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## The etymology and early history of ‘addiction’

Richard J. Rosenthal<sup>a</sup> and Suzanne Faris<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UCLA Gambling Studies Program, Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA; <sup>b</sup>Independent Scholar, Henderson, NV, USA

### ABSTRACT

Contemporary usage of *addiction* is contradictory and confusing; the term is highly stigmatizing but popularly used to describe almost any strong desire, passion or pursuit. Does current usage involve a recent corruption of the term or is there a history of conflicting meanings?

**Method:** A diachronic etymological study of the terms ‘addict,’ ‘addicted’ and ‘addiction,’ informed by contemporary linguistic theory and utilizing primary and secondary sources in Archaic and Classical Latin and in English. We examine three periods: Early Roman Republic, Middle and Late Roman Republic, and Early Modern England.

**Findings:** ‘To speak to,’ its earliest meaning, is explained by legal and augural technical usage (5th cent. BCE). As *addicere* and *addictus* evolved in the Middle and Late Roman Republic, the notion of enslavement, a secondary derivation from its legal usage, persisted as descriptive and no longer literal. In the Early Modern period, the verb *addict* meant simply ‘to attach.’ The object of that attachment could be good or bad, imposed or freely chosen. By the 17th century, addiction was mostly positive in the sense of devoting oneself to another person, cause or pursuit. We found no evidence for an early medical model.

**Conclusion:** Gambling appears to be the only behavior that could satisfy both original uses; it had a strongly positive meaning (its association with divination), and an equally negative, stigmatizing one. Historically, *addiction* is an auto-antonym, a word with opposite, conflicting meanings. Recent applications are not a corruption of the word but are rooted in earliest usage.

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### Introduction

We present a diachronic, etymological study of *addiction* to see whether a look at the word’s origins and how its usage has evolved can shed light on the contradictions surrounding the word today. The concept of addiction has been fraught with conflict, so much so that there was an attempt to avoid it entirely by writing it out of the diagnostic manuals and substituting other terms like abuse and dependence. The experiment appears to have failed, and addiction has not only been officially re-introduced but its territory expanded. Our reliance on it seems to have outweighed our frustration with its ambiguity. We’ll begin with an overview of the problem and some examples.

### The controversy: ‘addiction’ as a viable diagnostic term?

When the word *addiction* was deliberately omitted from four consecutive editions of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* [DSM-III (APA 1980), DSM-III-R (APA 1987), DSM-IV (APA 1994), and DSM-IV-TR (APA 2000)], it was

because it was considered a layman’s rather than a scientific term, pejorative, stigmatizing, and too difficult to define. There were simply ‘too many meanings’ (Alexander & Schweighofer 1988); the term lacked any ‘universally agreed upon definition’ (Buchman et al. 2011); the result of using it was ‘conceptual chaos’ (Shaffer 1986, 1997). The word has recently been reintroduced in DSM-5 (APA 2013), where it appears in the name for a new category, ‘Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders,’ yet the text observes that *addiction* has been ‘omitted from the official DSM-5 substance use disorder diagnostic terminology because of its uncertain definition and its potentially negative connotation’ (p. 485).

Furthermore, the editors of the DSM-5 have introduced *behavioral addiction* (p. 481), a term they also do not define, despite their expectation that other non-substance addictions will follow gambling disorder into the official nomenclature. (One such possibility, internet gaming disorder, appears in the appendix.) The section on gambling disorder doesn’t mention *addiction* or *behavioral addiction*, and neither term appears in the glossary. In fact, the latter term appears only in the introduction to this one-hundred-page chapter. Inclusion in DSM-5 represents behavioral addiction’s first

**CONTACT** Richard J. Rosenthal  rrosenth@ucla.edu  UCLA Gambling Studies Program, Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, University of California, Los Angeles, 740 Westwood Plaza, Suite 38-181, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1759, USA

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official recognition as a diagnostic entity. It is therefore especially notable that, in addition to the lack of a definition, there are neither criteria nor guidelines for the assessment of potential disorders.

Thus, there appears to be a strange ambivalence, and not merely in relation to behavioral addiction but with regard to addiction. It's as if they invited it to the party then refused to acknowledge that it was there. Even the title for the chapter, 'Substance Related and Addictive Disorders,' is peculiar; it should be 'Substance Related and Other Addictive Disorders.' As written, gambling disorder appears to be the only addictive disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Of the chapter's two objections to *addiction*, the lack of a clear definition is the more compelling; the view of it as pejorative or stigmatizing seems debatable given its current popularity. 'Addiction,' as the word appears in popular culture, may indicate impaired control, as in a bad habit or compulsion, but is frequently used to describe almost any strong desire, passion or pursuit. When marketers refer to a game, product or activity as addictive or addicting, they mean that it's exciting and will sustain consumer interest. The name conveys desirability: it will meet your needs and is habit forming (but in the nicest possible way).

### **Positive addictions are seemingly everywhere**

A surprising number of fitness centers, shoe stores, lingerie shops, hair and beauty salons are named Addiction. One of us (RJR) took photographs of some of these shops and store fronts to use as slides when we presented an earlier version of the paper (16<sup>th</sup> *International Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking*, Las Vegas, June 2016). Examples were found within a few blocks of his Los Angeles office, next door to his hotel in Paris, around the corner from where he was staying in London. Addiction is also a popular brand name, and not just for footwear or hand bags or cosmetics, as you would expect, but also for a line of biker clothing and men's underwear, a brand of pet food, a media company, an archery range, and a brand of hot sauce.

William Glasser (1976), a psychiatrist, introduced the term 'positive addiction' to mean a positive behavior, like running or meditation, that strengthens individual functioning. Engaging in either of those behaviors regularly, according to Glasser, at a dosage of about an hour a day, will produce a non-critical, transcendental state of mind. He identified that pleasurable mental state as the addiction.

Popular usage and meaning of terms such as 'addiction' have a way of influencing the medical and scientific

literature (Babor & Hall 2007). Although seemingly everything pleasurable has been labelled an addiction, and subjected to a blog or magazine article (e.g. 'Travel addiction is real' and 'Science confirms that you can actually be addicted to travel'),<sup>2</sup> some of these have actually been studied. This usually consists of a survey in which criteria for gambling or substance use disorder are applied.

