

# Television: Opiate of the Masses

Posted By: Wes Moore JAN 18, 2010

***[A classic article by Wes Moore, originally published here at disinformation® on May, 5, 2001]***

T.V.

It satellite links

Our United States of Unconsciousness

Apathetic therapeutic and extremely addictive

The methadone metronome pumping out

150 channels 24 hours a day

You can flip through all of them

And still there's nothing worth watching

— *Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy*, *Television, Drug of a Nation*

Momma's gonna make all of your nightmares come true

Momma's gonna put all of her fears into you

Momma's gonna keep you right here under her wing

She won't let you fly but she might let you sing

Momma's gonna keep baby cozy and warm.

— *Pink Floyd*, *Mother*

The nearest analogy to the addictive power of television and the transformation of values that is wrought in the life of the heavy user is probably heroin.

— *Terence McKenna*, *Food of the Gods*

There's a tumor in the TV mouth

Burn it out before it grows.

— *Marilyn Manson*, *Little Horn*

Alright junkies, I know you don't like staring at long strands of motionless text, and I know it's a struggle for you to analyze and comprehend the meaning of complex sequences of words. But if you give me just a few minutes, I will let you

in on a little secret that marketers and governments have been relying on for decades. That television you watch every day, your secret best friend, is an addictive opiate, and not only that, it's one of the most potent mind control devices ever produced. And I'm not just basing this on intuition. I have the neurological evidence to prove it.

Although the definitions are vague and somewhat misleading, the word "addiction" usually refers to a psychological or physical dependence on a particular experience that must be repeated in order for a person to be comfortable. Usually, we think about this in terms of chemical addiction, which occurs when the addict's chemical of choice reorganizes the nervous system so that it requires the presence of that chemical to operate smoothly.

Of course, not all addictions are chemical. Any behavior that leads to a pleasurable experience will be repeated, especially if that behavior requires little work. Psychologists call this pattern "positive reinforcement". This is what we mean, technically speaking, by addiction. In this sense, television certainly fits into the category of an addictive agent.

When you watch TV, brain activity switches from the left to the right hemisphere. In fact, experiments conducted by researcher Herbert Krugman showed that while viewers are watching television, the right hemisphere is twice as active as the left, a neurological anomaly. The crossover from left to right releases a surge of the body's natural opiates: endorphins, which include beta-endorphins and enkephalins. Endorphins are structurally identical to opium and its derivatives (morphine, codeine, heroin, etc.). Activities that release endorphins (also called opioid peptides) are usually habit-forming (we rarely call them addictive). These include cracking knuckles, strenuous exercise, and orgasm. External opiates act on the same receptor sites (opioid receptors) as endorphins, so there is little difference between the two.

In fact, strenuous exercise, which produces the nominal "runner's high"- a release of endorphins that flood the system, can be highly addictive, to the point where "addicts" who abruptly stop exercising experience opiate-withdrawal symptoms, namely migraine headaches. These migraines are caused by a dysfunction in opioid receptors, which are accustomed to the steady influx of endorphins.

Indeed, even casual television viewers experience such opiate-withdrawal symptoms if they stop watching TV for a prolonged period of time. An article from

South Africa's Eastern Province Herald (October 1975) described two experiments in which people from various socio-economic milieus were asked to stop watching television. In one experiment, several families volunteered to turn off their TV's for just one month. The poorest family gave in after one week, and the others suffered from depression, saying they felt as though they had "lost a friend." In the other experiment, 182 West Germans agreed to kick their television viewing habit for a year, with the added bonus of payment. None could resist the urge longer than six months, and over time all of the participants showed the symptoms of opiate-withdrawal: increased anxiety, frustration, and depression.

The signs of addiction are all around us. The average American watches over four hours of television every day, and 49% of those continue to watch despite admitting to doing it excessively. These are the classic indicators of an addict in denial: addicts know they're doing harm to themselves, but continue to use the drug regardless.

Recent studies on laboratory rats show that opioid-receptor stimulants induce addictive behaviors. The evidence is conclusive: all opioids are addictive! Even the ones your body produces naturally. The television set works as a high-tech drug delivery system, and we all feel its effects. The question is, can an addiction to television be destructive? The answer we receive from modern science is a resounding "Yes!"

First of all, when you're watching television the higher brain regions (like the midbrain and the neo-cortex) are shut down, and most activity shifts to the lower brain regions (like the limbic system). The neurological processes that take place in these regions cannot accurately be called "cognitive." The lower or reptile brain simply stands poised to react to the environment using deeply embedded "fight or flight" response programs. Moreover, these lower brain regions cannot distinguish reality from fabricated images (a job performed by the neo-cortex), so they react to television content as though it were real, releasing appropriate hormones and so on. Studies have proven that, in the long run, too much activity in the lower brain leads to atrophy in the higher brain regions.

