americans approached an "absolute sameness."

Following the mode . . . has grown so easy that, moving in the direction of least resistance, we are fast reaching a complete abdication of individual rights, a sheeplike acceptance of every diversion, form of instruction, or way of life labeled 'the latest.' And after all, instead of making us free, these material advances have ended by creating a power which is relentlessly herding us into flocks and droves, to be led hither and yon without our exercising a spark of independent volition.

In the same vein Clayton Hamilton held "theatre crowds" to be so simple-minded that only simple-minded plays could please them, and Henry Dwight Sedgwick decried the depressing effect on literature of the "upper bourgeois novel-reading mob."⁴⁹

Clearly sheeplike shoppers and "reading mobs" differed in class background from strikers and rioters. Such groups suffered from surfeit, not deprivation, and if they had somehow caught the crowd virus from the working class, in them it produced markedly different symptoms. In the proletariat the disease produced the volatility of the mob; in the bourgeoisie it manifested itself as the passivity of the mass. Among wage-earners crowd qualities corrupted the mind, turning people into madmen or beasts; among people of property and education crowd qualities weakened the character, making individuals into conformists. Thus in migrating from the rabble to respectable folk, habits of collective behavior allegedly became more temperate. But they had the insidious effect of rendering respectables less able to exercise—or to justify—social leadership.

Critics who lamented bourgeois conformism in the years 1900-1910 were resurrecting complaints that had been made familiar a half-century earlier. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, anxieties about the integrity of the individual had temporarily yielded priority to fears for the integrity of a social order supposedly besieged by rebellious wage-earners. Now, following the industrial battles of the 1890s, the mainstream of social criticism resumed its former concern with the problem of dwarfed and compliant personalities.

Yet the Emersonians and Tocquevillians of the new century had the advantage, not available to their predecessors, of anchoring their views in crowd psychology. A magazine writer named Loren Knox spoke in the distinctive idiom of this voguish “science” when he observed in 1908:

Though we, the people of the United States, boast of our individuality, we are regarded today by those who cater to our wants as an absorbent mass, rather than as discriminating units. . . . Indeed, the disease of democracy is upon us. *We are* a mass. Our appetite is for uniformities. . . . Each of us is under tutelage to the mass of us. Every moment we are acted on by suggestions from the demos. One cannot escape the thought of all.⁵⁰

Similar Sidisian inflections appeared in an essay by Josiah Royce, who warned that “certain modern conditions” give the mob spirit “new form and power, and to lead to new social dangers. . . .” One such condition was the “passive and sympathetic love for knowing and feeling whatever other men know and feel.” More potent was the power of communications media “to transmit the waves of emotional enthusiasm” among the scattered millions, a power that exposed nations to the risk of falling “rapidly under the hypnotic influence of a few leaders, of a few fatal phrases.” Thus modern society was prone to “the disastrous hypnotic slumber so characteristic of excited masses.”⁵¹

But it was characteristic of Royce, and indeed of this generation, not to give in to pessimism. He confidently prescribed participation in local communities as an antidote to the destructive impulses of “excited masses.” Others viewed mass behavior as benign, or as a crude but necessary engine of social progress. Psychologist G. A. Tawney insisted that individuals could enter crowds without losing their senses or their identities; E. A. Ross wrote of “times when crowds socialize men and fit them for better modes of association,” by bringing down “wormeaten social frameworks in which people have felt themselves imprisoned.”⁵²

In short, what distinguished the body of post-1900 social commentary was not its way of disparaging crowds, but its growing readiness to approve of them. The crowd psychology that established itself in America after 1900 comported easily with a progressive ethos predicated on expert management of class relations. Crowd psychologists’ theories about suggestibility were especially popular because they promised efficient ways to manufacture order in a hazardously plural and fluid society.