An illustrative example is a study of 'Argentine tango addiction' (Targhetta et al. 2013; see also Maraz et al. 2015). Targhetta, himself an avid devotee, conducted a survey of novice and experienced tango dancers. Of the 1,129 dancers whose responses could be included, almost half (45%) met DSM-IV criteria for abuse; seven percent met more conservative criteria for addiction. Based on the overall sample, 34% reported strong cravings, while 20% described symptoms of physical withdrawal. Tolerance was defined by an increase in time dancing or preparing to dance. Notably, the authors found the behavior to be much more of a positive than a negative addiction in that respondents reported positive physical effects, self-confidence, and a sense of well-being. That positive effects greatly outweighed negative effects was true even for those in the addicted group. The primary negative consequence was the spending of money for outfits and shoes.

The study reminded us of an editorial on 'internet addiction' (Block 2008; see also Billieux et al. 2015), which proposed as examples of tolerance not only the expenditure of more time but the need for more software or better computer equipment. Articles such as these illustrate the difficulties involved in applying features from substance addiction, such as tolerance and withdrawal, to non-chemical activities, as well as the problem of considering a positive behavior, one whose benefits far out-weigh any negatives, as an addiction.

### **Is it a recent problem?**

Various authors have expressed concern about what Sedgwick (1993) referred to as an 'epidemic of addiction attribution' (p. 133) and a 'crisis of addiction attribution' (p. 135). White (2004, p. 42) viewed it as 'a passing phenomenon of American pop culture.' It is not always clear whether they are referring to the spate of 'positive addictions' or the behavioral excesses championed as potential new disorders. In either case, we would be asking whether this is a recent problem, perhaps based on some misunderstanding, misuse or corruption of the term.

Most of the ongoing debates about the meaning of addiction have been framed in binary or dichotomous terms, usually related to the question of personal responsibility (e.g., Leshner 1997; Hickman 2004, 2007; Heyman 2009; Satel & Lilienfeld 2014). The behavior is voluntary (choice) or involuntary (disease); the individual is bad (criminal) or sick (patient); there is a failure or inability to resist the impulse

<sup>1</sup>As muddled as this may appear, it is perhaps technically correct. The requirement of only two of eleven criteria for a substance use disorder (SUD) means that one can have a disorder of moderate severity despite the absence of tolerance, withdrawal, or loss of control. In other words, other than distress and harmful consequences, the characteristics of an addiction weren't thought to be necessary. This was deliberate, in that the editors' intent was to increase the likelihood of early diagnosis. By thereby casting as wide a net as possible, they opted for a public health rather than an addictions model. A source of confusion is that SUDs, by their presence in DSM-5, are assumed to be addictions, and the terms are used as if they're synonymous.

<sup>2</sup>These utilize the same interviews, same quotes, same incorrect information. For example, at least a dozen blogs and magazine articles on travel addiction refer to its inclusion in *DSM-IV-TR* (American Psychiatric Association 2000) as an impulse control disorder. This is untrue: it has never been mentioned in the DSM or considered a legitimate disorder.

or behavior; it is or isn't due to a brain disease. Of the various contradictions, the notion of 'positive addiction' is arguably the most confounding, and the one least likely to be resolved by further research.

### **The etymological roots of 'addiction': might history provide the key?**

The specific application of 'addiction' to alcohol and drugs is considered a recent phenomenon (Levine 1978; Berridge & Edwards 1987; Peele 1990), with the medical conception of addiction beginning around the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Benjamin Rush (1784/1805) and Thomas Trotter (1804/1988). Yet *addiction* is a very old word. We will describe its origins, and then trace its early history up to but not including the medical model of addiction, which has been described by Levine (1978) and more recently by White (2004) and Hickman (2004, 2007).

Our review will focus primarily on three historical periods: The Early Roman Republic, the Middle and Late Roman Republic, and England during the Early Modern period. Of particular interest is not only the resilience of the term despite its limitations and attempts to avoid or replace it, but its current popularity as something desired despite the tradition of stigma associated with it. Is this seeming contradiction a new phenomenon, like the slang reversal of meanings where "bad" is the new good, or does it represent something much older, perhaps a misunderstanding or corruption of the word? Or is there a history of conflicting meanings, and if so how far back does it go? Is there an underlying meaning that has remained constant? A primary or prototypic addiction? Greater awareness of this early history, explored here with the benefit of insights offered by contemporary linguistic theory, will not necessarily resolve our present difficulties with the term, but may contribute to our understanding of its usage.

### **Origins: Early Roman Republic (5th – mid 3rd cent. BCE)**

#### **The legal meaning of *addicere* in the Early Roman Republic**

The English word *addiction* stems from the same root, *dicere*, meaning 'to say' or 'to speak,' as our words dictate, diction, and dictionary. *Addicere*, a Latin compound of *dicere* and the proposition *ad*, from which the English word 'addiction' is directly derived, meant literally 'to speak to,' and, more loosely, to 'assent' or 'adjudge' (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* 2012, vol. 1, p. 40). *Addictio*, the abstract noun derived from the verb, was the technical Latin term for the judicial act by which a debtor was made the slave of his creditor. The sentence was pronounced, or spoken, by the judge, or *praetor*, according to the ancient law of the Twelve Tables.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The verb *addicere* was also used more generally in Roman law, both with regard to criminals who were being handed over for punishment by an official, and for the public auction or sale of confiscated property. Cic. *Pro Quinto* 30.92; cf. *Ammianus Marcellinus The Later Roman Empire* 14.5; *Lewis & Short An Elementary Latin Dictionary*, p. 17.

The Twelve Tables, inscribed on bronze and erected for public view in the city of Rome in the middle of the fifth century BCE, constituted the earliest written record of Roman Civil Law. It was derived from primitive Roman religious law, whose administration was in the hands of a hereditary aristocracy that monopolized both secular and priestly offices. The Twelve Tables recognized a limited number of remedies for asserting property rights or contractual claims. On days when court proceedings were permitted by the Roman religious calendar, the *praetor urbanus*, the official in charge, would ritually intone a formula that encapsulated his judicial powers: *do, dico, addico*, which may best be translated as 'I give, I say, I adjudge' (Black et al. 1990, p. 37).

This pronouncement was nothing short of a 'binding spell' (Linderski 2006, p. 100–101), in that, in the exercise of his judicial duties, the praetor was acting in a quasi-religious capacity; his words were thought to embody the power of Jupiter, the chief Roman god who was responsible for lightning, thunder, and other celestial phenomena (Noailles 1949). As we shall see in the next section, the aristocratic officials of the Roman Republic, like the kings who preceded them, looked to Jupiter for signals of divine approval or support (Humm 2012; Schiavone 2012). Moreover, as a member of Rome's hereditary aristocracy, the praetor himself was one of the wealthiest and most powerful citizens of the Roman Republic (Dumézil 1966/1988).

