

Overstimulation in the Church

Responding to an Overstimulated, Pleasure Seeking Culture

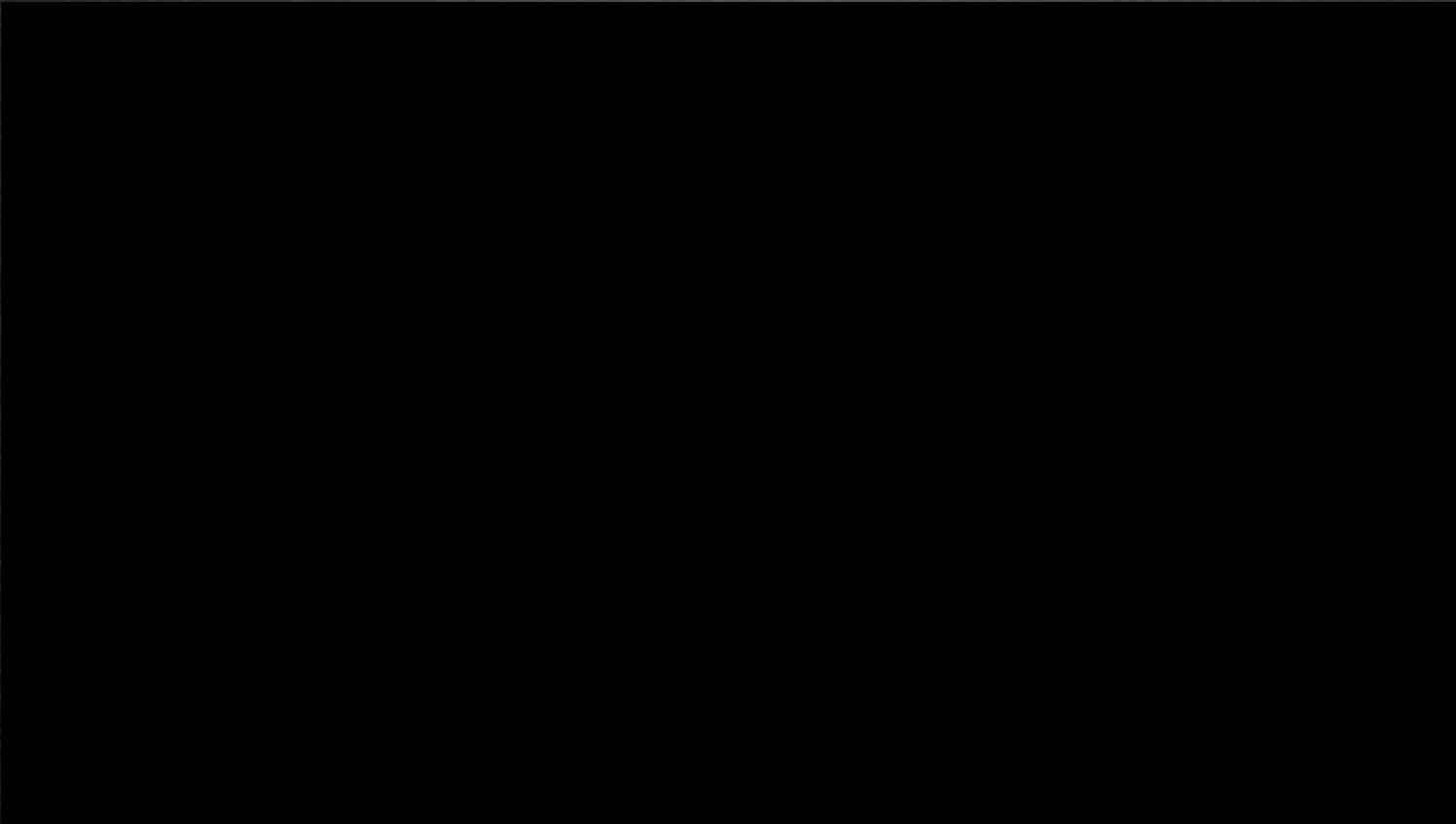
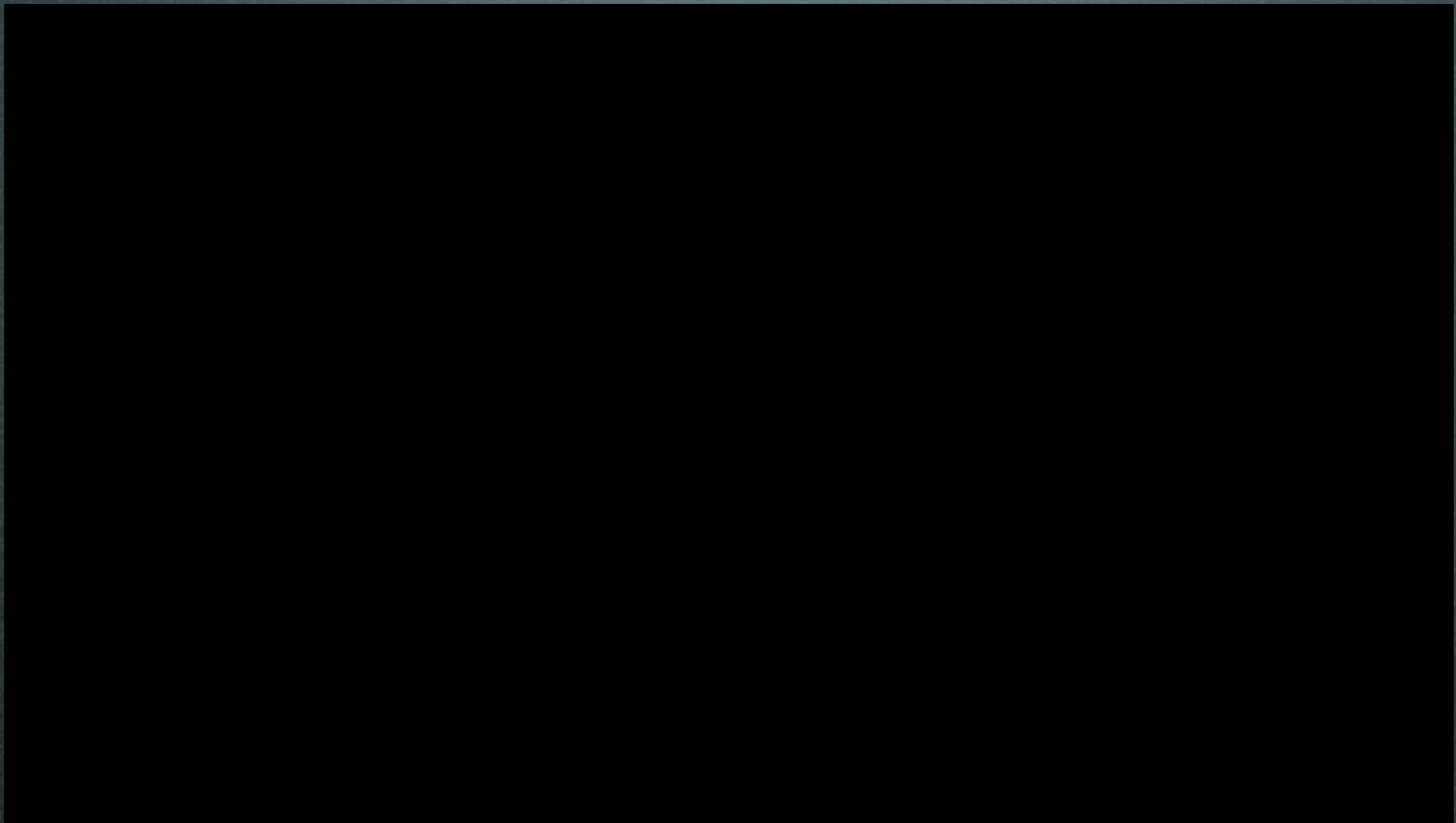
“Seminaries now recommend 15-minute sermons in light of shorter attention spans. Publishers want slimmer books, with simpler words and concepts. Will we soon have a 140-character Twitter gospel?”

