1 *Fin-de-siècle* Landslides

'The present epoch is one of [those] critical moments in which the thought of mankind is undergoing a process of transformation. […] the modern age represents a period of transition and anarchy'.

If not for the reference to mankind, which comes across as a bit dated today, it would be easy to mistake this quote for a comment on the changes taking place in the early twenty-first century. However, the author of these lines is not offering a sociology of liquid (post)modernity; nor is he commenting on waves of present-day populism or the demolishing – post-Donald Trump – of a well-known world order of international politics, and the attendant rise of a more anarchic regime. The lines appear instead in the opening pages of French crowd theorist Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd* (2002: ix–x). Besides being a cornerstone of the crowd psychology debates that flourished in France and elsewhere at the end of the nineteenth century, Le Bon's treatise deserves attention as an illustration of the pitfalls of presentism. While his remarks about the social world undergoing profound change may themselves reflect a certain presentism, they should at least vaccinate one from falling prey to the similar snare of portraying the twenty-first century as fundamentally different from the past or undergoing unprecedented changes. Subduing an inclination to presentism allows for the observation that many present-day accelerations of society seem rather miniscule compared to the European situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only was that era extremely liquid and accelerated, to use contemporary sociological vocabulary, but also understated and inadequately characterised by a twenty-first-century sociological idiom of transformation. That age is more accurately described as an overheated, heavily boiling pot on the verge of – or actually – overflowing, with minor and major changes piling up in ways that elicited a widespread sense of disruption, as Le Bon's book lays bare.

In this chapter I focus on this epoch – the time span from the 1870s and eighties to the 1920s and thirties, in which sociology and other social sciences gradually evolved into distinct disciplines – to provide a glimpse

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of the virtual landslides in which the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century world was caught. Under these conditions, familiar ways of life and structures of meaning entered a deep-seated instability and indeterminacy, if not outright collapse. Much has already been written about transformations in social and economic life, in art and culture, as well as in technology between the *fin de siècle* and the fall of the Weimar Republic. I shall therefore be somewhat selective in what follows. My account will not only be Eurocentric but also focus mainly, though not exclusively, on developments in France, Germany and Austro-Hungary, since this is where the sense of change and collapse I wish to portray were most pronounced and vividly expressed (for a discussion of British experiences with this era, see Marshall, 2007).

Admittedly, the biases informing the discussion below are not merely geographical; arguably more important are the kinds of developments selected for discussion as well as their interpretation. For example, when zeroing in on some of the significant changes in social life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I intentionally set aside the many continuities that exist alongside the transformations I excavate. In that sense, I forward something of a counter-narrative to the one advanced by historian Arno Mayer in his analysis of the overall persistence of premodern elements in the social and political constitution of this time period. In his *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, Mayer argued that certain 'forces of inertia and resistance' had often been overlooked by historians of the early twentieth century, forces that were firmly rooted in 'preindustrial economic interests, prebourgeois elites, predemocratic authority systems, premodernist artistic idioms, and "archaic" mentalities', all of which cast long-lasting shadows over European social and political life and played no small role in triggering the First World War (Mayer, 1981: 4, 5). Mayer's central point is that these forces of inertia and resistance did much to curtail the effects of all the melting of solids that surely did take place, he admits, in the late nineteenth century.

While I recognise the merits of Mayer's analysis, I nonetheless wish to cast my net elsewhere in the sea of historical developments to demonstrate a point not easily grasped from Mayer's Marxist perspective. Not only did stability and tranquillity come under immense pressure in the late nineteenth century – as a result of a mushrooming of technological advances, industrialisation, urbanisation, and other factors (developments that were sometimes intimately connected, sometimes not) – but also, and more crucial, this sense of change prompted new discussions and conceptions of collectivity and individuality. Indeed, as Le Bon's work demonstrates, the experience of radical change permeated reflections on *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century society, with particular

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configurations of collectivity and individuality arising as responses to and corollaries of this experience. Most important, I argue, this ensuing form of individuality was neither one of immanent flux and fluidity nor one of staunch autonomy. Rather, the notion of individuality that surfaced saw the individual as torn between collectively generated fluidity and, in a nod to Mayer, what may be referred to as *singular inertia*.

The patchwork of analyses that follows weaves together existing scholarly investigations and literary sources, the latter as a handy means of accessing experiences from a bygone era. While I do not assume here that the historical analyses offered in novels should be treated on par with scholarly examinations, I suggest that some novels may not only enrich our sociological imagination but also be sensitive to experiences that are historically, factually correct, although the historical details they describe are rendered in a literary or journalistic form. Reflecting this point, the few literary sources I evoke are written by historical eyewitnesses who took approaches both evaluative and factually descriptive. Although their writings do not conform to standard sociological methods, these authors provide a window into their historical situation and widespread everyday experiences of it, making them valuable sources for a historical sociology.

I thus begin with a set of literary accounts discussing the sense of change that swept across great parts of European social life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Combining these literary sources with historical analyses of this time, I demonstrate how particular meaning structures and ways of life were undermined by political, technological, scientific and cultural developments as well as how a sense of de-individualised subjectivity gained traction in the wake of these transformations. I suggest that while the landslide events experienced at this time were multifaceted, several of their features overlapped and found expression in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century social and political discourse. Thus, for several observers throughout Europe (and beyond), many of the profound changes that took place in society seemed to coalesce in the manifestation of a new collective subject: the crowd. In particular, these observers, led by Le Bon, concurred that crowds laid bare one of the significant experiences that emerged in the late nineteenth century: that of being swept away collectively (by crowds, themselves unleashed by and entangled with the many changes occurring in this time period). I further demonstrate that this concern with crowds was closely related to discussions of de-individualising hypnosis and suggestibility integral to the sense of *fin-de-siècle* change; these discussions portrayed individuality as moulded from the outside rather than as an expression of autonomy and independence.

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Finally, I zero in on the conception of hypnosis underpinning much late-nineteenth-century crowd theory. While notions of hypnosis and suggestion are often believed to imply a passive, externally mimetic conception of individuality, late-nineteenth-century debates were more ambivalent on this point. Indeed, they characterised the individual as being cast between external mimesis and an anti-mimetic sense of autonomous individuality. My central claim is that this individuality was predicated on and conditioned by the wider social changes described throughout the chapter.

From Slow Past to Fast Past

The sense of society undergoing profound changes in the late nineteenth century was widespread, and it manifested in both scholarly and literary accounts. I focus on two eminent Austrian novelists, Joseph Roth and Stefan Zweig, who have vividly portrayed a sense of the radical social, cultural and mental transformations that swept across Europe in a mere few decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That Austrian writers would be particularly attentive to such changes is hardly surprising, given the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the First World War. In particular, Roth's best-known novel, *The Radetzky March* (Roth, 2002), offers a meditation on the downfall of the Empire. With the death of Franz Joseph I in 1916 and the Empire's defeat in the First World War, the Empire and its structures of meaning vanished. Much of the narrative in *The Radetzky March*, set at a slow pedestrian pace, chronicles the quotidian incidents experienced by three generations of a fictive family, the Trottas, whose destiny is intimately linked to that of Franz Joseph I. The novel focuses on the years between 1890 and 1914 under the Austro-Hungarian Empire; its historical value arises from the fact that at the time of its writing in the early 1930s, the decelerated and predictable life depicted in the book had become scenes from a distant past. This sense of rupture was not a sudden insight to Roth. His comprehensive journalistic reportage from Berlin in the 1920s vividly detailed that Europe then was an entirely different animal from the world in which he grew up (Roth was born in Galicia, a north-eastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1894). The city of Berlin, suffering from the effects of Germany's defeat in the First World War, is portrayed in Roth's writings as filled with homeless people, immigrants and extreme poverty – a chaos greatly amplified by hyperinflation (Roth, 2003).

What Roth reported from Berlin echoed a wider modernist rupture. As Stefan Jonsson aptly puts it:

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> It is well known that modernist culture, and Weimar modernism in particular, articulates radically new ideas about the human subject. In early-twentieth-century art, we witness a decomposition and asymmetric reconstruction of the human face and body. In architecture, the idea of the interior as the padded case of the individual's essence gives way to the utopian living spaces of Walter Gropius or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in which the person became a variable function of his or her environment. Numerous novels chronicle how the space of individuality, materialised in the *intérieur* and set apart from public life, is invaded by external forces, to the extent that the self appears as a random mass of impersonal elements. (2013: 143, original emphasis)

It is this severance of the individual from recognizable structures that Roth wanted to bring into relief in *The Radetzky March* by recalling how the sense of acceleration and dramatic change during the Weimar period, including its manifold pressures on stable forms of subjectivity, starkly contrasted the ways in which life had been lived only a few decades earlier. And so, while a certain nostalgia flows from Roth's pen, Michael Hofmann, the authoritative Roth translator, is right to note that the novel 'is actually a far bleaker, more unconsoling book than it is [often] taken for, by no means the revanchist or reinstating celebration of a gone order, more the anatomy of a dismantlement' or 'an account of a formidable collapse, a deadly loss of scale and illusion' (Hofmann, 2002: xv).[1] Bluntly put, the dismantlement Roth portrayed was that of individuals being catapulted out of their protecting milieus, losing their social, cultural and political reference points in the sudden landslide of once-familiar patterns.

An early reviewer of *The Radetzky March* cogently characterised it as a 'sociological novel', hinting at its ability to bring factual events and experiences into fictional shape (Chamberlain, 1933). If Roth captured a notion of devastating rupture in both his fiction and journalistic writings, Stefan Zweig's *The World of Yesterday* shares elements from both these genres (Zweig, 2009). Born in Vienna in 1881, Zweig carried the adolescent's experience of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as seen from its centre, more so than Roth did. Completing his memoirs in 1942, shortly before he and his wife committed suicide, Zweig provided a rich account of a sixty-year-period during which the old world, the world of his youth, figuratively and literally came to ashes. Not surprisingly, a significant portion of his memoirs is devoted to the Hitler

[1] This assessment gains support from the ambivalence radiating from some of Roth's retrospective essays on the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In one of these, for example, he noted that while he had been opposed to the rule of Franz Joseph I, he also mourned the death of the Emperor as it entailed 'the passing of a fatherland. […] The chilly sun of the Habsburgs was being extinguished, but it had at least been a sun' (Roth, 2015: 92).