Where exactly did this leave the *addictus*, which in the passive form referred to the hapless individual who was physically handed over to his creditor by the praetor's authority and physically led off in chains, to be held for sixty days or until the debt was paid? Failure to pay the debt after the lapse of the statutory sixty days rendered the debtor his creditor's permanent property. He could then, at the creditor's discretion, be kept, killed or sold as a common slave (Schiavone 2012).

#### **The augural meaning of *addicere* in the Early Roman Republic**

The 'taking of auspices' was a public religious ritual whereby the official in charge would formally 'consult' the gods, especially Jupiter, by watching the skies for evidence of the god's favor and support of some course of action (Walters 1997).<sup>4</sup> Prior to the founding of the Roman Republic in the late sixth century BCE, these functions would have been performed by kings, who as in many agrarian, pre-modern societies constituted a link between the human and the divine (Dumézil 1966/1988). In the Republic, such rituals were performed by officials, many of whom also served as priests.

<sup>4</sup>There is some debate as to the original Latin meaning of augury (*augurium*), but it is clear that the term evolved into a general term that embraced Roman divination, including the taking of auspices (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, p. 234).

The praetor had, in his military capacity, the right to take auspices prior to battle. The sky god Jupiter would through the medium of birds communicate approval (*addixerunt*) and support for the proposed assault.<sup>5</sup> For example, in the Roman historian Livy's account of Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator's campaign against the Carthaginian general Hannibal in the late third century BCE, Maximus duly took the auspices before setting out for the city of Metapontum in southern Italy to negotiate a proposed surrender. The birds did not, however, give him a favorable signal (*non addixerunt*), so he didn't go, thereby avoiding the ambush that Hannibal and the city officials had planned for him (Livy, *History of Rome from its Foundation* 26.16).

Significantly, if the response had been positive, it would have been the birds that would have proclaimed Jupiter's approval, a belief reflected even in Latin grammar: to wit, in all historical accounts of auspices taken prior to battles and other significant undertakings, the birds appear as the subject of *addicere* always in the active voice (Linderski 2006). In sum, we may make the following generalization concerning the Latin verb *addicere* in its technical usages: only the gods, through the medium of birds, or the praetor, in his judicial capacity, might perform the act of 'speaking to.' The very act of speaking was imbued with power through its association with the authority of the gods (Linderski 2006). Thus, the word *addiction*, at its root, is one of the most powerful of words. We may be reminded that another powerful word, *fate*, at its root means 'to speak' (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* 2012, p. 318).

This earliest meaning of *addicere*, 'to speak to,' is central to both technical uses, the legal and the augural (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* 2012, p. 40). A second, looser meaning, to 'sanction' or 'confirm,' applies mostly to its augural usage (Linderski 2006; *Oxford Latin Dictionary* 2012, p. 40). The most consistent, best known meaning, that of 'enslavement,' is a slightly later, secondary elaboration, albeit one based on its earliest legal usage (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* 2012, p. 40). For the Romans, enslavement became increasingly associated with the passive forms of *addicere*, which of necessity would take on a very different connotation from the active form. To understand this, one must appreciate the distinction Romans made between active and passive forms of the verb, and in fact between active and passive in all forms of behavior. To be the recipient, to be acted upon, was to be less than. A passive human subject was a defeated individual, the object of someone else's power. Being sentenced to be another person's slave would be particularly humiliating. It would mean not only the loss of one's citizenship but of one's personhood (Walters 1997).

### **Who was the original addictus?**

Gaming was ubiquitous among all classes, and while we don't know the percentage of Roman debt slaves who were

gamblers, the relationship between gambling and devastating financial problems was well known. The severity of the problem necessitated the enactment of legislation to protect those most affected by it from harsh punishments. In the fourth century BCE, the *Lex Poetelia* ameliorated conditions for debtors (Testart 2002), while the *Lex Alearia*, in the third century BCE, effectively rendered all gambling debts legally unenforceable (Faris 2012).

By that time, the association between gambling, indebtedness, and enslavement was firmly established. However, gambling was also closely associated with divination. It therefore appears to be the only behavior to which both technical uses of *addicere*, the legal and the augural, may be said to apply. Since one meaning is extremely positive, the other extremely negative, we will take them up separately.

*Gambling and divination.* A close association between gambling and divination exists across almost all cultures and time periods (Kendall 1961; Reith 1999). The Old Testament, for example, was not against gambling, but against gambling done frivolously (Rosenthal 2015). Lots were cast to choose leaders, settle major disputes, determine guilt or innocence. The winning throw was thought to represent the will of God. The early psychoanalytic literature (Rosenthal 1987, 2015) contained a number of cases in which gambling was viewed as a way to answer important questions about what was permitted, about guilt or innocence, life or death, and whether the gambler was accepted and loved by the all-important other. Stekel (1924/1943) was the first to describe the game as an oracle; if the gambler won, his wish (e.g., for love or power) would be granted, an idea frequently repeated in the literature.

Although there are many similarities, there are also important differences between the appeal to oracles and the taking of auspices. The auspices did not provide answers to open-ended questions, but only indicated whether a particular action, on a given day, would be supported by the gods (Linderski 2006). By contrast, oracles such as that of the Greek Apollo at Delphi provided more of a narrative of one's future. Whom should I marry? Will I conceive a child? Although oracles' answers were typically vague or couched as riddles, they offered people insights into their future.

The Romans recognized yet another form of divination, sortition, the drawing of lots, which appears to have been either indigenous to Rome or adopted at least as early as the mid-Republic (Stewart 2010). As with the taking of auspices, the drawing of lots was used for important political purposes such as the determination of provincial governorships. While it had the practical advantage of determining such assignments more or less objectively, there was also a genuine religious-divinatory aspect (Taylor 1966; Rosenstein 1995).

Finally, there was dice. Dice games presumably evolved from dice oracles, evidence for which can be found worldwide, although it is entirely possible that dice were used on different occasions and under different circumstances both for divination and gambling (Ryan 2008). While no evidence exists for dice oracles at Rome, there is substantial evidence for the use of dice oracles in Greece and Asia Minor

<sup>5</sup>It was considered favorable if the birds flew in from the left side of the auspiciant's field of vision (*templum*), and alighted in auspicious high branches. Conversely, if the birds flew in from the wrong direction, or low, or landed in an inauspicious location, it would have indicated the god's disapproval (Linderski 2006, p. 99–101).

(modern Turkey), both of which were ultimately subsumed within the Roman Empire. Closer to home, the Etruscans of central Italy used dice for divination as well (Eldridge 1918; Turfa 2011).

