

# THE HISTORY OF TELEVISION



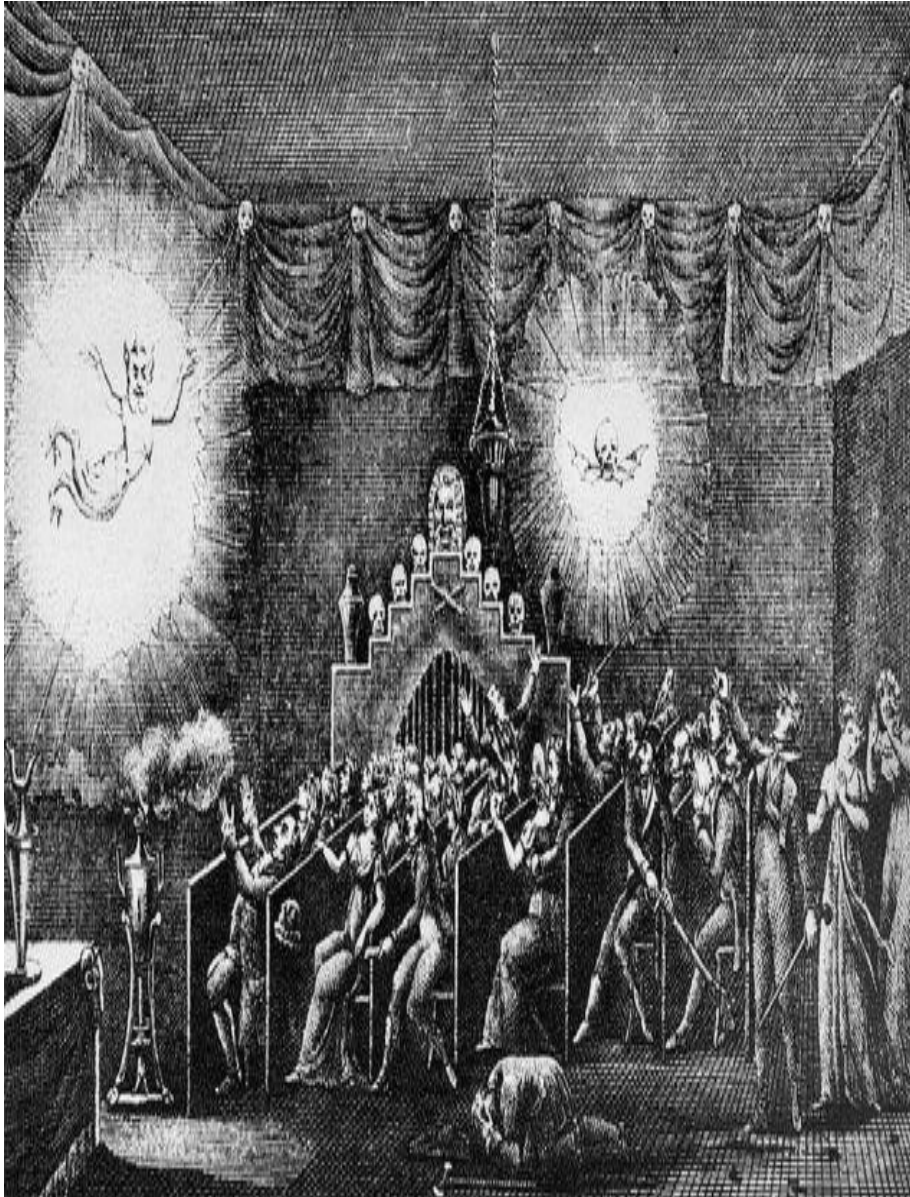
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## Ghostly Apparitions: German Idealism, the Gothic Novel, and Optical Media

Andriopoulos's book puts the TV into a long line of other "optical media" that go back at least as far as weird Renaissance experiments involving technologically-induced illusions, such as concave mirrors, magic lanterns, disorienting walls of smoke, and other "ghostly apparitions" and "phantasmagoric projections" created by speciality devices. These were conjuring tricks, sure, but they relied on sophisticated understandings of such basic things as light, shadow, and acoustics, making an audience see—and believe in—an illusion.

### **A Magic Lantern for Seeing Events at a Distance**

What's central to Andriopoulos's argument is that these devices included instruments specifically designed for pursuing supernatural research—for visualizing the invisible and showing the subtle forces at work in everyday life. In his words, these were "devices developed in occult research"—including "television-like devices"—invented in the name of spiritualism toward the end of the 19th century that later "played a constitutive role in the emergence of radio and television."



*From Etienne-Gaspard Robertson's 1834 study of technical phantasmagoria, via [Ghostly Apparitions](#).*

This was, in the author's words, part of "the reciprocal interaction between occultism and the natural sciences that characterized the cultural construction of new technological media in the late nineteenth century," a "two-directional exchange between occultism and technology."