“What would a church look like that created space for quietness, that bucked the celebrity trend and unplugged from surrounding media, that actively resisted consumerist culture?”

Phillip Yancey, Christianity Today November 2009



Why These Faces?



“I can think of nothing less pleasurable than a life devoted to pleasure.” John D. Rockefeller

What pleasure/stimulation does our culture pursue?

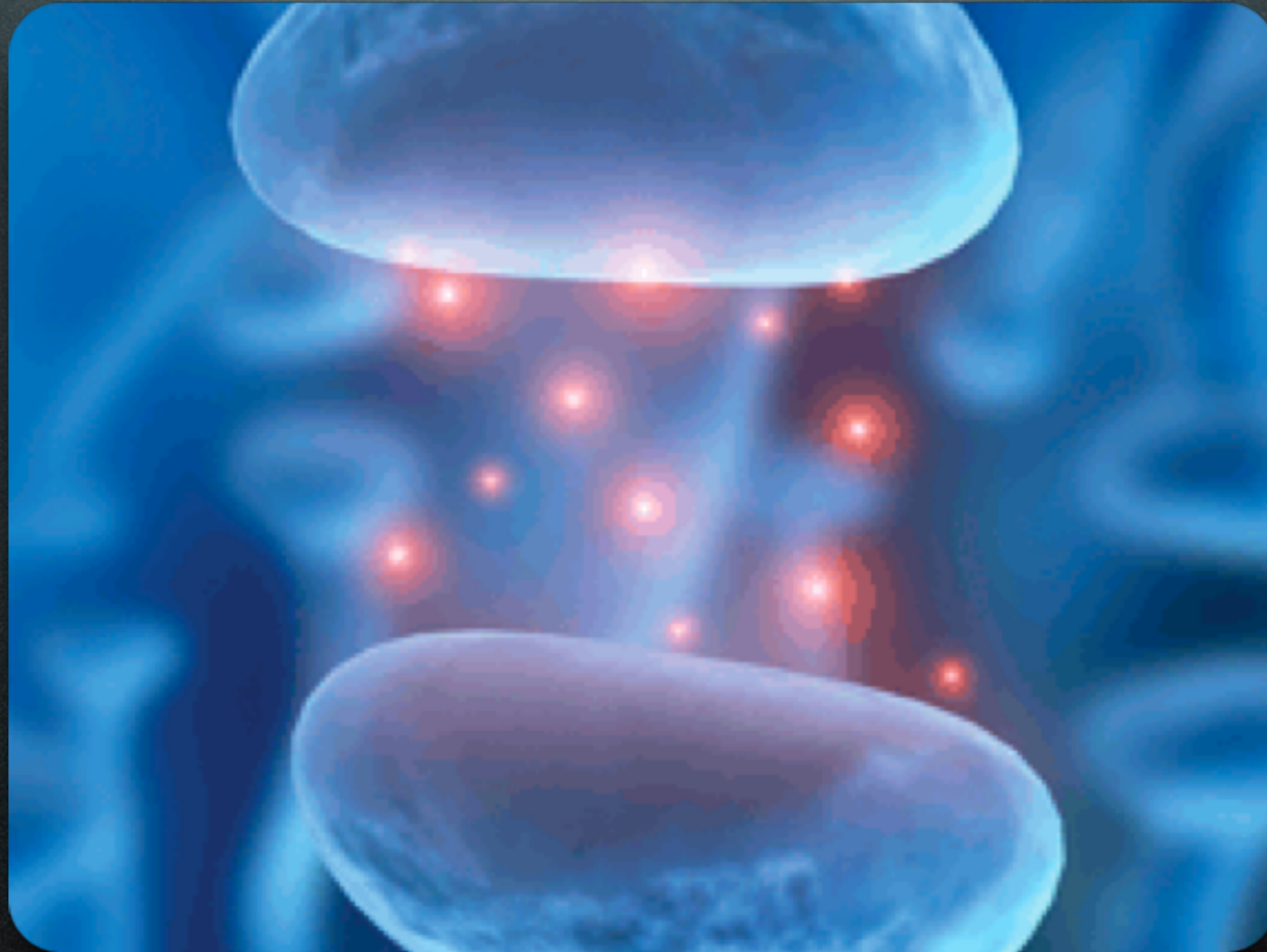
Anhedonia

Loss of the capacity to experience pleasure.
The inability to gain pleasure from normally pleasurable experiences
due to chronic over-stimulation

"Anhedonia" is derived from the Greek "a-" (without) "hedone" (pleasure, delight).
Other words derived from "hedone" include hedonism (a philosophy that
emphasizes pleasure as the main aim of life), hedonist (a pleasure-seeker), and
hedonophobia (an excessive and persistent fear of pleasure)

