

On Persuasion, Crowds, Christianity, and Our Farcical Politics

by [Carl Nelson](#) (October 2024)



Fête Nationale, 1880 (study) (Alfred Philippe Roll, 1882)

The most dangerous things in the world are immense accumulations of human beings who are manipulated by only a few heads. –Carl Jung

Is there anything an all-powerful Creator can't do?

Judging from history, this would be crowd control.

First he created human beings. Then, being upset by their collective actions, He drowned most to start again with a select few. Then, these select few, God's chosen, again grew fractious and rebellious. After seeing to their release from bondage in Egypt, casting aside His direction in favor of their own internal compass, they again ignored His advice and wandered another stubborn forty years in the Wilderness before obtaining the Promised Land. Then after even further violated commandments, God finally, tossing up His hands, left His Chosen, the Jews, loose on their own recognizance to wander across the face of the Earth in a great Diaspora. A few throughout this history had seemed capable of hewing to the straight and narrow but no more than that, until even God had gotten to His wits' end.

In writing this piece I did a bit of reading to augment my thoughts. (Always a prudent action.) I read, *The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind* by Gustave Le Bon and a more contemporary book, *Influence, the Psychology of Persuasion* by Robert B. Cialdini, PhD, at one time the Distinguished Professor of Marketing and Regent's Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University. This latter book is a primer of sales techniques, sugar coated for market consumption by use of the title's word, "influencers." As soon as you open the cover though—which is a sales pitch in itself—the author consistently, throughout the book, labels such influencers "compliance professionals" —which, indeed, they are.

Cialdini discusses six major "weapons of influence" used by "compliance professionals," each of which is quite effective, and all of which employ their tactics on both crowds and individuals as a work-around to the dispassionate scrutiny exercised by a rational and prudent examination.

For example, Cialdini, (in the chapter of his book on "Commitment and Consistency"), relates a puzzling experience had while investigating an introductory lecture whose intent was to sell subscriptions to a Transcendental Meditation

program. The initial presentation promised miraculous things to be had by attending the course. However, the credulity of the presentation was (intentionally) so demolished by questions from a planted associate of the professor's –that the presenters were left speechless for a response.

Following this fiasco, both the promoters and the investigators were confounded when the attending audience purchased far more subscriptions than ever anticipated. Our author and his plant presumed the audience had not understood the logic of the argument and purchased subscriptions nevertheless. However, after questioning the participants, they found that this was not the case.

The audience had understood the argument quite well. "In fact, too well. It was precisely the cogency of the planted associate's argument that drove them to sign up for the program on the spot. Their spokesman among the queried audience members put it best: 'Well, I wasn't going to put down any money tonight because I'm really quite broke right now; I was going to wait until the next meeting. But when your buddy [planted associate] started talking, I knew I'd better give them my money now, or I'd go home and start thinking about what he said and *never* sign up.'"

And so, it occurs likewise that a very good reason it is so hard to argue a partisan out of their vote is that the party, by playing the long game, has created an identification and a commitment from them that embraces the bedrock values the party ostensibly espouses. Once the voter has made a commitment to those values, it doesn't matter whether the policies will forward those values or produce the opposite. Commitment and Consistency Theory ordain that the voter will support those policies—because of the previous commitment made towards the values these policies ostensibly forward no matter how ludicrous the reasoning or the historical failure of like policies.

If they were to actually listen to countervailing arguments, they might lose their commitment. And then what? Once their commitment has been internalized, who would they be, if they denied it? This is just one of surely several reasons why, I believe, it is so hard to dislodge support for the current Democratic policies even in the bare face of their failures. What has their candidate accomplished? Most draw a blank. Which is not surprising, given a candidate who is at such a loss for credible policies of her own—that she has desperately stolen many of her opposition's. This is incredible!

So why do these Democrats still support the party's candidate?

The only answer apparent is: "Because she's a minority, and she's a woman."

Matthew Bates, a writer on Quora from Chicago, noted the same response from this family and friends who would continually return to vote in the same Democratic machine whose leadership were ruining the city. They could not offer any arguments for doing so. They supported black and women candidates. It was forbidden among them to consider otherwise.

Using a psychological work-around, critical thought had been bypassed. And not only individuals succumb to these techniques, but crowds are likewise hypnotized. Both individual and collective actions are nudged to their ends by these very serviceable techniques employed by compliance professionals. The average citizen might think they are in a thoughtful discussion of a matter, only to later realize that they have been punching way above their weight, ending in support of decisions at great odds to common sense and their own acquired wisdom.

When vast numbers of people can be convinced by the use of some elementary smoke and mirrors and nudged into compliance through the use of a few simple techniques—nefarious compliance experts can often sway citizens to act far from

common sense, and to relinquish their liberties for few apparent benefits. Additionally, there is the problem of whether the leader is as they have been fashioned to appear. Are they authentic? Are the candidates real, or are they Memorex? Are they truly honest, or running a bait and switch operation? This is just one reason why it would seem to me catastrophic to rely on the populace to vote proxies of whom they know very little.

Then there are the crowds—who ostensibly consider the issues. Political candidates woo crowds, the larger the better. Considering more reasons for the farcical nature of our political process, as it has come to its current pass, Gustave Le Bon's book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, adds insights.

The characteristics of the reasoning of crowds are the association of dissimilar things possessing a merely apparent connection between each other, and the immediate generalization 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 that 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. (Pg. 39)

...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 (my italics) are methods of argument well known to speakers at public meetings. (Pg. 29)

Speaking of the crowd hysteria which animated the French Revolution, he quotes from the memoirs of Billaud-Varennes: "...the majority and the minority, finish by consenting to help on their own suicide."