So, while the television itself—the living room object you and I most likely know—might not be a supernatural mechanism, it nonetheless descends from a strange and convoluted line of esoteric experimentation, including early attempts at controlling electromagnetic transmissions, radio waves, and even experiencing various forms of so-called "remote viewing."



The idea of a *medium* takes on a double meaning here, Andriopoulos explains, as it refers both to the *media*—in the sense of a professional world of publishing and transmission—and to the *medium*, in the sense of a person who acts as a psychic or seer.

Indeed, in Andriopoulos's version of television's origin story, the notion of spiritual clairvoyance was very much part of the overall intention of the device.

*Image: British scientist, science fiction novelist, Principal of the British Institute of Technology and President of the British Interplanetary Society Archibald M. Low demonstrates a TV system which he developed in London. (Photo & caption by Fox Photos/Getty Images)*





Clairvoyance—a word that literally means *clear vision*, but that has now come to refer almost exclusively to the supernatural ability to see things at a distance or before they even happen—offered an easy metaphor for this new mechanism. Television promised *clairvoyance* in the sense that a TV could allow seeing without interference or noise. It would give viewers a way to tune into and clearly see a broadcast's invisible signals—as if a remote-viewing apparatus with forgotten supernatural intentions is now ensconced in nearly everyone's home.

I'll leave it to curious readers to look for [Andriopoulos's book itself](#)—with the caveat that it is quite heavy on German idealism and rather light on real tech history—but it is worth mentioning the fact that at least one other technical aspect of the 20th-century television also followed a very bizarre historical trajectory.

*Image: A "moving face" transmitted by John Logie Baird at a public demonstration of TV in 1926. (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images)*

## **Part Tomb, Part Church, Part Planetarium**

The cathode ray—a vacuum tube technology found in early televisions sets—found an unexpected and extraordinary use in the work of gonzo [Norwegian inventor Kristian Birkeland](#).

### **The Northern Lights**

Birkeland used cathode rays in his attempt to build a doomed scale model of the solar system. [I WILL CHALLENGE THE READER TO STUDY THE DANGERS OF CATHODE RAY USED IN TV WHICH IS DIFFERENT WITH LIGHT EMITTING DIODE LDE USED IN LAPTOPS, PHONES AND PROJECTORS]. The electro-waves, electromagnets, infrared, heat variations in these equipment as air pollutions should be considered before purchasing what you are purchasing. Arguments without researches that would influence people to wrong decisions should be guarded by our leading brethren because people are looking unto them so much instead of looking unto Jesus.

Birkeland was the first scientist to correctly hypothesize the origins of the Northern Lights, rightly deducing from his own research of electromagnetic phenomena that the aurora borealis was caused by interactions between charged particles from the sun and the earth's own magnetic field. This produced the extraordinary displays of light Birkeland had seen in the planet's far north.