After the labor rebellions of the 1890s had been suppressed, many corporate managers adopted a conciliatory emphasis, shared with settlement house residents and other reformers, on peaceably *assimilating* immigrant workers. For proponents of “Americanization,” bent on turning millions of immigrants into obedient citizens, well-behaved crowds could be seen as crucibles of a healthy nationalism. To the degree that a mass society universalized certain values and

beliefs, it spelled victory over localism, sectionalism, class loyalties, ethnic allegiances and all the other fissures that stood in the way of creating a unified national culture. Americanization and mass uniformity were vividly equated in the ceremony for graduates of the English School started by the Ford Motor Company for its immigrant workers in 1914. The school director called it:

a pageant in the form of a melting pot, where all the men descend from a boat scene representing the vessel on which they came over; down the gangway. . . . into a pot 15 feet in diameter and 7 1/2 feet high, which represents the Ford English School. Six teachers, three on each side, stir the pot with ten foot ladles representing nine months of teaching in the school. Into the pot 52 nationalities with their foreign clothes and baggage go and out of the pot after vigorous stirring by the teachers comes one nationality, viz., American.⁵³

E. A. Ross furnished a subtler argument for embracing the mass in *Social Psychology*. According to Ross the advent of what Gabriel Tarde called the “public,” gradually replacing the crowd, was a strong sign of progress. There was a crucial difference between “government by the mob” and “the rule of public opinion,” marked by rational and deliberate debate, Ross observed. He added that skillful use of the laws of suggestion could enable the Few to educate and direct the Many, and made a plea for expert guidance of public opinion. In much the same vein, social worker Mary Follett contended that to maintain the vigor of popular government it was vital to subordinate the social properties of crowds to those of more stable and rational “groups”:

The crowd and the group represent entirely different modes of association. Crowd action is the outcome of agreement or concurrence of emotion rather than of thought. . . . Suggestion is the law of the crowd, interpenetration of the group.⁵⁴

During the progressive period, “scientific” techniques derived from crowd psychology enjoyed rising popularity in advertising, marketing, public relations and other fields devoted to manipulating mass opinion. An example is the field of speech education. Speech experts traditionally taught that orators moved people either by *convincing* them—appealing to the intellect—or by *persuading* them—appealing to the will through the emotions. Conviction required mastery of logic and the laws of argument. Persuasion called for the mysterious art of developing communion with the audience.

Walter Dill Scott, a psychologist at Northwestern University, introduced crowd psychology to speech education with a public speaking manual he published in 1906. Scott wrote, “Our most important actions are performed and most sacred conceptions are reached by means of merest suggestions.” In a

chapter titled "Rendering an Audience Suggestible," Scott retailed hypnotic tips guaranteed to make auditors "accept unhesitatingly almost any conclusion or conception which is presented to their minds."

The orator who is able to weld his audience into a homogeneous crowd has already won his hardest fight. *The difficult task is not to convince and sway the crowd, but to create it.*⁵⁵

For several years Scott's irreverent text posed a solitary challenge to traditional emphases on rhetoric, elocution and the laws of argument. By 1915, however, crowd psychology had staked out a large territory in the speech education literature. James Winans, a new leader in the field, wrote a textbook that gave prominent attention to the psychology of audiences. Another leading expert, Charles Woolbert, brought out studies explicitly analyzing audiences as crowds.⁵⁶

* * *

Academic psychologists continued to give crowd doctrines a more skeptical reception, as they had done since the first American reviews of Le Bon in the mid-1890s. William James readily agreed with his pupil Sidis that, as Sidis put it, a "mob self slumbers within the bosom of society." In a letter on lynchings published in the *Springfield Daily Republican* in 1903, James referred to the "carnivore within us."

The average church-going civilizee realizes absolutely nothing of the deeper current of human nature, or of the aboriginal capacity for murderous excitement which lies sleeping even in his own bosom.

