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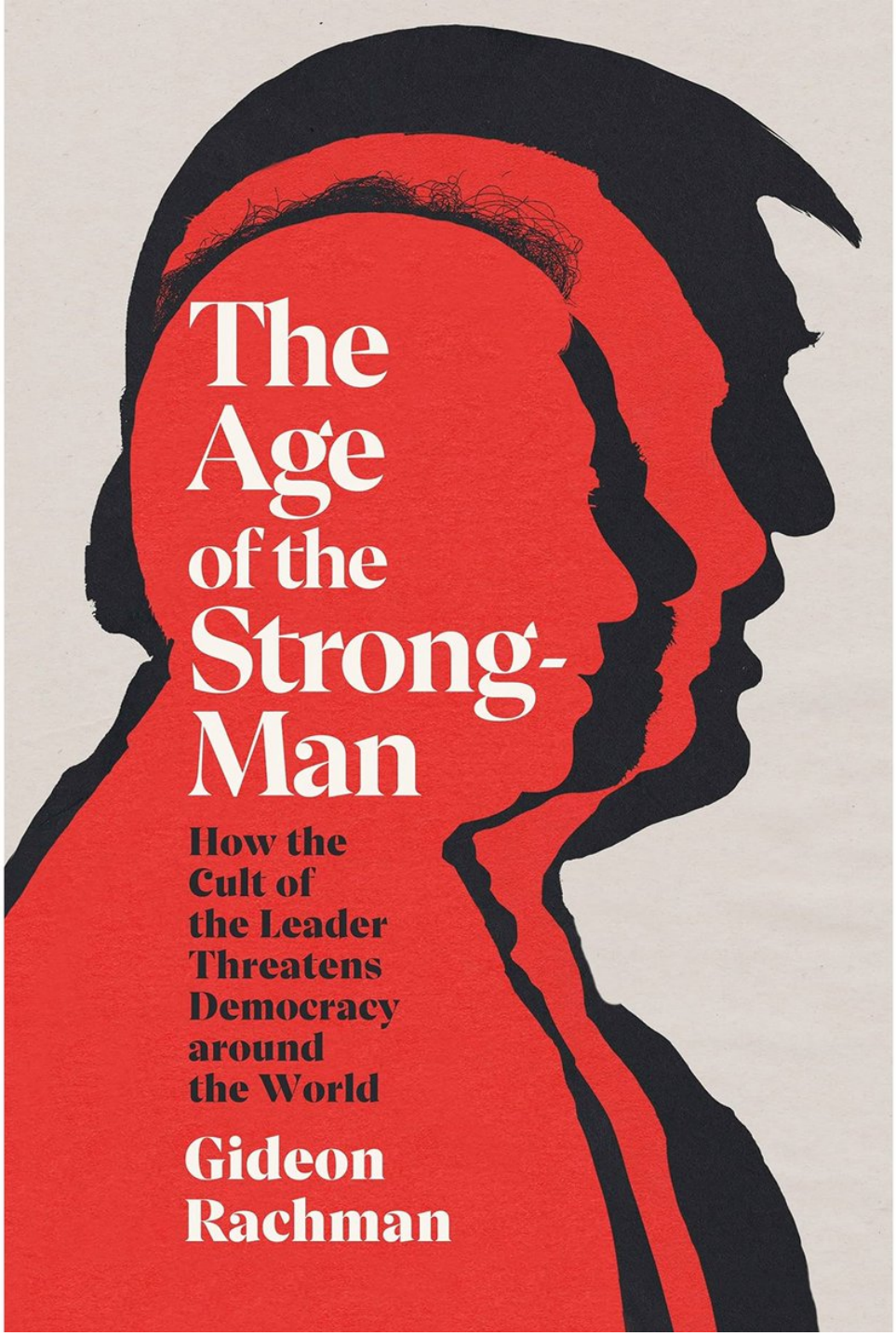

Populism [redacted] Disinformation [redacted] psychological manipulation [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Cult[redacted] Us[redacted] them[redacted]

Promoting an “us” against “them” mentality in this way means that should cult members disagree with any of the actions or mantras of their group, they are unlikely to voice them for fear of alienation. Over time, suppressing these emotions leads to the stubborn irrationality many therapists experience among cult members, as well as their trauma. But how?