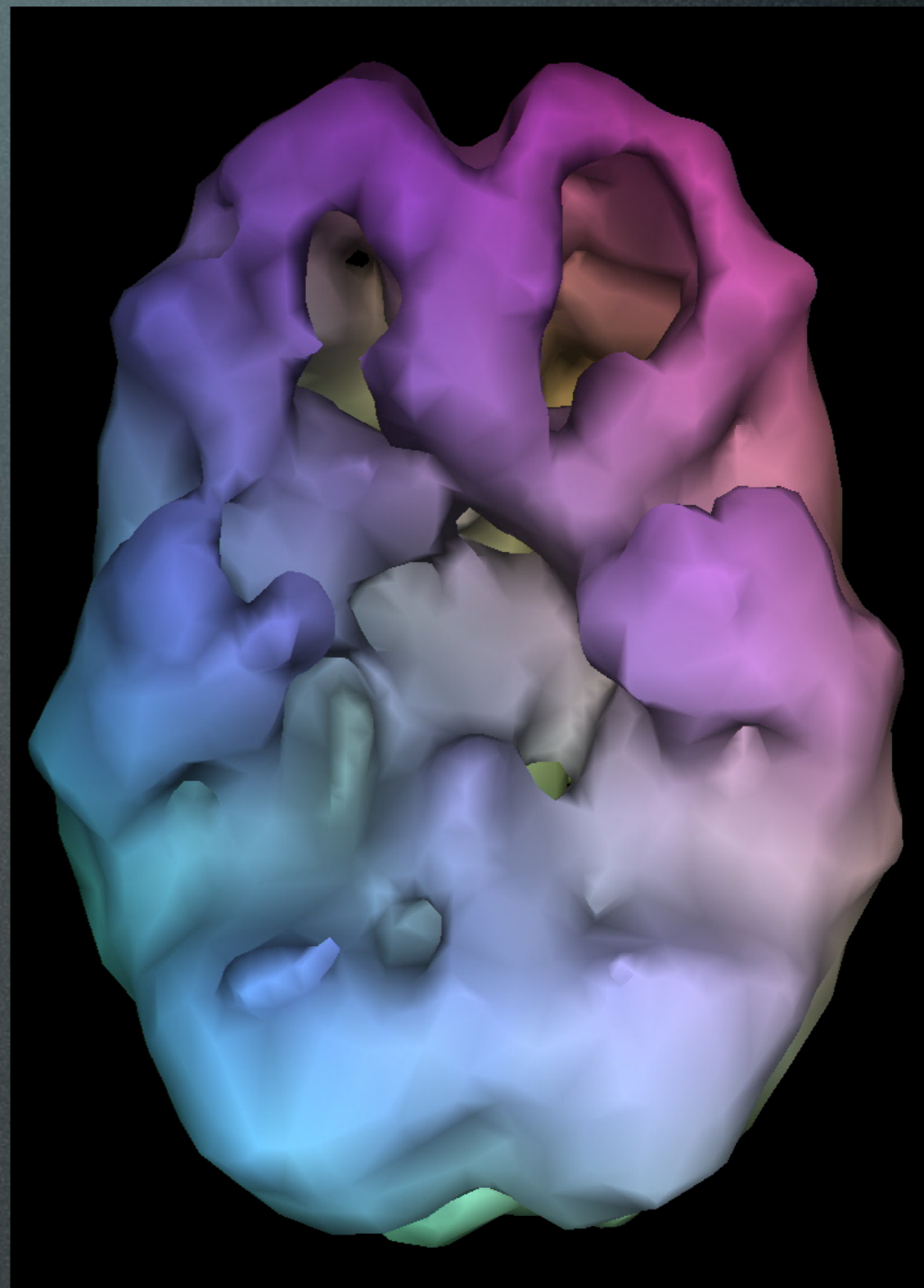