But James refused to surrender the whole subconscious to Sidis' "mob self." His reading of the mind's "deeper currents" more resembled that of another pupil, Edwin Diller Starbuck, who studied religious conversion. According to Starbuck, most conversions involved a new, regenerate consciousness "ripening" within the subconscious. This image of the subconscious, as partner rather than betrayer of the "waking self," drew sharp criticism from Sidis:

What Mr. Starbuck does not seem to realize is the fact that it is not the healthy normal life that one studies in sudden religious conversions, but the phenomena of revival insanity.

Starbuck retorted that Sidis saw pathology even in healthy mental functioning.⁵⁷

Starbuck and another student of American Protestantism, Frederick Davenport, observed that the power of "mob-mind" in evangelical religion was declining because Americans had "undergone marked mental evolution under the

stress of a complex experience and a rapidly differentiating social environment.” Both scholars forecast important uses, in religion and education as well, for what Davenport called “the art of normal suggestion.”⁵⁸

In the maturing field of social psychology the heyday of crowd concepts proved brief. Social psychologists quickly jettisoned reductionist generalizations derived from psychopathology and hypnotism. Charles Horton Cooley, Edward L. Thorndike, William McDougall, George Herbert Mead and John Dewey began to insist that human social behavior could never be attributed wholly to suggestibility, “herd instinct,” or any other singular cause. In 1916 John Dewey read an epitaph over the “suggestibility school” that had briefly dominated social psychology at the turn of the century. The future of the field belonged not to those who examined “the relationship of a mythical psychology of an isolated individual mind to the even more mythical psychology of a mass or crowd or public mind,” but to students of “the relationship of original or native activities to acquired capacities and habits.”⁵⁹

Boris Sidis scorned these developments, just as he defied the Freudian wave in psychiatry. While others repudiated crowd psychology or ransacked it for cheerful advice on how to manage the masses, Sidis stuck to the alarmist principles he formulated in the 1890s. Soon they congealed into a trite and repetitive jeremiad. Speaking at Harvard in 1911, Sidis intimated that his mentor James had helped promote the “shallow optimism” that blinded Americans to the “cankers and sores” of their social life. “We are in danger,” he warned, “of building up a Byzantine empire with large institutions and big corporations, but with small minds and dwarfed individualities.” Sidis held that only psychopathologists like himself could save America “from mental and moral decline”⁶⁰

Sidis’ politics had always been radical (Royce called him a Nihilist), and during World War I his hatred of the Romanovs combined with his anti-war convictions to make him a Bolshevik sympathizer. So was his son, a famous Harvard mathematics prodigy, who was arrested for taking part in a “red-flag” demonstration in Roxbury in May 1919. Ironically, Sidis could be accused of succumbing to the mob hysteria he had decried for so many years. Though he pleaded for the credit due him as a pioneer of social science, pointing out how much other investigators had borrowed from him, his politics could only serve to isolate him. Sidis’ reputation was in eclipse when he died in 1923.⁶¹

* * *

Though World War I failed to popularize the hyperbolic theories of Boris Sidis, it gave fresh impetus to more modest and utilitarian versions of crowd psychology. The years 1917-1920 provided numerous occasions for Le Bonian analyses of fickle crowds. More important was the way the war legitimized the imagery of inert masses, along with ideas about how to move them. This was the enduring legacy of the crowd psychologists, in America as in Europe. Their ideas seemingly corroborated by the record of the war and its aftermath, crowd

psychologists prepared the way for anti-democratic theories of “the mass society,” needing the management of scientifically trained elites, that would come into their own later in the century.⁶²

Government campaigns to promote the war effort conferred a patriotic prestige on the business of shaping mass behavior. To forge a heterogeneous public into a “white-hot mass instinct with fraternity, courage, and deathless determination,” the Wilson Administration’s Committee on Public Information developed a host of crowd-making techniques. CPI Director George Creel recruited many of his lieutenants from advertising, speech education and other fields that had assimilated crowd psychology doctrines before the war. Walter Lippmann called the government mobilization of public opinion during the war “the largest and most intensive effort to carry quickly a fairly uniform set of ideas to all the people of a nation.”⁶³