The connection between dice and Aphrodite, goddess of love and Venus' Greek counterpart, is also significant. Modified *astragali* (sheep or goat ankle bones), the forerunners of the more familiar cubical dice, were consecrated to Aphrodite on an altar dating to c. 500 BCE discovered in Athens (Foster 1984). Not only was Aphrodite closely associated with dice oracles but with dice games as well. In one of the most popular ancient dice games, the forerunner of craps, the winning throw was the 'Venus throw.' In addition to the financial reward, winning meant being favored by the goddess of love and beauty.<sup>6</sup>

Venus/Aphrodite was also closely associated with the goddess of luck, Fortuna (*Gr.* Tyche). This was the case both in Greece from at least the fourth century BCE, and in Rome where a joint festival of Venus Verticordia and Fortuna Virilis was held as early as the third century BCE (Carter 1900). Two centuries later, the great military dynasts of the first century BCE, Lucius Cornelius Sulla and Julius Caesar, adopted both Fortuna and Venus as divine patronesses.

Sulla, who was 'Dictator' of Rome decades before Caesar, established a cult of *Felicitas* (*Gr.* *Eutychia* or 'Good Fortune') and formally assumed the honorary cognomen *Felix* ('Lucky' or 'Fortunate'). He also referred to himself as 'Epaphroditus' or 'Favorite of Aphrodite' (Arya 2002). This association had the effect of cementing the loyalty of his troops and convincing the public at large of the inevitability of his military success and political supremacy in the Roman Republic (Baldston 1951).

No Roman general, however, claimed such a close relationship with Venus as Sulla's younger contemporary and future Dictator, Julius Caesar, who claimed direct descent from the goddess. A risk taker, Caesar placed tremendous faith in his luck, which he attributed to his special connection with Venus (Murphy 1986). It was Caesar, who upon crossing the Rubicon to engage his enemies, famously declared: 'The die is cast' (Suetonius *Divus Julius* 33).

In summary, dice and lots were intimately connected with both divination and gambling, as were Greco-Roman deities such as Venus/Aphrodite and Fortuna/Tyche. The fact that Sulla and Caesar built temples to Venus and Fortuna demonstrates how closely risk-taking, luck, and divine favor were associated in the Roman mind (Murphy 1986).

*Gambling and enslavement.* Dice games had become extremely popular by the end of the third century BCE even though gambling had been made illegal and the courts could no longer be used for the collection of debts (Faris 2012). Even so, the Romans perceived a link between gambling and bondage – both to those who bested them at dice games and

to the whims of the gods generally (Harnack 1889/2010). Gambling had the potential to ruin impressionable youths and even adults if they lacked the self-control to resist its lure (Muse 2003).

Combined with excessive drinking and illicit sex, gambling was perceived as part of a 'trifecta of vice' that potentially undermined the might of the Republic and its ruling aristocracy (Muse 2003, p. 129). Gambling debts could induce people to forget their duty to their families and the state. Gambling was also associated with criminality (Robinson 1995). *Aleator*, gambler, was generally a term of abuse, and gamblers from the lower echelons of Roman society were lumped with pimps and prostitutes as a criminal element, and therefore fair game for harassment by officials (Robinson 1995; McGinn 1998). Aristocratic gambler-debtors in the mid-first century BCE felt they had little choice but to join the violent rebellion of the disgraced senator Catiline, a man who promised the cancellation of all debts (Cicero *Second Oration against Catiline* 2.4; Sallust *Catilina* 14.2). Cicero, who prosecuted Catiline and successfully suppressed his revolt, subsequently attacked the equally reckless Mark Anthony as a shameless gambler who would grant pardons and political favors in order to satisfy gambling debts (*Philippics* 2.56).

Traditionally, upper class Roman males prized self-control as a supreme virtue. Inability to control one's urges – whether for alcohol, food, sex or the excitement of gambling, chariot races and gladiatorial spectacles – was associated with women, slaves and the lower orders (Edwards 1997). Moreover, 'pushing one's luck,' whether by 'chasing losses' at dice or ignoring unfavorable omens before a battle, was usually doomed to failure. For most Romans, the gods were capricious and Fortuna was a dangerous force of nature.

Thus, we see that gambling had two sets of associations, one that was extremely positive (divination, divine approval), the other extremely negative (enslavement, shame, disgrace). This coincides with the earliest meaning of addiction in that the verb *addicere* was rooted in two technical uses, the legal and the augural. Gambling seems to be the only behavior that fits both. One can, therefore, make a case for considering it the primary or prototypic addiction.

Even more important, however, is our recognition that a positive meaning of addiction existed from the earliest usage of the word alongside the negative, stigmatized meaning. In other words, two conflicting meanings existed from the beginning. Ambivalence about gambling, moreover, with its close associations to both divination and enslavement, may have served to reinforce this confusion. We turn now to the later years of the Roman Republic, after which we'll examine the early modern period. We'll see how the meaning of addiction evolved, while still holding on to these early influences.

## Evolution: Middle (mid 3rd cent. BCE – 133 BCE) and Late (133 BCE – 30 BCE) Roman Republic

### *The object of the addiction in Roman literature*

The verb *addicere*, in its legal sense, appears humorously in the late third and early second centuries BCE in the

<sup>6</sup>Robinson (1946, p. 209) cites several ancient sources mentioning the 'Venus Throw' (*Venerium*), including Cicero's *De Divinatione* 1.23, and Suetonius' *Divus Augustus* 71. See also Plautus' *Asinaria* (Act V, Sc.2). The Venus throw indicated the deity's guarantee of good fortune and happiness to come. The underlying belief seems to have been that the deity sent auspicious signs by guiding the hand of the thrower in a particular way (Graf 2005, p. 63, 66).

comedies of the playwright **Plautus**. In every instance, the word refers to the handing of a debtor over to a creditor by judicial order of the praetor. For example, the theme of judicial *addictio* is a running joke in Plautus' *The Little Carthaginian* (Act I, Sc.1; see also Act III, Sc.1 and Act V, Sc.6). In one scene, a pimp offers to 'assign himself into the hands of a youth: 'Who needs the praetor' he asks, '[w]hy don't I just turn myself (*me addicere*) over to you?' (Act V, Sc.6). Since the plays were performed on religious festival days, when social role reversal was the order of the day, we can appreciate the use of humor to help ordinary citizens cope with a legal system that must have seemed arbitrary and oppressive (Segal 1987).

In the first century BCE, a shift occurs and we begin to see the verb used in a less technical sense. Sometimes the verb is used reflexively to describe a self-destructive behavior. For example, a first-century BCE handbook on rhetoric considers whether a woman who had 'given her body over to base desire,' might be likely to poison a witness to her sexual indiscretions (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.16). The unknown author of the manual goes beyond the technical legal usage of *addicere* to express the idea of someone voluntarily giving herself over to ruinous desires, though it is worth noting that the hypothetical scenario is set in the context of a murder trial, perhaps a nod to the legal roots of the word.

