Bret and Heather 51st DarkHorse Podcast Livestream\_ Facebook...

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**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

mass movements, movement, people, frustrated, facebook, find, twitter, mass, book, happened, frustration, hoffer, suggests, problem, devil, influence peddling, fact, case, means, dnc

**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:16

Hey folks, welcome to the Dark Horse podcast live stream number 51. Dr. Heather hying. sitting to my right,

**Heather** 00:24

I am a dad. Yes, we are we 51

**Bret** 00:27

we are here. And we have a lot to talk about because 2020 marches on, things are afoot. So

**Heather** 00:35

I believe that we are going to start by talking about some social media shenanigans to put it rather more lightly than is actually the case and then move on to talking a little bit about the nature of mass movements.

**Bret** 00:51

All right, the nature of mass movements good. Well, I'm looking forward to that. But yes, we should start with what has happened in the last week, it seems like a month, but you know, that's the nature of time travel at the the period approaching the election. Here's what happened for those of you who have not been paying attention. What happened was I was involved in a private discussion in which somebody posted a Facebook link that I was supposed to go look at, and I clicked on the link, and I got an amazing message that could you show the message. This is awkward, we're waiting to show you the message. Here's the message, it says your account has been disabled, you can't use Facebook, because your account or activity on it didn't follow our community standards, we have already reviewed this decision, and it can't be reversed, etc, etc. So I saw this, I was completely shocked. Now those of you who are not Facebook friends of mine, I might need to give you a little bit of orientation. I used to be not a heavy user of Facebook, but a regular user of Facebook. And then after the Evergreen meltdown, Facebook became a very toxic environment. And I effectively walked away from it, moving most of my social media presence over to Twitter where things were more manageable and more hospitable, believe it or not. So I barely post there. And I was shocked to see this, this warning here that says that my account has been permanently disabled, because as far as I knew I hadn't posted anything on it recently. And I believe I might have logged on in logged on in October. But my last log on when which I did anything might have been even September. So what the heck triggered this? Well, of course, we don't know because it's Facebook. And they do not feel obligated to tell us anything about what rules mean, how we might have violated them. And there's no mechanism to to appeal the decision. So I was suitably shocked and confused. And I posted a tweet that could you show the tweet? It says I have been evicted from Facebook, no explanation, no appeal. I have downloaded quote my information and quote and see nothing that explains it. We are governed now in private by entities that make their own rules and are answerable to no process. disaster is inevitable. We are living in

**Heather** 03:16

and this we are governed now in private thing that you write here is in reference to the same thing that you talked about, I believe in our last livestream, in which you were talking about basically, government is that which governance,

**Bret** 03:31

right? Yes, that's exactly what I'm referring to government is that which governs and so it is, there is no shame to the founders that they did not anticipate social media, and therefore did not protect the rights that they knew were necessary in order for democracy to function in the context of social media, because there would have been no way to write those rules. So what we are now stuck with

**Heather** 03:54

they were remarkably prophetic, but they could not predict the specificity of the future, nor especially so many, many years out. Right? I mean, you know, no rate of change is impossible, as it is and they couldn't have predicted the rate of change much less what was happening, as the rate of change itself accelerated.

**Bret** 04:12

The these people had never seen a train, they had never seen a chainsaw. They would have known of at least hot air balloons. That's about the extent of the tech was that right? Yeah, the razzle dazzle that would have been available to them in imagining what was needed. But there would have been no way to anticipate this. And you know, just see the degree of the problem. Think about if somebody had told you in 2000, about Twitter, that they told you there was a wildly popular service in which people were limited to a tiny number of characters and they barked into the ether and others listened and rebroadcast these things. You wouldn't have known what they were talking about,

**Heather** 04:55

and I might have been looking for a new planet,

**Bret** 04:57

right? Yes, Ilan.

**Heather** 05:00

Get on it. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, I don't want him in charge,

**Bret** 05:04

because it'll take us to Mars. And there's nothing to do there. Right? Right. Okay. Well, I would agree with that. But in any case, there's no way we could expect them to write rules that would have protected us. And the thing that, you know, the problem that we have to deal with is, we are told by an ever present chorus of people who respond when one complains about an arbitrary decision like this, that well, these are private corporations, and you're using their service, and you're getting it for free, and they're entitled to do what they want so tough? And the answer is, actually no, this is now an essential artery of our democracy, to the extent that it is now bottlenecked by people who are up to this sort of political shenanigans. And I will get to why I believe it is political in a second here. But to the extent that it is bottlenecked by those people, one of two things has to happen. Either we have to be provided an alternative where our rights are protected, or our rights have to be protected in the context of these private platforms so that democracy can do what is necessary. The entire reason that we have the First Amendment is because the exchange of ideas, the free exchange of ideas, was understood correctly by the founders to be essential to the functioning of the democracy, right. They knew they had to protect good ideas, bad ideas, vile ideas, they had to protect the whole landscape from governmental interference in order that we could govern ourselves well, that the good ideas that sounds wrong, at first could rise to the top, and, you know, gain resonance. And they were, as I said, quite right, that this was necessary, but they couldn't possibly understand where those ideas were going to be exchanged in the 21st century. So we are now stuck in this predicament where the rights are not protected, where it is clear that we are actually involved in the discussions that affect governance and we are being governed by private concerns that are not protected or they from which we are not protected.

**Heather** 06:58

Just an asterisk for perhaps a later conversation. I wonder if some of the problem that we have when trying to have this conversation with people when they when they respond with it's a private corporation they can do what they want, is the naming that calling them social media suggests that is in fact media. And of course, freedom of the press suggests exactly that something like the New York Times has editorial control and they can publish or refuse to publish whomever they want and that is part of what freedom of the press guarantee is, and that calling these these platforms, social media suggests that they are like that, except that they effectively have monopolies

**Bret** 07:37

right? And then and in fact, there is a provision I'm 230 I forgotten the number but there's a question about whether or not these platforms are publishers or not and in effect, platforms are taking the position that they are publishers where that protects them and that they are not publishers with respect to responsibility so they're they're gaining the benefit that Yeah, they get the best of both worlds. And it leaves us with a bad predicament but if I can complete the story here if you look at this tweet if you're watching this on YouTube, you'll see it has quite a large number of likes now this is on Twitter you're on Twitter yes my my pointing out to my Twitter followers that I had been banned from Facebook without explanation and no opportunity for appeal caught people's attention because well as you can see in the replies to that tweet, people regard me as a very sober and responsible voice and they wanted to know what I might have done on Facebook that could have triggered this The answer is nothing. And so anyway, it's spread

**Heather** 08:42

like let me just it's not even that everything that you would have been doing on Facebook and you've already said this but it's not even that everything that you had been doing on Facebook was completely defensible and well within you know, everyone's understanding even of like the Overton window that these social media platforms are for some reason patrolling the borders of but you literally had nothing there was there was literally nothing that prompted this so far as we could tell because you literally aren't active on this platform and also I don't even have a Facebook account and never have so I can't even view what's going on there but like literally had done nothing and usually that is actually metaphorically you've done nothing here it just there was nothing that you had done on Facebook that prompted

**Bret** 09:27

us well right and i mean you know unless they decided to go back into the history there's nothing I did in the period here where I got banned that could possibly explain because I wasn't doing anything so I think the you know, I referred in my tweet suggesting that people come visit us on on dark horse today that we were going to pull back the silicone curtain and silicon curtain and the silicon curtain here reveals I think that there is a politically motivated core with In Facebook there has the power to ban people. And frankly, I think if I had been active on Facebook recently, it probably would have found something they've set, you know, community standards that are so arbitrary and vague, that they can find something. But in this case, it was like, Well, I didn't do anything that could justify this because I wasn't active. And so we'll ban him anyway. And what's he going to do about it? There's not even a link where you can click for an appeal. They tell me they've already reviewed it. Okay, now, already reviewed, it has a very clear connotation. It suggests that a human being looked at and decided that whatever the complaint about me was, was valid. And that's why I have no right to an appeal because the appeal had effectively already been filed on my behalf. And I had failed to compel them that I was a decent citizen.

**Heather** 10:49

All the steps that can happen have already happened. You're done. Yeah.