The persuasion industries emerged from the war filled with expansive ambitions and increasingly committed to the use of irrational techniques. Typical were the gains made by crowd doctrines in speech education. New texts stressed the irrationality of audiences and enthused about the efficiency of suggestion. O’Neill and Weaver wrote in 1926: “. . . the true end of speech is not expression, and not communication, but rather stimulation, or better yet, control.” These writers and William Brigance, author of another standard text, gave their readers detailed tips on converting audiences into crowds. “Crowd building,” observed O’Neill and Weaver, “. . . forms a vital portion of the forensic art.”⁶⁴

In addition to promoting persuasive techniques derived from crowd psychology, the war enhanced the prestige of the “science” itself. New analyses of mob and mass behavior commanded respectful attention, among them *The Instinct of the Herd in Peace and War* (1915) by the English biologist Wilfred Trotter and *The Behavior of Crowds* (1920) by the American educator Everett Dean Martin. The theories of Le Bon and Tarde continued to influence American sociology through the students of E. A. Ross, and also through the writing and teaching of Robert Ezra Park at the University of Chicago. Park had drawn heavily upon Le Bon for his 1904 doctoral dissertation, and in the 1920s he continued to cite Le Bon as the preeminent theories of collective behavior.⁶⁵

The role played by crowd psychology in sustaining the antidemocratic disillusionments of the 1920s can be glimpsed in the writings of Walter Lippmann. Crowd concepts first helped Lippmann interpret the irrationalities of the war years, then bolstered his conviction that the average citizen was politically incompetent. In *Public Opinion* (1922), a book deeply influenced by the CPI propaganda campaigns, Lippmann urged the need for an intelligentsia to manage an incompetent public for its own good. The principal means of “creating consent” proposed by Lippmann was the deployment of emotion-focusing symbols. As Lippmann described it, a symbol was very much like what the crowd psychologists called a “suggestion”; it “immobilizes personality, yet at the same time it enormously sharpens the intention of the group and welds that group . . . to purposeful action.”

When quick results are imperative, the manipulation of masses through symbols may be the only quick way of having a thing done. It is often more important to act than to understand The symbol is the instrument by which in the short run the mass escapes from its own inertia.⁶⁶

In *The Phantom Public* (1925) Lippmann repeatedly characterized the public in terms that resembled Le Bon's descriptions of crowds. "We must assume," he said,

that a public is inexpert in its curiosity, intermittent, that it discerns only gross distinctions, is slow to be aroused and quickly diverted; that . . . it personalizes whatever it considers, and is interested only when events have been melodramatized

Commanding the appropriate symbols, Lippmann observed, "the leader is able to make a homogeneous will out of a heterogeneous mass of desires."⁶⁷

During the 1930s the retreat from democratic principles was halted, in part because anti-democratic doctrines suffered from the company they kept. Always a creed of the Right, crowd psychology was now publicly embraced by fascists. Mussolini professed to have read *The Crowd* many times; the Nazis' familiarity with Le Bonian principles was easily discernible in *Mein Kampf* and in the pronouncements of Third Reich propagandists.⁶⁸ The gathering conflict between totalitarian systems and the surviving democracies helped to resharpen old distinctions between crowd and public.

New American scholarship on the phenomena of mass thought and behavior was devoted primarily to prevention. In a study of propaganda published in 1935, Leonard Doob sought to expose the irrational devices of persuasion so that individuals could protect themselves against them. Psychologist Ellis Freeman attacked the techniques of crowd creation that had become standard items in speaker's manuals, and noted that the greatest master of this craft was Hitler. In 1941 Hadley Cantril defended "real democracy" with a cautionary analysis of the psychology of social movements.⁶⁹

