

TELEVISION AND THE HIVE MIND

by Mack White



Sixty-four years ago this month, six million Americans became unwitting subjects in an experiment in psychological warfare.

It was the night before Halloween, 1938. At 8 p.m. CST, the Mercury Radio on the Air began broadcasting Orson Welles' radio adaptation of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. As is now well known, the story was presented as if it were breaking news, with bulletins so realistic that an estimated one million people believed the world was actually under attack by Martians. Of that number, thousands succumbed to outright panic, not waiting to hear Welles' explanation at the end of the program that it had all been a Halloween prank, but fleeing into the night to escape the alien invaders.

Later, psychologist Hadley Cantril conducted a study of the effects of the broadcast and published his findings in a book, *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic*.

This study explored the power of broadcast media, particularly as it relates to the suggestibility of human beings under the influence of fear. Cantril was affiliated with Princeton University's Radio Research Project, which was funded in 1937 by the Rockefeller Foundation. Also affiliated with the Project was Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) member and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) executive Frank Stanton, whose network had broadcast the program. Stanton would later go on to head the news division of CBS, and in time would become president of the network, as well as chairman of the board of the RAND Corporation, the influential think tank which has done groundbreaking research on, among other things, mass brainwashing.

Two years later, with Rockefeller Foundation money, Cantril established the Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR), also at Princeton. Among the studies conducted by the OPOR was an analysis of the effectiveness of "psycho-political operations" (propaganda, in plain English) of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Then, during World War II, Cantril and Rockefeller money assisted CFR member and CBS reporter Edward R. Murrow in setting up the Princeton Listening Center, the purpose of which was to study Nazi radio propaganda with the object of applying Nazi techniques to OSS propaganda. Out of this project came a new government agency, the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (FBIS). The FBIS eventually became the United States Information Agency (USIA), which is the propaganda arm of the National Security Council.

Thus, by the end of the 1940s, the basic research had been done and the propaganda apparatus of the national security state had been set up--just in time for the Dawn of Television ...

Experiments conducted by researcher Herbert Krugman reveal that, when a person watches television, brain activity switches from the left to the right hemisphere. The left hemisphere is the seat of logical thought. Here, information is broken down into its component parts and critically analyzed. The right brain, however, treats incoming data uncritically, processing information in wholes, leading to emotional, rather than logical, responses. The shift from left to right brain activity also causes the release of endorphins, the body's own natural opiates--thus, it is possible to become physically addicted to watching television, a hypothesis borne out by numerous studies which have shown that very few people are able to kick the television habit.

This numbing of the brain's cognitive function is compounded by another shift which occurs in the brain when we watch television. Activity in the higher brain regions (such as the neo-cortex) is diminished, while activity in the lower brain regions (such as the limbic system) increases. The latter, commonly referred to as the reptile brain, is associated with more primitive mental functions, such as the "fight or flight" response. The reptile brain is unable to distinguish between reality and the simulated reality of television. To the reptile brain, if it looks real, it is real. Thus, though we know on a conscious level it is "only a film," on a conscious level we do not--the heart beats faster, for instance, while we watch a suspenseful scene. Similarly, we know the commercial is trying to manipulate us, but on an unconscious level the commercial nonetheless succeeds in, say, making us feel inadequate until we buy whatever thing is being advertised--and the effect is all the more powerful

because it is unconscious, operating on the deepest level of human response. The reptile brain makes it possible for us to survive as biological beings, but it also leaves us vulnerable to the manipulations of television programmers.

It is not just commercials that manipulate us. On television news as well, image and sound are as carefully selected and edited to influence human thought and behavior as in any commercial. The news anchors and reporters themselves are chosen for their physical attractiveness--a factor which, as numerous psychological studies have shown, contributes to our perception of a person's trustworthiness. Under these conditions, then, the viewer easily forgets--if, indeed, the viewer ever knew in the first place--that the worldview presented on the evening news is a contrivance of the network owners--owners such as General Electric (NBC) and Westinghouse (CBS), both major defense contractors. By molding our perception of the world, they mold our opinions. This distortion of reality is determined as much by what is left out of the evening news as what is included--as a glance at Project Censored's yearly list of top 25 censored news stories will reveal. If it's not on television, it never happened. Out of sight, out of mind.