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experience, which forced Zweig, like so many others, to flee his native Austria in 1934. Yet, similar to *The Radetzky March* – and in no way underestimating the singularity and radical consequences of Hitler's reign[2] – the most striking passages of *The World of Yesterday* are those in which Zweig detailed a way of life in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn of the nineteenth century which, from the perspective of the late 1930s and early 1940s, appeared almost unfathomable.

Naturally, continuities between these two time periods can be identified in Zweig's writing. For one, Zweig drew attention to the antisemitism that persisted in the political life of Vienna in the 1880s and nineties by the likes of Georg Schönerer and Karl Lueger. But he also noted that their antisemitic policies had no immediate impact on his daily life as a Jew (2009: 46). Thus, despite antisemitism's permanence, an inescapable nostalgia lingers over Zweig's memoirs, a longing for a world in which tranquillity dominated and life was safeguarded against external turmoil as if wrapped up in cotton wool. Zweig, in his account of what he fittingly called 'the world of security' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, affirmed the same peacefulness of life in the Austro-Hungarian Empire reflected in *The Radetzky March*:

> Time and age were judged by different criteria [back then]. People lived a more leisurely life, and when I try to picture the figures of the adults who played a large part in my childhood it strikes me how many of them grew stout before their time. […] Even in my earliest childhood, when my father was not yet forty, I cannot remember ever seeing him run up or down a staircase, or indeed do anything in visible haste. Haste was not only regarded as bad form, it was in fact superfluous, since in that stable bourgeois world with its countless little safeguards nothing sudden ever happened. Those disasters that did take place on the periphery of our world did not penetrate the well-lined walls of our secure life. The Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, even the Balkan Wars did not make any deep impression on my parents' lives. They skimmed all the war reporting in the paper as indifferently as they looked at the sports headlines. […] When an old newspaper from those days happens to fall into my hands, and I read the excitable reports of some small local council election, when I try to remember the plays at the Burgtheater with their tiny problems, or think of the disproportionate agitation of our youthful debates on fundamentally unimportant matters, I cannot help smiling. How Lilliputian all those anxieties were, how serene that time! (Zweig, 2009: 46–7)

Zweig admitted that such recollections from his youth may well depict an artificial world, a time pocket, the historical oddity of which would be evident to any *entre-deux-guerres* observer or post-war reader of his great book. This peculiarity aside, it is important to note that while the old

[2] The most dreadful acts of Hitler's destructive regime were not known to Zweig when he wrote the book.

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Austro-Hungarian era seemed devoid of them, rupture and suddenness would soon manifest themselves with great force – with tangible consequences for an individuality increasingly regarded as being subsumed under external collective forces. Indeed, outside of the well-protected bubble of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time, change was already boiling, and the tectonic plates of the European societies would soon be set in motion with such dramatic effect that the life forms and experiential qualities of the Empire relayed by Zweig could only appear strangely archaic. I trace of some these transformations, loosely organising the following discussion around politics, science and technology, moving from an international level seemingly detached from people's everyday lives to developments around more quotidian experiences.

International Politics and Law

In his 1950 book *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, the legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt details how the so-called *jus publicum Europaeum* – the public law that governed the relations between the European states – collapsed as a result of a seemingly minor event in international affairs in the mid-1880s (Schmitt, 2003). During the colonisation surge of European states at the end of the nineteenth century, a discussion ensued about how to legally regulate the colonisation of African territory to avoid conflicts between different European powers over the same land. While much of this discussion had previously taken place as an intra-European debate dominated by European concerns and interests, the 1884–5 Berlin Conference (or Congo Conference) on international land appropriation would change that dramatically, with the United States undermining the existing balance:

> the United States assumed a decisive position when, on April 22, 1884, it recognized the flag of the International Congo Society, which was not a state. This opened the door to the confusion, whereby an international colony was treated as an independent state. The core concept of the traditional interstate European international law was thus thrown into disorder. (2003: 217)

Schmitt argues that even if this American move was 'perceived to be a peripheral matter' at first, its ramifications are difficult to overestimate. From around 1890, international law, formerly synonymous with European international law, now had to reckon with the United States, meaning that the regime of 'a self-conscious, Eurocentric international law' had been demolished (2003: 227). In other words, from seeing the world in its own image, Europe had to reconcile itself with a stronger external influence. 'The relativization of Europe' that Schmitt (2003:

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217) associates with the Congo Conference resembles the relativisation of the individual that I excavate from the *fin-de-siècle* discourses below, according to which the individual is neither independent nor entirely subjected to external control.

Schmitt also registered changes more internal to the state in his 1932 book *The Concept of the Political*, which argues for a change of hierarchy in the conceptual lexicon with which to understand states. Instead of taking as his starting point the conception of the state and deriving the political from it, he foregrounded the notion of the political and asserted in his opening observation that 'The concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political' (1996: 19). This is tied to Schmitt's famous understanding of the political as based on the difference between friend and enemy. The Schmitt expert Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde observes that although this reshuffling of the relationship between the state and the political was immediately contested in the academic community, it was in fact also anchored in actual contemporaneous developments. Most notably, Schmitt's de-centrering of the state as a guarantor of internal peace was made all too plain by both the Russian and German Revolutions (Böckenförde, 2002: 8–9). One might say that Schmitt's achievement here was to formularise a situation and development that had already taken place and only awaited conceptual framing.

For other observers, the European decline Schmitt described in the realm of international law and statehood was in fact a minor manifestation of a deeper collapse: the veritable breakdown of the cultural pillars of Europe. This sentiment crystallised especially in the German philosopher Oswald Spengler's grand epos *The Decline of the West*, a book originally published in two volumes in 1918 and 1922, respectively. Given the book's appearance after the First World War, it is easy to interpret its analysis of the cultural self-exhaustion of the West as a comment on that tragic war. Yet the book was more than that: as Spengler notes in the introduction to the 1918 edition, its title has remained unchanged since 1912, when he conceived of the book's main ideas (Spengler, 1980a: xv). Consequently, for Spengler, the war merely epitomised a decline already well under way. Equally important for present purposes, while Spengler traced this far-reaching deterioration through a comprehensive historical analysis spanning several millennia, the book was not just an illustration of Hegel's dictum that 'the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk' – that philosophical insight comes staggering up *after* the fact (Hegel, 1991: 23). It is more correct to say that Spengler's analysis had a highly contemporaneous

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affinity: it was conceived in and sought to capture a historical situation of Spengler's own. In other words, it is unlikely that Spengler could have authored his book independently of the sense of profound change that permeated the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The fact that Spengler laid the building blocks of his thesis prior to the First World War should not lead to a disregard of the war's devastating consequences on stability. Indeed, as the political theorist Jan-Werner Müller rightly argues, the First World War effectively ended the old world of security Zweig portrayed: the Great War 'put into question every single institutional arrangement and every single political idea (or even just moral intuition) on which the Age of Security had rested' (Müller, 2011: 16). Still, the Spengler case testifies to the importance of casting the net wider: the First World War's undeniable significance notwithstanding, transformation was in the air many years ahead of 1914. This is easily seen if the perspective is shifted to more local political developments, developments that had more immediate influence on the quality of everyday experience. France at the end of the nineteenth century provides a strong sense of some of the changes that can be registered at this level, suggesting a situation that differed considerably from the world of security relayed by Zweig. Susanna Barrows nicely summarises some of the simmering turmoil:

> Between 1889 and 1898 France would witness the inauguration of the May Day demonstrations, a wave of terrorist 'propaganda of the deed,' a marked increase in the number of strikes and violent demonstrations, the Panama scandal, the assassination of President Sadi Carnot, and the opening chapters of the Dreyfus Affair. (Barrows, 1981: 2)

Barrows carefully examines the ways in which French political havoc in the late nineteenth century arose out of rising industrialisation, urbanisation, unionisation, socialism and democratisation. Yet the factors upending the social order and instating a widespread experience of flux, acceleration and profound alteration went far beyond the openly political articulations found in strikes, demonstrations and the like. Barrows notes that, in anticipation of how Weimar Germany's fragile social and political structure was followed by a veritable cultural blossoming, the delicate French *fin-de-siècle* situation enjoyed a countermovement that inspired a range of *scientific advances*. Paradoxically, while these were in large part attempts to better understand the rupture that seemed to threaten the country – as well as to suggest possible remedies towards the re-stabilisation of society – they further augmented the sense of change at the time.

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Scientific Advances

In the social sciences, a range of newly established disciplines such as criminology, crowd psychology, and sociology (and to some extent psychotherapy), were united in championing a notion of de-individualisation as well as comprehending and responding to the rupture in its various manifestations. More specifically, these disciplines concurred that individual actions were in large part attributable to extra-individual dynamics and that in order to achieve the desired re-stabilisation of society, measures were needed to address this supra-individual maelstrom before it swept people away.

In criminology this surfaced in critiques of the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso's promotion of a highly individualised biological conception of crime. The founding father of the so-called criminal-anthropological school, Lombroso saw crime as tied to supposedly crime-prone individuals: some people were believed to be biologically predisposed to commit crimes, but fortunately, Lombroso and his followers argued, these individuals could be identified via biological markers (e.g. the shape of their head). Society could then single them out and introduce proper measures to curb their antisocial behaviour (Lombroso, 2006). Lombroso's criminal-anthropological school was critiqued most notably by Gabriel Tarde, who offered an important alternative analytical programme which portrayed crime as detached from biological predispositions. In Tarde's view, criminal activity should be conceived in relation to how it imitates other criminal acts, i.e. as a distinctively social – and in that sense, de-individualised – phenomenon (Tarde, 1968).[3] In other words, rather than focusing on particular individuals and their biological constitutions, Tarde analysed crime from a much more mimetic-relational approach, according to which singular criminal acts were understood in connection to other criminal acts they sought to imitate. Tarde's de-individualised analysis not only entailed that a person's biological set-up was no longer a driver of criminal activity but also suggested a democratisation of criminal life: in principle all persons could fall prey to crime-inducing imitative currents regardless of their biological constitution. Put differently, Tarde lent scholarly shape to the thought that every person, high or low in social position, could become overwhelmed by external mimetic forces.