**Bret** 10:52

Totally are willing. All right. So as this tweet that is, I guess, now on the screen was, was gaining likes and being circulated. At some point, a representative from Facebook popped in, in the replies Zach, can you show the next. So Liz Shepard, who goes by loose borders wha on Twitter of all the tone deaf things to say, says your account was mistakenly flagged by our system for identifying imposter accounts. We've restored it, and are sorry for the mistake. Now, I find this fascinating, because this clearly suggests that this was an automated phenomenon, which then seems to call into question whatever review they claimed took place, that meant I wasn't entitled to any sort of an appeal. She says it was flagged by our system for identifying a password. Now that I think is nonsense, because my account is a very long standing account. I have a large number of Facebook friends, they are coherent, in the sense that many of them stem from places that they that are geographical places, you know, in places I've worked evergreen and the like. So the account does not look like an imposter account. Nor was it behaving like an imposter account because it was largely dormant. So clearly something is up. Well, how am I ever gonna figure out what might be the cause of this? Well, I don't know. Let's see who lives Shepard is can you go to the next screenshots? Liz Shepard, Facebook comms formerly at the democrats and Speaker Pelosi. My god, this person is directly connected to top level DNC Democrats. Could it be that my unruly behavior suggesting that the duopoly is a corrupt entity and must be addressed in order that we properly govern ourselves? Could it be that I caused offence, and they called in people inside of Facebook in order to punish me or to provide a warning to others who might be uppity in this particular way? certainly seems likely. But the account is even strange. Take a look at it. Now, I must say this is a screen grab from today. Liz Shepard has a lot more followers today than she did when she popped into the replies to tell me that they had made a mistake over at Facebook, she had fewer than 1000 followers and she was following more than 800 people. So that's not a good ratio. There are enough people who follow back that you know, to follow 800 people and have less than 1000 followers. I mean, she's a very light user of Twitter or not very interesting to people and yet here she is verified. So somehow it would appear that Twitter which hasn't verified you, you're a notable person. How many Twitter followers do you have

**Heather** 14:04

me?

**Bret** 14:05

120,000 120,000 followers, you've actually had people pretend to be you. Am I correct? Yes, unfortunately, yes. You've had people actually try actually had imposter count. You actually had imposter accounts show up and Twitter refuses to verify you, I should say, when I got verified, there was a process for requesting that they establish who you were. And you know if they decided you were notable, whatever that means. They would do it. And then when you did the same thing, they had changed the process and basically they said that they were no longer verifying people because it had become a hallmark of like a sanction from Twitter. But this is nonsense there is no

**Heather** 14:50

that's I mean that's that's a rabbit hole. But it's not they didn't say they're no longer verifying people. They're saying they want to do it by application anymore and by demonstrating that you have a public presence, They're basically acknowledged that they're going to they're going to give blue checkmarks to whoever they feel like it and you can't request it. And you don't know when it'll come it'll come

**Bret** 15:08

so they've turned it into exactly the thing they claimed they didn't want it to be, which is a sanction from Twitter, you can't apply for exactly they landed down at the point that they, they like you and apparently they don't like you.

**Heather** 15:19

very likeable,

**Bret** 15:20

I guess. I mean, I find to like, thank you, but, but Twitter, Twitter does not agree. So in any case, bourgeois though quite likeable. Yeah, loose, loose Shepherd here, she is quite likeable. And, you know, proud DNC democrat connected to Speaker Pelosi. So that does suggest a possible explanation for what is taking place. So I tweeted back, can you go to the next screenshot? And I said, my first indication of a problem was this message saying Facebook had already reviewed the suspension and the decision can't be reversed my tweet about it clearly got your attention, meaning you live Shepard, but I have 400,000 Twitter followers, what protects regular people from such quote, mistakes? Liz?

**Heather** 16:08

Nothing. Nothing protects regular people from such mistakes, especially when the original message suggests that everything has already happened, that could possibly happen, and that there is no way that you could possibly get get another review, because reviews already happened.

**Bret** 16:24

Yep. Now, I will say the

**Heather** 16:28

deeply anti democratic, Twitter doesn't claim to be democratic. This person who now works for Facebook is apparently part of the Democratic machine. One would hope that she lived by democratic principles, or would choose to work for an organization that does this is not democratic.

**Bret** 16:47

Well, yes, of course. The Elite democrats of the DNC are famously not democratic in effect. Some viewers will remember that Howard Dean's joke before he disappeared from the the race. And you're with that? I don't remember. In any case, actually, you should check out Eric's opening essay on his most recent portal with with Douglas Murray. He talks about the dean scream episode, the thing that ended Dean's candidacy, but but howard dean used to joke that he was from the democratic wing of the Democratic Party. That was his line. It was hilarious because all of those of us who were Liberal Democrats understood that there was this machine inside the party that wasn't interested in democracy and was basically taking advantage of us. And Dean's Renegade candidacy. gave us hope for a while the way more recently, you know, Bernie Sanders campaign did and Tulsi Gabbert. So Alright, you have the

**Heather** 17:54

Yeah, it was halfway through bush two,

**Bret** 17:56

it was 2004 2004. Yep. All right. So Liz Shepherd has not responded and explained anything more about the mistake. I think we've gotten all of the information we're going to get and probably we're not going to find out anything more. But it is certainly interesting that they that Liz is sanctioned by Twitter, and establishment DNC, Democrat, proud of such on her profile. Now, these connections, though, are many, I don't think we have any idea how many of these people are inside of Facebook, and Twitter and Google. Occasionally one of these things reaches the attention of the press. So we've seen several other examples that could you put up the next screenshot. So here we have Nick Sileo, who is at Communications at Twitter, that means he is basically at Twitter comms, whereas live Shepard, is it Facebook, comms comms, having something to do with decision making power over what is and is not tolerated on the platform. And he's a former Kamala Harris press secretary. Isn't that interesting? All right. Next screenshots. All right. Now we have Can you read his name? I can't see.

**Heather** 19:14

Mon Carlos mahna mahna. mahna. Hey,

**Bret** 19:17

Carlos. Mon. Hey, is he was at Twitter, he is now moved on to Biden's transition team seems a little premature to me. But nonetheless, he's moved on to Biden's transition team. So in any case, there are these connections. We don't know how many of them there are. And we don't know what the interaction between these partisan folks in in our governmental structure and these private platforms is but in some sense, what we have is a new version of the revolving door right to the traditional revolving door as it is used to describe governmental corruption. Corruption involves people could take a new step out of industry and into government for some number of years and then return to industry that would be the classic pattern. And of course, It functions as some kind of illegal bribing mechanism, because the person knowing that they've come from an industry knows what the industry wants, knowing that they will return there they do, the industry is bidding. And the point is no fingerprints. Another way this can work is industry can approach somebody in government, persuade them, Hey, you know, when you come out, why don't you look us up, see if there's a job that we might have for you. Yep, it's another mechanism. But then this version with Twitter and Facebook, and presumably Google has a different spin to it, right? It works in a different direction, that in effect, instead of going into government to do industries bidding, these are people from a partisan faction of government who go into industry, right to do the party's bidding. And so it's a different revolving door, fundamentally different revolving door,

**Heather** 21:02

but it's no less influence peddling.

**Bret** 21:03

Well, that's just the thing. So if we can step back, and of course, this is a heck of a week to be discussing influence peddling. But what we've got is a party, which is not supposed to have a product, right? parties are supposed to represent people like me, lifetime Democrat, you as well, lifetime Democrat, we are the Democratic Party, but the Democratic Party is run by the DNC, which is, as I've been saying, throughout the period of unity, and influence peddling operation pure and simple. Now that influence peddling operation has to acquire power for which it needs votes. And then what it does with that power, is it pedals it, right. So to the extent that voters stop electing the Democratic Party, it has nothing to monetize, it can't sell its influence. So it must maintain that influence it must win voters. How do you do that? Well, you've got to control the conversation, because if people were to understand what's actually driving policy, they would throw the bums out. So how do you control the discussion? Well, the discussion is taking place on Twitter, on Facebook, on Instagram, who knows where else? So the point is, the revolving door now has to be in the places where the bounds of polite conversation are set in a private context. So there is no first amendment protection. And we are left with the results. And what does it look like? Well, frankly, it looks like what Twitter did with the hunter Biden story, right? Twitter actually shut down the account of the New York Post a 200 year old newspaper, and made it impossible to share in a normal sense, the article in which the obvious influence peddling going on in the Biden family was made plain. There's no justification for this. Obviously, the voters have a right to understand that that one of the major party candidates has a son who was peddling his influence when he was Vice President, and they are entitled to extrapolate that that might characterize a Biden ministration. To and this is, of course, deeply connected to recent history, because it was, you know, the Ukrainian connection and the allegation of influence peddling that caused the president to Yes, I believe he abused his power trying to get Biden's son investigated in Ukraine, which triggered impeachment. So, you know, this is the most important business of the nation here you have real revelations that appear to be robust on the basis of evidence, right evidence from Hunter Biden's own computer. And we are being told that that information is so suspect that even though published in a major American paper, it cannot be feared we're not even allowed to see it and decide whether it makes sense to us. So we are now being we are being infantilized and lied to and having our right to decide Actually, I do want to discuss that overridden by, you know, it's not the nanny state. It's the nanny corporations. So, I mean, the whole thing is absolutely frightening. And, you know, I have to point out that the motivation for the unity 2020 plan was that we were faced with essentially an influence peddling operation on the Democratic side and a different version of abuse of power on the Republican side, and that it was the system that caused this sort of breakdown that left people frozen out of governmental power, which has made them frustrated and angry and is causing them to lash out in the streets. And essentially, we have to confront the mechanism that generates this failure or it's going Take the republic apart. And you know we're seeing it, we're seeing it all laid bare, we're looking at the corruption, we're understanding how it functions, we're seeing that it actually is, you know, it is affecting the way we are able to collectively think by basically deciding not to pass certain messages. I mean, remember the Unity 2020 Twitter account was suspended for registering phony accounts in order to boost the hashtag, and it didn't register phone, he did not do it. We didn't do it.