Under the guise of journalistic objectivity, news programs subtly play on our emotions--chiefly fear. Network news divisions, for instance, frequently congratulate themselves on the great service they provide humanity by bringing such spectacles as the September 11 terror attacks into our living rooms. We have heard this falsehood so often, we have come to accept it as self-evident truth. However, the motivation for live coverage of traumatic news events is not altruistic, but rather to be found in the central focus of Cantril's War of the Worlds research--the manipulation of the public through fear.

There is another way in which we are manipulated by television news. Human beings are prone to model the behaviors they see around them, and avoid those which might invite ridicule or censure, and in the hypnotic state induced by television, this effect is particularly pronounced. For instance, a lift of the eyebrow from Peter Jennings tells us precisely what he is thinking--and by extension what we should think. In this way, opinions not sanctioned by the corporate media can be made to seem disreputable, while sanctioned opinions are made to seem the very essence of civilized thought. And should your thinking stray into unsanctioned territory despite the trusted anchor's example, a poll can be produced which shows that most persons do not think that way--and you don't want to be different do you? Thus, the mental wanderer is brought back into the fold.

This process is also at work in programs ostensibly produced for entertainment. The "logic" works like this: Archie Bunker is an idiot, Archie Bunker is against gun control, therefore idiots are against gun control. Never mind the complexities of the issue. Never mind the fact that the true purpose of the Second Amendment is not to protect the rights of deer hunters, but to protect the citizenry against a tyrannical government (an argument you will never hear voiced on any television program). Monkey see, monkey do--or, in this case, monkey not do.

Notice, too, the way in which television programs depict conspiracy researchers or anti-New World Order activists. On situation comedies, they are buffoons. On dramatic programs, they are dangerous fanatics. This imprints on the mind of the viewer the attitude that

questioning the official line or holding "anti-government" opinions is crazy, therefore not to be emulated.

Another way in which entertainment programs mold opinion can be found in the occasional television movie, which "sensitively" deals with some "social" issue. A bad behavior is spotlighted--"hate" crimes, for instance--in such a way that it appears to be a far more rampant problem than it may actually be, so terrible in fact that the "only" cure for it is more laws and government "protection." Never mind that laws may already exist to cover these crimes--the law against murder, for instance. Once we have seen the well-publicized murder of the young gay man Matthew Shepherd dramatized in not one, but two, television movies in all its heartrending horror, nothing will do but we pass a law making the very thought behind the crime illegal.

People will also model behaviors from popular entertainment which are not only dangerous to their health and could land them in jail, but also contribute to social chaos. While this may seem to be simply a matter of the producers giving the audience what it wants, or the artist holding a mirror up to society, it is in fact intended to influence behavior.

Consider the way many films glorify drug abuse. When a popular star playing a sympathetic character in a mainstream R-rated film uses hard drugs with no apparent health or legal consequences (John Travolta's use of heroin in *Pulp Fiction*, for instance--an R-rated film produced for theatrical release, which now has found a permanent home on television, via cable and video players), a certain percentage of people--particularly the impressionable young--will perceive hard drug use as the epitome of anti-Establishment cool and will model that behavior, contributing to an increase in drug abuse. And who benefits?