Along similar lines, Durkheim's sociological programme – which received powerful political backing in its attempt to reinvigorate the

[3] For a discussion of Lombroso, Tarde and other early criminologists, see Borch (2015: ch. 1).

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French educational system (Borch, 2012b: 68–9; Lepenies, 1988: ch. 2) – was centred on understanding society and the social in de-individualised, *sui generis* terms. Here too the central point was to see social dynamics not as reducible to individual authorship but, as it were, characterised by supra-individual forces supposedly inculcated into the behaviours of individuals. Let me briefly note here, as a final mention of how prominently de-individualisation was gaining traction at the end of the nineteenth century, that the concept was particularly taken up in the scholarly discourse on crowd psychology that emerged in the 1890s (as well as in the psychotherapy discussions which inspired it). This discourse suggested that crowd dynamics were becoming increasingly prevalent in modern society, to the extent that the late nineteenth century became synonymous with an era of the crowd; in this view, crowds effected a de-individualising change in their members, who suddenly succumbed to their leaders' impulses. Taken together, these points suggest that de-individualisation was becoming the new normal. I return to the basic analytical ideas of crowd psychology and psychotherapy below and to a deeper examination of Tarde and Durkheim in the following chapter.

Another reconceptualisation of the individual followed from changes in the area of perception. As Jonathan Crary argues in his cross-examination of late-nineteenth-century advances in art and modern culture vis-à-vis a host of scholarly contributions to philosophy, psychology and sociology, a 'generalized crisis in perception [took place] in the 1880s and 1890s' (Crary, 1999: 2). Questions of perception increasingly revolved around the problem of *attention*, in large part due to industrialisation and urbanisation. 'Inattention, especially within the context of new forms of large-scale industrialized production, began to be treated as a danger and a serious problem, even though it was often the very modernised arrangements of labor that produced inattention' (Crary, 1999: 13). Crary stresses that while the heterogeneous late-nineteenth-century debates on what constitutes attention and how it may be managed did not coalesce into a uniform understanding of attention, they did much to recast contemporary understandings of individuality and its connections to perception. The problem of attention engendered a tensional notion of individuality, in which the individual was seen as both capable of paying attention to something (say, a task in the factory) and being guided externally (by stimuli beyond the person's control).

The issue of perception also drew on scholarly developments taking place beyond the social sciences. In November 1895, the German physicist Wilhelm Roentgen discovered the X-ray and its ability to disclose bone structures, sparking a sea change in the connections between

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perception and individuality. The X-ray, itself indiscernible by human perception, 'was capable of penetrating [people's] clothes and flesh to reveal their most intimate organs' (Friedman and Friedland, 1998: 124). By providing a penetrating view of the individual, the X-ray preempted psychoanalysis's claim to fame – the alleged ability to shed light on the innermost aspects of an individual – albeit via entirely different techniques.

Interestingly, the scientific debate on perception ventured far beyond the terrain of intra-human exploration. Beginning in the 1890s, the discipline of physics gradually asserted that the same psychical 'fact' could be variously represented, making perception pivotal to understanding a reality that could no longer be considered objective in the term's traditional sense (Crary, 1999: 162–3; Crary here builds on the discussion in Hacking, 1983: 143). Reflecting upon the broader cultural implications of this shift away from a Newtonian worldview, Wilfrid Mellers and Rupert Hildyard write that the work of modern physicists such as Albert Einstein, James Clerk Maxwell and others produced 'the obscure feeling that "objective reality" no longer existed in quite the same way and could no longer be depended upon to underpin "commonsense" attitudes to life' (1989: 36) – an idea later radicalised by the likes of Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. In this way, even the hard sciences contributed to shaking the solid ground of familiar experience.

A final implication of the sedimentation of modern science that took place at the end of the nineteenth century is its contribution to the increasing *secularisation* of society. Durkheim attended to this development and associated it with a growing differentiation, or division, of labour in society where originally, 'everything social was religious [...] gradually political, economic and scientific functions broke free from the religious function' (2013: 132). As a result, God, 'from being at first present in every human relationship, has progressively withdrawn' – 'The individual thus feels himself [*sic*], and he is in reality, much less *acted upon* [by God]; he becomes more a source of spontaneous activity' (2013: 132, original emphasis). Given the supra-individual forces noted above, what transpired here was a more general *problematique* that Durkheim and other sociologists grappled with at this time: modern society gives rise to autonomous individuality (the 'cult of the individual', as Durkheim called it, see 2013: 317) yet creates new dependencies that practically annul this autonomy in certain respects (2013: 7). Durkheim's argument reveals this two-sidedness: 'it is possible, without contradiction, to be an individualist while asserting that the individual is a product of society, rather than its cause' (Durkheim in Lukes, 1969: 28, n. 21). In other words, individualism and individual autonomy need

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Figure 1.1 Roentgen's X-rays.
Note: A child taking X-rays in a clinic of the hospital of Villiers, France.
Source: Illustration from the magazine *L'Illustration*, vol. 56, no. 2886, 18 June 1898. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana. © 2019. Veneranda Biblioteca. Ambrosiana/DeAgostini Picture Library/Scala, Florence

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not be opposed to collectivism but may indeed be artefacts of society – a point crystallised in the concept of tensional individuality.

Technological Innovations

The experiential landslides did not end there. Alongside sweeping political developments and scientific discoveries that challenged inherited conceptions, a deluge of technological innovations characterised the late nineteenth century. Some of these contributed to the rise of consumer culture, as Rosalind Williams cogently documents:

> After 1850 many notable inventions were consumer products themselves – the bicycle, the automobile, chemical dyes, the telephone, electric lighting, photography, the phonograph. Never before or since has there been such a concentration of technological change affecting the ordinary consumer. What he [*sic*] ate, what he ate with, where he lived, what he wore, how he moved around – all these daily activities and more were being altered simultaneously. (Williams, 1982: 10)

The advent of mass consumption was closely linked to the reconfiguration of cities, in which new forms of advertisement posters and window arrangements became common (e.g. Gleber, 1999: 35–6). Furthermore, as Carolyn Marvin demonstrates, the invention of the telephone generated new forms of distanced intimacy; just as electricity, a replacement for gas fuel, was seen as a facilitator of cleaner homes and eventually as a mechaniser of domestic tasks, thereby freeing (some) women from their stereotypical household duties (1988: 67–85). The rise of consumer culture and its many material manifestations brought about a change in everyday perception by reshuffling the organisation and experience of quotidian life.

That the late nineteenth century was the hotbed of technological innovations, several with huge socio-cultural ramifications despite their pedestrian character, is well-corroborated by scholars. As Lisa Tickner summarises:

> A single generation experienced the impact of the typewriter (1874), the telephone (1876), the gramophone (1877), electric lighting (1880), the internal combustion engine (1885), the underground tube-train (1890), wireless telegraphy (1895), the cinema (1895), the cheap, mass-circulation daily newspaper (1896), the motor-bus (1897) and powered flight (1903). (2000: 190)[4]

[4] Referencing some of these as well as other inventions, James R. Beniger similarly notes that 'even the word *revolution* seems barely adequate to describe the development, within the span of a single lifetime, of virtually all of the basic communication technologies still in use a century later' (1986: 7, original emphasis).

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Media theorist Friedrich A. Kittler analysed these innovations in detail in his work on media technologies, demonstrating how individuality also became newly co-constituted by technological developments. Starting from the premise that 'media determine our situation' (Kittler, 1999: xxxix), in that media co-constitute the ways in which people act and think of themselves and others, Kittler explored a range of technological transformations in media that took shape at a time when the peacefulness of Zweig's youthful years was about to collapse. More precisely, these inventions contributed to shaking the scaffold of tranquillity Zweig depicts.

Focusing on the gramophone, the typewriter and film, Kittler claimed that each of these technological innovations had drastic effects on many facets of everyday life, including the ways in which individuality was seen and problematised. For example, the typewriting machine prompted a consequential retailoring of the shape and meaning of writing and its relation to individuality. Quoting Nietzsche's pronouncement that 'Our writing tools are also working on our thoughts' (Kittler, 1999: 200), Kittler recounts how handwriting was seen in Goethe's time as a means of self-formation: by cultivating a continuous handwriting style (as opposed to block letters), writers give visual expression to and manifest their individuality. In Kittler's words, 'To develop handwriting formed as out of one mold means to produce individuals' (1990: 84). A century after Goethe's birth, the invention of the typewriter challenged this intimate relationship between writing and individuality. The continuous flow of handwriting and its reference to the identity and singularity of the writer was now replaced with rows of anonymous block letters, rescinding the immediacy of recognizable self-expression on the part of the writer.[5]

Reflecting the era of mass consumption, technologies such as the typewriting machine soon gained immense popularity. Testifying to this success, Kittler (1999: 183–4) reports that in the US, the word 'typewriter' soon acquired a dual meaning, referring both to the machine itself and to female typists – since between 1870 and 1930 the number of women employed as typewriters grew massively and far outstripped the number of men in the occupation. Although Kittler and others may therefore be right that 'the typewriter, the tape machine and the telephone restructured (and regendered) the modern office' (Tickner, 2000:

[5] Or partly so, at least. People such as the German philosopher and psychologist Ludwig Klages would retain a belief in the ability to read personality characteristics out of handwriting and develop a whole graphological programme to that end in the early twentieth century (Ash, 2013: 47).

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Figure 1.2 The Odell typewriter.
Note: The Odell typewriter, invented in 1887, gained popularity in the late nineteenth century. Perry & Co's Odell Typewriter, 1893. London, History of Advertising Trust.
Source: © 2019. Photo Scala Florence/Heritage Images

190), Kittler arguably ended up exaggerating their socio-cultural implications in his wish to take media technology seriously. Indeed, parts of his analyses have an idiosyncratic twist, such as his penchant for analysing media technologies in a war-inflected jargon.[6] This is not to deny that connections existed between war and technologies such as film and typewriting machines: indeed, there is a rich tradition of establishing such links,[7] and war experiences were clearly crucial to Europeans in the time period from the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 to the First World

[6] One illustration of this is his claim that 'the typewriter became a discursive machine-gun. A technology whose basic action not coincidentally consists of strikes and triggers proceeds in automated and discrete steps [contrary, again, to the ideal of continuous handwriting], as does ammunitions transport in a revolver and a machine-gun, or celluloid transport in a film projector' (1999: 191).

