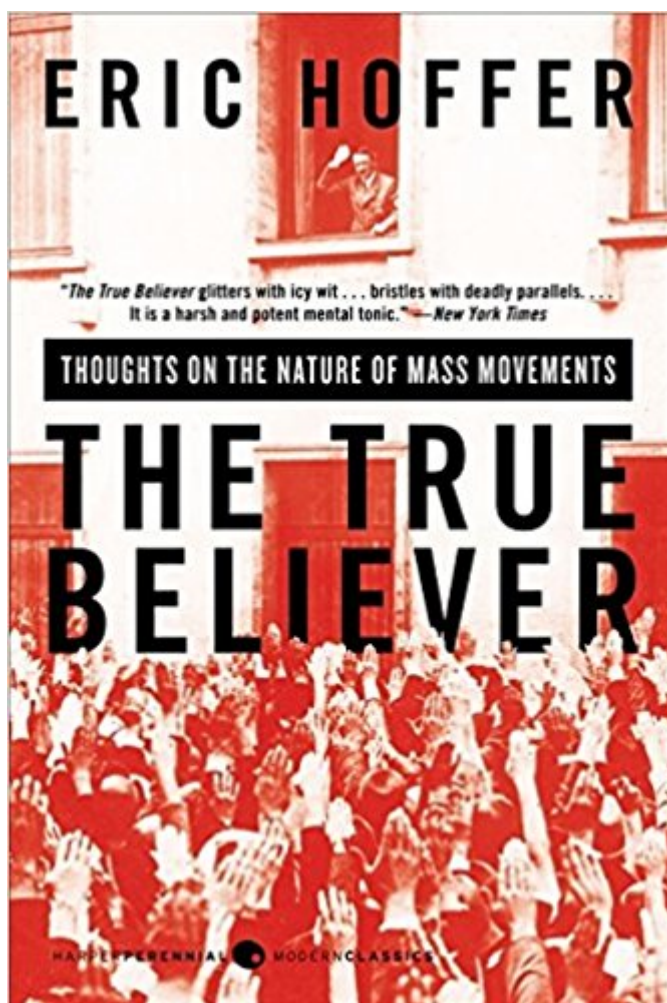


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The True Believer: Thoughts On The Nature Of Mass Movements (Perennial Classics)



Synopsis

“[Eric Hoffer] is a student of extraordinary perception and insight. The range of his reading and research is vast, amazing. [The True Believer is] one of the most provocative books of our immediate day.” •Christian Science Monitor The famous bestseller with “concise insight into what drives the mind of the fanatic and the dynamics of a mass movement” (Wall St. Journal) by Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Eric Hoffer, The True Believer is a landmark in the field of social psychology, and even more relevant today than ever before in history. Called a “brilliant and original inquiry” and “a genuine contribution to our social thought” by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The True Believer is mandatory reading for anyone interested in the machinations by which an individual becomes a fanatic.

Book Information

Series: Perennial Classics

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics (January 19, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060505915

ISBN-13: 978-0060505912

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.4 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 445 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #8,579 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Compulsive Behavior #24 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Political #25 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Violence in Society

Customer Reviews

A stevedore on the San Francisco docks in the 1940s, Eric Hoffer wrote philosophical treatises in his spare time while living in the railroad yards. The True Believer -- the first and most famous of his books -- was made into a bestseller when President Eisenhower cited it during one of the earliest television press conferences. Completely relevant and essential for understanding the world today, The True Believer is a visionary, highly provocative look into the mind of the fanatic and a penetrating study of how an individual becomes one.

Eric Hoffer (1902 -- 1983) was self-educated. He worked in restaurants, as a migrant fieldworker, and as a gold prospector. After Pearl Harbor, he worked as a longshoreman in San Francisco for twenty-five years. The author of more than ten books, including *The Passionate State of Mind*, *The Ordeal of Change*, and *The Temper of Our Time*, Eric Hoffer was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983.

This book, while somewhat dated (written while Stalin still ruled), is still frighteningly accurate and applicable to events unfolding even now. I found it difficult to read only in the sense that I did not want to believe that words written a few years before I was born could still so accurately portray the world and events that I see today.

Brilliant... I used this book back in high school in 1975 to write a paper on Sun Young Moon and the Unification Church and how cults work. This book also explains how Radical Islam has gained followers today. This is a classic work!!

An interesting subject for persons interested in viewpoints not necessarily aligned with political correctness.

If people want to understand the mentality of organizing the masses this is the book. As you read it, keep in mind the current 2016 campaign and you will see many similarities to the Nazis, Communist and Fascist. great book

Hoffer wrote this in 1951 and it is still so applicable and true. I typed up pages of excellent quotes and marked up this gem of a book. Politics and in particular the merger of religion and politics over the past 40 years has been a mess. Hoffer could have written much of his book today -- the concepts and thinking still apply.

Having gained his sight at fifteen, Eric Hoffer read and researched books on everything that makes man tick. He was a laborer and longshoreman to support himself but this self-educated man became America's iconic philosopher. Although written in 1951 "The True Believer" is a classic book on why people join and follow mass movements. Frustrated with their meaningless lives, people join a collective for the "enthusiasm for the group." Obama studied Hoffer (and Aynsksi) and used their "hope and change" theme to be the leader of a mass movement in the US. These movements work

for the future and are interchangeable. A young Nazi said he joined that group "to be free from freedom." Not to reason is a sign of all mass movements so disobedience to the cause is a much greater sin than killing or other acts. These people follow the leader not with their minds but with their emotions. Science abhors a vacuum so people with vacuous minds are the true believers that Eric Hoffer defines so well.

This is a well written book by a non-academic. Though his writing could use additional sources, his revelations were sobering. In our society we tend to believe that it is only the lowest of the low, with nothing to lose, that could seek change. Rarely is the person who has to live hand to mouth that engages in revolutionary acts but it is those with some standing in society, but wanting more. To dismiss Mr. Hoffer due to his clearly racist mindset would be akin to dismissing all of Darwin's work because he said Caucasians are the highest race of humans. Mr. Hoffer, just like Darwin, still suffered from the time he lived and wrote in. It is easy for use to look down on philosophers from the past. Remembering the history and society of their time is important to understand what helped to produce their work. In many movements that we have seen in the recent history we see similar threads to those discussed in this book. There must be a cadre of "true believer" these are necessary because there will be setbacks before the movement gains steam. During this time only those fully committed to the cause will stick it out. This is a great book for understanding how and why movements form. Thought it is older and will reference Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia more that modern readers will likely appreciate.

Eric Hoffer prefaces this book by noting that it contains his thoughts, not proven theories, on mass movements. After reading the book and seeing the many similarities he describes on the nazi movement, fascism, the catholic church, mormons, the American and French revolutions, I realized he may be on to something. I am sure many will be upset to see that the nazis and catholics have a lot more in common then they do differences. Thats not meant to offend, just to point out that both groups use very similar recruiting processes to grow the flock. Knowing how a person thinks and what motivates them is a great way to get them to join your team. His thoughts on the factors promoting self-sacrifice and the identification with the collective whole has hit the bullseye in my opinion. I have never really understood kamikazes, or more recently suicide bombers, but now I have a clearer picture into their thought process. If you wipe out the identity of the individual and get them to identify with the group, it makes it easier to get them give up their lives for the good of the group. Pretty powerful stuff.

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