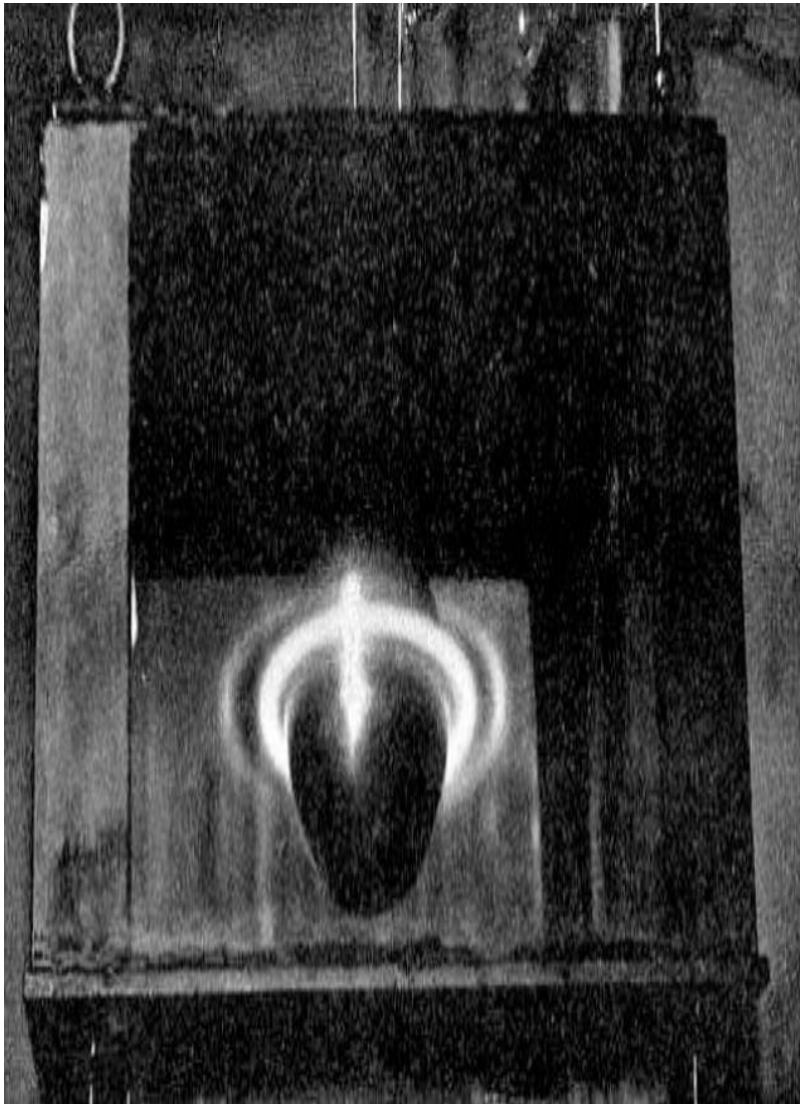


However, as Birkeland fell deeper into an eventually fatal addiction to extreme levels of caffeine and a slow-acting hypnotic drug called Veronal, he became fixated on the weirdly impossible goal of exactly modeling the Northern Lights in miniature.

As author Lucy Jago tells Birkeland's amazing story in her book [The Northern Lights](#), he was intent on producing a kind of astronomical television set: a "television-like device," in Andriopoulos's words, whose inner technical workings would model the electromagnetic secrets of the universe.

As Jago describes his project, Birkeland "drew up plans for a new machine unlike anything that had been made before." It resembled "a spacious aquarium," she writes, a shining box that would act as "a window into space."

*Kristian Birkeland stares deeply into his universal simulator ([via](#)).*



The box would be pumped out to create a vacuum and he would use larger globes and a more powerful cathode to produce charged particles. With so much more room he would be able to see effects, obscured in the smaller tubes, that could take his Northern Lights theory one step further—into a complete cosmogony, a theory of the origins of the universe.

It was a multifaceted and extraordinary undertaking. With it, Jago points out, "Birkeland was able to simulate Saturn's rings, comet tails, and the Zodiacal Light. He even experimented with space propulsion using cathode rays. Sophisticated photographs were taken of each simulation, to be included in the next volume of Birkeland's great work, which would discern the electromagnetic nature of the universe and his theories about the formation of the solar system."

*From Birkeland's The Norwegian Aurora Polaris Expedition 1902-1903, Vol. 1: On the Cause of Magnetic Storms and The Origin of Terrestrial Magnetism ([via](#)).*



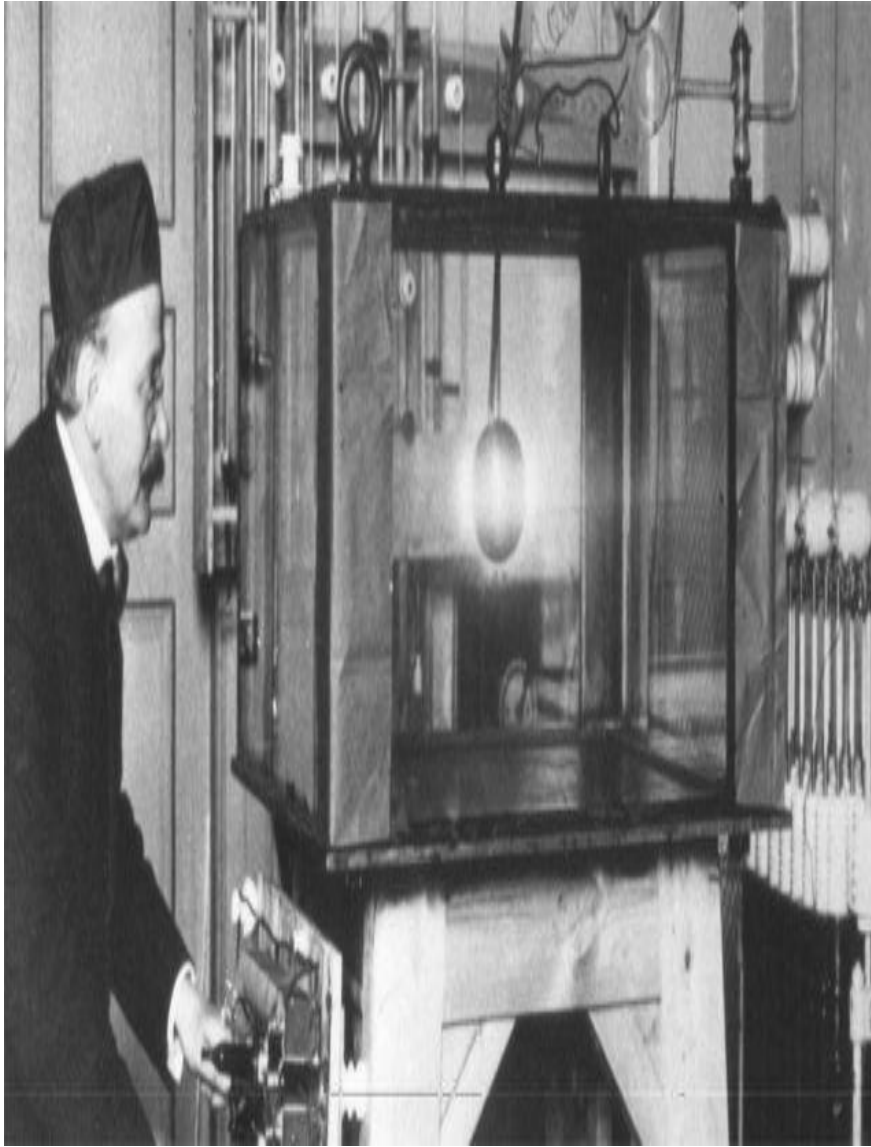
However, this "spacious aquarium" was by no means the end of Birkeland's manic (tele)vision.