**Heather** 25:32

So suspended for an infraction which it did not engage him

**Bret** 25:35

and it remains suspended. And it is true even this week that if you attempt to dm somebody, a link to our website in which we discuss governmental corruption, it's a very odd behavior. You try to dm somebody and on your side, it looks like you've succeeded in doing it on their side, it's hidden, right? It's a very bizarre, nefarious way of controlling what thoughts I mean, you know, think about it this way. So you said

**Heather** 26:03

it's not the nanny state, its nanny corporations, and I'm not there's something important here and it's not quite right. Because censorship, you know, we do censor what children are allowed to experience, right. And so if if we can, if we can take the connotation of nanny out of it, like, you know, we're who who gets in loco, parentis, who gets to take on the status of sort of parenting the populace to some degree, you know, we as as liberals, really, truly believe that given especially the global nature of some things like, like social media, like a lot of technology, we need regulation, that actually does protect the populace from some of the things that that cannot be regulated by individuals or cities or state level rights state as opposed to nation or more. But censorship is something that has always been a part of, of human life. And here we have a sort of imprimatur Of, from, from what from the corporations that are actually allowing us to speak with one another. That is deciding when and what we are allowed to hear and with whom we're allowed to speak. Whereas in the past, what the state was protecting us from with regard to corporations was often corporations, basically doing sort of, you know, cya psyops on on us and advertising such that we would not engage our best our best interests and become our best selves. So there's some, like there's some mess here, that it's not quite so it's not it's not clean, I don't think you meant to suggest that it was clean that it's moved from sort of nanny state to nanny Corporation, that there's that there's censorship, that there's still attempt to create motivations in people that serve the corporation rather than the person. And maybe part of what you're seeing and saying here is that now we have corporations working on behalf of particular political parties who want to change the motivations of people, even when that is not in their best interest and isn't only in the interest of, in this case, the DNC? Well, I

**Bret** 28:17

think there there are two things there. Yes, it is not the people, you know, the nanny, the reference nanny is about an adult who is empowered to tell, you know, presumably to protect you from your own worst instincts as a child. Right. And so being infantilized by a government that wants to protect us against our own instincts is bad enough when it actually happens. Now, the term nanny state is often used to dismiss regulation that exactly that is about preventing real harm that can't be prevented in other ways. But but it is also true that we see overreach, but the thing is, as Americans, the values encoded in the First Amendment, whether the First Amendment should, in some way be extended to or something else should come to protect us online. I mean, I would remind you, Twitter, Facebook, Google, these are private concerns, but they are on public roads. I mean, the internet was started as DARPA net, right? This was our governmental structure, generating a mechanism that then created an opportunity for these private concerns. But it's not a simple matter of, hey, they're private, they can do what they want, because effectively, we don't have a public access to this internet that we built. Right? So it's one of these things where there's at the very least a gray area as it is with research where the public funds the research and the product of it is private,

**Heather** 29:40

as it has I mean, just more more a closer analogy would be say the telephone companies right, you know that. I don't remember the history well enough to even replay it briefly. But, you know, the government went in broke up and made a bunch of baby bells because there was a monopoly and You know, in fact, the airwaves are ours, the airwaves are ours. And, you know, the in the case of telephone, it's not airwaves. But some of the things have happened with regard to networks.

**Bret** 30:11

Yeah, this is true. But at a deeper level, I would say we Americans have almost uniquely protected speech on the basis that speech itself is not understood to be harmful, right, or at the very least, that the harm that can come from speech itself, that is to say, there's lots of bad speech, but it is a symptom of something else that is harmful. But to the extent that speech might even be harmful, it is understood that the greater harm is done by empowering something to decide what can be set, which is exactly what is happening here. And so it actually strikes me that there's an analogy between this question and something that we discuss in our book about the fact that in our ancestral environment, a bad smell was not itself typically harmful. I mean, in fact, almost never right? That is to say, you smell something bad, like a rotting fish. And the fact that you smelled it doesn't hurt you. But it does tell you don't eat that right. Now, in this case, learning

**Heather** 31:16

itself is not dangerous. It's telling you it's it's advising you as to how to modify your behavior going forward, as opposed to,

**Bret** 31:25

right. So in this case, you've got you know, you can have hilarion speech, right? It's not the speech that hurts you, it's the hitlerian ism that generates the speech. So hearing the speech actually allows you to deduce that there's something dangerous there. Whereas blocking the speech as if the speech is doing the harm, then leaves open a it makes certain things taboo, which makes them attractive, and B, it means nobody's really in a good position to know what is being thought and how commonly.

**Heather** 31:52

Okay, I'm not sure I don't think I love this analogy, because I thought, what we talked about in the book is that modernity has brought with us smells that themselves are dangerous, like solvents, solvents, what toilet or something is probably when I think right. So this is a novel circumstance for which we have no evolutionary history. And in general, the response to recoil in response to a bad smell, and to not go towards it and to not eat it. And all of this has been sufficient up until at least until the Industrial Revolution, I think, more or less, and it's not sufficient anymore. And it's impossible to tell unless you happen to be familiar with the particular thing that you were smelling based on smelling something novel and reprehensible to your nose. Whether or not the actual smelling of it is doing you harm. I don't I think that some of what is going on with regard to friends as the actual free speech debate is that people on the authoritarian left are making exactly this claim about speech, that now speech itself is going to harm you. And I think this is this is completely wrong, and therefore I don't like that knowledge. No,

**Bret** 33:01

it is wrong. But this is the point is, you know what, we need to have a discussion about that, because to the extent that speech is now being equated with violence, that is something that we have to determine, right? If it is if something about speech has changed, we need to have a discussion about what it is and what that means about the regulatory environment. And assuming that nothing has changed, that speech is still speech and violence is still violence, then the answer is actually where is speech taking place. That's where we need to protect it, especially if there is no alternative. So this, it all creates a pretty interesting puzzle. And the derangement of our ability to think is obviously downstream of these corrupt entities like the DNC influencing these private concerns, which are beyond the reach of constitutional protections, which are the places where we have all gathered to figure out what's what, and we can't figure out what's what, because if you think what's what involves, you know, the articles of unity web page, you can't send it over dm to somebody. So, you know, if you think about the way memory works, you know, memory at a biological level involves you detecting that things have happened or that you think they've happened. And then when those things are reinforced, because you return to them. They become inscribed in your memory in a deeper way so that they last so you can't remember what you had for breakfast last Thursday, because you haven't thought about it. Right? So that memory has vanished. Other memories get built in, they get wired in so you can access them for life because you keep returning to them. And so in some sense, you've got the nanny Corporation deciding there's certain thoughts that we would rather you not remember there. There's like proactive memory holding, you know, we don't really want you to remember is that hunter Biden actually sold access to his father and, you know, was employed by this corporation and that this was connected to an impeachment of a sitting president. And

**Heather** 35:00

so Add to this the derangement of memory that comes with how pretty much all of us now use the internet where even those who tried to those of us who tried to be scrupulous, and clear up our virtual desktops and closed on our tabs, and all of this will will at some point, usually pretty reliably have opened a million tabs, right. And so you just keep running into the same thing where you like, I left it open, because I thought maybe an O right. And every time you run into this, it jumps back into memory, you recall something maybe a little bit less than you did last time about the eight connections that you thought you might want to make. But it makes it less likely that you can actually put together a coherent map of your universe, then I'm reminded, actually, I think this also might be something that we wrote about in the book, I'm reminded of one of my favorite short pieces by by barnhouse, called fullness the memorias in which he reports on someone maybe I'll at some point, I'll just read it, it's very short. He reports on a character who cannot forget anything. And this seems to be the way forward the way that you end up just becoming replete with knowledge. Of course, of course no, because the way that we make sense of our universe is to take in as many things as we possibly can. And then to do the analysis and the editing and the calling and to be left with this or and this is you know, this is actually have developed some of development works to write lists like a pop ptosis, the selective this program cell death, wherein we start with webbing between our fingers, and then we you know, we lose the material that we don't need this, and this happens with neuronal growth as well, as well, right? We have many more neurons and neuronal connections in utero, and in very early childhood, then then we then have as adults, and it's not that we're getting dumber, it's not that we're getting stupid. It's that you overbuild and then you and then you trim. So memory, memory works best when you can union fill, but then you have the time and the space for the analysis for the thought for the reflection. And you don't have to keep being reminded of the things that you kind of thought you already going to get rid of. Or you thought maybe maybe this maybe that let me put it in some bucket and be reminded of it once a month, as opposed to, am I gonna get any tabs open? Let me see what's on them?

