

# The Psychology of Totalitarianism

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Mass formation is a form of mass hypnosis that emerges when specific conditions are met, and almost always precede the rise of totalitarian systems
- › Four central conditions that need to exist in order for mass formation to arise are widespread loneliness and lack of social bonding, which leads to experiencing life as meaningless, which leads to widespread free-floating anxiety and discontent, which leads to widespread free-floating frustration and aggression, which results in feeling out of control
- › Under mass formation, a population enters a hypnotic-type trance that makes them willing to sacrifice anything, including their lives and their freedom
- › Key strategies to disrupt the mass formation process are to speak out against it and to practice nonviolent resistance. Dissenting voices keep totalitarian systems from deteriorating into abject inhumanity where people are willing to commit heinous atrocities
- › Ultimately, “totalitarianism” refers to the ambition of the system. It wants to eliminate the ability of individual choice, and in so doing, it destroys the core of what it is to be human. The quicker a system destroys the individual, the sooner the system collapses

Professor Mattias Desmet, a Belgian psychologist with a master’s degree in statistics, gained worldwide recognition toward the end of 2021, when he presented the concept of “mass formation” as an explanation for the absurd and irrational behavior we were seeing with regard to the COVID pandemic and its countermeasures.

He also warned that mass formation gives rise to totalitarianism, which is the topic of his new book, "[The Psychology of Totalitarianism](#)." Desmet's work was further popularized by Dr. Robert Malone, whose appearance on the Joe Rogan podcast was viewed by about 50 million people.

But as the search term "mass formation" exploded in popularity, Google responded by manipulating the search engine results in an attempt to discredit Desmet and show people in their search results information that would cause them to discount the importance of this work. Why? Because Google is at the core of the global cabal and movement toward totalitarianism.

## **Understanding the Psychology of the Times Is Crucial**

Those who refuse to learn from history are bound to repeat it, they say, and this appears particularly pertinent in the present day because, as explained by Desmet, if we don't understand how mass formation occurs and what it leads to, we cannot prevent it. How did Desmet reach the conclusion that we were in the process of mass formation? He explains:

*"In the beginning of the Corona crisis, back in February 2020, I started to study the statistics on the mortality rates of the virus, the infection fatality rates, the case fatality rate and so on, and immediately, I got the impression – and with me, several world-famous statisticians, such as John Ioannidis of Stanford, for instance – that the statistics and mathematical models used dramatically overrated the danger of the virus.*

*Immediately, I wrote an opinion paper trying to bring some of the mistakes to people's attention. But, I noticed immediately that people just didn't want to know. It was as if they didn't see even the most blatant mistakes at the level of the statistics that were used. People just were not capable of seeing it."*

This early experience made him decide to focus on the psychological mechanisms at play in society, and he became convinced that what we were seeing were in fact the

effects of a large-scale process of mass formation, because the most salient characteristic of this psychological trend is that it makes people radically blind to everything that goes against the narrative they believe in.

They basically become incapable of distancing themselves from their beliefs, and therefore cannot take in or evaluate new data. Desmet continues:

*“Another very specific characteristic is that this process of mass formation makes people willing to radically sacrifice everything that is important to them – even their health, their wealth, the health of their children, the future of their children.*

*When someone is in the grip of a process of mass formation, he becomes radically willing to sacrifice all his individual interest. A third characteristic, to name only a few, is that once people are in the grip of a process of mass formation, they typically show a tendency of cruelty towards people who do not buy into the narrative, or do not go along with the narrative. They typically do so as if it is an ethical duty.*

*In the end, they are typically inclined, first, to stigmatize, and then, to eliminate, to destroy, the people who do not go along with the masses.*

*And that's why it is so extremely important to understand the psychological mechanisms at work, because if you understand the mechanisms at work, you can avoid the mass formation to become so deep that people reach this critical point in which they really are fanatically convinced that they should destroy everyone that does not go along with them.*

*So, it's extremely important to understand the mechanism. If you understand it, you can make sure that the crowd, the mass, will first destroy itself, or will exhaust itself, before it starts to destroy the people that do not go along with the mass.*

*So, it's of crucial importance, and that's what my book describes. It describes how a mass, a crowd, emerges in a society, under which conditions it emerges, what the mechanisms of the process of mass formation are, and what you can do about it. That's extremely important. I will mention this from the beginning.*