But for these scholars and their contemporaries there was no longer any question of blocking "the rush of the mass" or of retrieving E. A. Ross' "sage Emersonian individualism." Though crowd psychology *per se* had been discredited by the eve of World War II, the mass was universally accepted as the great defining condition of Cantril's "real democracy." Many of the premises and images of crowd psychology were absorbed into the anxious theorizing about the mass society after the war.⁷⁰

"There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses," writes Raymond Williams. Yet seeing others as masses "has become characteristic of our kind of society, has been capitalized for the purposes of political or

cultural exploitation." Crowd psychology crystallized that "way of seeing" in the last century and bequeathed it, largely intact, to the social imagination of our own time.⁷¹

Notes

1. Ray Stannard Baker, *American Chronicle: The Autobiography of Ray Stannard Baker* (New York, 1945), 131.
2. E. A. Ross, *Seventy Years of It: An Autobiography* (New York, 1936), 56.
3. E. A. Ross, *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order* (New York, 1901), 42-48.
4. *Ibid.*, 53.
5. E. A. Ross, "The Mob Mind," *The Popular Science Monthly* 51 (July 1897), 390-398; Ross, *Social Control*, 84. Ross's scheme anticipated the tripartite typology invented by David Riesman a half-century later. His "back-look" corresponded to Riesman's "tradition-directedness," "in-look" corresponded to "inner-directedness," and "out-look" corresponded to "other-directedness."
6. Ross, *Social Control*, 146, 148-149.
7. Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Mass' and 'Masses' in Nineteenth-Century England," in *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs*, Volume I, *Words Numbers, Places, People* (Urbana, 1985), 45. Raymond Williams elucidates the evolution of the concept of the "masses" in a superb short essay in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York, 1976), 158-163.
8. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (New York, 1958), 303.
9. Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 5-6, 9-11; quoted by Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution* (New York, 1972), 27. See also Dirk Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1765-1780* (New York, 1977), 41-48, 72-73, 82; E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971), 76-136; John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), 11; John K. Walton, Review of Bohstedt, *Journal of Social History* 18 (Fall 1984), 156-157.
10. Quoted by Andrew Cunningham McLaughlin, *The Confederation and the Constitution, 1783-1789* (New York, 1907), 166.
11. *Evening Post* (New York), April 22, 1805, quoted by David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York, 1965), 156.
12. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 118-119. See also vii-viii, 162-170, 200-202; and Michael Feldberg, "The Crowd in Philadelphia History: A Comparative Perspective," *Labor History* 15 (Summer 1974), 323-336.
13. Quoted by Salvador Giner, *Mass Society* (New York, 1976), 46-47. Giner usefully discusses the crucial severing of the conception of the mass as "a holistic vision of society" from that of the mob.
14. Quoted by *ibid.*, 47; "The American Scholar," in *The Portable Emerson*, ed. Mark Van Doren (New York, 1946), 40.
15. "Ministerial Labors in the Mississippi Valley," undated manuscript sermon, Beecher Family Papers, Group 71, Series II, Box 53, Folder 127, Yale University Library; introductory note to Beecher's "The Advance of A Century," in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Democratic Vistas* (New York, 1970), 66-67.
16. From an unpublished lecture given soon after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, in James E. Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston and New York, 1887), II, 600, quoted by George M. Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War* (New York, 1965), 66.
17. *New York Times*, July 25, 1877.
18. Lieutenant Richard H. Young, "Mob and Military. Legal and Tactical Considerations Affecting the Employment of the Military in the Suppression of Mobs. Part Two: Tactical Considerations," *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 9 (June 1888), 263.
19. Baker, *American Chronicle*, 17-20.
20. *Ibid.*, 24-25.
21. Ray Stannard Baker to Father, April 6, 1894, Baker Papers, Library of Congress; *American Chronicle*, 37-39.
22. Baker, *American Chronicle*, 63-64.
23. Aline Gorren, "The New Criticism of Genius," *Atlantic Monthly* 74 (December 1894), 800; Boris Sidis, "A Study of the Mob," *Atlantic Monthly* 75 (February 1895), 188-195.
24. James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and Race: Methods and Processes* (New York, 1895), 104; John Dewey, "The Need for Social Psychology," *Psychological Review* 24 (July 1917), 266-277.