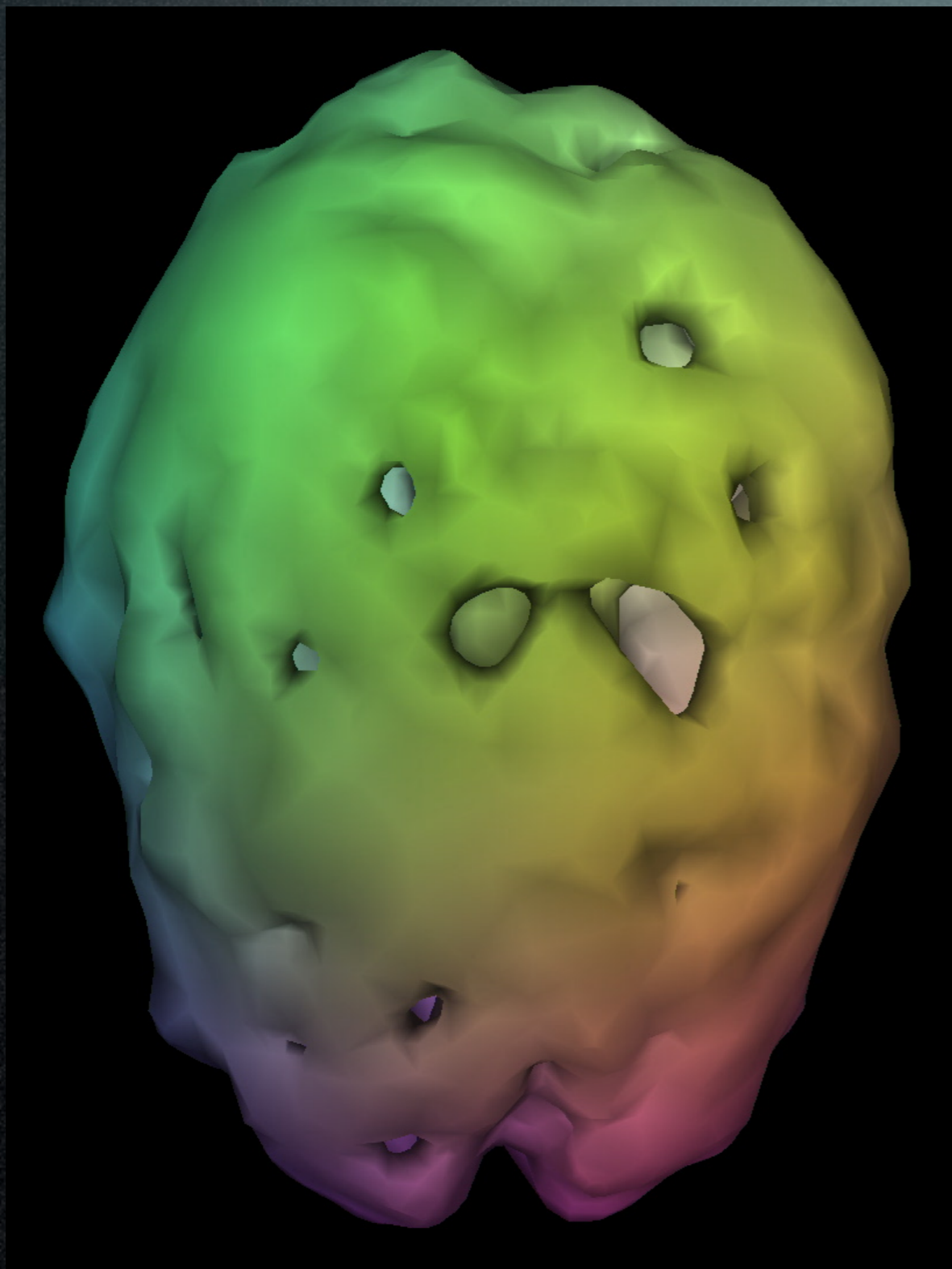