*Usually, it is impossible to wake up the masses. Once a process of mass formation emerges in a society, it's extremely difficult to wake the masses up. But, [waking them up is] important, [because] you can avoid the masses and their leaders becoming so fanatically convinced of their narrative that they start to destroy the people who do not go along with them."*

Indeed, to those of us who did not fall under the spell of the irrational COVID narrative, the cruelty with which political leadership, media and people at large tried to force compliance was shockingly abhorrent. Many were physically attacked, and some even killed, simply for not wearing a face mask, which we knew was a useless prevention strategy.

## **Historical Context for Mass Hypnosis**

It is easier to understand what mass formation is if you consider it as mass hypnosis, because they're not merely similar, they're identical, Desmet says. Mass formation is a kind of hypnosis that emerges when specific conditions are met. And, disturbingly, these conditions, and the hypnotic trance that emerges, almost always precede the rise of totalitarian systems.

While totalitarianism and a classical dictatorship share certain features, there are distinct differences at the psychological level. According to Desmet, a classical dictatorship, at the psychological level, is very primitive. It's a society that is frightened of a small group, a dictatorial regime, because of its aggressive potential.

Totalitarianism, on the other hand, arises from a very different psychological mechanism. Interestingly, the totalitarian state didn't actually exist before the 20th

century. It's a relatively new phenomenon, and it's based on mass formation or mass hypnosis.

The conditions for this mass hypnotic state (listed below) were first met just before the emergence of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, so that's our historical context. These conditions were again met just before the COVID crisis. What we're seeing now is a different kind of totalitarianism, largely due to technological advancements that have created extremely effective tools to subconsciously influence the public.

We now have very sophisticated tools with which to hypnotize far larger masses of people than they could in earlier times. But while our current-day totalitarianism is global rather than regional, and the information war more sophisticated than anything the Soviets or Nazi's could muster, the basic psychological dynamics are still identical.

## **Understanding Hypnosis**

So, what are those psychological dynamics? "Mass formation" is a clinical term that in layman's jargon could simply be translated as a kind of mass hypnosis, which can occur once certain conditions are fulfilled.

When you are being hypnotized, the first thing the hypnotist will do is to detach or withdraw your attention from the reality or environment around you. Then, through his hypnotic suggestion — usually a very simple narrative or sentence stated out loud — the hypnotist will focus your full attention on a single point, for instance, a moving pendulum or just his voice.

From the perspective of the hypnotized person, it will seem as though reality has vanished. An extreme example of this is the use of hypnosis to make people insensitive to pain during surgery. In that situation, the patient's mental focus is so narrow and intense, that they don't notice that their body is being cut into.

In the same way, it doesn't matter how many people are injured by the COVID measures, because the focus is on COVID and everything else has vanished, in psychological terms.

People can be killed for not wearing a mask and the hypnotized won't raise an eyebrow. Children can die from starvation and friends can commit suicide from financial desperation — none of it will have a psychological impact on the hypnotized because to them, the plight of others doesn't register. A perfect example of this psychological blinding to reality is how COVID job deaths and injuries are simply unrecognized and not even considered to be causal.

People will get the shot, suffer massive injuries, and say, "Thank goodness I got the shot or it would have been so much worse." They cannot conceive the possibility that they were injured by the shot. I've even seen people express gratitude for the shot when someone they supposedly loved died within hours or days of getting it! It's just mindboggling. The psychological dynamics of hypnosis does explain this irrational and otherwise incomprehensible behavior, but it's still quite surreal.

*"Even while I know the mechanisms at work, I'm still baffled every time it happens," Desmet says. "I almost can't believe what I see. I know someone whose husband died a few days after the vaccine, during his sleep, from a heart attack.*

*And I thought, 'Now she will open her eyes and wake up.' Not at all. She just continued in the same fanatic way — even more fanatic — talking about how happy we should be because we have this vaccine. Unbelievable, yes."*

## **The Psychological Roots of Mass Formation**

As mentioned, mass formation, or mass hypnosis, can occur when certain psychological conditions are present in a large-enough portion of society. The four central conditions that need to exist in order for mass formation to arise are:

1. Widespread loneliness and lack of social bonding, which leads to:
2. Experiencing life as meaningless, purposeless and senseless, and/or being faced with persistent circumstances that don't make rational sense, which leads to:

3. Widespread free-floating anxiety and discontent (anxiety/discontent that has no apparent or distinct cause), which leads to:
4. Widespread free-floating frustration and aggression (frustration and aggression have no discernible cause), which results in feeling out of control

## **How Mass Formation Emerges in a Society**

Once a large-enough portion of society feels anxious and out of control, that society becomes highly vulnerable to mass hypnosis. Desmet explains:

*“Social isolation, lack of meaning, free floating anxiety, frustration and aggression are highly aversive because if people feel anxious, without knowing what they feel anxious for, they typically feel out of control. They feel they cannot protect themselves from their anxiety.*

*And, if under these conditions a narrative is distributed through the mass media, indicating an object of anxiety, and at the same time, providing a strategy to deal with the object of anxiety, then all this free-floating anxiety might connect to the object of anxiety.*

*And, there might be a huge willingness to participate in a strategy to deal with the object of anxiety, no matter how absurd the strategy is. So, even if it is clear from the beginning – for everyone who wants to see it – that the strategy to deal with the object of anxiety might claim many more victims than the object of anxiety itself ... even then, there might be this huge willingness to participate in a strategy to deal with the object of anxiety.*

*That is the first step of every major mechanism of mass formation. Whether it concerned the Crusades, or the witch hunts, or the French Revolution, or the beginning of the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, we see the same mechanism, time and time again.*

*There is a lot of free-floating anxiety. Someone provides a narrative that indicates an object of anxiety and a strategy to deal with it. And then all the anxiety connects to the [proposed] object of anxiety.*

*People participate in a strategy to deal with the object of anxiety that yields a first important psychological advantage, and from then on people have the impression that they can control their anxiety. It's connected to an object and they have a strategy to deal with it."*

## **The Problematic Social Bonding of Mass Formation**

Once people who used to feel lonely, anxious and out of control start to participate in the strategy presented to them as the solution to their anxiety, a brand-new social bond emerges. This, then, reinforces the mass hypnosis, as they now no longer feel isolated and lonely.

This reinforcement is a kind of mental intoxication, and is the real reason why people buy into the narrative, no matter how absurd. "They'll continue to buy into the narrative, because it creates this new social bond," Desmet says.

While social bonding is a good thing, in this instance it becomes extremely destructive, because the free-floating frustration and aggression are still there, and need an outlet. These emotions need to be directed at someone. What's worse, under the spell of mass formation, people lose their inhibitions and sense of proportion.

So, as we've seen during the COVID pandemic, people will attack and lash out in the most irrational ways against anyone who doesn't buy into the narrative. The underlying aggression will always be directed at the part of the population that isn't hypnotized.

Speaking in generalized terms, typically, once mass formation is taking place, about 30% of the population will be hypnotized — and this typically includes the leaders who pronounce the hypnotizing narrative to the public — 10% remain un hypnotized and do not buy into the narrative, and the majority, 60%, feel there's something wrong with the



narrative, but go along with it simply because they don't want to stick out or cause trouble.

Another problem with the social bonding that emerges is that the bond is not between individuals, but rather a bond between the individual and the collective. This gives rise to a feeling of fanatic solidarity with the collective, but there's no solidarity toward any given individual. So, individuals are remorselessly sacrificed for the "greater good" of the faceless collective.

*"This explains, for instance, why during the Corona crisis, everybody was talking about solidarity, but people accepted that if someone got into an accident on the street, you were no longer allowed to help that person unless you had a surgical mask and gloves at your disposal.*

*That also explains why, while everybody was talking about solidarity, people accepted that if their father or mother was dying, they were not allowed to visit them,"* Desmet says.

In the end, you end up with a radical, paranoid atmosphere in which people do not trust each other anymore, and in which people are willing to report their loved ones to the government.