25. Dominique Barrucand, *Histoire de l'hypnose en France* (Paris, 1967), 90-91, 95-96, 104-119; Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York, 1970), 85-101; Baldwin, *Mental Development*, 165. The quotes are from George A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life* (New York, 1900), 145-146. See also Albert Moll, *Hypnotism* (London, 1890), 256-262. For discussion of the importance of ideodynamism in the irrationalist "new psychology" that influenced Gustave Le Bon and other students of crowd phenomena, see Robert Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave Le Bon and the Crisis of Mass Democracy in the Third Republic* (London, 1975), 64-65; and Yvon J. Thiec, "Gustave Le Bon, prophete de l'irrationalisme de masse," *Revue française sociologique* 22 (1981), 415-418.
26. Barrucand, *Histoire de l'hypnose*, 187-189, 197-198; John Chynoweth Burnham, *Psychoanalysis and American Medicine, 1894-1918: Medicine, Science and Culture* (New York, 1967), 70-71, 102-103; Nathan G. Hale, Jr., *Freud and the Americans: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876-1917* (New York, 1971), 125-127; David Shakow and David Rapaport, *The Influence of Freud on American Psychology, Psychological Issues*, Volume 4, Number 1, Monograph 13 (New York, 1964), 102-103.
27. Quoted by Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven, 1981), 77.
28. *Ibid.*, 128-129; Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 17 ed. (London, 1930), 30-36, 44-50. See also Nye, *Origins of Crowd Psychology*, 64-71. For a provocative new study of crowd psychology, see J. S. McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob: From Plato to Canetti* (London, 1989).
29. On the politics of crowd psychology, see Roger L. Geiger, "Democracy and the crowd: the social history of an idea in France and Italy, 1890-1914," *Societas* 7 (Winter 1977), 51; Alexandre Metraux, "French Crowd Psychology: Between Theory and Ideology," in William R. Woodward and Mitchell G. Ash, eds., *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth Century Thought* (New York, 1982), 291-292; and Erika Apfelbaum and Gregory R. McGuire, "Models of Suggestive Influence and the Disqualification of the Social Crowd," in C. F. Graumann and S. Moscovici, ed., *Changing Conceptions of Crowd Mind and Behavior* (New York, 1986), 32.
30. On the extension of crowd psychology from crowds to their contexts, see Nye, *Origins of Crowd Psychology*, 73-74; Geiger, "Democracy and the crowd," 62; Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors*, 17-29; Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 5.
31. *Ibid.*, 19-21, 77-80; Nye, *Origins of Crowd Psychology*, 76-78, 106-112, 170; Geiger, "Democracy and the crowd," 61. Nye and Geiger point out that Le Bon explicitly claimed the mantle of Machiavelli with his *La psychologie politique et la defense sociale* (1910), a book of advice to rulers on how to "control the masses by knowing and manipulating their minds."
32. James Mark Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development: A Study in Social Psychology* (New York, 1897), 228, 235; William James, Review of *The Crowd* by Gustave Le Bon, *Psychological Review* 4 (May 1897), 313-316.
33. Herbert S. Langdon, "Boris Sidis," *Dictionary of American Biography* (1935); "Boris Sidis," *National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (1935); Josiah Royce to William James, October 17, 1892, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
34. William James to Boris Sidis, October 28, 1897, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
35. W. S. Taylor, *Morton Prince and Abnormal Psychology* (New York, 1928), 98-99; Otto M. Marx, "Morton Prince and the Dissociation of a Personality," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 6 (April 1970), 120-130.
36. Morton Prince, "Some of the Present Problems of Abnormal Psychology," *Psychological Review* 12 (March-May, 1905), 118; Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, 283-297, 300; Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 3 volumes (New York, 1955), Volume II, 110, 115.
37. Boris Sidis, *The Psychology of Suggestion: A Research into the Subconscious Nature of Man and Society* (New York, 1898), 158, 179-180, 24-90.
38. *Ibid.*, 17, 88, 245-246, 267.
39. *Ibid.*, 24, 304, 308; James, Introduction to *The Psychology of Suggestion*, vii.
40. Sidis, "A Study of the Mob."
41. Sidis, "A Study of Mental Epidemics," *Century Magazine* 52 (October 1896), 849-853, *Psychology of Suggestion*, 310-327, 364.
42. Sidis, *Psychology of Suggestion*, 319-364.
43. Ross, *Social Psychology: An Outline and Source Book* (New York, 1908), 27.
44. Robert H. Gault, "Suggestion and Suggestibility," *American Journal of Psychology* 25 (September 1919), 185-194; Gault, *Social Psychology: The Bases of Behavior Called Social* (New York, 1923); Emory S. Bogardus, *Fundamentals of Social Psychology* (New York, 1924).
45. Edwin Diller Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness* (London, 1899), 167-171; Frederick Morgan Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals: A Study in Mental and Social Evolution* (New York, 1917), 227-228. See also George A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life* (n.p., 1900), 104-172.