His ultimate goal—devised while near-death in a hotel room in Egypt—was to construct a vacuum chamber partially excavated into the solid rock of a mountain peak, an insane mixture of tomb, church, and planetarium.

The resulting cathedral-like space—think of it as an immersive, landscape-scale television set carved directly into bedrock—would thus be an artificial cavern inside of which flickering electric mirages of stars, planets, comets, and aurorae would spiral and glow for a hypnotized audience.

Birkeland wrote about this astonishing plan in a letter to a friend. He was clearly excited about what he called a "great idea I have had." It would be—and the emphasis is all his—"a museum for the discovery of *the Earth's magnetism, magnetic storms, the nature of sunspots, of planets—their nature and creation.*"

His description is worth quoting at length; you can almost feel the caffeine. "On a little hill," he scribbled, presumably on hotel stationery, perhaps even with a little image of the pyramids embossed in the letterhead, reminding him of the ambitions of pharaohs, "I will build a dome of granite, the walls will be a meter thick, the floor will be formed of the mountain itself and the top of the dome, fourteen meters in diameter, will be a gilded copper sphere. Can you guess what the dome will cover? When I'm boasting I say to my friends here 'next to God, I have the greatest vacuum chamber in the world.' I will make a vacuum chamber of 1,000 cubic metres and, every Sunday, people will have the opportunity to see a ring of Saturn ten metres in diameter, sunspots like no one else can do better, Zodiacal Light as evocative as the natural one and, finally, auroras... four meters in diameter. The same sphere will serve as Saturn, the sun, and Earth, and will be driven round by a motor."



Every Sunday, as if attending Mass, congregants of this artificial solar system would thus hike into the immersive TV of Birkeland's strange astronomy, hypnotized by its explosive whirls of electromagnetic wonder.

Seen in the context of the occult mechanisms, psychic TVs, and clairvoyant media technologies of Stefan Andriopoulos's book, Birkeland's story reveals just one particularly monumental take on the other-worldly possibilities of televisual media, bypassing the *supernatural* altogether to focus on something altogether more extreme: a direct visual engagement with nature itself, in all its blazing detail.



Since television is such a big part of the family's life, it is important that Christians look at how it influences them.

## **Morality and the Media and How It Affects You By Laci Post**

Of course, Birkeland's cathode ray model of the solar system might not have conjured ghosts or visualized the spiritual energies that Andriopoulous explores in his book, but it did try to bring the heavens down to earth in the form of a 1,000 cubic meter television set partially hewn from raw granite.

It was the most awesome TV ever attempted, a doomed and never-realized invention that nonetheless puts all of today's visual media to shame.



How many hours do you spend a day watching television? The A. C. Nielsen Co. estimates the average American watches more than 4 hours of TV each day. Focus on the Family states that children spend about 5 hours using media every day, with television making up the great bulk of it.

Since television is such a big part of the family's life, it is important that Christians look at how it influences them. What are the messages given out, and are they beneficial or harmful to one's faith?

There are several concerns regarding media and morality. All year around special attention is given to commercials that are overly sexual and send out questionable messages. In years past, [www.GoDaddy.com](http://www.GoDaddy.com) commercials, which feature women in revealing clothing, have been particularly controversial.

Besides their often-sexualized content, commercials are also questioned for promoting materialism and sending out false or misleading messages. Commercials are so good at marketing that a 3-year-old child can recognize more than 100 different brands (Center for a New American Dream). While this seems harmless, materialism can lead to discontentment, unhappy relationships, and drug or alcohol abuse (Focus on the Family). Untruths are another issue, and the commercials that are questioned the most for this are often political ads. Children are being taught that telling untruths is acceptable in order to sell a particular candidate or product.

Violence on television is another concern with media. Norman Herr, PhD, professor of science education at California State University, Northridge, estimates that by the time a person turns 18, they have already seen 200,000 acts of violence on television. This can affect behavior. “Studies show extensive viewing may be to blame for aggressive or violent behavior, poor academic performance, precocious sexuality, obesity, and substance abuse” (Focus on the Family).

Drunk girls break a window to get into a locked house. A man lies about his grandmother's death to earn sympathy in a game. A contestant says she wants to stab another contestant in the face. A woman drives drunk as cameras keep rolling — and viewers keep watching. Viewers tuning in to some reality TV situations may come to the conclusion that there simply isn't such a thing as moral behavior on reality TV. It may depend on how you define "morality." And some who work behind the scenes say that unscripted television shows can actually teach viewers about what's right or wrong.