By the first century BCE, the verb *addicere* also began to be used in a positive sense, to mean 'devoted to something.' Just as one could devote places or objects to deities, one could devote one's time and energy to a particular pursuit or activity. **Cicero** (106–43 BCE), the famous Roman orator and statesman who had prosecuted the rebel Catiline, in a clever twist on the original legal sense of debt slavery, promised a Roman jury that in return for acquitting a young man named Caelius, his client would forever after be bound and dedicated (*addictum deditum*) to serve the interests of the Republic (*Pro M. Caelio Oratio* 80). In another politically-charged speech, **Cicero** reminded a jury of his peers that he had consistently devoted himself to the interests of the Senate (*senatus cui me semper addixi, Pro Plancio* 39.93). 'Addiction' could be a positive thing if its object was honorable.

Devotion, however, could be a mixed blessing. **Cicero** affirmed this in one of his philosophical works (*Tusculan Disputations* 2.5) referring to Greek professional philosophers who were so wedded (*addicti et consecrati*) to preconceived doctrines and positions that they could not respond to questions or challenges without becoming defensive. While their commitment to the tenets of their particular schools was not harmful *per se*, it was portrayed as regrettable because it undermined the true purpose of philosophy, namely critical inquiry.

The theme continued to be developed well into the imperial period, as the term *addicere*, in its various forms, continued to gain traction with Roman speakers and writers outside of its strictly technical usages (Greene 2013). For example, a recurring topic is the error of condemning the mind to serve the interests of the body. In the first century

of the Common Era, the Stoic philosopher **Seneca** (c.3 BCE–64 CE) regularly employed *addicere* in his moral and philosophical writings. According to **Seneca**, the vast majority of people were guilty of devoting their minds to earthly pleasures (*animum corpori addixit*, Letters 90.19). Seneca distinguished between those who relied on their physical senses to set their priorities and those who were sufficiently enlightened to see past the superficial phenomena of the physical world. For instance, in a letter addressed to a promising young imperial official named Lucilius, the philosopher observed that those who were 'enslaved (*addicti*) to gluttony and lust' risked disaster; such folly, he maintained, was the 'beginning of all evils' (Seneca *Letters* 124.3). Likewise, the second-century CE imperial biographer **Suetonius** characterized the oft-ridiculed Emperor Claudius as so dominated (*addictus*) by his wives and favorites that he behaved more like a lackey than ruler (*Divus Claudius* 29).

Indeed, the most striking aspect of the use of *addicere* in each of these instances is the idea of bondage or enslavement. However, the object of that enslavement had evolved over the course of six centuries. We can recognize several overlapping, not-strictly chronological shifts in meaning. What started as literal, the fate of the debt bondsman (*addictus*) under the ancient Law of the Twelve Tables, became metaphorical. One could become enslaved by vice (e.g., gambling, drinking, gluttony). A behavior like gambling, which previously might have led to one's being sentenced into slavery, now *was* the enslavement. This was then expanded so that it was the pursuit of wealth or fame or even philosophy to which one was enslaved. In some instances, it was the goal that was misguided; in others, it was the excessiveness of the pursuit. The point at which it would be labelled excessive might depend upon the philosophy or moral stance of the writer.

Context, and the use of active or passive voice, were important. *Addicere* in its active sense implied the subject's superior or supernatural power, whether it was to change someone else's legal status or to convey divine approval or support for a course of action. Furthermore, it was possible to be 'addicted' to something useful or honorable such as service to the state. In the following section, we will see how the language of addiction, with its fundamental tension between positive and negative connotations, was given a second act in Modern English.

## Reception: The Early Modern Period in England (16th – 18th cent.)

### *The derivatives of addicere in Early Modern English*

Although Latin roots first entered English indirectly via French after the Norman conquest of England in 1066, 'pure' Latin words, uncorrupted by French pronunciation and usages, were carefully and deliberately adopted by scholars during the Early Modern period as English intellectuals endeavored to keep up with intellectual developments in Renaissance Europe (Ogilvie 1964). Classical translations led to the introduction of many new words into English. These loanwords were thought to add much-needed precision

(Barber et al. 1993/2009; Cree 2018). The bold new religious ideas of the sixteenth century were accompanied by a reformation of the language with which those beliefs were expressed.

‘Attachment,’ by contrast, was a semantic innovation upon the English derivative ‘addict’ that clearly dates to the Early Modern period (Lemon 2018, p. 49–51). It is no accident that this change occurred during the turbulent Tudor period, when people were expected to ally or attach themselves by solemn oath to king or other causes, such as religion (Cervone 2011). Whether used reflexively as a verb (i.e., ‘to attach oneself’) or adjectivally in the sense of ‘attached’ (meaning ‘committed to’), this sixteenth-century importation to the Latin loanword enriched its semantic possibilities even further (Willis 2008).

### **For good or ill: ‘addiction’ and the Protestant Reform movement**

The English verb ‘addict’ found particular resonance among the early church reformers. It’s earliest known appearance in English was in a tract by the Protestant reformer John Frith (1529, p. 318), where he is advising his readers to: ‘[j]udge ... all these things with a simple eye/be not partially addict to the one nor to the other/But judge them by the scripture.’ It is Cree’s (2018) contention that Frith was using the word here in the augural sense, since it involves the act of choosing between two or more things. If, in fact, Frith was aware of the augural usage of the verb, he apparently understood it as ‘preference’ or ‘choice,’ meaning (in a Christian context) the individual’s preference for a particular doctrine or interpretation of the Bible (Cree, p. 452). Cree supports her argument by noting another passage, presented by Frith (1531, p. 217) just two years later, where ‘addict’ again refers to preference or choice, only this time on the part of God.

Significantly, other English Reformers not only continued this active usage of ‘addict,’ but expanded upon the importance and consequences of an individual’s religious choices. They emphasized the dangers associated with a mistaken choice (Catholicism, the Pope, icons and idols). Most prominent was the danger of grievously offending God or of being led down the wrong path away from God. The Reformers extended their concerns to the physical realm, where one could be addicted to physical pleasures like gluttony and drunkenness. According to Lemon (2018, p. 11), they believed that attachment to physical pleasures led to misguided religious faith, and vice versa. In this sense, they resembled Seneca and the Stoic philosophers, for it was not just the excess of worldly pleasure they condemned, but the mere pursuit thereof, including the theatre, musical instruments, the use of tobacco, and, of course, gaming.