[7] For example, as Walter Benjamin famously pointed out, links between aesthetic and technological dimensions and war were prevalent in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's futuristic movement, which accorded war aesthetic qualities (Benjamin, 2008: 41–2).

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War. Rather, my point is that warfare may not permeate these technologies quite as deeply as Kittler suggested, and his attempts to link them together therefore seem forced at times.[8] Yet his analysis does hint that one might find in private space (including office space) an equivalent to the kind of de-individualisation that crowd psychologists associated with crowd behaviour in public space. In other words, despite the many differences in their subject matter, observations of crowd behaviour and typewriting highlighted de-individualisation as a problem of their time.

The invention of film contributed considerably to this shaking up of individuality. Kittler details how the entertainment potential of film was readily recognised when it came into being in the 1890s. Still, film did more than prepare the way for a cinematic experience featuring, and sometimes blending, entertainment and propaganda. According to Kittler, the technology's early stages played a pivotal role in the development of late-nineteenth-century French psychotherapy. Much of the discussion within French psychotherapy at this time concerned the therapeutic potential of hypnosis and suggestion, the latter defined by the Nancy doctor Hippolyte Bernheim as 'an idea conceived by the operator, seized by the subject, and accepted by his [*sic*] mind' (Bernheim quoted in Chertok and Stengers, 1992: 27). Together with hypnosis, suggestion questioned the idea of the autonomous individual. One of the key characters in this discussion, the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, would be among the first to establish a connection between filming and therapeutic practice. Consequently, states Kittler, in 1883 Charcot 'ordered his chief technician […] to start filming' his treatment of hysterics with serial cameras (1999: 141). These efforts did not amount to filming the patients in any modern sense, but they did document Charcot's work through still images which, when put in sequence, demonstrated the phases patients went through, for better understanding and scrutiny.

Charcot's initial steps would set the direction for a genuine mélange of film and psychotherapy. Kittler (1999: 145) notes that when it became possible decades later to project serial photographs as films, the opportunity was quickly seized by psychiatrists. Hans Hennes, a Bonn-based psychiatrist, celebrated in 1909 the possibility of converting 'a rapid succession of movements into a slow one through cinematographic

[8] One characteristic example of his associations running wild is this: 'If the joysticks of Atari video games make children illiterate, President Reagan welcomed them for just that reason: as a training ground for future bomber pilots. Every culture has its zones of preparation that fuse lust and power, optically, acoustically, and so on. Our discos are preparing our youth for a retaliatory strike' (Kittler, 1999: 140).

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reproduction', making it 'possible to see things "whose precise observation is, in real life, hardly or not at all possible"' (Hennes quoted in Kittler, 1999: 145). In other words, the medium of film constituted a dramatic experiential innovation through which individuality could be decomposed into a decelerated sequence of events that escape ordinary perception. Lived temporality could thus be studied at different paces, rendering possible the careful inspection of dynamics and experiences that would otherwise go unnoticed. While this bears some resemblance to how typewriting chopped up continuous writing and the subject formation associated with the latter, post-Charcotean psychotherapy triangulated the technological medium, experiential effects and the psychotherapeutic.

Walter Benjamin's classic analysis of the artwork in the age of its technological reproducibility further argued that the reproducibility of film as an artistic medium bid farewell to the aura of preceding art forms such as paintings, an aura procured through their non-reproducible singularity (Benjamin, 2008). According to Benjamin:

> On the one hand, film furthers insight into the necessities governing our lives by its use of close-ups, by its accentuation of hidden details in familiar objects, and by its exploration of commonplace milieux through the ingenious guidance of the camera; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of a vast and unsuspected field of action. […] It is through the camera that we first discover the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. (2008: 37)

Yet for Benjamin, the film medium did not merely contribute to effecting a decomposition of subjects and objects, in the sense that these could now be scrutinised in unprecedented ways that might unearth layers of individuality beyond the control of the subject (as psychoanalysis proclaimed). Equally important, Benjamin argued, the technological reproducibility of art that the medium of film supposedly incarnated '*changes the relation of the masses to art*' (2008: 36, original emphasis). In contrast to how, in Zweig's childhood, artworks such as paintings were approached by onlookers individually or in small groups, films (including, of course, entertainment movies) are typically viewed in larger collective cinematic settings. The central corollary of this, Benjamin posited, was that onlookers no longer form individual opinions about the artwork. Rather, 'nowhere more than in the cinema are the reactions of individuals, which together make up the massive reaction of the audience, determined by the imminent concentration of reactions into a mass' (2008: 36). In other words, individual judgment is replaced by mass judgment; verdicts are de-individualised and shaped by collective forces.

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Benjamin's essay was written around 1935–6, then existing in two versions (a third version was written between 1936 and 1939). The text thus antedates by more than a decade the American sociologist David Riesman's famous mid-century analysis of other-directed behaviour (Riesman, 1950), an analysis that left a bigger imprint on sociological discussions than Benjamin's account did, although the latter better appreciated the ways in which other-directedness may be spurred by technological innovations. Thus, Benjamin's analysis articulates a broader experience at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the dramatic consequences for conceptions of individuality brought about by technological innovations such as film. In fact, in the era in which the film medium was invented, notions of autonomous individuality came under attack both from beneath and above, as it were. The mergers and homologies between film and psychoanalysis undermined autonomous individuality from beneath in that they pointed to deeper, now suddenly analysable levels of individuality that had previously escaped attention. By contrast, disciplines such as psychotherapy, crowd psychology, sociology and criminology, as well as the types of collectively formed (mass) experiences pointedly identified in Benjamin's film analysis, challenged notions of individual autonomy from above, stressing that individuality was intrinsically tied to supra-individual forces and dynamics. These developments touted the message that individuality is not self-bound in any way but rather enmeshed in otherness.

Although Benjamin's analysis dates to the second half of the 1930s, it captures an important experiential layer from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Stefan Andriopoulos's examination of intersections between film and psychotherapy in this era shows (Andriopoulos, 2008). Andriopoulos's analysis echoes aspects of Kittler's examination, albeit with somewhat different emphases. Let me address only two points here which relate to what Andriopoulos characterises as the 'mutually constitutive interrelation that links hypnotism and cinema's emergence and cultural appropriation' (2008: 110). In a discussion of movies such as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919–20) and Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* (1922), Andriopoulos details how late-nineteenth-century discussions of hypnosis and suggestion became important cinematic themes in the early twentieth century. The plots of these movies were deeply inspired by scholarly discussions about the seemingly overwhelming capacities of hypnosis – including the inciting question of whether it is possible to hypnotise someone to commit crimes without his or her consent and conscious knowledge (a question that received considerable attention in criminological and psychotherapeutic circles in the 1890s). But more than that, the *reception* of such movies

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Figure 1.3 Somnambulist in action.
Note: Scene from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920. German Expressionist silent film with a story of murder and intrigue. Director: Robert Wiene. Still showing Cesare the somnambulist (Conrad Veidt) making off with Jane (Lil Dagover).
Source: Artist: Robert Wiene. London: Ann Ronan Picture Library. © 2019. Photo Ann Ronan/Heritage Images/Scala, Florence

also evoked tropes from academic debates on hypnotic suggestion: observers claimed that the film medium was endowed with hypnotic powers.

This latter possibility might be said to underlie Benjamin's assertion that film changes the audience's reaction, rendering each individual's response a function of the collective sentiment. While such a collective response might also be said to pertain to older art forms such as theatre plays, early twentieth-century observers asserted that films hold considerably stronger suggestive powers, so much so that they were attributed the ability of 'addressing and interpellating the human mind' in an immediate fashion (Andriopoulos, 2008: 119). In other words, film was accorded the ability to accelerate de-individualising hypnotism, a

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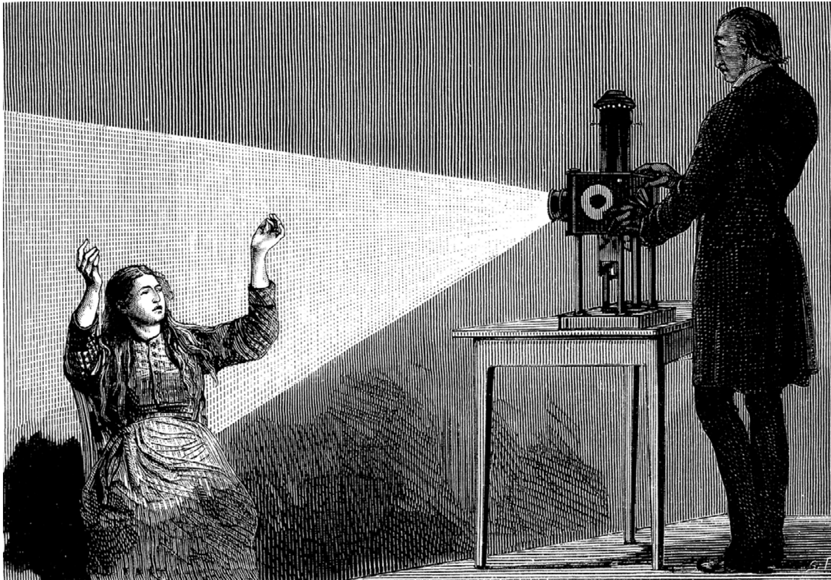

Figure 1.4 Charcot practising hypnotic suggestion.
Note: Jean Martin Charcot demonstrating hypnosis, 1879.
Source: Oxford, Science Archive. © 2019. Photo Scala Florence/Heritage Images

perspective widely accepted in the early twentieth century. For example, Michael Tratner reports that the Hollywood film industry formulated a Movie Production Code in 1930, the so-called Hays Code, which advised that care should be taken in regards to the effects films might have on audiences. As the Code states, the problem was that 'Psychologically, the larger the audience the lower the moral mass resistance to suggestion' (cited from Tratner, 2008: 15).[9] But in fact, this imminent potential (or threat) had been recognised much earlier. Andriopoulos relates that 'Before 1918, during the Wilhelmine Empire, the anxiety about this affinity between cinema and hypnotism had even led to repeated censorship of films showing, or inducing, hypnosis' (2008: 121; see also Benjamin, 2008: 37–8).

