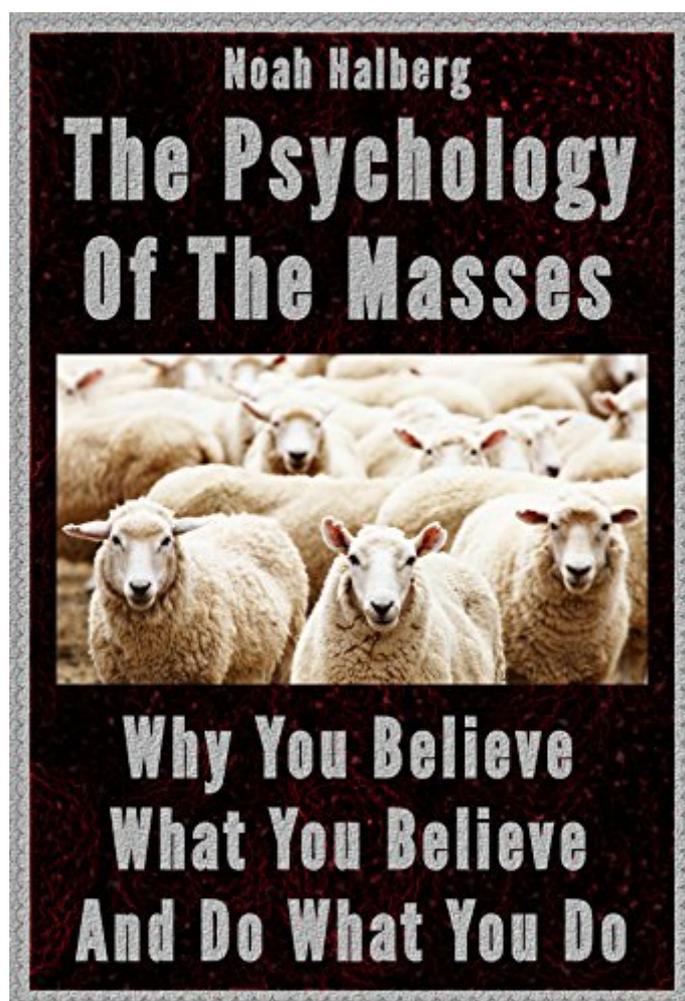The book was found

The Psychology Of The Masses: Why You Believe What You Believe And Do What You Do

Synopsis

The Psychology of the Masses is about how and why people are so groupish. Nearly all of us seem to believe that our ideas and habits are freely chosen, not the result of the accidents of our environment; however, most of us tend to believe and do what the people around us believe and do. We fall easily under the spell of what has authority or prestige. These facts are so well-established that propagandists like Edward Bernays could use them to sell everything from wars to consumer goods. We barely feel the pressures of our groups so long as we don't depart from them, but when we do, the coercive nature of social life immediately reveals itself to us. But nevertheless, if we weren't like this social life would be impossible. As social animals, we feel distraught when separated from our herds; this is why rejection is so painful. I view crowd psychology as the central science of the social sciences the way chemistry is the central science of the natural sciences. It can be used in combination with neighboring fields to explain almost everything about social life. It can explain everything from stock bubbles to religious cults to individual beliefs and habits. It provides the best explanation I know of for how memesâ "bits and combinations of cultural informationâ "spread. My theoretical assumptions are different from meme theory's assumptions and I avoid using the term "meme" in order not to confuse people, but anyone with an interest in the subject will probably want to read this book. Edward Bernays co-founded the public relations profession with his knowledge of crowd psychology. He and the influential journalist Walter Lippmann used it when they and the others on the Creel Committee got the United States into World War I. So this isn't hot air but has been practically applied to good effect.This book is broad in scope, but a few simple ideas serve as unifying themes throughout it, so I don't think it's too ambitious; it's cohesive. In addition to the things mentioned above, I also talk about elite theoryâ "or why we'll never be entirely equal, or independent of authorityâ "along with evolutionary theory, media studies, economics, management theory, military strategy, political philosophy, creativity, mental illness, and the arts, and about the formation of ideas and habits, and about what crowd psychology has to say about modern technologies like social media and search engines. I'm attempting to construct a complete theory of human nature, and I dedicate my last chapter entirely to my plan for that. I am aware of modern research in the behavioral and social sciences, and talk a bit about it, but many of the authors I discuss wrote their books a century or longer ago. What is newer is not always better; no one, as far as I know, has treated the subjects I talk about as thoroughly and with as much rigor as the classic authors. Among the older authors I cite, along with the two mentioned above, are crowd psychologists Gustave Le Bon, Wilfred Trotter, and Gabriel Tarde, along with the founder of American psychology, William James, and the Italian elitist school

of sociology, which includes Robert Michels, Gaetano Mosca, and Vilfredo Pareto. I do talk about modern controversies, like the one between supporters of kin selection (like Richard Dawkins) and group selection (like E.O. Wilson) in evolutionary biology. Wilfred Trotter has a unique theory which may provide a solution to the problems of altruism; more specifically, he uses the herd instinctâ"the tendency of the members of a group to believe and behave in the same waysâ"instead of altruism to explain most social behavior. Modern theorists assume that group behavior must be facilitated by altruism somehow, even if it's only so that an organism can spread its genes. Trotter argues that altruism is a byproduct of the herd instinct, and when the two conflict herd instinct has precedence; or in other words, nonconforming altruists are punished along with selfish "cheaters."

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Customer Reviews

When I started reading this book, I was expecting to find a historical background about crowd psychology covering the writings of the leaders and pioneers of this field. But Noah Halberg exceeded my expectations not only in how thorough was the background he gave but in the manner he has woven these writings in a seamless way through out the book to help achieve the objective

of "the uniting of the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities under a single intellectual framework."I was also expecting that a book about crowd psychology will tap into multiple disciplines mainly in psychology, sociology and political sciences. But yet again Noah Halberg exceeded my expectations by the breadth of disciplines he delves into in his quest to put "a plan for a complete theory of human nature" as he outlined it in chapter 13: Philosophy, linguistics, mythology, fashion, religion, history, theories of war, media, economics and economic bubbles, sociobiology, evolutionary biology, physiology are just some of the disciplines from which xxxxx picked what is relevant or what he made relevant through his powerful insights.Of particular interest to me was chapter 10: "The Crowd and Modern Technology" in which he expressed his concerns about the impact of the internet and social media on individual liberty. In a world that is "becoming more and more like a big crowd", the boundaries between public and private life is being destroyed.

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