Such ‘choices’ need not be actively chosen, however. The most influential of the Protestant Reformers next to Luther, John Calvin, viewed as unsupportable the belief in man’s active agency (Cree 2018; Lemon 2018). According to Calvin, man was so corrupted and enslaved by sin that he was incapable of choosing correctly (Lemon 2018). One

could perhaps prepare oneself, but the act of positive attachment was not a matter of will. It was only through God’s grace that one was turned away from depravity and bad choices. An accomplished Latinist and writing in Latin, Calvin drew upon the legal, rather than the augural, usage of the Latin verb *addicere* to indicate that it is something done to or for one; it is not voluntary or within one’s control (Lemon 2018). This would be in line with the early legal meaning of *addictio* in Latin, where one did not act freely but was acted upon by the law, embodied by the praetor, and then, through the latter’s binding pronouncement, made the slave of one’s creditor.

While Cree is almost certainly correct that the frequent use of ‘addict’ and the language of addiction helped cement a sense of community among Protestant Evangelical reformers, an interest in the Latin classics amongst the educated classes also helped fuel the large-scale adoption of Latin derivatives into the English language (Burrow 2013; Lemon 2018). Therefore, during the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, a variety of religious writers, including not just Calvinists but also Anglicans and Catholics, utilized ‘addict’ to discuss the dangers of misguided attachments. The bad objects singled out for attention included witchcraft, magic, and sin (Willis 2008). Among the first of the Catholic writers was the scholarly St. Thomas More, who described ‘the kinde of man, that was by synne addicted and adjudged to the divel, as his perpetual thrall’ (*Treatise on the Passion* 1534). In light of his own in-depth classical and legal knowledge, More’s use of the phrase, ‘adjudged to the divel, as his perpetual thrall’ (i.e., judicially handed over to the devil as the latter’s slave or bondsman), was clearly intended to play off the original legal sense of the term.

### **The language of ‘addiction’ in Elizabethan drama**

Meanwhile, Elizabethan playwrights such as Shakespeare and Marlowe were keenly aware of the demand for displays of classical learning as the Renaissance came to England in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Most if not all of them had a solid grounding in Latin, and a few had university degrees (Barber et al. 1993/2009; Burrow 2013). Audiences for their plays, however, included nobility and urban poor, university-educated scholars and the illiterate, and, of course, the sophisticated, aristocratic and royal patrons who financed their productions (Burrow 2013).

In order to adapt the classics for such a diverse audience, Shakespeare strategically deployed Latin derivatives such as ‘addict’ and ‘addiction,’ while rendering them easily recognizable (Lemon 2018). For instance, in *Henry IV*, few playgoers would fail to notice the crescendo of Falstaff’s highly rhetorical – and humorous – defense of drinking sack (a type of dry white wine), which he admittedly prefers to battle (2 *Henry IV*, c. 1597, Act IV, Sc. 3), while Olivia’s single-minded ‘addiction’ (as in ‘self-imposed attachment’) to ‘melancholy’ and mourning was one of her defining attributes in *Twelfth Night* (c. 1601, Act II, Sc. 5; Lemon, p. 52).

Given the power and allure of the theater for Elizabethan audiences, it would be very surprising if attentive playgoers

did not ‘pick up on’ such memorable language, even if they had not previously been familiar with it (Burrow 2013). Moreover, given the competitive nature of Elizabethan society, it is also likely that theater-goers integrated it into their own speech, as a means of impressing others with their erudition (Barber et al. 1993/2009).

### **Normalization: the language of addiction becomes conventional**

By the seventeenth century, ‘devotion,’ in a positive sense, emerged as the dominant usage of ‘addict,’ and, in fact, became the convention, utilized regularly for dedications and epistolary sign-offs. The verb ‘addict,’ meaning to ‘attach or devote oneself’ as a “disciple or adherant [sic] to any person, cause or pursuit’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989, vol. 1, p. 142) appeared frequently, and usually in relation to the most positive of activities. In the following examples, it conveys the sense of a higher purpose, divorced from any association with enslavement or loss of control. In the *History of the Cardinals* (1670), we read: ‘The greatest part of the day he addicts either to Study, Devotion, or other Spiritual exercise’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989, vol. 1, p. 142).

Thomas Fuller, in *The Church History of Britain* (1655), wrote: ‘We sincerely addict ourselves to Almighty God’ (3:208). And Thomas Hearne (1698), in his description of Plato’s education, wrote that, as a young man, ‘He addicted himself to Poetry,’ while later, ‘He addicted himself to the Discipline of Pythagoras’ (III, 414). Meanwhile, the participle ‘addicted’ was used to communicate one’s devotion, and, as such, was employed as a closing to letters and dedications. Milton (1645), in his ‘Dedication to Parliament [sic]’ at the beginning of *Tetrachordon*, mentions his ‘addicted fidelity.’ The great Elizabethan composer and musician, Thomas Morley (1597/1973, p. 3), concluded his Dedication to his teacher, William Birde, ‘And so I rest, In all love and affection to you, Most addicted, Thomas Morley.’

### **The expert view: early English lexicographers on the language of addiction**

While these have been selective, albeit influential examples, a review of the dictionaries and grammar books produced in the sixteenth century find their authors cognizant of the legal origins of addiction, as well as its contemporary usage. For instance, Sir Thomas Elyot (1538) explained that in Ancient Rome, the verb *addicere* referred to ‘when the iuge in old thyme delyuered the dettour to his credytours, to do with hym what they lyst,’ though he also included other legal definitions such as ‘to saye, to iuge, to appointe, or depute [sic].’<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Thomas Cooper would define

*addicere* in his Latin-English dictionary broadly as ‘to say, to deliuer: to sell, or appointe goods to be sold openly; to alienate from him selfe or an other, and permit, graunt, and appoint the same to some other person [sic]’; the passive participle *addictus*, meanwhile, was glossed in Latin as *deditum, obstrictum sibi ac liberis suis aliquem habere* (‘to hold someone who had been fettered and awarded to him or his children,’ *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae Britannicae*, 1565).

Meanwhile in 1552, Richard Huloet defined the Latin *addicere* as ‘addict or gyve hym selfe to lyue pleasantly’ (*Abecedarium Latinum*), while Baret (1574/1580) subsequently defined the English verb ‘addict’ in terms of devotion to friendship, study and even upright living (*Alvearie or Quadruple Dictionarie, containing four sundrie tongues; namelie English, Latine, Greek, and French*). Significantly, Baret’s dictionary entry does not even hint of the possibility of being addicted to anything negative or dangerous (Lemon 2018). In 1616, finally, the lexicographer John Bullokar defined ‘addict’ neutrally as ‘to apply or giue ones selfe [sic] much to anything’ (*An English Expositor*).