Dopamine's' Role in Anhedonia



Tolerance

Overstimulation & Pornography



Prefrontal Cortex Problems

☒ Short attention span

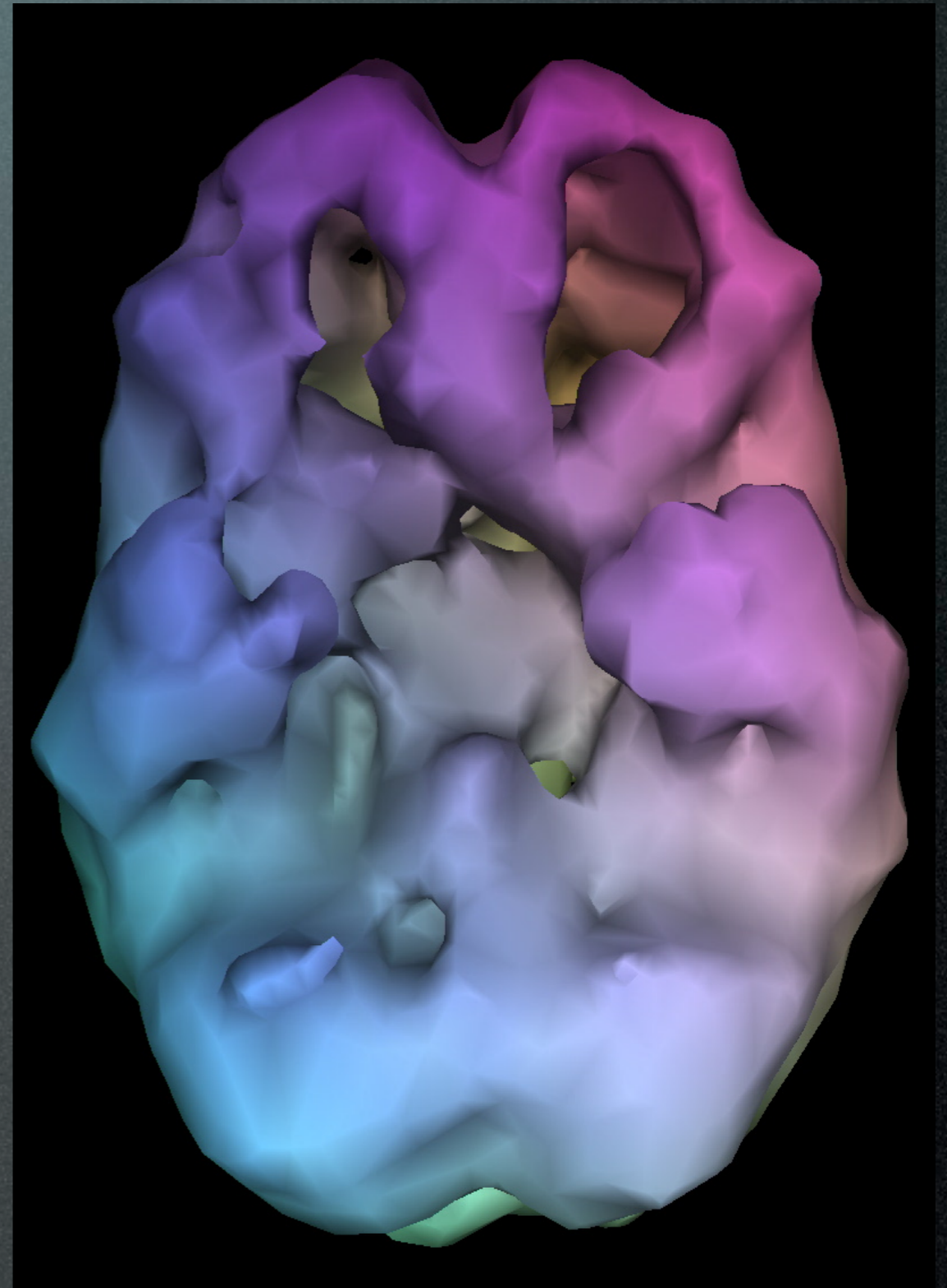
☒ Impulsivity

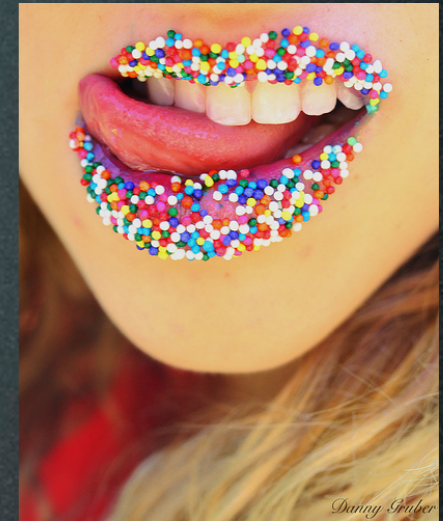
☒ Procrastination

☒ Disorganization

☒ Poor judgment

☒ Lack of empathy and
insight



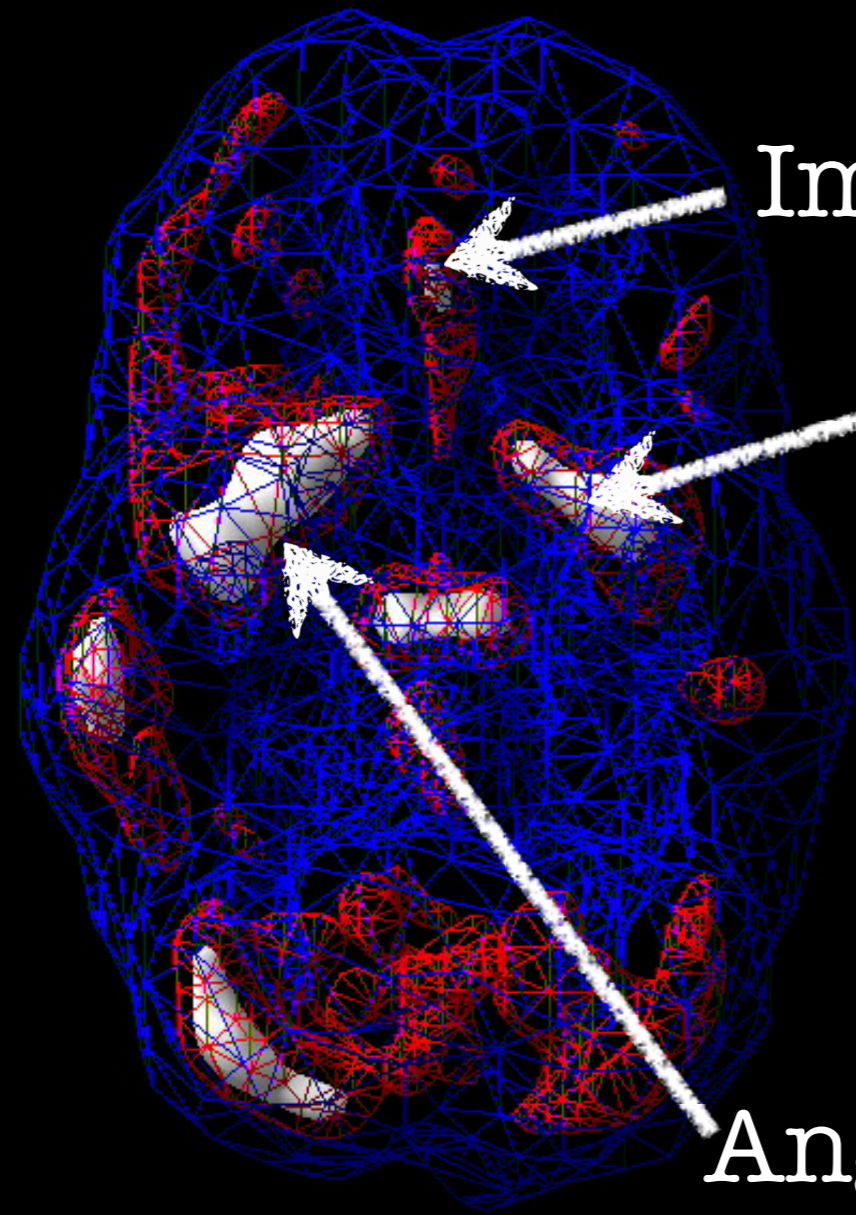


competing images/experiences



Rehabilitation

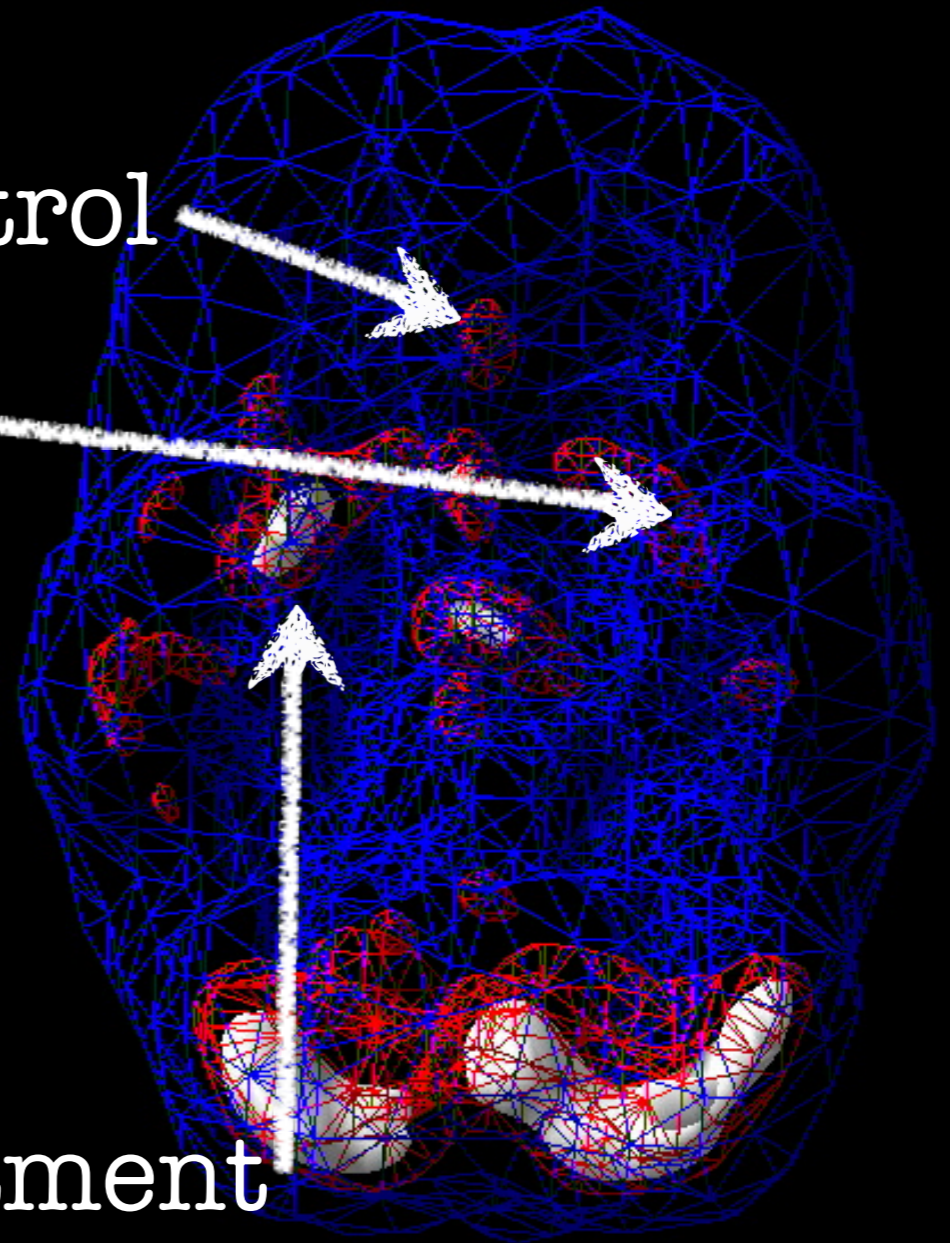
“modern worship styles and spiritual practices, when not balanced with contemplative or reflective practices, can also contribute to the hijacking of the brains pleasure system.” Archibald Hart



Impulse Control

Anxiety

Anger/Resentment



Reflective/Meditative Practices and Brain Activity