**Bret** 37:19

Well, actually, if you think back the movie version of men in black,

**Heather** 37:26

right, is there a non movie version of black?

**Bret** 37:29

Yeah, it's a it's a comic, oh, the neuralyzer the device that allows these governmental UFO dudes to cause you to forget what you've just seen, because lots of people in this movie world are seeing aliens all the time. And the government is, you know, erasing these memories. It's almost like these, the media, these social media platforms are using a neuralyzer. Who are they using it for? Oh, they're using it for their friends, you know, high up in these governmental parties where, you know, yeah, presumably, these platforms love the access that they have. And they don't understand that the corruption of the government structure is actually endangering the republic that they're depending on. And you know, it's all a frightening catastrophe. But yes, the magic of understanding how to think involves editing down, it's a sculpting process. And the insidious thing here is this is not an individual free to engage in thinking about things and then editing away the ones that weren't that valuable, the dead ends and all of that this is some external force that doesn't have to explain to you what their goal was, or why they thought something wasn't for you to think about. It's editing your memories to

**Heather** 38:44

write it? Well, yes, you need at least two things to learn to be able to think carefully and to learn how to be in possession of a mind that can do so you need to be free to find whatever information you go looking for. And this is, you know, this is one of the reasons that some people lament the loss of actual like library stacks, right, that actually walking around a physical library where things have been more or less put into a spot so that you you went looking for one book, and you end up finding 10 others that are a little bit related, but not quite, which is harder to do when you're doing, say, a Google Scholar search or a website search looking for scientific literature, for instance. But then you also need the silence, basically, the mental silence and the ability to stop at the gates any more stuff from coming in and impinging on your ability to consider what all it is that you have now taken in and what it means and we are losing, we're losing both of these. Do you have more here or shall we

**Bret** 39:48

say in closing, ultimately, the the message that I want people to derive is that the influence peddling itself is destroying the Republic, the mechanisms through which it functions and preserves itself are ever changing. But I believe it is the case that until we figure out how to deal with the influence peddling problem and the fact that it has left the American public, as a sidelight to issues of policy, we are going to face a system that gets worse and not better. And to the extent that Twitter and Facebook and Google don't want us discussing the influence peddling by the people that they assure us we have to vote for they are the problem, and we're going to have to confront them. So I think that's where we are. The analogy that you can't deliver on your private property, can't dam a river on your private property. Meaning that private property is not the end all and be all have rights. And I

**Heather** 40:58

Unless Unless you own the land that the river runs through all the way out to the ocean, in which case you might be able to, but so long as the river goes on to other people's land, you're not allowed to affect that, that which is not yours with regard to damming,

**Bret** 41:14

yeah, water. And we are all having deep effects on each other. So these ideas of this is mine, I can do with it. What I want is often not the case, because right? There are deep implications. Yep. All right.

**Heather** 41:27

All right. So I last week, we did a deep dive into Rodriguez, new book live not by lives, live not by lies, which is named for the sulphonates essay, which I read an excerpt from In the previous episode, Episode 49. And after that, I was thinking a bit about this book, which I've had on my bed stand for a while Eric offers the true believer thoughts on the nature of mass movements. And I've dipped into it here and there. And and I think it really has a number of things to teach us about our current moment. And in a way there's, there's some hope to be to be had from it. So this book was written in 1951, which means it has the issue was all older tomes do as all older texts do, just as we were talking about with regard to the Constitution, the framers of the Constitution, they could not have accurately predicted what had not yet happened. And so the examples are inherently from that time, in this book, and, and before. And so we, I think we might extrapolate a little bit from some of his thoughts, but let me just say first, so basically, I want to talk a little bit about what enables mass movements who participates, what are the tools by which they work? Where do the fanatics come from? And specifically, then how can creativity provide resistance to their appeal? And what do honorable leaders look like, like? So this Eric offer, just reading from the back, was self who lived from 1902 to 1983, was self educated and lived the life of a drifter to the 1930s. after Pearl Harbor, he worked as a longshoreman in San Francisco for 25 years. And he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983 and died later that year. And specifically, the true believer, which is the first of his books, which I guess if it's published in 1951, the first of his books was published when he was 49 years old. He became a best seller when President Eisenhower cited at during one of the earliest televised press conferences. So that's what this book is I can't imagine a current politician reading or citing a book a book like this and would would that they could actually, okay, so, I'm going to read a few short excerpts as as we proceed here. Let's see. From the very beginning, the preface, this book deals with some this book deals with some peculiarities, common to all mass movements be their religious movements, social revolutions, or nationalist movements. It does not maintain that all movements are identical, but that they share certain essential characteristics which gives them a family likeness. All mass movements generate in their adherence or readiness to die and a proclivity for United action. All of them irrespective of the doctrine they preach on the program, they project, breed, fanaticism, enthusiasm, fervent hope, hatred and intolerance. All of them are capable of releasing a powerful flow of activity in certain departments of life. All of them demand a blind faith and single hearted allegiance. All movements however, different in Doc, however, different doctrines and aspiration, draw their early adherence from the same types of humanity. They all appeal to the same types of mind. Though there are obvious differences between the fanatical Christian the fanatical Mohammedan, the fanatical nationalist of fanatical communist and the fanatical Nazi, it is yet true that the fanaticism which animates them may be viewed and treated as one. The same is true of the force which drives them onto expansion on world dominion. There was a certain uniformity and all types of dedication, of faith, of pursuit of power of unity and of self sacrifice. There are vast differences in the contents of holy causes and doctrines but a certain uniformity and the factors which make them effective. He who like Pascal Blaise Pascal finds precise reasons for the effectiveness of Christian doctrine has also found the reasons for the effectiveness of communist Nazi nationalist doctrine. However different the holy causes people die for they perhaps die basically for the same thing.

**Heather** 45:36

This book concerns itself chiefly with the active revivalist phase of mass movements. This phase is dominated by the true believer, the man of fanatical faith who was ready to sacrifice his life for a holy cause. An attempt is made to trace his Genesis and outline his nature as an aid in this effort uses made of a working hypothesis, starting up from the fact that frustrated predominant among the early adherents of all mass movements that they usually join at their own accord, it is assumed one, that frustration of itself without any proselytizing, prompting from the outside can generate most of the peculiar characteristics of the true believer. And to that an effective technique of conversion consists basically in the inculcation and fixation of proclivities and responses indigenous to the frustrated mind. So, this, this strikes me, there are a number of other places that we want to go here. But his his core hypothesis in this book, is that actually finding a group of people who are frustrated is is, is sufficient. And I think he's actually arguing that it's, that is maybe not necessary. But if you have it, it is sufficient. So it is akin to necessary and sufficient to creating a mass a mass movement, if you if you then know what to do with it. And I would say that there's something there's something to be teased out here. From the election four years ago, in the United States, the 2016. election, there were, the vast majority of people on the left, saw Trump seeming to use exactly the frustration of a vast majority of people on the right as a unifying agent, that he was saying things like drain the swamp, and make America great again. And we're going to bring jobs back, and we're going to stop the flow of people who are taking your jobs. And you know, he was finding the ways that people were frustrated, and those on the left could look at his rallies and his rhetoric and the seeming lockstep approval by his rallying base. And see in it the seeds of these other kinds of mass movements fascism, for instance, and this was the thing that we started to hear from from the left, right, like he is going to bring in fascism. This became in turn the Yep. I we have said many, many times that we don't see that we don't think that Trump was trying to be fascist nor was nor is likely to bring in fascism, but he was using some of these kinds of techniques of, of the most effective leaders of mass movements, specifically by keying in on the frustration of, of a of his base. This then became in turn the rallying cry of the mass movement that rose up, quote and resistance, right. What we now see many on the left everyone from you know, the whelk to the mainstream democrats who are largely playing footsie with the woke are using fear mongering, and hatred and mass delusion by claiming that fear mongering and hatred and mass delusion is what Trump is doing, and therefore, that's what that's what people on the left must do as well. So it's a mass movement to the claim as to defend against what seems to be maybe a mass movement. And I would argue, actually, what was going what was going on with Trump was was not that it wasn't what it appeared to many on the left, but what has what has what has risen up and what's what happened long before the 2016 election actually, was they were looking for an excuse, they the the hard left, the far left, right, we're looking for an excuse to create a mass movement. And could could they find huge numbers of frustrated people? Of course, of course they could you have something to add here? Well,