Being well-versed in classical Latin, the scholars who compiled these reference works described the earliest legal (though curiously not augural) meanings, as well as the evolution of *addicere* and its derivatives up through the writings of Seneca. These lexicographers not only documented how the Latin words had been used historically, but how they had then, in turn, influenced contemporary writers, who introduced new meanings to these Latin derivatives based upon their own socio-cultural experience (Cervone 2011). While there had been an early emphasis on misguided attachments, and the dangers associated with bad choices, according to Bullokar (1616) the object of the attachment could be good, bad, or indeterminate. If there could be said to be a dominant valence, it was positive or at least neutral; the verb ‘addict’ came to be used increasingly in a positive sense to mean commitment or devotion (Willis 2008; Cree 2018).

### **Assessment: the evolution of the language of ‘addiction’ in Early Modern England**

In summary, derivatives of the Latin ‘*addicere*’ were attractive during the early modern period because of their prestigious classical pedigree (Barber et al. 1993/2009), as well as their semantic flexibility. ‘Addict,’ used as a verb, meant attachment; among its many synonyms were words that conveyed a strong attachment like commitment and devotion, and words connoting a less purposeful attachment, such as inclination, tendency, proneness or preference. There was a choice of objects, but the verb referred to the act of attaching, not the wisdom of one’s attachment or the consequences thereof.

The attachment, and, therefore, the addiction, was primarily positive, although negative addictions could occur if the attachment was to the wrong object. For the early Reformers, this meant Catholicism, the Pope, the icons and idols of the old church, while for those seeking forbidden knowledge or power, this meant an interest in witchcraft,

<sup>7</sup>The expansion of the legal definition of *addicere* in the sixteenth century English dictionaries (e.g., sell, appoint, etc.) was in fact drawn from ancient legal sources, as the harsh debtor seizure remedy of the Twelve Tables was subsequently abrogated by statute, though *addicere* continued to be used both with reference to the seizure of debtors’ property, as well as the handing over of convicted criminals for punishment (See n. 3 above).

magic, and the dark arts (Lemon 2018). When Falstaff embraces drink and the fellowship of the tavern instead of soldering and service to his king (*2 Henry IV*, Act IV, Sc. 2; Lemon 2018), it's a bad choice on his part but not what would be considered an addiction in the modern medical sense.

This focus on individual agency was introduced by Frith and some of the early reformers, only to be contradicted by Calvin (Cree 2018). Well-schooled in classical Latin, the Protestant Reformers' usage corresponded roughly with the original Latin legal (passive) and augural (active) aspects of addiction, which encapsulated the differences between these obligatory and voluntary interpretations, as well as the more obvious dichotomy of positive and negative (Hickman 2004; Willis 2008; Cree 2018). This tension between obligation and choice ran throughout the early modern period (Hickman 2004; Willis 2008), although the main difference between the derivatives of *addicere* as they appeared during the classical period, and their subsequent usage in the Early Modern era, was the greater precision in Latin, based, in part, on greater distinctions between active, passive, and reflexive forms of the word in Latin, in comparison with the emphasis on the act of 'attachment' in Early Modern English.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### *Moral vice or physical illness: when did the disease model really emerge?*

Several authors (Porter 1985; Warner 1994; Willis 2008) have recently disagreed with Levine (1978), who dated the modern medical conception of addiction to the work of Rush and Trotter around the beginning of the nineteenth century. They argue that a disease model of addiction emerged by the seventeenth century or even earlier. We did not find this to be the case. Support for their claim is sometimes due to contextual errors, sometimes an error in translation.

For example, Lemon (2018, p. 26–28) has a section on addiction to study, in which she gives a number of examples of both Cicero and Seneca's evocation of study as a positive pursuit. Both philosophers speak of it fondly, acknowledging the commitment (i.e., sustained attachment) and devotion necessary to do it well. Lemon then produces the following quote from Thomas Lodge's 1614 translation of Seneca:

For the minde being once moued and shaken, is addicted to that whereby it is driven. The beginning of some things are in our power, but if they bee increased, they carie us away perforce, and suffer us not to returne backe: even as the bodies that fall headlong downeward, have no power to stay themselves. (Lodge, p. 515)

As presented by Lemon (p. 28), the quote describes the loss of control that can occur when the pursuit of knowledge, being too single-minded, involves sacrificing other aspects of one's life. It is introduced in support of Lemon's argument about excessive devotion to study, and is an important point, that scholarship, though intrinsically a good thing, can result in helplessness and a progressive loss

of control if pursued too enthusiastically. However, the quote actually comes from Seneca's writings on rage (*De Ira*), not the study of philosophy. Furthermore, the Latin word *addicere* was not even used by Seneca in the passage quoted (p. 183, fn.16), and is therefore irrelevant to Lemon's argument.

That behaviors taken to excess have harmful consequences is not something up for dispute; it's probably something people have always known, hence the blaming of others, including the Devil. The section just cited on addiction to study was Lemon's lead-in to her discussion of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Cree (2018) has pointed out that both Willis (2008) and Lemon (2018), in their focus on Marlowe's play, have made a curious choice for their exploration of addiction, in that the word and its derivatives are absent from the text. Willis was aware of this, but thought what was there would 'invite modern readers to think of Faustus's attachment to the "damned art" of magic, as a form of addiction.' There is certainly the idea of enslavement through a pact with the devil, and a progressive worsening that's perhaps a by-product of too single-minded scholarship, but without 'addiction,' we are just left with an ill-considered attachment, not a pathology.

Warner (1964) based her evidence for an early modern model of addiction primarily on the pamphlets and sermons of preachers and 17th century moralists. An excellent example (cited by Willis 2008) was by Increase Mather, an influential spiritual and political leader, whose sermon about the harmful consequences of alcohol actually contained the word 'addicted' in its title (but only once in the text). From a reading of the sermon, it is clear that Mather identified drunkenness as a sin, an evil propagated by the Devil, most certainly a bad choice, but not a disease.<sup>8</sup>

This is not to say that drunkenness wasn't analogized to a disease, even by physicians. According to Porter (1985), doctors viewed hard-drinking as analogous to disease, and frequently described it as a 'fever,' 'a deadly fever,' and a 'poison.' He notes that 'the verbal play between "toxin" and "intoxication" readily spawned medical metaphors' (p. 390). However, physical symptoms and the experience of illness are regularly associated with heavy drinking, so it is not too far-fetched to think of excessive alcohol consumption as a 'poison,' or as producing a 'feverish state,' or even the sensation of dying.

