

# THE MONSTERS WE ALL HELPED CREATE

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While digital tools are indeed democratising, they have also cultivated darker aspects of human nature: Self-righteousness, narcissism, cruelty, ignorance. Hyper-individualism has gone viral, now that we are freed from the restraints of traditional authority. Online - and increasingly, offline - we can do whatever we want, say anything we want, largely without consequence or retribution.

Yet both collectively and individually, we feel ill at ease. We're losing empathy, magnanimity: Our ability to connect with others, and to work together. We prioritise ourselves over others, and we omit things which don't sit comfortably with our worldview and our needs. Lash out, delete, block, swipe right, troll, dox, swat, ghost; we do not need to suffer the consequences of our actions.

Somehow we feel more empowered, but also more vulnerable, confused, scared. People are feeling cynical, and many are tiring of the modern world. Our self-esteem and mental health are plummeting as we increasingly interface with the world through screens which present an airbrushed, stylised simulation of real life. We celebrate facile extroversion and performance, over serious concern and rumination. Don't think about things too much, we say.

Our political leaders are projections of this narrative, larger-than-life manifestations of Western values and thinking. Although liberals are appalled by people such as Johnson and Trump, these leaders are symptomatic of our time: archetypes of the self-serving, hyper-individualistic digital age, of superficial celebrity culture and infotainment, and of image over substance.

Trump and Johnson are the perfect symbols of our contemporary narrative of entitlement, self-aggrandisement and self above all others. 'Do whatever you want and b\*\*locks to everyone else' is our modern mantra: Individualism unleashed from traditional societal structures; the Id and the identity of the internet age; the dark shadow of our 'democratising' technologies.