**Bret** 49:26

I mean, I think you're pointing to something interesting, which is that the frustration that usually causes a mass movement has caused to mass movements. Yeah, and the reason I mean, maybe that's more common than we know. But that essentially what you've got is I don't even want to call it an unstable equilibrium because I think I drew a diagram on one of our podcasts before, that basically had a zone of stability, a little trough in which the ball could reside, but if it went too far in one direction, One or the other? It went over the side, right? Yes. And in some sense, maybe that's not the right model here, maybe the right model here is that you've got a trough that holds the ball, and then something causes it to be a peak. And it causes a slide into two different things. But basically, what you've got, I would argue the bottom thing is a very novel system that is making people sick, and a very corrupt governmental structure that is freezing them out of the solution making Yep, right. So they are left outside that is almost literally going to cause frustration of every kind, the sense that one cannot do enough, that is right to get ahead. Right, that thing will cause people to look for the explanation of what it is that's blocking their well being. And that means they are susceptible to snake oil salesmen who want to tell them that, you know, what is causing your frustration is rampant racism, right? Really? Didn't we just elect a black president twice? I mean, you know, is it rampant racism? Yes, it's rampant racism. That's the reason, you know, or, on the other side, I guess it would be, you know, it's governmental incompetence and immigrants or whatever it is, that's, you know, taking the well being that is do you and driving it somewhere else. And the point is, really, if we were paying attention and understood deeply, we would recognize that actually, there is something that is taking well being and it's rent seekers, and they own the governmental structure and they are dealing with us as an inconvenient periodic electoral hazard that has to be dealt with, but that you want to jumpstart the economy right? What you need to do is get the governmental structure to stop functioning in this partisan win in bipartisan in this case, I just mean working for people who can buy access and against everyone else.

**Heather** 51:50

Yes. And how do you how do you do it? How do you bring the frustrated together? There are a number of unifying, unifying techniques and by unifying we, I don't mean anything lovely or wonderful, but in in hofers explanation, you know, how is it that you bring the frustrated together? What can unify them? Well, hatred, obviously, right. So, for instance, here from Hoffer, again, hatred is the most accessible and comprehensive of all unifying agents it pulls and worlds the individual away from his own self, makes them oblivious of his wheel and future freedom of jealousies and self seeking. He becomes an anonymous particle quivering with a craving to fuse, and coalesce with his like into one flaming mass. Mass, mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a god, but never without belief in a devil. Usually, the strength of a mass movement is proportionate to the vividness and tangibility of its devil. When Hitler was asked whether he thought the Jew must be destroyed, he answered, No, we should have then to invent him. It is essential to have a tangible enemy, not merely an abstract one. Fa Voight tells a Japanese mission that arrived in Berlin in 1932. to study the National Socialist Movement, Boyd asked a member of the mission, what he thought of the movement, he replied, It is magnificent. I wish we could have something like it in Japan only we can't because we haven't gotten the Jews. It is perhaps true that the insight and shrewdness of the man who know how to set a mass movement, emotion, or how to keep on going manifest themselves as much and knowing how to pick a worthy enemy as a knowing what doctrine to embrace and what program to adopt. The theoreticians of the Kremlin hardly waited for the guns of the Second World War to cool before they pick the democratic West, and particularly America as the chosen enemy. It is doubtful whether any gesture of goodwill or any concession from our side will reduce the volume and venom of vilification against us emanating from the Kremlin. Remember, this is 1951 one of Shanghai Shaq's most serious shortcomings was his failure to find an appropriate new devil once the Japanese enemy vanished from the scene at the end of the war. The ambitious but simple minded general was perhaps too conceited to realize that it was not he but the Japanese devil who generated the enthusiasm, the unity and the readiness for self sacrifice of the Chinese masses. So this this line, mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a god but never without belief in a devil is critical. I think absolutely. And you know, how, how many devils does the the new authority terian left have you know, Anything? Anything that they will append to phob to, or is to you can find the devil there. So, if you're being accused of being racist, you can find that white people are the devil. If you are being accused of being sexist, you can find that men are the devil. That sis people are the devil that all you know that able bodied people are the devil. You know, all of all of these particular ways, the immutable demographics, immutable characteristics, become the devil in this new world order and it's it's quite effective, because man rage feels good in it. And it brings people together even if they're not actually fighting for anything.

**Bret** 55:04

All right, this leads to multiple things. But I think the behavior of hymenoptera ins answer isn't wasps. Yeah, bees and wasps, bees in my mind, and that's the case, have it behavior. And actually, you know what they don't. my graduate work in Panama involved dealing with the hazard of Africanized bees, that there were bees that had been hybridized with African strains that went into this very aggressive stinging behavior where people you could die from being stung so many times which was not the ancestral state for our new world version of these bees.

**Heather** 55:47

So just I mean, just notable there is that the difference between Africanized honeybees and non Africanized honeybees is entirely one of behavior and a difference in group behavior. By by the bees, right, right, the transmitted but many maybe many people don't understand they, you know, they may think that it's a different it's a different venom. It's like it's, it's no, it's actually when stung by one of our non Africanized honeybees, I think it's, I think it's just as the upper typically you'll get one staying and you know, maybe a couple and you can get away but Africanized honey bee is chase you

**Bret** 56:23

down, they do. And you know, this is a response to different hazards to the hives. You know, it's not like the Africanized or the African bees are being wasteful, they just have hazards that require a lot more things to dissuade them. But the thing I wanted to point to, is that one of the things that we have learned in the study of these animals is that they mark the animal that they perceive to have been a threat to the high whether it whether or not so if you walk too close to a hive and you get a sting, you are now carrying a chemical signature. And so you now the fact that you back away from the hive is now not good enough because you have been marked as hazard to hive and therefore you run Yes, you run and you hope very much that you don't run into a thicket you can't get through or trip or you know, and there's a famous story in research circles that would now be 20 years ago, at least of a student who disturbed a hive in a cave and tripped and died to death. But But in any case, the there was

**Heather** 57:30

a hive in a cave somehow. Okay, yeah, some strange

**Bret** 57:33

but I don't remember the exact story was a was OTS student, I believe. But in any case, the the fact of the, we're going to set a bar, and if you try to cross it, we're going to label you with some phobia or something like that, which makes you devil and then, you know, no holds barred from that, from that moment on. That is very much how this seems to work. Now, the other thing that this makes me think, though, is, I must say I have I do not resonate with the idea of hating people very frequently. It's a very rare individual that I find deserving of hate, I can be very angry, I'm very angry at the behavior, for example of these platforms and the way that they are attempting to control the way we think. But as for actually hating people, I reserve that for altra special occasions.

**Heather** 58:38

Well, and I think we're going to get to, you know, he starts the little excerpt that I read in the very beginning, suggests that it's really it's a particular kind of person. And what I'd like to do is talk about, even if you do enjoy succumbing to rage, even if you do find yourself as as someone who has who has done this, and maybe you know flippable to a different ideology, that appears to be exactly the opposite, that it's actually the same kind of personality. defect really that you're revealing. How is it that you could instead become someone who is not as susceptible to rage? Who does not find it so enjoyable?

**Bret** 59:18

Yes, and in some sense, I wonder, I think this goes this is one characteristic, the propensity to hate means that you are vulnerable to becoming a pawn of one of these movements. And these movements are very often driven by people who have an agenda that isn't about you, it's about them, right? And so, not being susceptible to hate may even be like an immune response to prevent yourself from being capturable.