[9] This perspective even made it to the political domain. A notorious example from the German context is the way in which it surfaced in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which argued that bringing people together in mass settings is crucial for propaganda to be effective. While resistance to propaganda might otherwise be too strong, Hitler claimed that the mass setting ensures that the individual will '[succumb] to the magic influence of what we might designate as "mass suggestion"' (Hitler, 1992: 435). I discuss this further in Borch (2013).

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The second important point from Andriopoulos's analysis addresses the flip side of the 'mutually constitutive interrelation' between cinema and hypnotism: the ways in which cinematic conceptions inflected discussions of hypnotism. Parallel to Charcot's experimentations with serial cameras in the early 1880s, Bernheim, his chief rival in French psychotherapeutic discussions on the role of hypnotic suggestion, almost simultaneously 'experimented with the hypnotic production of visual, film-like hallucinations' (Andriopoulos, 2008: 113). Andriopoulos goes so far as to suggest that in 1886 Bernheim 'offered a film theory *avant la lettre*', as evinced by his use of 'the curious notion of a "nervous light", in order to elucidate the mental processes of suggestion' – one which, according to Andriopoulos, 'seems derived from the cultural knowledge about the projection of images that nine years later allowed the brothers Lumière to present the cinematograph to an astounded audience' (2008: 111, original emphasis). Andriopoulos's analysis thus suggests film and psychotherapy are even more closely entangled than Kittler argues they are, and that the ways in which each reinforces the other did much to reshuffle conceptions of individuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

I recognise that this summary account of political, scholarly and technological landslides has only provided selected historical snapshots and that many more elements can be added to this list. For example, I have paid little attention to the rise of modernist art and how modernism can be seen as 'a heterogeneous response to a shared experience of seismic upheaval' in the modern order of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Tickner, 2000: 184). While further historical illustrations of the sense of transformation permeating this era follow in Chapters 4 and 5, I stress that my core concern here has not been to offer a systematic historical treatment of late-nineteenth-century developments. More modestly, I aimed to contour the ways in which a range of profound changes took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, causing a widespread sense of seemingly stable patterns to give way, with established conceptions and experiential modalities being replaced by a sense of collectively induced de-individualisation. This all added up to a particular modern experience – that is, the experience of a particular phase and situation in modern society. I now delve further into a range of scholarly responses to this modern experience, examining theoretically informed attempts to understand how individuality and collectivity were changing and entering new configurations at the end of the nineteenth century. My subsequent analysis of contributions to crowd psychology, psychotherapy, sociology and other fields is based on the central assertion that the theorists singled out here were all committed to understanding this modern experience and its implications.

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Before getting to that, however, it is useful to note that this account of ways in which late-nineteenth-century developments in politics, academia and technology produced a notion and experience of de-individualisation is at odds with how classical sociological findings are often portrayed. For example, in his historical-semantic analysis of individuality, Luhmann (1989: 150) highlights Durkheim's plus-sum conception of collectivity and individuality as examined in *The Division of Labour in Society*: more collectivity does not lead to a decrease but rather an increase in individuality (Durkheim, 2013: 313–16). A similar point is made in Luhmann's own analysis of modern individuality, which takes as its point of departure not a division-of-labour perspective but a functional differentiation (on this difference, see Luhmann, 1982). According to Luhmann, modern society is characterised by its differentiation into a range of operationally autonomous function systems (law, politics, science, economy, religion, etc.). An important corollary of this is that individuals are only partially connected to, or included in, each function system. No individual is solely and fully part of, say, the political system or the scientific system; most people are included in many systems at different occasions. This stands in contrast to pre-modern societies in which no strong differentiation exists, meaning that individuals tend to belong to one undifferentiated system. Importantly, Luhmann (1989: 158–60) argues, the merely partial inclusion in function systems is precisely what guarantees modern individuality: a high degree of functional differentiation permits individuals to define their individuality *independently* of particular systems or, put differently, in those gaps that existing systems do not cover. Again, the discourse on and experience of collectively induced de-individualisation is a counter-narrative to such accounts. Rather than seeing modern society as increasing individuality, I suggest that the experiential layer of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century developments placed severe pressure on individuality. This became especially clear in contemporaneous discussions of crowds.

Crowds Everywhere: Capturing the Experience of De-Individualisation

The late-nineteenth-century processes of urbanisation, industrialisation, technologisation and political unrest appeared to coalesce in the *crowd*, which foregrounded in an embodied fashion the sentiment that modern society was on the brink of something radically new. A wide range of observers concurred in describing how crowds of people swarmed urban streets, seemingly attracted to cities by the gravitational pull of industrialisation and urbanisation. While the emergence of urban crowds owed

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much to the technological advances that went hand in hand with industrialisation, the crowd itself did not epitomise new technological developments. In fact, the crowds of people inhabiting urban spaces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were often anything but technologically sophisticated. The journalist Jacob A. Riis's visual portrayal of the 'other half' living in misery in New York City forcefully makes this point (Buk-Swienty, 2008). While Riis's efforts were mainly focused on documenting urban poverty, others were more concerned with the phenomenon of urban amassing as well as its broader social, cultural and political consequences, which were often pictured as negative. In particular, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset saw a direct connection between the upsurge of physical crowds, on the one hand, and social and cultural decline, on the other.[10] In his 1929 essay *The Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega argues that the experience of crowds of people was inescapable to any urban dweller:

> Towns are full of people, houses full of tenants, hotels full of guests, trains full of travellers, cafés full of customers, parks full of promenaders, consulting-rooms of famous doctors full of patients, theatres full of spectators, and beaches full of bathers. What previously was, in general, no problem, now begins to be an everyday one, namely, to find room. (1960: 11–12)

The claustrophobic image of the city as a veritable tsunami of people who render available space an increasingly scarce resource reflected, in Ortega's point of view, a recent development only a few decades old. But this transformation was not merely one of quantity. Ortega admits that in the early twentieth century, the number of urban inhabitants was not significantly different from in the late 1920s, when he wrote his essay. What had changed was that human agglomeration, as per Riis's documentation, was collapsing into a zone of indistinction, where it had once neatly separated society into mass venues (of poverty) and places reserved for the upper tiers. The human flood into the city had broken the dikes that formerly upheld the social order:

> The multitude has suddenly become visible, installing itself in the preferential positions in society. Before, if it existed, it passed unnoticed, occupying the background of the social stage; now it has advanced to the footlights and it's the principal character. There are no longer protagonists; there is only the chorus. (1960: 13)

Ortega's observations cannot simply be dismissed as the pampered remarks of a well-established citizen who, never having had to consider

[10] I discuss Ortega's work and its relation to other contemporaneous thinking in Borch (2012b: 166–70).

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the lives of the excluded masses, now confronted them with an ill-concealed sense of annoyance and regret. Such an interpretation ignores the more important aspect of his analysis: a widespread impression and experience, concordant with observers in the late nineteenth century, that the *quantitative* influx of people, the massification of cities and society, had *qualitative* repercussions in that it changed individuals' relation to themselves as well as to culture and society more broadly. Indeed, the direst parts of Ortega's diagnosis concern what he saw as a veritable cultural degradation, embodied in the rise of a new subject: the mass person. Whereas Western societies had previously cultivated a specific subject, the select person who strove for goals and values beyond him- or herself (truth, morality, etc.), a new character type crystallised with the advent of mass individuals: people 'who demand nothing special of themselves, but for whom to live is to be every moment what they already are, without imposing on themselves any effort towards perfection; mere buoys that float on the waves' (1960: 15). For Ortega, though the mediocrity this entailed was vulgar, it also was politically suspect, as he believed mass individuals possess an ingrained preference for illiberal forms of politics such as fascism and syndicalism. According to his analysis, these political forms depart from deliberative democracy based on discussion, reason and arguments, a concept later championed by Jürgen Habermas:

> the mass-man [*sic*] would feel himself lost if he accepted discussion, and instinctively repudiates the obligation of accepting that supreme authority lying outside himself. Hence the 'new thing' in Europe is 'to have done with discussions,' and detestation is expressed for all forms of intercommunion which imply acceptance of objective standards, ranging from conversation to parliament, and taking in science. (1960: 74)

A politics of violence took hold in their stead, one which, Ortega warned, returned the political to the 'fauna of a past age' (1960: 92). This observation of a purported retrogression of politics was widely echoed by other observers of crowd and mass behaviour at the time.

Similarly, Ortega's linking of the visual experience of crowds to a new type of mass subject was undergirded by a claim that found widespread resonance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: these phenomena were intimately tied to more profound transformations of society throughout the nineteenth century, such as those analysed earlier in this chapter. In a Marxist parlance, albeit one not espoused by Ortega himself, it might be said that what Ortega diagnosed in terms of new character types and their corresponding forms of political action was but the superstructure that attended more material developments. In

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particular, he argued, the rise of liberal democracy, the advances of science and rapidly spreading industrialisation all contributed to the betterment of the life conditions of people, but this was, paradoxically, precisely what effected the change in character type from select individuals to mass individuals (1960: e.g. 107–14). In other words, all the industrious activity – all the cultural and technological developments analysed earlier – essentially ended up producing passive subjects. Ortega's diagnosis therefore entailed that modern society was digging its own grave: its many advances produced the conditions of its own collapse. Modernity was giving rise to a mass situation that was for all practical purposes pre-modern (1960: 125).