Besides all of these concerns, the most dangerous thing that media can do is alter your Christian worldview. "Consistently consuming entertainment with false ideas will inevitably distort our view of the world," Tracy Munsil, a writer for Focus on the Family, warns believers. She recommends using this 7-question approach to evaluate the media we consume and distinguish between false messages and a biblical worldview:

1. Is there a God and what is He like?
2. What is the nature and origin of the universe?
3. What is the nature and origin of man?
4. What happens to man after death?
5. Where does knowledge come from?
6. What is the basis of ethics and morality?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

Focus on the Family also recommends limiting the media's influence over our lives by limiting the amount of television we watch. Turn it off during meals, and don't use it for background noise. Watch TV together as a family and discuss questionable issues. Practice talking back to your TV. If a person on television behaves in a way you know to be wrong, say so out loud. This will help reinforce your values. Finally, spend some time evaluating your media consumption. How much is it influencing you and your family? Television is not a substitute for personal devotion because no one can give an experience with God as you would have it when you dedicated the time to personal studies.

You can watch your favorite preacher and many Christian content media but how many have done this yet lack a personal experience with God. The woman at the well may have listened to many influential preachers of her day, The Pharisees, even John the Baptist but its when she had a personal experience with Jesus that her life changed. Paul had listened to the disciples who were spirit-filled but only an experience with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed his life. While there's nothing evil in listening and watching the sermons, it may be a means but not an end-product. How much would like food chewed for them and they finish the process by swallowing? Only a little child who can't help itself and is still underage. Friends we cannot continue to be spiritual babes.



I am acquainted with a number of cases where the women have thought their marriage a misfortune. They have read novels and watched not only secular but Christian media until their imaginations have become diseased, and they live in a world of their own creating. They think themselves women of sensitive minds, of superior, refined organizations.

Parents, especially mothers, should be the only teachers of such infant minds. They should not educate from books [media]. The children will generally be inquisitive to learn the things of nature. They will ask questions in regard to the things they see and hear, and parents should improve the opportunity to instruct, and patiently answer, these little inquirers. They can in this manner get the advantage of the enemy, and fortify the minds of their children, by sowing good seed in their hearts, leaving no room for the bad to take root. The mother's loving instructions is what is needed by children of a tender age in the formation of character. {Ellen White solemn Appeal page 133.2}

Many mothers feel that they have not time to instruct their children, and in order to get them out of the way, and get rid of their noise and trouble, they send them to school. The school-room is a hard place for children who have inherited enfeebled constitutions. School-rooms generally have not been constructed in reference to health, but in regard to cheapness. The rooms have not been arranged so that they could be ventilated as they should have been, without exposing the children to severe colds. And the seats have seldom been made so that the children could sit with ease, and keep their little, growing frames in a proper posture to insure healthy action of the lungs and heart. Young children can grow into almost any shape, and can, by habits of proper exercise and positions of the body, obtain healthy forms. It is destructive to the health and life of young children for them to sit in the school-room, upon hard, ill-formed benches, from three to five hours a day, inhaling the impure air caused by many breaths. The weak lungs become affected, the brain, from which the nervous energy of the whole system is derived, becomes enfeebled by being called into active exercise before the strength of the mental organs is sufficiently matured to endure fatigue. {Ellen White solemn Appeal page 130.1}

During the first six or seven years of a child's life, special attention should be given to its physical training, rather than the intellect. After this period, if the physical constitution is good, the education of both should receive attention. Infancy extends to the age of six or seven years. Up to this period, children should be left, like little lambs, to roam around the house and in the yards, skipping and jumping in the buoyancy of their spirits, free from care and trouble. {Ellen White solemn Appeal page 133.1}

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Before the Christian father leaves his home, to go to his labor, he will gather his family around him, and bowing before God will commit them to the care of the Chief Shepherd. He will then go forth to his labor with the love and blessing of his wife, and the love of his children, to make his heart cheerful through his laboring hours. And that mother who is aroused to her duty, will realize the obligations resting upon her to her children in the absence of the father. She will feel that she lives for her husband and children. By training her children aright, teaching them habits of temperance and self-control, and teaching them their duty to God, she is qualifying them to become useful in the world, to elevate the standard of morals in society, and to reverence and obey the law of God. Patiently and perseveringly will the godly mother instruct her children, giving them line upon line, and precept upon precept, not in a harsh, compelling manner, but in love, and in tenderness; and thus will she win them. They will consider her lessons of love, and will happily listen to her words of instruction. {Ellen White solemn Appeal page 135.1}

Many parents are blind to the tendencies of their children. Some parents have stated to me, with great satisfaction, that their sons or daughters had no desire for the attentions of the opposite sex, when in fact these children were at the same time secretly giving or receiving such attentions, and the parents were so much absorbed in worldliness and gossip that they knew nothing about the matter. {Ellen White Testimonies Volume 5 page 59.4}