[redacted] brand [redacted] :[redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] horizontal connection [redacted] :[redacted]

The brain is usually considered to be in two parts: the right side typically being more responsible for emotions, with the left being more logical and thus where language is processed. Integration between the two (horizontal integration) is key for putting feelings into words to both reduce their emotional charge and communicate them to others. The lack of outlet for emotion in this way often allows it to spiral into trauma as the emotional-logical connection in the brain becomes rusty and emotions circulate in the brain unchecked (Collins: 1982).

[redacted] emotions-logic [redacted] rusty [redacted] :[redacted]

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[redacted] vertically [redacted] vertically [redacted] PTI[redacted] cult [redacted] :[redacted]

> The brain is also integrated vertically- from top to bottom and vice versa. How well this integration happens decides how well we can process thoughts, reasoning, judgements and perceptions as well as how integrated our feelings, emotions and instincts are with each other. Without proper exercising of this vertical connection, people are either cut off from their feelings or unable to think clearly and make rational decisions, thus making them both highly suggestable and emotionally vulnerable (Whitsett: 2014).

[redacted] extreme thinking [redacted] cult [redacted] horizontal [redacted] vertical [redacted]:[redacted]

As cults tend to discourage and severely punish those who question their leaders or practices, they tend to prevent both vertical and horizontal integration from happening. This means that negative emotions are more likely to get stuck (eventually surfacing as trauma), while critical thinking and reasoning are suppressed. Mentally incapacitating their members in this way allows a strict following mentality to flourish as suppressing emotional processing and critical thinking not only keeps them vulnerable, but also unquestioning of their leader.

To conclude, cultic behaviors and rituals can have devastating effects on the brain and people's lives. Often taking advantage of vulnerable people in search of comfort and identity, they disable critical thinking processes and freeze emotional processing to both gain and maintain control over their members. This makes their members not only less logical, but also prone to trauma, as they often feel robbed of an outlet for emotional discomfort distress.

[redacted] cult[redacted]

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[redacted] PTI [redacted] :[redacted]

[redacted] Denial[redacted] psychological mechanism[redacted] cult [redacted] :[redacted]

> Denial is a straightforward and primitive psychological mechanism. It is a refusal to acknowledge uncomfortable evidence that contradicts one's beliefs and attitudes, especially those aligned with personal identity or ambition. "The

[redacted] cognitive dissonance [redacted] :[redacted]

> Cognitive dissonance, on the other hand, doesn't totally deny disconfirming evidence. It merely bends the evidence to feel more psychologically palatable. "I was never totally convinced the election was

[redacted]
:[redacted]

Cognitive dissonance [redacted] 1954[redacted] 21[redacted] :[redacted]

Cognitive dissonance was first identified when researcher Leon Festinger studied a group that believed the Earth would be destroyed by a flood on December 21, 1954. The believers would be rescued by an alien spaceship.

On the designated date, the group excitedly waited for the midnight arrival of the craft and their departure. When it did not arrive, they were led to believe that there had been an error in communication and another date was announced. Ultimately, after predictions of the world's flood did not materialize on repeated dates, the most committed concluded that the earth was not flooded because of the faithfulness of the group – denial. The less totally committed adjusted their thinking, concluding that there was a miscommunication from the leader – cognitive dissonance.

[redacted] communication[redacted] cognitive dissonance [redacted] PTI[redacted] cognitive dissonance [redacted]:[redacted]

[redacted]

> In doing so, the believers either denied or bent reality while maintaining their own dignity. They also avoided the mental possibility that they were bamboozled.

[redacted]