Much of Ortega's diagnosis echoes ideas that Le Bon expressed some 30 years earlier, though from a different theoretical perspective. Whereas Ortega based his analysis on demographic changes and on his immediate visual experiences with crammed city life, the Frenchman took inspiration from explanatory models derived from psychotherapy. Indeed, it was Le Bon's central objective to develop a genuine psychology of crowds tasked with conceptualising the modern mass era. The fruits of his labours were pulled together in *The Crowd*, published the same year Roentgen discovered how X-rays can penetrate singular bodies. Like Roentgen, Le Bon sought to account for a new type of perception. In contrast, however, Le Bon's analysis was wedded to a collective level: he argued for conceiving of 'the crowd as a particular modality of perception, as a specific social arrangement that conditions the limits of perceptual experience' (Crary, 1999: 245). Further, in contrast to Ortega's work, the psychological anchoring of Le Bon's work renders the spatial dimension of agglomeration less important. According to Le Bon, crowds are defined by neither numbers nor spatial proximity. What matters instead is the mental transformation they enact by annulling any differentiation between individuals: while individuals usually can be considered self-contained and, in most instances, law-abiding and sensible, they undergo a transition once they become part of a crowd, with all their individual differences collapsing into one homogeneous entity characterised by '*mental unity*' (Le Bon, 2002: 2, original emphasis). Since ever more life spheres were allegedly being subjected to crowd rule in modern society, Le Bon argued that autonomous self-contained individuality was becoming increasingly rare.

Accordingly, Le Bon's ruminations in effect reduce the liberal self to a mere romantic fiction, a patinated vocabulary belonging to a superseded social order. Once the lens zeroes in on the emergence and societal importance of crowds in the late-nineteenth-century configuration of modernity, the individual subject can no longer serve as an analytical

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starting point. Instead, Le Bon's analysis suggested that intellectual efforts should be invested in understanding how and why the crowd vortex was able to eliminate individuality and carry individuals away in aggregate flux in ever more realms of life. 'The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age', he states (2002: iii), identifying it as the central phenomenon in need of explanation. Consequently, the problem for Le Bon was not just one of a mere change in individuality or character type, such as Ortega would later bemoan. What was at stake was the loss of individuality altogether. On an even graver note, and extending beyond the problem of the crumbling liberal self, Le Bon touted the message that the wider institutional foundations of society were equally being demolished by the runaway train of 'the power of crowds':

> On the ruins of so many ideas formerly considered beyond discussion, and to-day decayed or decaying, of so many sources of authority that successive revolutions have destroyed, this power [of crowds], which alone has arisen in their stead, seems soon destined to absorb the others. While all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, the power of the crowd is the only force that nothing menaces, and of which the prestige is continually on the increase. The age we are about to enter will in truth be the ERA OF CROWDS. (2002: x, original emphasis)

Le Bon's analysis is rich in descriptions of how this era of crowds allegedly undermined the civilisational advances of modern society and replaced them with barbarianism, '[i]ntolerance and fanaticism', 'stupidity', 'irritability', 'impulsiveness', lack of responsibility, as well as the 'atavistic residuum' of primitives (2002: xiii, 6, 13, 22, 39). The list of undesirable features Le Bon attributed to crowds went on. Several of its entries were later reemphasised by Ortega, who similarly associated the modern age of crowds and masses with societal regression. Akin to Ortega's argument, moreover, a central point of Le Bon's analysis was that the focus on crowds and their dynamics served as a fractal manifestation of a broader diagnosis and experience of modern society. By asserting that crowds assumed an increasingly hegemonic position in modern society, Le Bon argued that its characteristic features were also becoming societally dominant. The plasticity and fickleness he attributed to crowds could be, in his view, ascribed to society more generally. As a result, the catapulting of crowds into a prevailing societal role appeared to transform society into a shabby laboratory filled with unstable explosives. In Spengler's later, no less dramatic, phrasing, 'The mass is the end, the radical nullity' (1980b: 358).

Le Bon's analysis certainly does not reflect Marxist ideas. Indeed, as I noted earlier, Le Bon often treated crowds synonymously with

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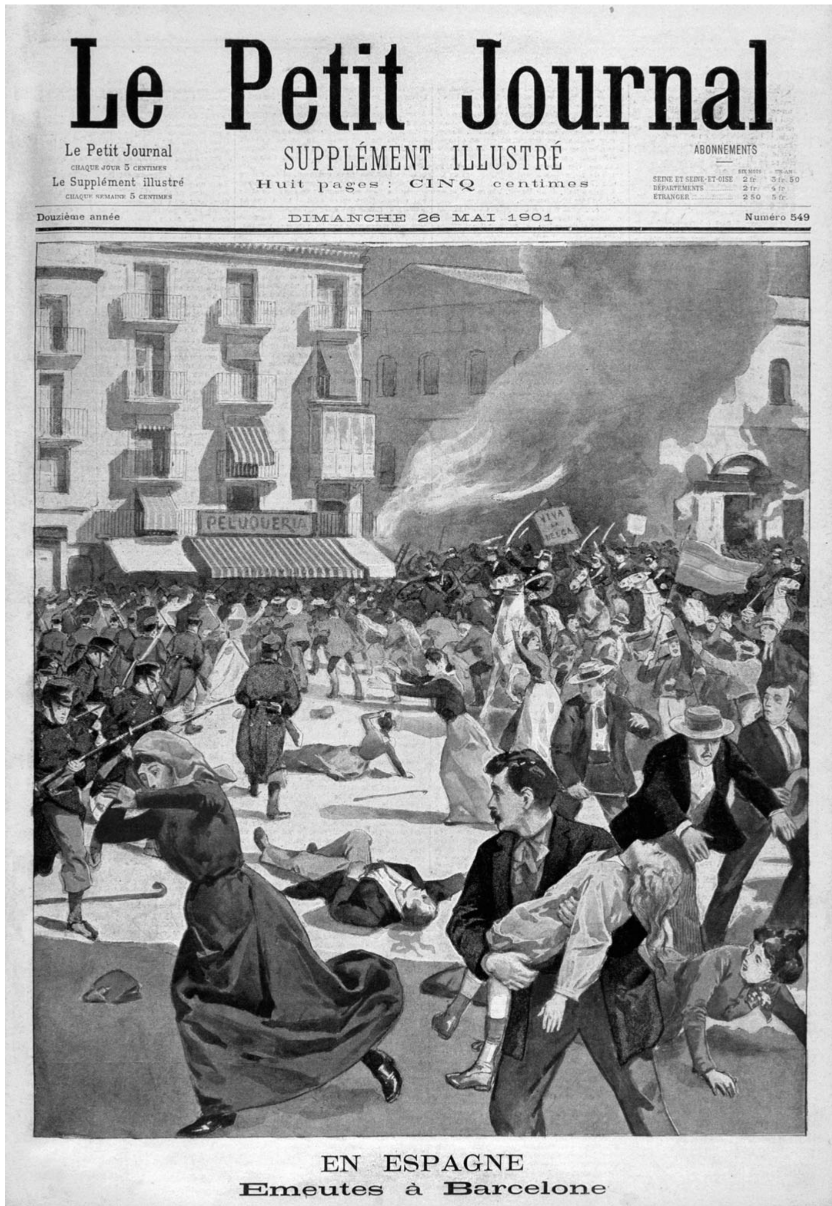

Figure 1.5 The era of crowds.
Note: In Spain, Riots break out in Barcelona, 1901.
Source: Illustration published in *Le Petit Journal* 26 May 1901. © 2019. Photo Art Media/Heritage Images/Scala, Florence

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socialism: they represented the same evil to him (1974; 2001). Yet his writings suggest that Marx and Engels's famous proverb only needed updating for the new mass era: *All that is solid is crushed by the crowd*! This was the modern experience Le Bon tried to capture. However, his attempt to understand this experience *psychologically* was a far cry from perspectives in a Marxist register. Instead, it was heavily indebted to contemporaneous developments in French psychotherapy. Like most other crowd psychologists at the end of the nineteenth century, Le Bon was particularly preoccupied with debates about the role and analytical potential of *hypnotic suggestion*, debates which crystallised in the so-called Nancy–Salpêtrière controversy. At the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, Charcot had since the 1870s grown increasingly interested in hysteria; he later discovered hypnotic suggestion as a means with which to treat hysterics. Charcot defended a constricted notion of hypnotic suggestion in that he argued that only hysterics are susceptible to this form of treatment. In contrast, Bernheim, who practiced in Nancy, was convinced that no such restrictions apply: no one group of people is solely susceptible to suggestion, and every person is suggestible, albeit with different propensities.[11]

The Nancy (Bernheimian) position gradually became the hegemonic interpretation in French psychotherapy at the end of the nineteenth century. But more than that, as I touched upon earlier, its prominence extended far beyond specialist clinical circles. By conceiving of *all* individuals as potentially susceptible to hypnotic suggestion, Bernheim triggered a minor revolution in the humanities and social sciences at the time. His refutation of Charcot's bounded notion of suggestion elevated hypnotic suggestion to the level of a general concept for analysing individuals and their interrelations in all kinds of settings. The analytical potential of this move was immediately recognised and highly consequential. As the medical historian Henri Ellenberger observes in *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, 'We can hardly realize today to what extent hypnotism and suggestion were invoked in the 1880's to explain countless historical, anthropological, and sociological facts such as the

[11] The interest in suggestible phenomena in fact predates both Bernheim's and Charcot's work. The mesmeric movement of the late eighteenth century was one crucial forerunner to the debates on hypnotic suggestion that would play out a century later (for discussions of mesmerism, including its links to late-nineteenth-century discussions, see Borch, 2019; Chertok and Stengers, 1992; Darnton, 1968; Ellenberger, 1970). It is also worth noting that the differences between Charcot and Bernheim were many. For example, Charcot affirmed a more physiological approach, whereas Bernheim espoused a stricter psychological one. For discussions of the polemic between the schools they each headed, see Harrington (1987: ch. 6) and van Ginneken (1992: ch. 4).

