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**Sociology Of Reality TV**

**By Edward Charkow**

You know something has permeated a culture when American colleges and universities are charging big money to teach classes about the sociology and psychology of reality TV.

Aside from the more traditional subjects like calculus and European History, college students are paying several grand a semester to collectively watch and discuss Big Brother, American Idol or MTV's The Real World. Students debate questions like "Why is reality TV so popular?" or "Why do people want to be broadcast while using the toilet or failing to discipline their wild children?" I am sure the founders of the great American institutions of learning are backflipping in their graves knowing that students are writing papers about Flavor Flav, but many academics argue that reality TV actually provides a new lens through which to view and interpret our culture. The question remains: Could reality TV actually be teaching us anything, or are these classes just dangling carrots to get more students to pay \$30,000 tuition bills?

No matter what, popular culture has arguably been taken over by television's version of reality. Though these shows are not something many of us wish to put into a time capsule to reflect the condition of American media in the 21st century, most of us cannot get enough of them. There are just as many closet watchers of reality TV as there are self-proclaimed reality addicts. And, it doesn't even seem like the story-line or topic matters anymore - it's the format that grabs us. The same person might watch Project Runway, Making the Band and Flip that House. So perhaps it's just exciting to peer into the minds, emotions and lives of others. The popularity of blogs would certainly affirm that. In a time when we know less and less about what goes on behind the doors of the Oval Office or the gilded lobbies of American's largest corporations, it seems we all just want a little bit of truth, or else a whole lot of candor.

Find out more about Reality T.V. at

<http://www.reality-maniacs.com>

**Ancient Philosophy on the Internet can Change How We Think**

**By Jesse S. Somer**

Here I am again sitting at my computer, my job is to write about the positive aspects of the Internet. I'd like to think of myself as a bit of a novice philosopher as well as writer. The other day in poetry class at university my lecturer mentioned a quote from a guy who I had already read and enjoyed, Baruch/Benedictus Spinoza. The quote mentioned was quite a simple one, and in my opinion simplicity is the best form of communication (and everything else for that matter). Spinoza once said, "Reality is perfection." I feel this idea is quite a powerful one indeed, in relation to all aspects of life, including the Internet.

Where do you go these days when you want to find out about anything? Church? School? Parents? No, you go to the Internet. The Internet is the collective pool of unconscious, sub consciousness, and conscious ideas, beliefs, knowledge and wisdom of humanity from the past to the present. There has never been such a tool available for us. Of course there is a perfectly imperfect amount of crap out there to sift through as well, but that is intrinsic in this perfectly balanced reality that has always existed.

So, if reality has always been perfect, why is the existence of the Internet anything special? The truth is, it is only as special as anything else in life. Now, you have to ask yourself, "Is life special?" I think you know the answer to that one...then again there's that perfect paradoxical balance. Why the Internet then? Well, my younger brother once said, and I don't know where he pulled this little tidbit of wisdom, "The only constant in the Universe is that everything is in constant transition." The Internet exists because of a natural progression in human thinking; it's an evolution of our collective minds. It is a constructed idea formed through the process of eternal change.

Human beings have a huge history spanning at least half a million years. As well as the magic feeling of love there has always been the balancing emotion of fear. It seems that over time societies go through different stages where one of these feelings dominates and then permeates general actions by the community. At the moment many people would find it hard to disagree with the fact that we are in a period of fear. With war, hatred and segregation prevalent in reality as well as the 'reality' presented by the media news and TV/film, fear is reigning supreme in many of our daily interactions.

This relates to the use of the Internet because it looks as though people are afraid to get on the Web. I used to be afraid for Pete's sake! To tell you the truth I still have some irrational fears when it comes to researching a paper for school. I often think, "Will I find the 'right' information?" The answer of course is that there is always a possibility of things going wrong, that's this perfection of reality. Life would be stale, stagnant and sterile otherwise. The key lies in our belief in this perfection. The Internet has eliminated the need to go to libraries and carry around huge books just to read small sections of each. There is also less need to get to a science library and then sociology, mathematics etc. So much information is now available to people in our own homes.

Whether you are researching seventeenth century philosophers' ways of thinking for personal or professional reasons, or even just looking up information on how to make your own chai tea, or on how

to change the oil on your car; the Internet is a source for so many areas of interest it is simply mind

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boggling. It is truly the most perfect form of reality's perfection in modern contemporary society. That's why they call this the Information age right? The only problem has to deal with the perfectly imperfect amount of pornography that constitutes more than half of all websites on the Web. What does this say about our current moral disposition in our changing perception's construct of reality? I'll leave you with that one to ponder...

Jesse S. Somer

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Jesse S. Somer is a novice writer and philosopher thinking about the real meaning behind the existence of the World Wide Web.

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