La Bon notes further:

A crowd is not just impulsive and mobile. Like a savage, it is not prepared to admit that anything can come between its desire and the realization of that desire ... The notion of impossibility disappears for the individual in a crowdThe unreal has almost as much influence on them as the real. They have an evident tendency not to distinguish between the two.

Doesn't this sound a lot like those crowds clamoring for the Green Agenda?

And on the convictions of crowds, La Bon says:

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 ... Whether such a sentiment apply to an invisible God, to a wooden or stone idol, to a hero or to a political conception ... its essence always remains religious.

However, not all is loss, and the crowd does have a redeeming characteristic, as according to Le Bon:

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 individual is capable. Appeals to sentiments of glory, honour, and patriotism are particularly likely to influence the individual 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... How numerous are the crowds that have heroically faced death for beliefs, ideas, and phrases that they scarcely understood!... 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 civilization would have grown up on our planet and humanity would have had no history"

How smart of the Christian God to realize this and to make use of it, finally.

To my mind, the Old Testament marked God's struggle with

managing the Madding Crowd. God seems to have learned—or perhaps was feeling His years, when He handed matters over to His Son (Jesus)... where, in Him, human management was placed on a subsidiary basis. Jesus did not lead migrations. He did not direct nations. Rather He assembled disciples, fellow purveyors of individualized spiritual instruction. By employing reason to teaching via analogy, and parable, He discussed matters with the upper cognitive (individualized) mind of listeners who happened to attend Him on riverbanks, hillsides and over meals. And Jesus had this to say about politics: “Precisely, for the coin bears the image of the emperor Caesar. Well, then, you should pay the emperor what is due to the emperor. But because you bear the image of God, give back to God all that belongs to Him.” In short, he placed limits on the government, and agency to the individual.

The psychology of a large crowd inevitably sinks to the level of mob psychology. If, therefore, I have a so-called collective experience as a member of a group, it takes place on a lower level of consciousness than if I had the experience by myself alone. —C.G. Jung

The Christian God possibly decided, that if He were to raise His children to the spiritual level He envisioned, He was going to have to speak to mankind on an individual basis. For it is as individuals that we reason and can seek the best solutions dispassionately. Give what is due the crowd, and keep what is due to oneself.

Apparently, He turned His next generation (Jesus) loose to perform the upgrade, as it does seem that Christianity carved a perfect approximation of combining the collective allegiance of the Old Testament crowds with the defining allegiance of the New Testament to the individual. It would seem that

Christianity was a religion created to temper and guide the Old Testament (crowd) religion with the pragmatic, rational (individual). realism of the New Testament. This union of the Old Testament with the New occurred when Jesus announced the upgrade in His declaration of the New Covenant: as agreement between God and man with only two commandments:

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. –Matthew 22:37-40

And with these two commandments, Jesus placed in the individual's hands the reins with which to control and channel the positive passions of the crowd, and of its agent, the accepted law. Shazam! Western Civilization.

But, as they say, nothing good lasts forever. And, unfortunately, this profound ordering of the popular mindset is collapsing with the collapse of Christian belief. In its stead there has been a return of the false gods: Progressivism, Socialism, Communism, New Age factions, Existentialism and Humanism, all manner of Earth-based paganisms, Rationalism, combined with a reverence for technologic advance like an algorithmic Idol, such as AI, that will doubtlessly fractal into innumerable prime actors in an ongoing list of progeny like the Grecian Gods. All as a coda to Alexander Solzhenitsyn's timeless remark:

More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen

Russia: "Men have forgotten God, that's why all this has happened."

Then in addition to this loss of the Christian cultural rudder, La Bon adds: "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."

Indeed, more than a measure of public authority is currently maidservant to the welfare citizen, the hindering bureaucrat and the managerial elite (see "[Twilight of American Democracy](#)").

Indeed, presently our democracy isn't enduring.

Would any responsible citizen who has learned to fend for themselves "the necessities of everyday life" hire an employee, or employ a financial advisor, or solicit a godfather for the family in such a manner as we currently elect our leaders, who are given the power to tax, engage in war, and to censor and rule every manner and measure of our existence? The answer is, no. More and more, it is the concerns of those special interests noted above which determine our laws and rulers.

Currently, as the tin gods the Enlightenment has made us out to be, we are having like problems managing our civilization. If Carl Jung thought a large crowd sinks to the level of mob psychology – he should have lived to see them on social media! If we are to learn anything by the historical cycles, it might be that they are driven by crowds. And that "standing athwart history, yelling "Stop", as William F. Buckley was inclined, at most seems to retard movements—possibly by drawing individuals from the swelling crowd. But, alas, to no avail.

At best, it's a braking movement, a rearguard action. And how much use is a well turned argument or a well conceived essay to turn them? Surely there were plenty of those circulating in Bolshevik Russia.

As Jesus said of false prophets, "You will know them by their fruits."

(And not even by this stirring essay, alas!)

Or as Dylan said, "You don't need a weatherman to know the way the wind blows." A great slogan for subsidiarity, (and freedom of the individual mind).

(Meanwhile, I'd suggest placing half of your investments in gold—unless you are confident with the use of blockchain cybercurrencies.)

Stay tuned for a following essay concerning the *Sovereign Individual*, which describes the upcoming demise of politics, and consequent future of individual choice—due to the revolutionary effects of cybercryptology which will allow us to shop for our governing laws as a consumer rather than them being thrust upon us at birth, as a vassal—soon as I can craft it.

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Carl Nelson's latest book of poetry titled, *Strays, Misfits, Renegades, and Maverick Poems (with additional Verses on Monetizations)*, has just been published. To have a look at this and more of his work please visit [Magic Bean Books](#).

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