The child's first teacher is the mother. During the period of greatest susceptibility and most rapid development his education is to a great degree in her hands. To her first is given opportunity to mold the character for good or for evil. She should understand the value of her opportunity, and, above every other teacher, should be qualified to use it to the best account. Yet there is no other to whose training so little thought is given. The one whose influence in education is most potent and far-reaching is the one for whose assistance there is the least systematic effort. {Ellen White Education page 275.1}

Those to whom the care of the little child is committed are too often ignorant of its physical needs; they know little of the laws of health or the principles of development. Nor are they better fitted to care for its mental and spiritual growth. They may be qualified to conduct business or to shine in society; they may have made creditable attainments in literature and science; but of the training of a child they have little knowledge. It is chiefly because of this lack, especially because of the early neglect of physical development, that so large a proportion of the human race die in infancy, and of those who reach maturity there are so many to whom life is but a burden. {Ellen White Education page 275.2}



Upon fathers as well as mothers rests a responsibility for the child's earlier as well as its later training, and for both parents the demand for careful and thorough preparation is most urgent. Before taking upon themselves the possibilities of fatherhood and motherhood, men and women should become acquainted with the laws of physical development--with physiology and hygiene, with the bearing of prenatal influences, with the laws of heredity, sanitation, dress, exercise, and the treatment of disease; they should also understand the laws of mental development and moral training. {Ellen White Education page 276.1}

This work of education the Infinite One has counted so important that messengers from His throne have been sent to a mother that was to be, to answer the question, "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" (Judges 13:12), and to instruct a father concerning the education of a promised son. {Ellen White Education page 276.2}

Never will education accomplish all that it might and should accomplish until the importance of the parents' work is fully recognized, and they receive a training for its sacred responsibilities. {Ellen White Education page 276.3}

Many parents keep their children at school nearly the year round. These children go through the routine of study mechanically, but do not retain that which they learn. Many of these constant students seem almost destitute of intellectual life. The monotony of continual study wearies the mind, and they take but little interest in their lessons; and to many the application to books becomes painful. They have not an inward love of thought and an ambition to acquire knowledge. They do not encourage in themselves habits of reflection and investigation. {Ellen White Education Testimonies Volume 3 page 142.2}

In attending our colleges many of the youth are separated from the softening, subduing influences of the home circle. At the very time of life when they need vigilant supervision they are withdrawn from the restraints of parental influence and authority, and are thrown into the society of a large number of their own age, of varied characters and habits of life. Some of these have in childhood received too little discipline and are superficial and frivolous; others have been governed too much and have felt, when away from the hands that held the reins of control perhaps too tightly, that they were free to do as they pleased. They despise the very thought of restraint. By these associations the dangers of the young are greatly increased. {Ellen White Education Testimonies Volume 6 page 168.1}

A well-disciplined family, who love and obey God, will be cheerful and happy. The father, when he returns from his daily labor, will not bring his perplexities to his home. He will feel that home and the family circle are too sacred to be marred with unhappy perplexities. When he left his home, he did not leave his Saviour and his religion behind. Both were his companions. The sweet influence of his home, the blessing of his wife, and love of his children, make his burdens light, and he returns with peace in his heart, and cheerful, encouraging words for his wife and children, who are waiting to joyfully welcome his coming. As he bows with his family at the altar of prayer, to offer up his grateful thanks to God, for his preserving care of himself and loved ones through the day, angels of God hover in the room, and bear the fervent prayers of God-fearing parents to Heaven, as sweet incense, which are answered by returning blessings. {Ellen White Solemn Appeal page 137.2}

In the formation of character, no other influences count so much as the influence of the home. The teacher's work should supplement that of the parents, but is not to take its place. In all that concerns the well-being of the child, it should be the effort of parents and teachers to co-operate. {Ellen White Education page 283.1}

We must educate our children so that we can come up to the gates of the city and say, "Here am I, Lord, and the children that thou hast given me." We must not come up without our children to hear the words, "Where is my flock, my little flock, that I gave you--that beautiful flock that I gave you, where are they?" And we reply they have been left to drift right into the world, and so they are unfitted for heaven. What we want is to fit them for heaven so we can present the little flock to God, and say, "I have done my best." {Ellen White Manuscript Releases Volume 6 page 373.2}

At the judgment day, TV will never stand for our defence, neither the sermon you had from a brother, but your very own experience with Jesus on a personal level. It's only because we have become busy to run our chores that we resort to substitutes and excuses to the extent that we entrust our spirituality and interpretations from others than tasking our minds. We have become reflectors of other peoples' ideas. In such time as this when errors abound, shall we not have the spirit of Bereans not just to listen and watch but go home, sit with our bibles and search if these things be so! The Bereans couldn't even trust Paul, how safe is it for us to entrust others with interpretation of scriptures?