As has been well documented by Gary Webb in his award-winning series for the *San Jose Mercury New*, former Los Angeles narcotics detective Michael Ruppert, and many other researchers and whistleblowers--the CIA is the main purveyor of hard drugs in this country. The CIA also has its hand in the "prison-industrial complex." Wackenhut Corporation, the largest owner of private prisons, has on its board of directors many former CIA employees, and is very likely a CIA front. Thus, films which glorify drug abuse may be seen as recruitment ads for the slave labor-based private prison system. Also, the social chaos and inflated crime rate which result from the contrived drug problem contributes to the demand from a frightened society for more prisons, more laws, and the further erosion of civil liberties. This effect is further heightened by television news segments and documentaries which focus on drug abuse and other crimes, thus giving the public the misperception that crime is even higher than it really is.

There is another socially debilitating process at work in what passes for entertainment on television these days. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in adult subject matter on programs presented during family viewing hours. For instance, it is common for today's prime-time situation comedies to make jokes about such matters as masturbation (*Seinfeld* once devoted an entire episode to the topic), or for daytime talk shows such as *Jerry Springer's* to showcase such topics as bestiality. Even worse are the "reality" programs currently in vogue. Each new offering in this genre seems to hit a new low. MTV, for instance, recently subjected a couple to a *Candid Camera*-style prank in which, after winning

a trip to Las Vegas, they entered their hotel room to find an actor made up as a mutilated corpse in the bathtub. Naturally, they were traumatized by the experience and sued the network. Or, consider a new show on British television in which contestants compete to see who can infect each other with the most diseases--venereal diseases included.

It would appear, at the very least, that these programs serve as a shill operation to strengthen the argument for censorship. There may also be an even darker motive. These programs contribute to the general coarsening of society we see all around us--the decline in manners and common human decency and the acceptance of cruelty for its own sake as a legitimate form of entertainment. Ultimately, this has the effect of debasing human beings into savages, brutes--the better to herd them into global slavery.

For the first decade or so after the Dawn of Television, there were only a handful of channels in each market--one for each of the three major networks and maybe one or two independents. Later, with the advent of cable and more channels, the population pie began to be sliced into finer pieces--or "niche markets." This development has often been described as representing a growing diversity of choices, but in reality it is a fine-tuning of the process of mass manipulation, a honing-in on particular segments of the population, not only to sell them specifically-targeted consumer products but to influence their thinking in ways advantageous to the globalist agenda.

One of these "target audiences" is that portion of the population which, after years of blatant government cover-up in areas such as UFOs and the assassination of John F. Kennedy, maintains a cynicism toward the official line, despite the best efforts of television programmers to depict conspiracy research in a negative light. How to reach this vast, disenfranchised target audience and co-opt their thinking? One way is to put documentaries before them which mix of fact with disinformation, thereby confusing them. Another is to take the X Files approach.

The heroes of X Files are investigators in a fictitious paranormal department of the FBI whose adventures sometimes take them into parapolitical territory. On the surface this sounds good. However, whatever good X Files might accomplish by touching on such matters as MK-ULTRA or the JFK assassination is cancelled out by associating them with bug-eyed aliens and ghosts. Also, on X Files, the truth is always depicted as "out there" somewhere--in the stars, or some other dimension, never in brainwashing centers such as the RAND Corporation or its London counterpart, the Tavistock Institute. This has the effect of obscuring the truth, making it seem impossibly out-of-reach, and associating reasonable lines of political inquiry with the fantastic and other-wordly.

Not that there is no connection between the parapolitical and the paranormal. There is undoubtedly a cover-up at work with regard to UFOs, but if we accept uncritically the notion that UFOs are anything other than terrestrial in origin, we are falling headfirst into a carefully-set trap. To its credit, X Files has dealt with the idea that extraterrestrials might be a clever hoax by the government, but never decisively. The labyrinthine plots of the show somehow manage to leave the viewer wondering if perhaps the hoax idea is itself a hoax put out there to cover up the existence of extraterrestrials. This is hardly helpful to a true understanding of UFOs and associated phenomena, such as alien abductions and cattle

mutilations.

