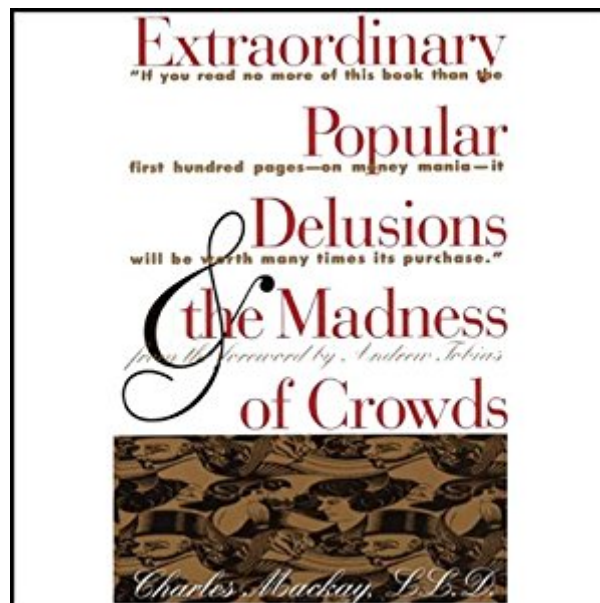




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Extraordinary Popular Delusions And The Madness Of Crowds And Confusion



Synopsis

Charles Mackay covers many types of delusions, among them financial manias like the South Sea Company bubble of 1711-1720, the Mississippi Company bubble of 1719-1720, and the Dutch tulip mania of the early 17th century. According to Mackay, during this bubble, speculators from all walks of life bought and sold tulip bulbs and even futures contracts on them. Allegedly some tulip bulb varieties briefly became the most expensive objects in the world during 1637. Mackay's accounts are enlivened by colorful, comedic anecdotes, such as the Parisian hunchback who supposedly profited by renting out his hump as a writing desk during the height of the mania surrounding the Mississippi Company. Financier Bernard Baruch credited the lessons he learned from Mackay with his decision to sell all his stock ahead of the financial crash of 1929. Other chapters are devoted to Alchemists, scientists and pseudo scientists who attempted to turn base metals into gold. Mackay notes that many of these practitioners were themselves deluded, convinced that these feats could be performed if they discovered the correct old recipe or stumbled upon the right combination of ingredients. There are also extensive treatments on the Crusades, Witch Mania and Trials and other forms of mass delusion. --This text refers to the Digital edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 7 hours 50 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: April 7, 2010

Language: English

ASIN: B003FX6IJQ

Best Sellers Rank: #56 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Business & Investing > Economics
#76 in Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Marketing > Multilevel #146
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Customer Reviews

A. Popular Delusions is a truly great book. B. But be careful which of the many offerings you buy. First off, many of the editions in are partial reprints of the original 1841 edition. Anything with 200 or so pages is badly incomplete. The book you want must have all 16 chapters. Second, most of the print editions, especially those claiming about 400-odd pages, are complete, but have type so

small as to severely limit your reading pleasure. You must understand there is no copyright protection for the original English author so anyone can rip it off, and to make the most money many of these "artists" try to print as few literal pages as possible. The two editions I have bought (in 1967 at a bookstore and 2003 on), both published in London, have about 700 pages, including the dozen or so original hand illustrations. This is the print edition you want. Third, to solve the type-size problem, acquiring a Kindle edition can be a good answer. It can also be priced as cheaply as 99 cents or even 0. But beware of what it contains as well. When I clicked on the Kindle version of a complete 16-chapter print version (the one on which I am writing this review) it turned out that the free Kindle version was shorted to just a few chapters, which I was able to discover only after I downloaded it. Fourth, the completely independent book, Gustave Le Bon's "The Crowd", originally published in 1895 is equally worth reading. You'll love both books; make sure you actually enjoy them and get the whole things, as well.

Classic text and very relevant today in light of the recent financial crisis. If you buy the CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; Reprint edition (October 22, 2013), beware that it has no pagination, making it impossible to cite to for academic work. I also note other reviews that comment on abridged editions by other publishers. So, beware. But the text is both priceless and timeless.

Amazing how much of what's in this book still apply to today's world. The reason why this work still resonates (I believe) is because it speaks to human nature that seems pretty immutable over the centuries we've been around. Some may be put off by the old-world writing style. I wish someone in Hollywood would make a movie out of any of the stories told.

A timeless collection of historic events represented in the context of human error, misconception, and delusion. The events portrayed in this collection are as pertinent now as when they originally occurred. Seriously, you will not find a better compendium of human failures and folly, all related in the context of popular myth, incredulity, and delusion. The tales told in this volume aren't really any different than those surrounding events in our own time. Think of the fallacy of the Crusades, then think of the horrors of modern Jihadism and radical Muslim extremism, I think you can grasp the parallels. Think the Dutch Tulip Bulb Craze was wacko...bought any BitCoins lately? The simple fact of delusional actions impacting the masses has never been far from the headlines. This book helps bring that fact into sharper focus.

The Tulip Mania and South Sea Bubble are frequently mentioned on the financial media and in many popular films. I wanted to read more about these and this book filled the bill on that. I also particularly enjoyed reading about the Witch Mania and also about the "Slow Poisoners." The print of the book is great. The wording from the 1800's is a bit different so it takes a little effort to read it. I could do without the poetry sprinkled in, but I suspect it was more popular when the book was written. It's interesting to speculate about what could be added to an updated version--Pet Rocks, the Dot.com bubble, the recent real estate bubble, the re-election of many worthless politicians, etc. One thing is sure--human nature doesn't change. Contrary to what young people say, that makes history always relevant.

This is a favorite book of mine! Just extraordinary how stupid and gullible people can be en masse. I love all the stories. Even though these stories took place over a century ago, they're still relevant today, as stuff like this keeps happening all the time!

This book is interesting on at least two levels. Firstly, it demonstrates the myriad paths by which humankind--western civilization--goes round in circles of madness and delusion. Secondly, it was first published in 1841 and the English language used during that time is much different than that in use today. Additionally, the author, Charles MacKay was a Scottish journalist and this is reflected not only in the precision of the English used to write the book, it also is British English of that era. This makes reading even more interesting. There are times a word is used that is today taken to mean something entirely different from its meaning during the era when this book was written. The book has gathered a body of academic support as a work of considerable importance in the history of social psychology and psychopathology. The topics MacKay covers include economic bubbles, alchemy, crusades, witch-hunts, prophecies, fortune-telling, magnetisers (influence of imagination in curing disease), shape of hair and beard (influence of politics and religion on), murder through poisoning, haunted houses, popular follies of great cities, popular admiration of great thieves, duels, and relics. A bit too much time is spent on Alchemy in my opinion and I skipped over the last of this segment. Of humorous interest is the Tulip Bubble that took place in Holland and nearly ruined that economy when it burst. It did, at minimum, dash many fortunes and mirrors almost exactly what took place here in the United States when the housing bubble brought down banks, insurance companies, Wall Street firms and virtually wiped out the middle class in 2008. The book is a worthy read, albeit a bit chewy. Should you be the sort to follow politics and movements in the United

States this book will likely hold your interest and be an enjoyable read.

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