**Heather** 59:43

Yeah, so that's excellent. Not being susceptible to hate may provide a kind of immune response. Here we have his list, which is just interesting, of the disaffected who are most likely to be grabbed. So apart from the discussion of can you find yourself immune, like, apart from what you can 100% change about your own life. These are things some of which be very hard to escape from. And so you might have to work harder to not succumb to a mass movement, the disaffected are found in all walks of life, their most frequent in the following categories, the poor, misfits, outcasts, minorities, adolescent youth, the ambitious, where they're facing insurmountable obstacles, or unlimited opportunities, those in the grip of some vise or obsession, the impotent in body or mind, the inordinately selfish, the board, the sinners. So he then proceeds to spend many, many pages on a description of many of these, which we don't have time to do for the most part here. But I want to share a little bit specifically about board. I'm not sure that's what's next though. from that list, though, you know, the poor, misfits, minority, etc, we what we see here, if we can read it again, I don't think that that the Trump phenomenon really is a mass movement, the way the left makes it out to be, although it does have some elements of it. But if we, if we, for the moment, read these as two competing mass movements, it is in effect, pitting members of each of some of those groups against one another, right? It's sort of you know, it is that the left seems to have completely forgotten about class, right, which, when we were growing up, this was the concern that we understood to be the thing that really continues to keep people down. And, and Trump does speak to that, whereas people on the left, the most vocal leaders on the left come from quite a lot of money privilege, which is the kind of privilege that that speaks loudest. So let's see, when people who offer rights are ripe for a mass movements, they are usually right for any effective movement, and not solely for one with a particular doctrine or program. And furthermore, since all mass movements draw their adherence from the same types of humanity and appeal to the same types of mind, it follows that all mass movements are competitive. And the gain of one in adherence is the loss of all the others. All mass movements are interchangeable. One mass movement really transforms itself into another, a religious movement may develop into a social revolution, or nationalist movement, a social revolution into militant nationalism, or religious movement, a nationalist movement into a social revolution or religious movement. And I would say that we saw this even I didn't pull up any clips. But in the early days of the post, George Floyd, death protests that were that quickly became riots, as well. We saw some, you know, clearly, like, good faith. Black Lives Matter, people. And I don't know if they identify as leaders or not, I don't know what kind of a hierarchical or non hierarchical system they have in place. But we saw people really appealing to rioters, and you are doing damage to what we are trying to accomplish here. But what what you saw were a lot of people who were disaffected who were frustrated, seeing this outpouring of energy and read as rage on the streets, who were coming in, who, even if we allow that the germ of the Black Lives Matter movement had had good people in it, which certainly had good people and it whether or not the original founders of it, were honest, honest brokers, it quickly became corrupted by all of these other people who were just looking for a mass movement. And the argument here would be they could have easily just as easily, you know, they want to call themselves communists, they could have easily just easily become fascists, you know, in any of these, any of these other ideologies, that it's the ideology isn't the driving force. It's the it's the belonging, it's the sense of frustration. It's the frankly, it's the abolition of the past, which is another thing that that he talks about here. And in order to really dissuade one from thinking about the past one also has to make the idea of the present into a living hell. And so you, you, you cannot imagine that today is okay, or that tomorrow was okay, you're only looking forward into basically utopian future, largely.

**Bret** 1:04:36

So for those of you who have not yet checked out the podcast I did with Douglas Murray, definitely worth checking out. We had a great discussion. One of the things that I raised there and that he and I discussed has to do with a the fact that there's a dynamic tension between left and right, which is where the magic of our system comes from, but Yep, I believe But there's an insidious downside to this to the dynamic tension. Yes. In other words, if it is, you know, if liberals are the ones with the ambition to figure out how the system might be made better, and the conservatives are the ones who keep the liberals from, you know, driving us into the terrible unintended consequences, right, if that tension is necessary to moving actually forward, but doing so with enough discipline that you don't fall into a utopian abyss, that the downside of it has to do with the fact that each, each side tends to overplay its hand. And what I think is going on is a there's because we are inherently evolutionarily competitive beings, right? And we are placed in a system that puts us in competition with each other, right? We are in competition in the marketplace, one of the go to moves that people who have done well or have ended up empowered whether or not by their own success, one of the go to moves for them, is to limit the access of others to the tools that make you powerful, because of course, if you've done well, or are doing well, you don't necessarily want everybody empowered to displace you, right? So pulling up the ladder is a go to move at the point that you pull up the ladder. And so you know, oh, my goodness, education is failing everyone. It's crap. Right? Okay. So lots of people are not being well educated, which means by the time they reach adulthood, they have dull feeble tools. Right, right. dole feeble tools, when you have them are going to leave you susceptible to the argument that you should join this movement to do away with the devil that's blocking you from well being, in other words, the roots of the, for lack of a better term, communal communist impulse to overthrow the structure is in the enfeebling of people, so that they are incapable. The reason that we are now hearing arguments against meritocracy is that many people have been badly armed for a meritocracy. And they know that in a meritocracy, they will not succeed. Hence, the list that Hoffer gives there of all of these different categories of people who resonate with these messages. So there's

**Heather** 1:07:21

nothing in your what you're saying or what I'm saying what Hoffer saying suggests that people don't have legitimate reason to be frustrated, oh, there will always be reason to be frustrated, there will always be large numbers of people who are frustrated. And I would, I would say, as I've said many times before, here and elsewhere, that we have, in fact, uniquely right now a whole generation that is more widespread Lee legitimately frustrated due to this sort of perfect storm of helicopter parenting which rendered them unable to to face risk and to know what what risk looks like the legal drugs that have rendered them unable to read or mitigate their own moods and bodies and ubiquitous screens, that D personalize all interactions. And you know, and the list goes on. But those are sort of the, you know, the three big things that I always come back to that, you know, of course, you've got and then you add to that the, you know, the powerful who have actually rendered an economy that's almost impossible to enter huge loads of debt, inability to buy real estate, or get out from under your educational debt, which didn't really educate you anyway, of course, people are frustrated, there was no argument that we are making the people should not be frustrated. But how can you turn your frustration into something that might do good, as opposed to joining an ideology that renders you more hopeless, more helpless, more filled with rage, less capable of actually pulling yourself out of it in the future and doing some good?

**Bret** 1:08:54

I would just add to that. So a ultimately, if you don't want the attack on meritocracy to topple your functional civilization, then the answer is you have to arm people so that they're capable of competing in a meritocracy. So, I think one of the things that's missing from the discussion for me that those of us who have succeeded in a meritocracy have succeeded against fewer possible challengers than we otherwise would have. And that that so we are both successful in a context where merit matters, but had an unfair advantage in the access to it. And so the solution to this problem ultimately involves arming everybody to compete in a meritocracy, which, of course, if you're really, you know, ideologically true to your values, makes the market work better. You know, so, that is the solution. But the, what we are what we are going to see in the alternative is an attack on meritocracy by those who see it as a place where they will lose and probably accurate In most cases, and the unfortunately I don't see a solution to that problem. There's no rapid solution because people who are badly armed for meritocracy cannot be instantly armed. So they are going to engage in transfer which is going to jeopardize everything that works.

**Heather** 1:10:18

Yes. I okay. Hoffer continues, unless a man has the talents to make something of himself. Freedom is an irksome burden of what avail is freedom to choose if the self be ineffectual, we join a mass movement to escape individual responsibility. Or, in the words of the ardent young Nazi quote, to be free from freedom. It was not sheer hypocrisy, when the rank and file Nazis declared themselves not guilty of all the enormities they committed. They considered themselves cheated and maligned when made to show the responsibility for obeying orders. Had they not joined the Nazi movement in order to be free from responsibility? So hold on one more, yeah, directly related to that. People whose lives are barren and insecure seem to show a greater willingness to obey than people who are self sufficient and self confident, to the frustrated. Freedom from responsibility is more attractive than freedom from restraint. So this this goes back to some of what we were talking about last week with regard to Dreyer's book, they are eager the frustrated to barter their independence for relief from the burdens of willing deciding and being responsible for inevitable failure. They willingly abdicate the directing of their lives to those who want to plan command and shoulder all responsibility. Moreover, submission by all to a supreme leader is an approach to their ideal of equality. In times of crisis, during floods, earthquakes, epidemics, depressions and wars, separate individual effort is of no avail and people have ever conditioned already to obey and follow a leader to obey is then the only firm point in a chaotic day by day existence. So this, this begins to bring together some of the other elements of the perfect storm that again, as we have said here before, what has been happening in Portland since the end of May, and what happened in most major American cities and other major cities throughout the world, in at least for a short, much shorter period in the beginning of June, would have been very unlikely to have happened, at least in the form in which it did, absent COVID-19 absent the pandemic, with which the entire world was wrestling, that that, that the virus itself, just and made it possible for people to spill out onto the streets because they were more frustrated even than they ever had been before. And they were either feeling that they needed to obey in order to keep themselves and their countrymen safe. The things like lock downs, or they were being resistant to that, and, and feeling frustrated by what felt to them, like authoritarian measures.