How has overstimulation & pleasure seeking impacted the Contemporary Church's....

experience of worship?
understanding of worship?
pace/pattern of worship?

What If... worship moved us from

- Information to Formation
- Entertainment to Engagement
- Performance/ Productivity to Presence
- Individualistic to Communal

Reflective Practices as a “means” of transformative grace in worship

(Howard Rice)

“These “means” allow us to remain open to God’s grace. They nurture spiritual growth and maturity in the life of a person or community. They help clear away blocks to God that every person puts up, often unconsciously.”

- Prayer
- Reading Scripture
- Meditation
- Feasting and Fasting
- Serving Others
- Worship and Sacrament
- Holy Reading
- Sabbath Rest

Book & Article Resources

Hart, Archibald (2007) Thrilled to Death: How the endless pursuit of happiness is leaving us numb. Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson.

Miller Wendy (1995) Invitation to Presence: A Guide to Spiritual Disciplines. Nashville TN: Upper Room Books.

Rice, Howard (1998) The Pastor as Spiritual Guide. Nashville TN: Upper Room Books.

Ed., Webber Robert (1994) The Complete Library of Christian Worship: Nashville TN: Star Song Publishing

Leventhal, A., Kahler, C., Ray, L., Stone, K., Young, D., Chelminski, I. Zimmerman, M.(2008) Anhedonia and Amotivation of Psychiatric Outpatients with with Fully Admitted Stumulant Abuse Disorder. The American Journal of Addictions, 17, 218-223.