*"So, that's the problem with mass formation,"* Desmet says. *"It's solidarity of the individual with the collective, and never with other individuals. That explains what happened during the revolution in Iran, for instance. I talked with a woman who lived in Iran during the revolution, which was actually the beginning of a totalitarian regime in Iran.*

*She witnessed, with her own eyes, how a mother reported her son to the government, and how she hung the rope around his neck just before he died, and how she claimed to be a heroine for doing so. That's the dramatic effects of mass formation."*

## **With No External Enemy, What Happens?**

We're now facing a situation that is more complicated than at any previous time, because the totalitarianism that is now arising has no external enemies, with the exception of citizens that aren't hypnotized and don't buy into the false narratives. Nazi Germany, for example, was destroyed by external enemies that rose against it.

On the other hand, there's advantage to this, because totalitarian states always need an enemy. That's something that was very well described by George Orwell in his book "1984." In order for the process of mass formation to continue to exist, there must be an external enemy onto which the state can focus the aggression of the hypnotized masses.

## **Nonviolent Resistance and Outspokenness Are Crucial**

This brings us to a key point, and that is the need for nonviolent resistance and speaking out against the narrative. Violent resistance automatically make you a target for aggression, so "resistance from within a totalitarian system always has to stick to the principles of nonviolent resistance," Desmet says. But you must also continue to speak out in a clear, rational and nonabusive way. Desmet explains:

*"The first and foremost principle the resistance has to stick to during a process of mass formation and emerging totalitarianism, is that people who do not go along with the masses have to continue to speak out. That's the most crucial thing."*

*As totalitarianism is based on mass formation, and mass formation is a kind of hypnosis, the mass formation is always provoked by the voice of the leader, which keeps the population in a process of hypnosis. And when dissonant voices continue to speak out, they will not be able to wake the masses up, but they will constantly disturb the process of mass formation.*

*They will constantly interfere with the hypnosis. If there are people who continue to speak out, the mass formation will usually not become so deep that*

*there is a willingness in the population to destroy the people who do not go along with the masses. That's crucial.*

*Historically speaking, if you look at what happened in the Soviet Union and in Nazi Germany, it's clear that it was exactly at the moment when the opposition stopped to speak out in public that the totalitarian system started to become cruel.*

*In 1930, in the Soviet Union, the opposition stopped to speak out, and within six to eight months, Stalin started his large purges, which claimed tens of millions of victims. And then, in 1935, exactly the same happened in Nazi Germany.*

*The opposition was silenced, or stopped to speak out. They preferred to go underground. They were thinking that they were dealing with a classical dictatorship, but they were not. They were dealing with something completely different. They were dealing with a totalitarian state.*

*And by deciding to go underground, it was a fatal decision for themselves. So, also in Nazi Germany, within a period of one year after the opposition stopped to speak out in public, the cruelty started and the system started to destroy first its opponents. That's always the same.*

*In the first stage, totalitarian systems or the masses start to attack those who do not go along with them. But, after a while, they just start to attack and to destroy everyone, group after group.*

*And, in the Soviet Union, where the process of mass formation went very far, much further than in Nazi Germany, Stalin started to eliminate the aristocracy, the small farmers, the large farmers, the goldsmiths, the Jews, all people who according to him would never become good communists.*

*But after a while, he just started to eliminate group after group without any logic. Just everyone. So, that's why Hannah Arendt said that a totalitarian state*

*is always a monster that devours its own children. And that destructive process starts when people stop to speak out.*

*That's probably the reason why, in the beginning of the 20th century, there were several countries where there was mass formation, but where there was never a full-fledged totalitarian state.*

*Probably, there were enough people who didn't shut up, who continued to speak out. That's something that is so crucial to understand. When mass formation emerges, people typically feel that it doesn't make sense to speak out because people don't wake up. People don't seem sensitive to their rational counter arguments.*

*But, we should never forget that speaking out has an immediate effect. Maybe not that it wakes the masses up, but that it disturbs the process of mass formation and the hypnosis. And in that way, prevents the masses from becoming highly destructive towards the people who do not go along with them.*

*Something else also happens. The masses start to exhaust themselves. They start to destroy themselves before they start to destroy the people who do not go along with them. So, that's the strategy to be used for internal resistance towards totalitarian regimes."*

## **Push Back Against Transhumanism and Technocracy**

As mentioned earlier, the leaders who declare the narratives are also always hypnotized. They are fanatics in that sense. However, while today's world leaders are fanatics about transhumanism and technocracy, they may not necessarily believe what they're saying about COVID.