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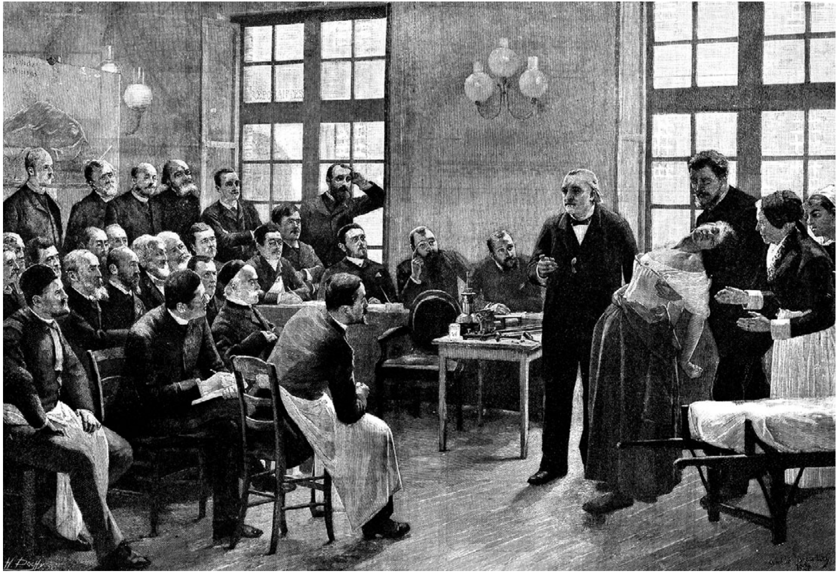

Figure 1.6 Charcot in action.
Note: Jean Martin Charcot, French neurologist and pathologist, 1887.
Source: Oxford, Science Archive. © 2019. Photo Scala Florence/Heritage Images

genesis of religions, miracles, and wars' (1970: 164–5). Indeed, once unleashed as a general conceptual apparatus (not necessarily related to hysterics), hypnotic suggestion became widely and rapidly appropriated in sociological and other analyses, with Le Bon's analysis just one drop in a larger sea. This also applied to investigations that zeroed in on human–object encounters over those between humans. For example, in his 1889 essay *Time and Free Will*, the French philosopher Henri Bergson repeatedly and explicitly likens the experience of art to hypnosis, arguing among other things that

> the object of art is to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality, and thus to bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realize the idea that is suggested to us and sympathize with the feeling that is expressed. (2001: 14; see also Crary, 1999: 239–40)

As the earlier discussion of the interrelations between hypnotic suggestion and cinema makes clear, Ellenberger might in fact understate the prominence hypnosis and suggestion enjoyed: their conceptual repertoire had an immense impact on both popular culture and scholarly debates in psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology and other fields *well into*

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the twentieth century. Indeed, it is possible to identify a host of attempts to deploy this vocabulary for practical purposes during that century. For example, Andriopoulos (2008: 92) mentions that the American psychologist Walter Dill Scott subscribed to notions of hypnosis and suggestion in the latter's 1908 book *The Psychology of Advertising*. In fact, Scott devoted an entire chapter of this book to suggestion, rehearsing a number of ideas from late-nineteenth-century suggestion and crowd theory, on the basis of which he developed recommendations for supposedly successful advertising techniques (Scott, 1908: 80–92). Similarly, as I return to in Chapter 5, theories of crowd suggestion featured strongly in financial investment advice literature, including contrarian speculation theory (see, e.g. Hansen, 2017; Stäheli, 2006).

Bernheimian hypnotic suggestion seemingly entailed a highly plastic conception of the self.[12] This was particularly evident in Bernheim's reflections on his clinical treatment of patients, in which he argued that the *suggestionné* (the patient) was turned into an 'automatism' in the hands of the *suggestionneur* (the doctor/hypnotiser):

> The human organism [the *suggestionné*] has become almost a machine, obedient to the operator's will. I say 'Rise,' and he rises. One subject gets up very quickly, another obeys slowly, the machine is lazy, the command must be repeated in an authoritative voice. […] General sensibility and the special senses may be modified, increased, diminished, or perverted at will. (Bernheim, 1889: 29)

Hypnotic suggestion applied as a general analytical framework beyond the clinic thus formed the grounds for a conception of the mouldable subject-automaton. In other words, suggestion theory radically discarded the liberal, self-constituting individual for one that was malleable and profoundly relationally constituted in its relationship to the *suggestionneur*.[13]

It is reasonable to speculate that the widespread adoption of the suggestion framework across the scholarly landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was due to its capturing a pervasive

[12] 'Seemingly' because, as I return to below, Bernheim's analysis was in fact rather more nuanced, or ambivalent, than is often recognised.

[13] A crude hypnotist position, in which the *suggestionné* is reduced to an entirely mouldable entity, could rather easily morph into a behaviourist account of the individual as responding completely to externally given stimuli. This was realised by the Russian neurologist and psychologist Vladimir Bekhterev (a rival of the more famous Ivan Pavlov), who developed a comprehensive collective reflexology tasked with analysing collective phenomena on the basis of reflexes (Bekhterev, 2001). For a discussion of Bekhterev's work and its connection to crowd theory, see Borch (2012b: 84–5). It will become clear later on when I focus on Tarde that he avoided this behaviourist slide, retaining a notion of a distinctive self that could, more or less successfully, resist external suggestion.

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modernist experience of the plasticity of individuality (or its showing higher degrees of plasticity than the concept of a liberal self accepted). In addition, it represented the constant flux of people's ideas, beliefs, and so on – more precisely, that they were externally induced to the extent that what one person believed were his or her singular thoughts was in fact merely inherited, through suggestion, from the outside. It was only a short step from this observation to the argument that the tumultuous features of modern society – industrialisation, urbanisation, technological advances, etc. – created the optimal conditions for such suggestive forces to flourish and further destabilise individuality, thereby also bringing down the pillars of society. A vicious circle emerged out of this: while suggestion itself might be a general phenomenon, its societal significance was buttressed by the instability of the late-nineteenth-century social order, an instability itself propelled by suggestible crowds. For this reason, a connection surfaced between the various strands of literature devoted to hypnotic suggestion. While the central hunch of the Nancy doctors was that individuals can be transformed into automatons and that the notion of the autonomous self is highly empirically questionable as a result, Le Bon was concerned with the overall transformations of society as effected by crowds and their suggestive power. Put differently, what Le Bon analysed in society at the macro scale had intimate ties to what Bernheim and his colleagues identified at a micro level in the clinic.

How, specifically, did Le Bon draw on Bernheim's work? Two interrelated influences can be detected. The first relates to the main explanation Le Bon offered of crowd behaviour, in which he referred approvingly to 'recent physiological discoveries':

> We know to-day that by various processes an individual may be brought into such a condition that, having entirely lost his [*sic*] conscious personality, he obeys all the suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it, and commits acts in utter contradiction with his character and habits. The most careful observations seem to prove that an individual immerged for some length of time in a crowd in action soon finds himself – either in consequence of the magnetic influence given out by the crowd, or from some other cause of which we are ignorant – in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotised individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotiser. (2002: 7)

Although this echoed Tarde's general idea of somnambulist individuals (see Chapter 2), this hypnotist explanation of crowd behaviour attracted piles of critical commentary in subsequent twentieth-century literature from sociologists, psychologists, historians and social psychologists alike (Borch, 2012b). Granted, what Le Bon provided here is all conceived in a vague language (of 'various processes', 'resembles', etc.). Nonetheless

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he championed the relation between hypnotiser and hypnotised found in Bernheim's Nancy clinic as a relevant template for understanding why individuals undergo profound de-individualisation once they become part of a crowd: they simply transform into malleable entities that do whatever the hypnotiser – in Le Bon's framework, the leader – demands. Echoing Bernheim's account, Le Bon asserted that the crowd member is in effect 'no longer himself [*sic*], but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will' (2002: 8).

The second main influence from Bernheim is implicit in the first. The notion of hypnotic suggestion to which Le Bon subscribed followed the Nancy School of interpretation, according to which all individuals are susceptible to suggestion, although to varying degrees (the machine can be lazy at times, as Bernheim noted). It was this interpretation that allowed Le Bon to portray crowd behaviour as a truly dangerous feature of modern society: anyone could be caught in crowd hypnosis – even the upper tiers of society, its otherwise unwavering mainstays. No escape seemed possible, and 'The individualities in the crowd who might possess a personality sufficiently strong to resist the suggestion are too few in number to struggle against the current' (2002: 8).

Against the backdrop of such *fin-de-siècle* crowd ideas, one might find appealing McPhail's argument that scholars from this tradition subscribed to a transformation hypothesis. In trying to capture a modern experience of crowding and massification, these scholars turned to ideas predicated on a notion of individuals undergoing a profound transformation once they became part of a crowd (Le Bon) or when massification took societal hold (Ortega). Two distinctly different situations inform this conception: with no crowding or massification, the liberal self is retained since individual autonomy is unaffected by outside influence; alternatively, crowding and massification dominate, creating a fully dissolved individuality. Especially in Le Bon's case, this *transformation* of the individual, the taking of the liberal self to pieces, is due to the broader materialisation of the suggestive processes described by Bernheim. Although this might all seem to validate McPhail's observation that the transformation hypothesis was central to early crowd theory, I argue that interpreting turn-of-the-nineteenth-century theories of crowd and collective behaviour as advancing a transformation hypothesis does not do them justice. Much more was at stake in this theoretical landscape than the transformation hypothesis alone can acknowledge. I thus suggest that the more interesting and important issue these crowd scholars grappled with was how to conceive of the individual in ways that allowed for both (anti-mimetic) volition and (mimetic-hypnotic) submission. In other words,

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these scholars tried to square de-individualising dynamics with some form of an autonomous self.

Individuality as a Matter of Mimetic and Anti-Mimetic Inter-Relations

As we have seen, Le Bon portrayed the individual as if there were a fundamental gulf between people left to themselves and those enmeshed in a crowd or collective formation. Allegedly, the former has the capacity to make independent, rational decisions, while the latter is bereft of this ability and at the mercy of collective impulses emanating from the crowd and its leader. Undergirding this image is a strong separation between mimesis and anti-mimesis, with the crowd as the force that transforms the anti-mimetic individual into a mimetic creature. This notion is indebted to Bernheim's interpretation of suggestion and how the physician (crowd leader) can turn patients (crowd members) into automatons. However, a closer inspection of Bernheim's work renders the neat division between mimesis and anti-mimesis rather less clear-cut. Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, an expert on the history of hypnosis, captures this in an important intervention entitled 'The Bernheim effect' (2009), in which he upends widely held views on the Nancy–Salpêtrière controversy. Borch-Jacobsen's discussion revolves around what he characterises as

> the paradox of suggestion: how can you induce someone to become passive (suggestible) if this passivity requires his [*sic*] prior acceptance? If he accepts, it is because he was already willing. But if he was willing, can we say that he passively executed a suggestion? (2009: 109; see also Chertok and Stengers, 1992: 37)

This problem can be further specified: there is in fact no problem at all if the subject (the *suggestionné*) is '*already* regressed, *already* plunged into some hypnoid state', since in this case the subject's consciousness will not work to inhibit the suggestions of the *suggestionneur* (2009: 111, original emphasis). Yet the problem or paradox remains very real 'if the subject is awake, lucid, in full possession of her [*sic*] faculties of inhibition [...] How is it possible to suggest to this person … not to resist suggestion?' (2009: 111).