46. Even anti-lynching statements often ended by blaming the victims and thus justifying the practice. For example, see Henry Cabot Lodge, "Lynch Law and Unrestricted Immigration," *North American Review* 152 (May 1891), 602-612; and Walter Hines Page, "The Last Hold of the Southern Bully," *The Forum* 16 (November 1893), 303-314. On the incidence and interpretation of lynchings and other racial violence, see Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response* (Amherst, 1988); Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia, 1980); George C. Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940* (Baton Rouge, 1990); and Mildred I. Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of an American Black Woman, 1893-1930*, Volume 15 in the series *Black Women in United States History* (Brooklyn, 1990).
47. Raymond Williams writes, ". . . Masses was a new word for mob, and the traditional characteristics of the mob were retained in its significance: gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit." *Culture and Society*, 298.
48. Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors*, 182; Salvador Giner, *Mass Society*, 60-62; Fred H. Matthews, *Quest for an American Sociology: Robert E. Park and the Chicago School* (Montreal, 1977), 55.
49. Mary Moss, "Machine-Made Human Beings," *Atlantic Monthly* 94 (August 1904), 264-268; Hamilton, "The Psychology of Theatre Audiences," *The Forum* 39 (October-December 1907), 234-248; Sedgwick, "The Mob Spirit in Literature," in *The New American Type and Other Essays* (New York, 1908), 27-50. The new "crowd civilization" also elicited some praise, notably by the preacher-publicist Gerald Stanley Lee, cousin of the famous public relations counselor Ivy Lee. Gerald Stanley's career peaked in 1913 with the publication of a best-seller titled *Crowds*. Early statements of his views include "The Dominance of the Crowd," *Atlantic Monthly* 87 (February 1901), 240-253. See Gregory W. Bush, *Lord of Attention: Gerald Stanley Lee and the Crowd Metaphor in industrializing America* (Amherst, 1991).
50. Loren H. B. Knox, "Our Lost Individuality," *Atlantic Monthly* 104 (December 1909), 818-824.
51. Josiah Royce, *Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other Human Problems* (New York, 1908), 81-96.
52. G. A. Tawney, "The Nature of Crowds," *Psychological Bulletin* 2 (October 15, 1905), 329-33; E. A. Ross, *Foundations of Sociology* (New York, 1905).
53. Quoted by Stephen Meyer III, *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921* (Albany, 1981), 160-161. See also John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New York, 1965), 234-250.
54. Ross, *Social Psychology*, 63-65; Mary Follett, *The New State: Group Organization in the Solution of Popular Government* (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1965; first published 1918), 85-86, 22-23.
55. Walter Dill Scott, *The Psychology of Public Speaking* (Philadelphia, 1906), 155-156, 161, 179, 185.
56. Giles Wilkeson Gray, "Some Teachers and the Transition to Twentieth Century Speech Education," in Karl R. Wallace, ed., *History of Speech Education in America* (New York, 1954), 433-438; Charles H. Woolbert, "The Audience," in *Psychological Monographs* 21 (June 1916), 36-54; Woolbert, "Persuasion: Principles and Methods," *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* 5 (January-May 1919), 12-25, 101-119, 212-238. See also Woolbert, "The Place of Logic in Persuasion," *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* 4 (January 1918), 19-39; H. B. Gislason, "The Relations of the Speaker to His Audience," *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* 2 (January 1916), 39-45; and Harry Frank Covington, "On Imaginative Suggestion," *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* 2 (April 1916), 180-185.
57. Sidis, *Psychology of Suggestion*, 308; *Springfield Daily Republican*, July 23, 1903, cited by Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James, Briefer Version* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1948), 249-250; Edwin Diller Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, 105, 108-09, 133, 163; Sidis, *Psychology of Suggestion*, 163. Sidis was replying to a statement Starbuck made in an 1897 article.
58. Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, 167-168, 172-173; Davenport, *Primitive Traits*, 190-215, 257.
59. Dewey, "The Need for Social Psychology," 267-268.
60. Sidis, *Philistine and Genius* (New York, 1911), 36-38, 54-55, 87-88, 95.
61. Boris Sidis, "The Source and Aim of Human Progress (A Study in Social Psychology and Social Pathology)," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 14 (April-June 1919), 122-126, 133-135, 142; *New York Times*, May 3, May 14, and May 15, 1919.
62. For a detailed discussion of crowd psychology as precursor of mass society theory, and the transition between them, see Eugene E. Leach, "Mastering the Crowd: Collective Behavior and Mass Society in American Social Thought, 1917-1939" *American Studies* 27 (Spring 1986), 99-114. See also McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob*, 203, 210.
63. George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York, 1920), 100; Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922), 236, 46-47.
64. James Milton O'Neill and Andrew Thomas Weaver, *The Elements of Speech*, 2nd edition (New York, 1935), 9, 285-286; William Norwood Briggance, *The Spoken Word: A Text-Book of*