**“ In the end, the ultimate challenge is not so much to show people that the coronavirus was not as dangerous as we expected, or that the COVID narrative**

**is wrong, but rather that this ideology is problematic — this transhumanist and this technocratic ideology is a disaster for humanity ... To show people that, in the end, a transhumanist view on man and the world will entail radical dehumanization of our society. ~ Mattias Desmet”**

Many know that they're telling lies, but they justify those lies as necessary in order to bring the ideologies of transhumanism and technocracy to fruition. The ridiculous COVID agenda is a means to an end. This is another reason why we must continue to push back and speak out, because once the counter arguments disappear, these leaders will become even more fanatic in their ideological quest.

*“In the end, the ultimate challenge is not so much to show people that the coronavirus was not as dangerous as we expected, or that the COVID narrative is wrong, but rather that this ideology is problematic — this transhumanist and this technocratic ideology is a disaster for humanity; this mechanistic thinking, this belief that the universe and man is a kind of material mechanistic system, which should be steered and manipulated in a mechanistic technocratic transhumanist way.*

*That's the ultimate challenge: to show people that in the end, a transhumanist view on man and the world will entail radical dehumanization of our society. So, I think that's the real challenge we are facing. Showing people, 'Look, forget for a moment about the Corona narrative.*

*What we are heading for if we continue in the same way, is a radically, technologically controlled transhumanist society, which will leave no space whatsoever for life for a human being.”*

**It'll Get Worse Before It Gets Better**

Like me, Desmet is convinced that we're rapidly headed toward global totalitarianism and that things will get far worse before they get better. Why? Because we're only in the initial stages of the process of totalitarianism. On the horizon, digital identity still looms large, and with that comes an unfathomably powerful control grid capable of breaking just about anyone.

The glimmer of hope is this: Everyone who has studied mass formation and totalitarianism has concluded that both are intrinsically self-destructive. They cannot survive. And, the more means it has at its disposal to control the population, the sooner it might destroy itself, because totalitarianism destroys the core of the human being.

Ultimately, "totalitarianism" refers to the ambition of the system. It wants to eliminate the ability of individual choice, and in so doing, it destroys the core of what it is to be human, "because psychological energy in a human being emerges at every moment a human being can make a choice that is really its own choice," Desmet says. The quicker a system destroys the individual, the sooner the system collapses.

Again, the only weapon against the brutal destruction of humanity is to push back, to speak out, to nonviolently resist. It may not stop totalitarianism in its tracks, but it can keep the most heinous atrocities at bay. It will also provide a small space where the resistant can try to survive together and thrive in the midst of the totalitarian landscape.

*"Then, if we want to succeed, we will have to think about parallel structures which can allow us to be a little bit self sufficient. We can try to make sure that we don't need the system too much anymore. But, even these parallel structures would be destroyed in a moment if the people do not continue to speak out. So, that's the crucial.*

*I try to bring this to the attention of everyone. We can build parallel structures as much as we want, but if the system becomes too destructive and decides to use it's full aggressive potential, then the parallel structures will be destroyed. But, the system will never reach this level of depth of the hypnosis if there are dissonant voices that continue to speak out. So, I'm very dedicated myself to continue to speak out."*

While it's impossible to make accurate predictions, Desmet's gut feeling is that it'll probably be at least seven or eight years before the totalitarian system currently emerging will burn itself out and self-destruct. Could be more, could be less. Society is a complex dynamic system, and even simple complex dynamic systems cannot be predicted even one second in advance. This is known as the deterministic unpredictability of complex dynamic ecosystems.

## More Information

Regardless of how long it takes, the key will be to survive it all and do what we can to minimize the carnage. A key challenge on an individual level will be to maintain elementary principles of humanity. In the interview, Desmet discusses Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's book, "The Gulag Archipelago," which highlights the importance of holding on to your humanity in the midst of an inhumane situation.

*"That, maybe, is the one and only thing that can guarantee us of a good outcome of the entire process — which is a necessary process, I think. This crisis is not meaningless. It's not meaningless. It's a process in which society can give birth to something new, something much better than exists up until now," he says.*

To learn more about this truly crucial topic, be sure to pick up a copy of Desmet's book, [\*\*"The Psychology of Totalitarianism."\*\*](#)