Extraterrestrials have been a staple of popular entertainment since *The War of the Worlds* (both the novel and its radio adaptation). They have been depicted as invaders and benefactors, but rarely have they been unequivocally depicted as a hoax. There was an episode of *Outer Limits* which depicted a group of scientists staging a mock alien invasion to frighten the world's population into uniting as one--but, again, such examples are rare. Even in UFO documentaries on the Discovery Channel, the possibility of a terrestrial origin for the phenomenon is conspicuous by its lack of mention.

UFO researcher Jacques Vallee, the real-life model for the French scientist in Stephen Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, attempted to interest Spielberg in a terrestrial explanation for the phenomenon. In an interview on *Conspire.com*, Vallee said, "I argued with him that the subject was even more interesting if it wasn't extraterrestrials. If it was real, physical, but not ET. So he said, 'You're probably right, but that's not what the public is expecting--this is Hollywood and I want to give people something that's close to what they expect.'"

How convenient that what Spielberg says the people expect is also what the Pentagon wants them to believe.

In *Messengers of Deception*, Vallee tracks the history of a wartime British Intelligence unit devoted to psychological operations. Code-named (interestingly) the "Martians," it specialized in manufacturing and distributing false intelligence to confuse the enemy. Among its activities were the creation of phantom armies with inflatable tanks, simulations of the sounds of military ships maneuvering in the fog, and forged letters to lovers from phantom soldiers attached to phantom regiments.

Vallee suggests that deception operations of this kind may have extended beyond World War II, and that much of the "evidence" for "flying saucers" is no more real than the inflatable tanks of World War II. He writes: "The close association of many UFO sightings with advanced military hardware (test sites like the New Mexico proving grounds, missile silos of the northern plains, naval construction sites like the major nuclear facility at Pascagoula and the bizarre love affairs ... between contactee groups, occult sects, and extremist political factions, are utterly clear signals that we must exercise extreme caution."

Many people find it fantastic that the government would perpetrate such a hoax, while at the same time having no difficulty entertaining the notion that extraterrestrials are regularly traveling light years to this planet to kidnap people out of their beds and subject them to anal probes.

The military routinely puts out disinformation to obscure its activities, and this has certainly been the case with UFOs. Consider Paul Bennewitz, the UFO enthusiast who began studying strange lights that would appear nightly over the Manzano Test Range outside Albuquerque. When the Air Force learned about his study, ufologist William Moore (by his own admission) was recruited to feed him forged military documents describing a threat from extraterrestrials. The effect was to confuse Bennewitz--even making him paranoid enough

to be hospitalized--and discredit his research. Evidently, those strange lights belonged to the Air Force, which does not like outsiders inquiring into its affairs.

What the Air Force did to Bennewitz, it also does on a mass scale--and popular entertainment has been complicit in this process. Whether or not the filmmakers themselves are consciously aware of this agenda does not matter. The notion that extraterrestrials might visit this planet is so much a part of popular culture and modern mythology that it hardly needs assistance from the military to propagate itself.

It has the effect not only of obscuring what is really going on at research facilities such as Area 51, but of tainting UFO research in general as "kooky"--and does the job so thoroughly that one need only say "UFO" in the same breath with "JFK" to discredit research in that area as well. It also may, in the end, serve the same purpose as depicted in that Outer Limits episode--to unite the world's population against a perceived common threat, thus offering the pretext for one-world government.

The following quotes demonstrate that the idea has at least occurred to world leaders:

"In our obsession with antagonisms of the moment, we often forget how much unites all the members of humanity. Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat to make us realize this common bond. I occasionally think how quickly our differences would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world." (President Ronald Reagan, speaking in 1987 to the United Nations.