Speech Composition (New York, 1932), 120-183. See also Arleigh B. Williamson, *Speaking in Public* (New York, 1932); and Robert T. Oliver, *The Psychology of Effective Speech* (New York, 1942).

65. For a brief discussion of Martin, Trotter and Park, see Leach, "Mastering the Crowd," 104-

106. Park's debt to Le Bon is described by Clark McPhail, *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (New York, 1991), 5-9.

66. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 98-99, 235-239.

67. Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York, 1925), 64-65, 47-48.

68. Nye, *Origins of Crowd Psychology*, 177-180; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, quoted by Hans Herma, "Some Principles of German Propaganda and Their Application to Radio," in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, eds., *Radio Research: 1942-1943* (New York, 1944), 247-248; Ernest Kris, "Mass Communication Under Totalitarian Governments," in Douglas Waples, ed., *Print, Radio, and Film in a Democracy* (Chicago, 1942).

69. Leonard Doob, *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique* (New York, 1935), 51; Ellis Freeman, *Conquering the Man in the Street: A Psychological Analysis of Propaganda in War, Fascism, and Politics* (New York, 1940), 176-191; Hadley Cantril, *The Psychology of Social Movements* (New York, 1941).

70. For an interpretation of the background and development of mass society theory, see Eugene E. Leach, "'Just Human Atoms Massed Together': The Evolution of Mass Society Theory from Ortega y Gasset to Riesman and Mills," *Mid-America* 71 (January 1989), 31-49.

71. Williams, *Culture and Society*, 300.