The extent to which preachers, reformers, and even physicians used medical metaphors is perhaps better illustrated by another excessive behavior, one not so closely associated with physical illness. In 1674, Charles Cotton described gambling as 'an itching disease that makes some scratch the head; while others, as if bitten by a tarantula, are laughing themselves to death' (p. 1). He goes on to compare gambling to a 'paralytical distemper.' Henry Ward Beecher

<sup>8</sup>The sin of drunkenness, according to Mather, exists in its excessiveness, and for that reason is paired with gluttony. He observes, as did many others, that habitual drunkenness causes various physical illnesses, as well as mental (emotional, intellectual) and moral problems, but at no point does he suggest that it's a disease. Furthermore, he makes no attempt to relate addiction to the choice or consequences of the drinking. His use of the word is strictly in the sense of attachment.

(1844) wrote how gambling ‘diseases the mind, unfitting it for the duties of life’ (p. 115). He added that gamblers are ‘like plague-patients, infected and diffusing infection; each sick, and all contagious’ (p. 117). Cotton was a gambler, Beecher a minister, and almost two centuries separated them, yet both use the metaphor of gambling as a disease, one that was easily transmitted, progressed rapidly, and was often fatal. The National Anti-Gambling League, which was founded in England toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, compared gambling to cancer, leprosy, a deadly virus, and a poison that had infected the populace (Dixon 1980).

These disparate sources were using medical metaphors to convey the seriousness of the problem, and we can’t help noting that the language of disease was used both for the individual and for society. Furthermore, it was not *addiction* itself that was the disease, it was drunkenness or gambling, and when they referred to addiction, it was to convey ‘attachment’ or ‘preference.’ While the word drunkard did exist, there was no catch-all name for the sick gambler. And as a number of authors have noted (White 2004; Hickman 2004, 2007; Willis 2008; Cree 2018), ‘addict’ was used as either a verb or adjective throughout the early modern period; it was not to be recognized as a noun until approximately the turn of the twentieth century (Berridge & Edwards 1987; White 2004; Hickman 2004, 2007).

### **Word power: the inherent flexibility and ambiguity of the language of ‘addiction’**

So, if there was neither an early medical model for addiction based on progressive loss of control and disregard for the consequences, nor a close, non-metaphorical association with disease emerging in the Early Modern period, what was there? What we found was a tension between the original legal and augural meanings, which meant both a negative and a positive meaning for addiction. This was based primarily on the nature of the object, whether a good or misguided choice, since in the early modern period, addiction meant, essentially, attachment. And as Cree (2018) and others have observed, during the early modern period, the language of addiction was more apt to be positive than negative.

Therefore, today’s interest in positive addictions, and even the use of ‘addiction’ to connote keen interest or devotion to something, is not a recent corruption or misuse of the term; it has a long history dating back to the first century BCE, and was then rediscovered and appropriated in the Early Modern period (Willis 2008). We can also appreciate, as a result of our review, that ‘behavioral addictions’ aren’t the ‘new kids on the block,’ but were, in fact, the original settlers, already there to greet the arrival of the substance use disorders (Willis 2008). Furthermore, while evidence for a primary or prototypic addiction may not be strong, gambling is the only activity that fit both early meanings, the legal and augural, and would, therefore, appear to be the only candidate. More importantly, with its strongly positive and negative associations, gambling would

have reinforced both desirable and stigmatizing views of addiction.

An auto-antonym (also called a contronym or, after the two-faced Roman god, a Janus word) is a word with multiple meanings, one of which is defined as the reverse of one of its other meanings (*Merriam Webster* online). To *sanction*, for example, means both to ‘permit’ and to ‘punish,’ while to *bolt* means to ‘leave quickly’ and to ‘fix in place.’ To *dust* can mean adding or removing, depending upon whether one is dusting crops, baking a cake, or cleaning house. To *rent* can mean ‘to borrow from’ but also ‘to lend to.’ To *screen* can mean ‘to show’ or ‘to conceal.’

Addiction appears to be such a word. Many auto-antonyms owe their opposing meanings to different countries of origin or their development at different times (*Merriam-Webster* online); one meaning may be more obscure or archaic (Greene 2013), or different meanings may derive from different forms of a single root word. In the case of ‘addiction’ and its related words, both sets of meanings, positive and negative, developed more or less concurrently from active and passive forms which were morphologically distinct in Latin but not in English. Hence, the confusing co-existence of positive and negative usage in contemporary popular and even medical discourse (Willis 2008).

Further complicating matters, the verb ‘addict’ was effectively a sixteenth century back-formation from the Latin participle *addictus* used reflexively, but in the twentieth century it came to be widely used as a noun to refer to people who were unable to give up a substance or activity – in other words, who were *passively* suffering from an ‘addiction’ (White 2004; Cree 2018).<sup>9</sup> Finally, the familiar adjective ‘addictive’ (the stem ‘addict-’ here in its *active* sense, plus the adjectival suffix ‘-ive’) slipped into the Modern English lexicon in the nineteenth century as a technical scientific term, then came into general usage to refer to the appealing or compelling aspect of a particular activity or substance (*Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 40).

Subsumed in this distinction between active and passive forms of the word is another dichotomy going back to the original technical uses, the legal and augural. It was from the legal that addiction received its earliest meaning of enslavement. What has not been appreciated is that the enslavement exists on no less than three levels. First, the individual’s gambling or other difficulties that created the indebtedness that led to his arrest; second, his then being acted upon in court, where he is subjected to the power of the praetor; and third, the content of the sentence, which renders the *addictus* a virtual slave of his creditor. Everything about this emphasizes its obligatory nature. In the active (and reflexive) usage of addiction, by contrast, the emphasis is on either favor (Roman augury) or, more commonly, attachment (Early Modern English).

The dichotomies mentioned in the introduction, primarily between voluntary and involuntary models of addiction, imply an either-or approach. Thus, the tension between the

<sup>9</sup>For the linguistic phenomenon of ‘back-formation,’ generally, see English Language and Linguistics Online (or ‘ELLO’) available at <http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/Morphology/Backformation>

active and passive meanings, traced from the early Roman Republic up through Early Modern England, suggests that both obligation/compulsion and active choice may be built into the original meaning of the word. The contradictions in the word are therefore inextricably intertwined.

These grammatical and semantic complexities, in fact may have contributed to its resilience. Ambiguity based on elusive and conflicting meanings may be satisfying in the short term, and even add to the popularity of the word. However, in the long term, without a clear way to 'pin down' its clinical usage and define it properly, it will continue to hinder our understanding.

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