## **CONFESSIONS FROM RESEARCHER, TV SHOWS PRODUCERS AND VIEWERS**

“Survivor,” which just concluded its 18th season, has no rules prohibiting lying, betrayal, cruelty.

“The ethical line on ‘Survivor’ is a continuum,” said host and producer Jeff Probst.

“Moral is at one end, immoral at the other. Each person decides at any given moment where they are willing to place themselves — how far down that continuum will you drift for a million dollars?”

That's the question on most competitive reality shows, and provides many of their most compelling moments.

“One of the most fascinating aspects of Survivor is watching people justify their ethics,” Probst said. “Nothing is off-limits when it comes to crossing an ethical line. It comes down to your own personal ethics and how far you can stretch that line in your own self.”

Probst wouldn't identify the most or least moral or ethical players the game has seen over its 17 seasons, saying “that's impossible to answer because it requires a judgment regarding what is moral in a game that requires each player to make that decision for themselves.” Often, it's a decision other players, viewers, and critics make.

Probst did say that Jon “Jonny Fairplay” Dalton's seventh-season lie “that his grandmother had passed away is one of the most blatant examples of questionable moral behavior. It was brilliant from a strategy (point-of-view) and horrifying on a basic human level.”

But is it truly immoral behavior? Maybe not.

## **Moral Behavior**

Bernard Gert, Dartmouth's Stone Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy, is the author of “Common Morality,” which presents a rule-based framework for understanding moral behavior, rules that he said are shared across cultures and societies.

The first five rules are “don't kill, don't cause pain, don't disable, don't cause loss of freedom, don't deprive of pleasure,” Gert said. The second five are “more social.” Those are “don't deceive, keep your promises, don't cheat, obey the law, and do your duty” as required by your job or role.

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[What would you do?](#) It's those second five that come up in games such as “Survivor,” “Big Brother,” “Hell's Kitchen,” or even “The Biggest Loser.” But the rules don't necessary apply to questionable behavior on series that center on dating or drinking, such as “Flavor of Love” and “The Real World.”

"There's an amazing amount of confusion about sexual behavior. People often think about morality as if it's related to sex. Sex is no more a moral matter than eating is," Gert said. "It just turns out that sexual behavior really has the potential for hurting people." Rape and "certain kinds of seduction," he said, are clearly immoral, but only "because (they violate) one of the other rules."



“We locked them out because we knew a bad girl wouldn't let herself stay locked out,” he said. “She's not hurting anyone by (breaking in), other than the window.”

Third-season cast member Ailea said she went on the show to “learn from” the other women and “from their mistakes, so when I came home I wouldn't be so aggressive and intense.”

Likewise, Ailea said that “maybe someone, somewhere can learn from our mistakes. I know there were a lot of mistakes made on the show.” Murray said that's one of the show's goals: to educate the cast and viewers about acceptable behavior, and to show the impact it can have on others.

“It's almost like they're looking at themselves in a mirror and they're seeing the kind of behavior that can get them into trouble,” Murray said. “We thought that if they did this, not only would the viewers enjoy watching these women who live their lives so unapologetically, but also potentially these bad girls could learn something from watching each other.”

That was true for Ailea. “I constantly had in the back of my head that my mom and my brother and sister were going to watch this.”

## **Take the morality test: Is it OK for everyone?**

To determine when it's acceptable to break the rules of morality, Gert offers a test: “Would you be willing for everyone to know that they can break the rules in the same circumstances?”

On “Survivor,” then, lying, deceiving, back-stabbing, cheating, and other forms of immoral, rule-breaking behavior are acceptable, because everyone knows there are no rules prohibiting them, just like bluffing in a poker game, Gert said. “I would think that people who agree to go on these reality shows, if they were not an idiot, ought to know that a lot of people think that things are allowed.”

## **Media and Moral Development**

One criticism often leveled against the media is that they are contributing to the decay of morality. Indeed, a recent national poll reported that 70 percent of Americans are very or somewhat worried that popular culture, as portrayed in television and movies, is lowering moral standards in the United States.<sup>62</sup> The concern is fueled by the tremendous amount of time youth are spending with the media and by their easy access to explicit content. Children can readily find stories about violence, sexual promiscuity, theft, and greed in a variety of media outlets including fictional programming, reality shows, rap music, and the Internet. Almost no research, however, focuses on how the media shape children's moral development. Researchers have written widely on how the media affect children's behaviors, both prosocial and antisocial. But they have paid little attention to the moral lessons children learn from the media that may be underlying these behaviors.

Moral development in children follows a predictable developmental path. When presented with an ethical dilemma, children under the age of eight typically judge an action as wrong or incorrect when it results in punishment or goes against the rules set forth by authority figures.<sup>63</sup> As children mature, they begin to consider multiple perspectives in a situation, taking into account the intentions and motives of those involved and recognizing the often-conflicting rules inherent in moral dilemmas. In other words, their moral reasoning becomes more flexible and “other” oriented.