Borch-Jacobsen notes that Bernheim did not always seem to be aware that suggestion entails this paradox. The latter often 'invoke[d] the operator's suggestion to explain the patient's suggestibility' (Borch-Jacobsen, 2009: 111), which wound up in a circular argumentative structure: suggestibility is provoked by hypnosis, which is itself activated by suggestion (see e.g. Bernheim, 1889: 15). This circularity fuelled a

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series of critiques against Bernheim's project voiced by, among others, psychologists such as Alfred Binet, Pierre Janet and later, Sigmund Freud. Freud's 1921 essay *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the 'I'* marshals this critique – also quoted by Borch-Jacobsen – as an explicit rejoinder to Bernheim. Freud's critique had several dimensions: for one, he criticised what he saw as Bernheim's inability to fully account for how suggestion actually worked, effectively treating it as some 'magic word': 'My resistance subsequently took the form of a rebellion against allowing suggestion, which explained everything, to evade explanation itself' (Freud, 2004: 40).[14] In addition, Freud recalled how he had seen Bernheim in action at the height of the latter's career, an experience he regarded with mixed feelings: Bernheim's 'astonishing skills I witnessed personally in 1889. However, I remember a vague hostility to this tyranny of suggestion even then. If a patient who was not proving submissive was told forcefully: But what are you doing? *Vous vous contresuggestionnez!* I said to myself that this was a clear case of injustice and an act of violence' (Freud, 2004: 40, original emphasis). In response to this, Freud published *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the 'I'* as an attempt to rethink crowd theory by replacing the tyranny he associated with suggestion with a more positive terminology – in Freud's case, the notion of libido.[15]

Pulling the rug from under Freud's critique of suggestion being a magic word, Borch-Jacobsen points to a crucial dimension of Bernheim's conception that has escaped attention and which dissolves (or displaces, perhaps) the paradox of suggestion. Thus, Borch-Jacobsen argues, Bernheim's writings testify to an understanding of suggestion that runs counter to the notion sketched above. Bernheim realised that suggestion does not simply play out between an active *suggestionneur* and a passive *suggestionné*. Rather than follow this top-down model, which – per Freud – can be understood as a manifestation of tyranny and power, Bernheim attributed a key role to the *suggestionné*'s active and voluntary contribution to the suggestion. Borch-Jacobsen summarises:

> So it is not *le suggestionneur* who provokes the receptivity to suggestions; it is the *suggestionné* himself [*sic*] who disinhibits himself, who lets himself go, who makes himself passive. […] Just as Zeno's reasoning will never prevent Achilles from

[14] Freud's remark about suggestion explaining everything refers to Bernheim's assertion that 'everything is in suggestion' (Bernheim quoted in Borch-Jacobsen, 2009: 111).

[15] In spite of its intentions to turn away from such a register of tyranny and violence, Freud's own mass psychology was imbued with no fewer repressive features in its account of the violent primal father. For a discussion of Freud's mass psychology in relation to alternative accounts, see Borch (2012b: 103–8) and McClelland (1989: ch. 8).

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catching the tortoise, so Binet's, Janet's, and Freud's arguments will never prevent the subject from allowing himself to be 'suggestioned' *if he is willing*. The mystery of hypnotic induction disappears as soon as one understands that suggestibility is not an automatism and that submission to suggestion is in fact a very voluntary servitude, revokable at any moment. In the end, there is no hypnosis, only a self-hypnosis, or a consent to hypnosis. (2009: 112, original emphasis)

What are the implications of this position, which emphasises instead the active part played in suggestion by the *suggestionné*? For one, it completely reshuffles the relation between power and suggestion – suggestion is not a question of the *suggestionneur* holding almost unlimited power over the *suggestionné*. Instead Bernheim presented a model expressing what would later become Michel Foucault's dictum: 'Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free' (Foucault, 1982: 221). The power manifested by suggestion is entirely dependent on the *suggestionné*'s free submission to and partaking of it. This might read as a micro-level anticipation of the Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich's famous attempts to understand – through a mélange of Freudian and Marxist theorisation – how, under fascism, '*the masses of people themselves assented to their own subjugation and actively brought it about*' (Reich, 1971: 209, original emphasis; see also 1975). However, Bernheim's conception suggested a somewhat different model that effectively undoes the notion of hypnosis (as well as those of the 'unconscious' or 'subconscious') intimated in the quotation above. Supported by the Belgian physician Joseph Delbœuf, his colleague, Bernheim clearly identified a relation between the *suggestionneur* and the *suggestionné* but one not of a hypnotic nature. Instead, this relation is better theorised as a 'state of suggestion', in which the *suggestionné* actively partakes in the suggestion by willingly conforming to 'the suggestion out of complaisance' (Borch-Jacobsen, 2009: 115). In the words of Delbœuf, 'The somnambulists are excellent actors, and they quickly enter into the spirit of their role. Nevertheless, even in this regard, a certain education seems indispensable to me. It is sometimes necessary to guide them, to train them' (cited from Borch-Jacobsen, 2009: 115). Returning to the dissolution of the paradox of suggestion, the *suggestionné* need not be a passive subject who blindly and hypnotically follows the suggestions of the *suggestionneur*; on the contrary, *suggestionnés* are active subjects who willingly adopt what they believe the *suggestionneur* wants them to do or think. Borch-Jacobsen likens this to the later notion of the 'experimenter expectancy effect', which describes situations in which the experimental subject responds and 'conform[s] to the expectations unintentionally communicated by the experimenter' (2009: 119).

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For present purposes, the more significant point is that viewing the willpower of the *suggestionné* as pivotal dealt a considerable blow to Le Bon's damning critique of crowds as motors of mimetic de-individualisation: it suggested that crowd members might actually openly enter their mimetic de-individualising state. If this were indeed the case, the basis for Le Bon's denigration of crowds would crumble, and it would seem fair to ask why crowds should be seen as morally and politically suspect if in fact their members' de-individualisation is just as much a result of the latter's positive decision to let go of their subjectivity.

It is important to note that while Le Bon's conception of crowds might end up shaken by Bernheim's proposal, the latter should not be read as vindicating Berk's analysis, *contra* Le Bon, with its strong emphasis on an independent, anti-mimetic individual. After all, while volition might initially be at play in hypnotic suggestion, suggestion itself operates in a mimetic register. Rather than placing Bernheim's proposition in either the mimetic or anti-mimetic camp, it is more correct to say that it presents an early attempt to account for the tensions and oscillations between the two. On the one hand, it suggests that individuality is stretched out between mimesis and anti-mimesis. Similar to how Crary portrays late-nineteenth-century discussions of attention as torn between the ability of subjects to focus attention individually and their attention's susceptibility to being moulded from the outside, so the individual, in the Bernheimean template, can oscillate between a mimetic and an anti-mimetic position. At times it might operate in a mimetic fashion, at other times anti-mimetically, and often it is likely located on a continuum between the two poles. On the other hand, and arguably more provocative, Bernheim's analysis suggests that the anti-mimetically placed individual may well desire to be carried away by de-individualising mimesis. It goes without saying that this option, the deliberate letting go of individuality, is entirely incomprehensible from Berk's rationalist-individualist point of view – indeed, an outright scandal from the liberal stance undergirding Berk's analysis. Bernheim's work opened precisely that analytical option.

⋆⋆⋆

I have deliberately pooled together an array of historical developments from France, Germany, and Austro-Hungary, glossing over the varying local backgrounds against which these transformations took place. While this runs the risk of paying too little attention to the role of local context, my aim has not been to provide a comprehensive chronological account of a string of historical details. Instead of prioritising such granularity,

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I have demonstrated that considerable changes took place in the overall European social and conceptual landscape within the time span of only a few decades. Indeed, I have argued that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a hotbed of a wide range of significant changes in social life (including inventions in science, culture, and technology as well as factors such as industrialisation and urbanisation), transformations that resulted in an experiential landslide that dramatically shook familiar modes of life and perception. Despite any forces of inertia in the broader politico-economic energies identified in this time period, per Mayer, these changes were so profound that when observers reflected retrospectively upon them in the 1930s, they could hardly recognise the social order that was left behind. My central argument is that this sense of change, this sweeping away of established life forms and their corresponding experiential qualities, should not be underestimated. Quite the opposite, it is a kind of modernist experience which is important to retain, and not merely to evade a forgetfulness of the past or, relatedly, to avoid a presentism which claims that our current, twenty-first-century age is uniquely fluid and accelerated. Most crucial, keeping this historical situation in mind helps elucidate why particular notions of individuality and collectivity emerged at this point in time. As evidence of this, Nidesh Lawtoo convincingly argues that a broad range of *fin-de-siècle* observers agree that modern developments put the subject in an entirely new situation, in which its autonomy was profoundly challenged by external forces even to the extent 'that the experience of mimesis, in its polymorphous manifestations, informs the subject from the very beginning' (2013: 18). Or, as Stefan Jonsson puts it, the ideas that emerged in this time period in response to real-life experiences suggested 'a vanishing of the subject' (2013: 143).

What I have tried to demonstrate is essentially that events of historic magnitude prompted a resultant landslide in conceptions of collectivity and individuality: in these analyses of (de-individualised) subjectivity occurring in tandem with the modern experience of rapid instability, the individual was seen as increasingly subdued by external collective dynamics, in whole or in part. I suggest that Bernheim not only articulated an early account of this conception of individuality but also added important nuance to it through his analysis of suggestion, which proposed that the individual may show *both* mimetic *and* anti-mimetic dimensions. That said, this duality was by no means exclusively tied to Bernheim's work. In Chapter 2, I discuss Gabriel Tarde's adoption of it: although Tarde's thought often swung more toward the mimetic, his concept of the individual is more ambivalent than scholars (e.g. McPhail) have recognised, seeing as even Tarde conceded that the subject might volitionally enter mimetic forms.

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