It is interesting to note that the lower/reptile/limbic brain correlates to the bio-survival circuit of the Leary /Wilson 8 Circuit Model of Consciousness. This is our primal circuit, the base "presence" that we normally associate with consciousness.

This is the circuit where we receive our first neurological imprint (the oral imprint), which conditions us to advance toward anything warm, pleasurable and/or protective in the environment. The bio-survival circuit is our most infantile, our most primal way of dealing with reality.

A person obsessed with the pursuit of physical pleasure is probably fixated on this circuit; in fact the Freudians believed an opium addiction was an attempt to return to the womb. We could logically deduce that such addictions occur when higher brain functions are anesthetized and the newly dominant lower brain seeks out pleasure at any cost. Taking this into account, television is like a double edged sword: not only does it cause the endocrine system to release the body's natural opiates (endorphins), but it also concentrates neurological activity in the lower brain regions where we are motivated by nothing but the pursuit of pleasure. Television produces highly functional, mobile "bio-survival robots."

Herbert Krugman's research proved that watching television numbs the left brain and leaves the right brain to perform all cognitive duties. This has some harrowing implications for the effects of television on brain development and health. For one, the left hemisphere is the critical region for organizing, analyzing, and judging incoming data. The right brain treats incoming data uncritically, and it does not decode or divide information into its component parts.

The right brain processes information in wholes, leading to emotional rather than intelligent responses. We cannot rationally attend to the content presented on television because that part of our brain is not in operation. It is therefore unsurprising that people rarely comprehend what they see on television, as was shown by a study conducted by researcher Jacob Jacoby. Jacoby found that, out of 2,700 people tested, 90% misunderstood what they watched on television only minutes before. As yet there is no explanation as to why we switch to the right brain while viewing television, but we do know this phenomenon is immune to content.

For a brain to comprehend and communicate complex meaning, it must be in a state of "chaotic disequilibrium." This means that there must be a dynamic flow of communication between all of the regions of the brain, which facilitates the comprehension of higher levels of order (breaking conceptual thresholds), and leads to the formation of complex ideas. High levels of chaotic brain activity are

present during challenging tasks like reading, writing, and working mathematical equations in your head. They are not present while watching TV.

Levels of brain activity are measured by an electroencephalograph (EEG) machine. While watching television, the brain appears to slow to a halt, registering low alpha wave readings on the EEG. This is caused by the radiant light produced by cathode ray technology within the television set. Even if you're reading text on a television screen the brain registers low levels of activity. Once again, regardless of the content being presented, television essentially turns off your nervous system.

In addition to its devastating neurological effects, television can be harmful to your sense of self-worth, your perception of your environment, and your physical health. Recent surveys have shown that 75% of American women think they are overweight, likely the result of watching chronically thin actresses and models four hours a day.

Television has also spawned a "culture of fear" in the U.S. and beyond, with its focus on the limbic brain-friendly sensationalism of violent programming. Studies have shown that people of all generations greatly overestimate the threat of violence in real life. This is no shock because their brains cannot discern reality from fiction while watching TV.

Television is bad for your body as well. Obesity, sleep deprivation, and stunted sensory development are all common among television addicts.

So I hope we've firmly established that television is an addictive drug, one that is no better than opium, heroin, or any other opiate. Television is just as (and possibly even more) harmful to the body-brain as every other drug. But there's one big difference. All other drugs apparently pose a threat to the established social order. Television, however, is a drug that is actually essential to maintaining the social infrastructure. Why? Because it brainwashes consumers to throw money at the gaping void of their meaningless, terror-filled lives. And by brainwashed, I mean they've been hypnotized using very subtle and established techniques which, when coupled with television's natural effects on brain waves, make for the most ambitious psychological engineering ruse ever concocted.

Psychophysicologist Thomas Mulholland found that after just 30 seconds of watching television the brain begins to produce alpha waves, which indicates torpid

(almost comatose) rates of activity. Alpha brain waves are associated with unfocused, overly receptive states of consciousness. A high frequency alpha waves does not occur normally when the eyes are open. In fact, Mulholland's research implies that watching television is neurologically analogous to staring at a blank wall.

I should note that the goal of hypnotists is to induce slow brain wave states. Alpha waves are present during the "light hypnotic" state used by hypno-therapists for suggestion therapy.

