



Social Sciences

Wild Hunger: The Primal Roots of Modern Addiction

Bruce Wilshire

Rowman and Littlefield

978-0-8476-8967-5

(June 11, 1998)

Current debates surrounding the genesis of addiction have focused on physical and/or mental causes, but Wilshire looks at the topic from an entirely different perspective. Using a mix of spirituality, psychology, evolution and ecological awareness, he fashions a persuasive argument for why our society, like so many before it, has turned to artificial stimulants, depressants, and pleasures.

Adopting a position similar to Thoreau toward awareness of nature, Wilshire posits that humans are drawn to addictive substances because we've lost touch with the natural world, ignoring our embedded genetic memories and skimming across the surface of our surroundings.

Our hunter-gatherer physiology is poorly prepared for the onslaught of technology, and, as a result, we drift further away from knowledge of our natural selves. According to Wilshire, each of us has a "wild hunger" that is unsatisfied by the neatly packaged food that we consume and by the isolation that cars and air-conditioned buildings bring. We are suffering from ecstasy deprivation, something, which was once satiated by contact with the natural world and can only now, unless we tune into the world, be replaced by addiction to drugs, alcohol, sex, and even technology.

At its best, *Wild Hunger* sparks contemplation not only on the issue of addiction, but also on the topic of how far we've strayed in thought and deed from our ancestors. The book falters only when the author attempts to underscore his points by including long passages about a walk he took with his dog once—a device which proves to be precious and unnecessary. Even if one doesn't agree with all of Wilshire's conclusions, his passion, reason and earnest hope for the future of humankind make this a compelling read.

Elizabeth Millard