**Bret** 1:13:02

Yeah, it's a, it's interesting, because obviously, there was not only the restriction on one's behavior, there was the looming economic crisis, which people who were vulnerable can detect this is going to fall very heavily on them. And the response is exactly this being freed from responsibility, right? Literally, to the point of attacking buildings, right, like hammering on these buildings, to get the federal demon to come out and you know, in front of them, right? It's it's, I mean, it's a bizarre kind of theater. But you know, yes, frustration is at the very root of this, because of course, frustration is an evolutionary adaptation designed to alert you that you're in a cul de sac, and that you need to somehow escape it, right? If you don't have opportunities, to better yourself with where you are, then you're motivated to seek somewhere else. So that results in all of this lashing about four utopian states that might just solve the problem,

**Heather** 1:14:08

right? But of course, the what we the lashing out that we see, currently on the streets of Portland and still elsewhere, is predicated on well, several lies. But at least one lie that comes to mind is the idea that they're actually anywhere close to being able to be self sufficient. And you know, we saw this with with jazz chop in in Seattle, these these are people who are so confused as to the nature of what it would mean to actually be self sufficient that they ended up getting porta potties sent in by Seattle, because they hadn't even imagined that far. They're buying food with currency, they're using their phones. They were outraged when the ambulances would not enter the space where they had violence was occurring because no one was willing to Give the the the medics, the assurance that they would actually be kept safe. This is this is the opposite of self sufficiency. This is this is children in the bodies of adults who have deep reason to be frustrated, who don't have the tools that they should have at the age that they're at, who are for some reason, being told by most of the leaders of the cities, and these states, that actually this is cool. Keep at it, guys. So that's this, this is where we actually need this is why I hate the term nanny nanny state precisely, you know, in part because it has been used. Yeah. And it is, it is used as a as a as an epithet by people on the right, largely. But, you know, everyone acknowledges that actually, part of what we're doing with government and with society is keeping sufficient order that when people are delusional, you shut it down, you tell them no, that's wrong, you're wrong at the moment. And we're going to take you over here and do whatever we need to do with you to make sure that you stop putting other people at risk. That is the role of the state.

**Bret** 1:16:13

Yes, it is the role of the state to assist, you know, and it's amazing how much of this mirrors the the role of proper parents, right, the role of the state is to place limits that are clearly understandable, and to enforce them, irrespective of who violates them. Yes. And this idea that, you know, oh, the child is having a tantrum, it must be very upset. And I'm sympathetic, the the empathy with the, the creature that is having a tantrum and putting the entire operation in jeopardy is such a low quality parent. I mean, I'm, you know,

**Heather** 1:16:54

it's terrible. And, you know, in general, parents aren't experiencing empathy in that, in that moment, they're experiencing frustration, and they're at their wit's end, and they just want to make it stop. But of course, it just moves, it moves the problem farther into the future. And in this case, allowing these society level tantrums is moving the problem not just farther into the future, but across a wider and wider swath of society. Shut the tantrum down.

**Bret** 1:17:18

It's externalizing it onto all of us. And ultimately, you can't even justify it in terms of helping people who have a right to be frustrated because they will be massively harmed by the coming apart of the structure on which there is dependent Does anyone else so you know, indulging their utopian fantasies is hurting them in the future.

**Heather** 1:17:39

Yes. Okay. So there's three more things that I really want to get through. Before we before we stop, even though we're well beyond our time here. Hoffer argues and this is this is this is near and dear to my heart, you will recognize because the idea of creativity has been one that I have been focused on since I was since I was a child, really, the idea of creativity. For instance, in science, creativity and analysis come together in the best science and many people who aren't scientists imagine that science is just about you know, just about arranging things and organizing them and then you know, seeing patterns emerge something but there is such deep creativity in many of the more of the earlier parts of the of the scientific method. And it is often seemed to me that creatives that that people who are deeply creative, which includes many scientists and engineers, are are more resilient, are more resistant to the kinds of mass movements and ideologies that they are, that they are advertising. And Hoffer has a couple of explanations for why that might be case. The case, in part is big. He says, because creativity is a cure for boredom. He says, when people are bored, it is primarily with their own selves, that they are bored. the consciousness of a barren meaningless existence is the main fountainhead of boredom. You will remember when our children were very young, I was I was clear with them that they would not they would not proclaim themselves board because that was a failure on their part in our bar. Yeah, that that is that is an insane thing to declare yourself that that should you say that out loud. That is it that is demonstrative of a failure in your own in your own head, and not to say again, that there are some people alive who actually just do not have the tools with which to cure their own boredom. And of course, that the advertisers and the consumer, the marketplace of stuff as opposed to ideas has made it really really easy to to run up against the end of your own abilities. But certainly among children, there is no excuse for letting a child declare themselves bored and and to walk in and And as an adult and sail all care that for you know, you let the kid you let the kid solve their own their own boredom. He also says poverty which is speaking about actual poverty not having enough money, poverty when coupled with creativeness is usually free of frustration. I'm not sure I agree with this but it's an interesting claim. Poverty when coupled with creativeness is usually free of frustration before I go on remember this is a guy who worked as a railroad yards and this is a Steve door no longshoremen. So it's this is not he is not speaking as a man from economic pressures to the sentence again, poverty, poverty, when coupled with creative, creativeness is usually free of frustration. This is true of the poor artisans skilled in his trade. And if the poor writer, artist and scientist and the full possession of creative powers, nothing so bolsters our self confidence and reconciles us with ourselves as the continuous ability to create, to see things grow and develop under our hand day in, day out. The decline of handicrafts in modern times is perhaps one of the causes for the rise of frustration and the increased susceptibility of the individual to mass movements. So this, this just dovetails beautifully with, with things that we have said from from many avenues, right, that those who actually can do something physical. And, you know, we have said it in terms of sport isn't inherently creative, although there is a kind of creativity in figuring out how to move your body in the world and how to interface depending on if it's a, you know, you against a mountain or you against a ball and another opponent or you know, a whole team, that there is a, it's a different kind of creativity than the finding the form in the stone, or putting the words on the page or deciphering the pattern and generating the hypothesis. Right? These are all different kinds of creativity, but what you're doing in each case is, is finding meaning through creating, I don't know what other words, you use something that did not exist before. Right? And that the ability to watch, to watch something come into existence that did not exist before that you did, cannot leave you bored. You just can't be bored if you're doing that right. And And finally, in this interest in this section, with regard to creativity, he asks, offer asks, whence come the phonetics

**Heather** 1:22:31

mostly from the ranks of the non creative men of words. The most significant division between men of words is between those who can find fulfilment in creative work, and those who cannot. The creative man of words, no matter how bitterly he may criticize and derived the existing order, is actually attached to the present. His passion is to reform and not to destroy. When the mass movement remains wholly in his keeping, he turns it into a mild affair. Sure, I agree with that, but the reforms he initiates are of the surface and life flows on without a sudden break. But such a development is possible only when the anarchic action of the masses does not come into play, either because the older advocates without a struggle or because of man towards allies himself with strong men of action, the moment chaos threatens to break loose. And he then provides basically a number of examples of what he calls non creative men of words, including people like Hitler, who he says these are people who aspired to be artists or writers and just couldn't hack it. Right? They didn't, they didn't have it in them. And their aspirations to do something that they were actually incapable of doing is part of what turned them into the despots that they were fascinate fascinating. Yeah. So I'm reminded also of one of one of my favorite books, which now I'm going to forget the name of by Crawford. Oh shockcraft as soulcraft in which here we have a, you know, a deeply smart, analytical, analytically, analytically inclined, and creative man who with a PhD in economics from the University of Chicago, who goes to work inside the beltway writing reports, the 10 people will read and that he's not sure will make any difference at all, and gives it up for for a life that he finds much more fulfilling, restoring vintage motorcycles at his own shop in Virginia, I think. And it is, you know, shop craft as soulcraft is the name of the book, it is extraordinary. And, you know, I'm not arguing that you need to be doing something, something physical in order to find your creative outlet, although I think if if you have a creative outlet, that also has some physical aspect to it, you're less likely to be fooled by it, that even those who are talented, who are truly creative, in purely in fields that have no physical ramification are, can probably more easily be turned into basically propagandists can more easily have their skill with words or art be turned into people who are doing the work of Some mass movement, as opposed to, you know, if you're if you have, if you're a craftsman. And you know, either you've built a table that is both functional and beautiful or you have not, it is harder to become a tool of the, of the ideology.