When Mulholland's research was published it greatly impacted the television industry, at least in the marketing and advertising sector. Realizing viewers automatically enter a trance state while watching television, marketers began designing commercials that produce unconscious emotional states or moods within the viewer. The aim of commercials is not to appeal to the rational or conscious mind (which usually dismisses advertisements) but rather to implant moods that the consumer will associate with the product when it is encountered in real life. When we see product displays at a store, for instance, those positive emotions are triggered . Endorsements from beloved athletes and other celebrities evoke the same associations. If you've ever doubted the power of television advertising, bear this in mind: commercials work better if you're not paying attention to them!

An addictive mind control device . . . what more could a government or profit-driven corporation ask for? But the really sad thing about television is that it turns everyone into a zombie, no one is immune. There is no higher order of super-intelligent, nefarious beings behind this. It's the product of our very human desire to alter our state of consciousness and escape the hardships of reality .

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We're living in a Brave New World , only it's not so brave, or even that new. In fact, it's starting to look more and more like the Dark Ages, with the preliterate zombie masses obeying the authority of the new clergy: Regis Philbin and Jerry Springer .

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Wes Moore

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**AdaM Ra** · 7 years ago

"God is in the TV" Rock is Dead by Marilyn Manson. Has anyone noticed how today when one questions the TV they are treated the same way a person would have been treated 60+ years ago when questioning God. TV is a religion and I think its about time that someone declair that TV is Dead. Every house has its shrine and we become more mechanical as the TV becomes more real. War On TV

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**Swine** · 4 years ago

I still have a tv, but not any Channels. Just Internet and books. I'm a more avid reader, however I still love the Internet and YouTube for unbiased information. Question is "Does surfing the net have the same effect on the brain even if you are using it to educate one self?"

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**Tanja** · 7 years ago

I have been without television for two years soon and I dont regret the choise I made. Now I can hardly watch anything on tv its all commercials and reality I Hah I Throw the box out and

tv, its all commercials and reality ! Ugh ! Throw the box out and do something else :)

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**mowglycdb** · 7 years ago

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**musicARTstar** · 7 years ago

wow ~ and i only dropped in to say that the title says it all.. now i'll have to return for a closer read.

I once wrote a sarcastic little ditty called " TV Groupie".. The chorus went like this..

i'm a tv groupie - i hang on every word  
a tv groupie - i'm really such a turd  
and if they dropped the bomb today - i don't really care  
as long as the next episode of Dallas comes to air!

(heh heh) it was never published but it seems to fit well here :)

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**kingnormie** · 7 years ago

And, What, Pray tell, be this "Television", some New Phenomena, New Technology. fer to warp my Minimal Brain? Soundin' a mite Dangerous to me! Thinkin' I might jest Pass !

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**Joe B** · 7 years ago



Listen to Frank Zappa's "I'm the Slime" for another version of the idea. I try to watch as little TV as possible but once it is on in the room it is very difficult to avoid watching. I resort to sitting with my back turned to it sometimes but I am considered anti-social for this. For me watching TV is the anti-social act.

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**honu** · 7 years ago

I still have that Disposable Heroes disc from when it came out years ago. Am I dating myself?

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**Jonas** · 7 years ago

I want 42 channels of American Gladiator

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**tygertyger** · 7 years ago

A gramme is better then a damn...

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**Jonas** · 7 years ago

For those of you without hope, we have rooms with color TV, cable and air conditioning. Fnord

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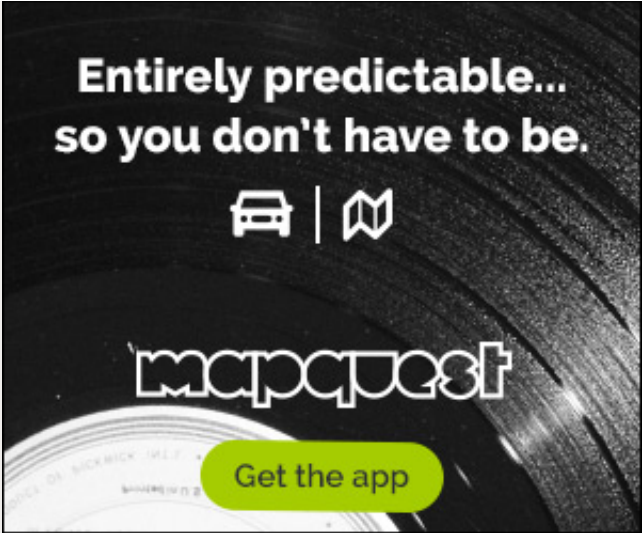
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