"The nations of the world will have to unite, for the next war will be an interplanetary war. The nations of the earth must someday make a common front against attack by people from other planets." General Douglas MacArthur, 1955)

Some one remarked that the best way to unite all the nations on this globe would be an attack from some other planet. In the face of such an alien enemy, people would respond with a sense of their unity of interest and purpose." (John Dewey, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, speaking at a conference sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1917)

And where was this "alien threat" motif given birth? Again, we find the answer in popular entertainment, and again the earliest source is *The War of the Worlds*--both Wells' and Welles' versions.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that H. G. Wells was a founding member of the Round Table, the think tank that gave birth to the Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA) and its American cousin, the CFR. Perhaps Wells intentionally introduced the motif as a meme which might prove useful later in establishing the "world social democracy" he described in his 1939 book *The New World Order*. Perhaps, too, another purpose of the Orson Welles broadcast was to test of the public's willingness to believe in extraterrestrials.

At any rate, it proved a popular motif, and paved the way for countless movies and television programs to come, and has often proven a handy device for promoting the New

World Order, whether the extraterrestrials are invaders or--in films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*--benefactors who have come to Earth to warn us to mend our ways and unite as one, or be blown to bits.

We see the globalist agenda at work in *Star Trek* and its spin-offs as well. Over the years, many a television viewer's mind has been imprinted with the idea that centralized government is the solution for our problems. Never mind the complexities of the issue--never mind the fact that, in the real world, centralization of power leads to tyranny. The reptile brain, hypnotized by the flickering television screen, has seen Captain Kirk and his culturally diverse crew demonstrate time and again that the United Federation of Planets is a good thing. Therefore, it must be so.

It remains to be seen whether the *Masters of Deception* will, like those scientists in *The Outer Limits*, stage an invasion from space with anti-gravity machines and holograms, but, if they do, it will surely be broadcast on television, so that anyone out of range of that light show in the sky, will be able to see it, and all with eyes to see will believe. It will be *War of the Worlds* on a grand scale.

Jack Kerouac once noted, while walking down a residential street at night, glancing into living rooms lit by the gray glare of television sets, that we have become a world of people "thinking the same thoughts at the same time."

Every day, millions upon millions of human beings sit down at the same time to watch the same football game, the same mini-series, the same newscast. And where might all this shared experience and uniformity of thought be taking us?

A recent report co-sponsored by the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Commerce Department calls for a broad-based research program to find ways to use nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive sciences, to achieve telepathy, machine-to-human communication, amplified sensory experience, enhanced intellectual capacity, and mass participation in a "hive mind." Quoting the report: "With knowledge no longer encapsulated in individuals, the distinction between individuals and the entirety of humanity would blur. Think Vulcan mind-meld. We would perhaps become more of a hive mind--an enormous, single, intelligent entity."

There is no doubt that we have been brought closer to the "hive mind" by the mass media. For, what is the shared experience of television but a type of "Vulcan mind-meld"? (Note the terminology borrowed from *Star Trek*, no doubt to make the concept more familiar and palatable. If Spock does it, it must be okay.)

This government report would have us believe that the hive mind will be for our good--a wonderful leap in evolution. It is nothing of the kind. For one thing, if the government is behind it, you may rest assured it is not for our good. For another, common sense should tell us that blurring the line "between individuals and the entirety of humanity" means mass conformity, the death of human individuality. Make no mistake about it--if humanity is to become a hive, there will be at the center of that hive a Queen Bee, whom all the lesser

"insects" will serve. This is not evolution--this is devolution. Worse, it is the ultimate slavery--the slavery of the mind.

And it is a horror first unleashed in 1938 when one million people responded as one--as a hive--to Orson Welles' Halloween prank.

In a sense, those people who fled the Martians that night were right to be afraid. They were indeed under attack. But they were wrong about who was attacking them. It was something far worse than Martians. Had they only known the true nature of the danger facing them, perhaps they would have gone to the nearest radio station with torches in hand like the villagers in those old Frankenstein movies and burned it to the ground, or at least commandeered the new technology and turned it towards another use--the liberation of humanity, instead of its enslavement.

RELEVANT LINKS

**U.S. Government Report:
Human Beings to be Merged with Technology
to Create a "Hive Mind"**
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