Marina Krcmar and her colleagues have conducted several studies on whether watching violence on television affects children's moral reasoning. In one survey, they presented six- to twelve-year-olds with hypothetical stories in which a perpetrator performed aggression either for reasons of protection, called “justified” violence, or for random reasons, called “unjustified” violence.<sup>64</sup> Most of the children perceived the unjustified aggression to be wrong. But children who were heavy viewers of fantasy violence programs such as Power Rangers were more likely than children who seldom watched such programs to judge the “justified” aggression in the stories as being morally correct. And indeed researchers have found that much of the violence in popular superhero cartoons is portrayed as justified.<sup>65</sup> In the Krcmar study, both children who watched a great deal of fantasy violence and those who watched more realistic entertainment violence, such as Cops, displayed less advanced moral reasoning strategies, focusing more on rules and the presence or absence of punishment in their reasoning about moral dilemmas.

A follow-up study found the same pattern.<sup>66</sup> Again, children who watched a great deal of fantasy violence were more likely than light viewers to perceive justified violence as morally acceptable. Heavy doses of fantasy violence also were linked with a child's ability to take on someone else's perspective. In particular, children heavily exposed to fantasy violence had less advanced role-taking abilities, which in turn predicted less sophisticated moral reasoning skills. This second study also looked at the family's influence on children's television viewing and moral reasoning. In families where parents stressed communication, children were less likely to watch fantasy violence on television and therefore exhibited higher moral reasoning skills. Parents who stressed control had children who watched more fantasy violence and had less advanced moral reasoning.

Both these studies suggest that watching a great deal of violence on television may hinder children's moral development. Yet it may also be that children with less sophisticated moral skills are drawn to violent programs, especially superhero shows, because their fairly simplistic storylines depict aggression as typically justified and rarely punished.<sup>67</sup>

Two recent studies shed some light on this puzzle. In an experiment, Marina Krcmar and Stephen Curtis tested the causal effect of television on children's moral conceptions of right and wrong.<sup>68</sup> Children between the ages of five and fourteen were randomly assigned to one of three groups: one group watched an action cartoon that featured characters arguing and eventually engaging in violence; another group watched a similar clip involving an argument from which the characters walked away instead of fighting; and a control group did not watch television. Afterward, children listened to and judged four hypothetical stories involving violence. Children who had watched the violent program were more likely than those in the control group to judge violence as morally acceptable. They also exhibited less sophisticated moral reasoning in their responses, often relying on authority or punishment as rationales (for example, "You shouldn't hit because you'll get in trouble"). The reaction was the same regardless of the children's age. In fact, older children (nine to fourteen years) who had seen the violent clip displayed reasoning skills that were on par with those of younger children (five to eight years) in the control group. The experiment demonstrates that exposure to a single program containing fantasy violence can alter children's short-term moral evaluations of aggression and can even adversely affect the strategies they use to make sense of those evaluations.

Unexpectedly, the study found that children who viewed the nonviolent version of the cartoon reacted much the same as those who viewed the violent version; that is, they judged violence as being more morally acceptable than did members of the control group. The authors reasoned that action cartoons might be so familiar to children and so typically full of violence that even watching a nonviolent segment from this genre triggers mental models or schemata in children that involve justified violence.

A second study, in this case a longitudinal one, also illuminates how the media affect moral development. Judy Dunn and Claire Hughes tracked forty “hard-to-manage” preschoolers and forty matched control children over a two-year period, measuring their cognitive skills, social behavior, and emotional functioning.<sup>69</sup> The two groups of preschoolers engaged in similar amounts of pretend play at age four, but the hard-to-manage children were substantially more likely to engage in play that involved killing, death, and physical violence. Many of these fantasy play incidents were tied to media characters and programs. In addition, children from both groups who engaged in much violent pretend play at age four had significantly lower moral reasoning scores at age six, even after researchers controlled for verbal ability, aggression, and friendship quality at age four. These violent-play children were more likely than their peers to respond in selfish or hedonistic ways to moral dilemmas, often focusing on punishments rather than on the motives and feelings of the story characters. Although the study did not directly measure children's media habits, the preschoolers' violent fantasy play was often tied to violent television and movies they had seen.

To summarize, some research suggests that extensive viewing of television violence can alter children's views about the acceptability of violence and perhaps even hinder the development of their moral reasoning. Fantasy violence that is portrayed as justified or heroic is most strongly implicated here, again suggesting that the type of content children watch is important. Such conclusions must be tentative, however, because of the paucity of studies in this area. With the exception of one experiment and one longitudinal study, nearly all the evidence is of the snapshot-in-time variety and does not permit drawing causal conclusions. In addition, the research has examined only children's moral views about aggression. It has paid little attention to media's effect on other moral issues such as altruism and even other types of antisocial behavior such as cheating, lying, and stealing. Finally, the focus to date has been on detrimental effects of media exposure, not on whether some programs and genres can enhance moral development. And the research has focused solely on television. Websites, video games, movies, and even children's books sometimes grapple with moral dilemmas, and researchers need to explore their impact as well.

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