**Bret** 1:25:14

Yeah, absolutely, there is an awful lot to having succeeded in some place that allows you to know what success means rather than finding that judgment through somebody else who decides that you are successful and leaves you open to being manipulated,

**Heather** 1:25:33

exactly. Okay. Individual creatives aren't sufficient, though. So for me, I and I, I grok at a fairly deep level. And you know, this is why we were successful as professors working with individual students, how to help individuals find their own creative, analytical, productive core self, and to help make individuals resistant to things like mass movements. But But individuals resisting isn't really sufficient, because absent a unifying rhetoric, values of democracy and decency are likely to lose out to less nuanced and less democratic movements. So I have Yeah, maybe I won't, I won't read this, this longer excerpt here. But just say that, as I said, at the beginning of this discussion, that people are often willing to flip sides, that they join one and they find the the problems in it and they become, they're not immune to mass movements, right there. They're actually particularly susceptible to mass movements, and are perhaps just can become immune to the particular one that they were members of, rather than immune to mass movements in general. So what? How do we inoculate people against that? When we see people flip, move directly from one side to the other? How can we get people to pause and think is there between sides, for instance, as they're being rejected by the side to which they to which they once were tightly bound? How can they say maybe I don't belong need to belong to any maybe, maybe it's okay. For me to, to think that ideology itself is the problem. And I might do better by considering my positions and my hopes for myself and my family and my community, my nation, all of these nested sets to which I belong, from first principles rather than from received authority, right? Like how can you grab of people who might be recognizing that some movement to which they are they are grabbed, and, and pull them out into a sense of awareness. And to that, Hoffer actually says exactly as you did at the beginning of our conversation, that very often, it's one mass movement that comes in to displace another and that you end up having competing mass movements. But that can't be the only way that's not going to be stable, that's not going to create a democracy, that stable long term. And so just just to finish a little bit on leadership, he says, See, with regard to leadership, the personality of the leader is probably a crucial factor in determining the nature and duration of a mass movement. Such rare leaders as Lincoln and Gandhi not only try to curb the evil inherent in a mass movement, but are willing to put an end to the movement when its objective is more or less realized. There are, they are of the very few in whom power has developed a grander and generosity of the soul. And, finally, there are of course, rare leaders such as again, Lincoln, Gandhi, even FDR, Churchill a narrow they do not hesitate to harness man's hungers and fears to weld the following and make it zealous into death in the service of a holy cause. But unlike a Hitler, or Stalin, or even a Luther and Calvin, they are not tempted to use the slime of frustrated souls as mortar in the building of a new world. The self confidence of these rare leaders is derived from and blended with their faith in humanity, for they know that no one can be honorable unless he honors mankind and that that slime of frustrated souls which is amazing, actually turns out one of his opening quotations in the book and slime had their for mortar. I didn't know this, but that comes from Genesis that comes from the last amendment did not know that. Yeah, I didn't I didn't remember that either. Yeah.

**Bret** 1:29:54

So unfortunately, I think there's a problem buried here, which is that there is a kind of idea of how would we solve this problem? What would we do instead? And then there's a question of what do you do with the fact that you have hundreds, perhaps hundreds of millions, if we think of a larger context than just the US, of people who have been hobbled by a system that wasn't in interested in making them capable, right, right, that's not a problem, you can't just start doing things right. And that problem goes away, somehow, we have to deal with the fact we have stopped handing over the tools to be self sufficient, that would cause people to be less susceptible to this nonsense. And that, if we started doing things, right, today, it would be more than a generation before we had gotten past the consequences of what we've done badly up to this point.

**Heather** 1:30:49

Yeah. I mean, I think this also, you know, this, this is a much longer conversation. But this points to one of the real criticisms of something like UBI, actually, right, that solving the wealth inequality, it wouldn't solve the wealth inequality, addressing the vast number of people who actually struggle to know whether or not they're going to have enough money to make their rent and buy food. By simply providing money does not provide the motivation to create inherently, there are people who are active creatives, or analysts of sorts, who are absolutely kept from doing that work, by the fact that they actually simply just have to work two jobs and cannot find the peace of mind the space, the mental space, in order to do what they desperately want to do. But it would it would not address the motivational problem that the vast majority of people have, who are frustrated, in part because they were not given the tools they needed. And now it seems it might be too late.

**Bret** 1:31:57

Yeah, in fact, it you can upgrade the tools that they've got, but you can't get people you know, who you try to fix their toolkit at adulthood. The opportunity has been largely lost. And so

**Heather** 1:32:12

well, I guess I'm, I'm a little surprised to hear you say that? I think I don't know. I don't know how you do it at scale. But I feel like updating, introducing, and updating a toolkit, like an evolutionary toolkit is exactly what we were doing in the classroom for 15 years. Yeah,

**Bret** 1:32:33

upgrading, but it wasn't anything like what would have been true for those same people if they had had consistent a model for a system in which the cultivation of one's own tools results in the growth of capacities that then cause well being to emerge from the world as a result of your own input of effort and creativity and, and skill. And so, you know, I, I'm very proud of what we did. But the problem is, we are dealing with people who have been hobbled and you can improve. I mean, this is true for all of us, we are all hobbled by increasingly, forces that don't care about us and want to miss inform us about what's important and misdirect us into, you know, wasting money and time on things that we shouldn't. So, anyway, I'm not saying you can't make people's lives better. What I'm saying is a How would you, you know, you say you can't do it at scale. Okay, so we got

**Heather** 1:33:38

I don't know, I don't know how to do it at scale. And I haven't I haven't come up with an answer. I don't know that you can't,

**Bret** 1:33:45

you will do it worse at scale than you would do it. Personally. The number of people who are capable of doing it personally are very few. So we can't do it for that many, and those for whom we do it are suffering the consequences of whatever bad educational experiences, and, you know, misinformation they've gotten from advertisers trying to frustrate them into buying stuff and who, you know, we've got damaged people. And yes, we can we can improve things starting tomorrow, if we decided to do it, but the degree to which we are dealing with a damaged population, and that that will require a new generation in which we are no longer doing new damage before the problem is actually even beginning to be solved is I think, a critical issue.

**Heather** 1:34:34

It's critical, but I think this is too I think this is too hopeless. I think. I mean, this is often the case that you you take a much more pessimistic view of things than I do, in part because I don't know how to sleep with that degree of pessimism. So does that mean that I'm engaging in delusion, perhaps in order to allay the strength of mass move a mass movement That is happening on the authoritarian left that is grabbing more and more people, revealing to some who might be on the fence revealing to as many as possible of those who might be on the fence that they could be drawing, building, growing, connecting, healing, any number of things that actually brings real meaning to human existence. And that that, unlike destroying, yelling, raging, etc, is more lasting, and will make them both more anti fragile in general and more resistant to the next ideology that comes along.

**Bret** 1:35:46

I agree, I mean, it's the obvious direction to go. The question is just how quickly does it change the hazard of mass movements? And I guess we differ a little bit on that. Hopefully, you're right.

**Heather** 1:36:00

All right. So we will go for 15 minutes. But tomorrow, we have our monthly private q&a on what you can access by joining my patreon at 11am Pacific is when it starts to our q&a. We've already solicited the questions for tomorrow, but it's small enough that we are often able to watch the chat as it happens and sometimes engage with with that in real time. Starting next weekend, I guess, are the conversations that you have on your on your Patreon. Wait

**Bret** 1:36:37

that suggests we're almost done with October? Yes, it does.

**Heather** 1:36:42

And of course, you can join the discord server as as well. But if you want to ask a question in the next hour, where we will be, we will be doing just that. pose your super chat question either right now, or at the top of the next hour, and we will get through as many of them as we can. Yep.

**Bret** 1:37:03

Do check out the new podcast with Douglas Murray, that I put out a couple days ago. He was here reporting from Portland on what he sees. And I think actually, it is essential that those of you who are outside of Portland and don't really know what's been going on here, hearing somebody come from Great Britain, and look in on Portland and report on what he's seeing is really eye opening. Yeah, I recommend that

**Heather** 1:37:32

I have not listened to your conversation with him yet. But we had dinner with him and his partner the night before you did your podcast and yeah, seeing, you know, we don't share politics, but we are friends. And he is he's just such an extraordinarily gracious and brilliant man and seeing someone not from here, come in and observe and see what's going on and hearing his incisive insightful takes is extraordinary. Yeah, I'm sure your conversation was amazing.

**Bret** 1:38:04

Yes, he's, he's a great guy. And it's wonderful to have him as a friend and and wonderful that we aren't in the same political place because the discussions are definitely highly productive. Yeah. All right. We'll see you in 15 minutes. You well.