Highlights from the last meeting...

Have technology and the changes in the individual availability and quality of writing materials changed the way that we write? Currently there are two processes involved in writing: the actual writing of work and the revisionary, or editing, process. This was not practical when writing materials were extremely expensive. Can you imagine doing ten drafts of an essay on Papyrus? Also, it seems that when the process of writing becomes more efficient, our initial thoughts become more sloppy and our expression of those thoughts becomes shorter. We no longer have to carefully think out what we are going to say before we put it into words; we can always assume that we can go back and change it later. The word processor and the computer have changed the way that we write; have they merely made the process easier, or have there also been negative consequences incurred by these developments?

How has the ability to type changed our writing style? One example is that calligraphy (which means “good writing”)—even legible penmanship—has become extinct in recent years. Will calligraphy exist only in monasteries and religious orders some day, if even there?

Beyond the manifest mechanical differences, how has the content of writing been affected by the developments in the way that we write? It is likely that the content of our writing is affected deeply by how our thinking processes themselves are altered by the way in which we acquire information and the affect that media has on us as human beings.

Quantity has an impact on quality. How has the quantity of writing which is available to us in the modern age changed the quality of writing? Considering the mass of information that is available to us, we must acknowledge that it is impossible for us to read everything. Bookmaking has grown from individual monks copying important works in monasteries to a major world industry, producing more books than any one person could ever read. Has the art of learning changed from knowing what to read to knowing what not to read? It seems that a major part of reading has become sifting through the endless morass of material and identifying the worthwhile works.

What effect does the quantity of information itself have? How has the explosion of information, through text, radio, and television, changed the quality of the information being conveyed? Has the method of delivering the information become more important than the message? In the technological world, does the form that the information takes become the primary focus and become more important than the thought within the information? For example, what is so important about a “Hallmark card”—and why do we send these prefabricated sentiments rather than thoughts of our own? Also, if there were a “Truth” in such a card, would it be recognized or would it be negated by the medium in which it is conveyed? At least one philosopher suggests that Truth spread through a cliché becomes a lie.

The variety, abundance, and disconnected nature of information which we experience leads to a fragmentation of thought. Is this necessarily a bad thing? What is the cognitive function of words? Words are the way in which we convey ideas. The trend of de-emphasis of the importance of language reflects that visible material reality is our focus and not words “What is Truth?” The technological society demands a fragmented visual way of thinking in order to perpetuate itself. As long as we continue to use words, there may be a non-material, non-visual, and non-technological hope. Or is Hope today based only on new technology?

But why does that mean that we have hope, and hope for what? Is writing simply a tool that allows us
to advance materially, or can it be something more? The philosophical question is whether language is a way of accessing reality and truth or whether it is simply a convention that we use to manipulate nature. Language can help us in the search for ourselves. But what we take to be real is the material/visual/external world which we can manipulate, rather than the internal world which we could try to understand; we substitute visual reality for worded truth, and take Truth to be the appropriation process of what we take to be real.

Next Meeting: 
January 14, 8:30 p.m., 
Gamble Hall, room 106.

Our topic: 
Fine arts provide a practical, concrete medium through which we can express philosophical ideas. Novels, for example, give us the ability to exemplify our message in characters that people relate to and identify with. We are interested specifically in discussing Walker Percy's novel The Moviegoer, and how ideas are conveyed through fictional works. Is this an effective way to communicate ideas? Are there ideas which can be expressed in this manner which lose value and/or depth if they are said outright? What ideas are Percy conveying in his novel? Is his use of fiction effective or ineffective in communicating his messages?

Announcements!!!

2nd Annual Philosophical Essay Contest!!

Guidelines:
* Competitors must be students of AASU during the 97-98 academic year
* Essays must focus on a philosopher or some philosophical topic
* Essays must be a minimum of 1,000 words and include your name and phone number

Awards will be given to First, Second, and Third place winners!

Submissions can be dropped off at any time in The Thought Box, located in The Writing Center in Gamble Hall, room 109.

Judging will take place in Spring Quater, 1998

Mark Your Calendars!
Winter Quarter Meeting Schedule

Gamble Hall, room 106
8:30 p.m.

Wednesday:
January 14 & 28
February 11 & 25
March 11

Have a Safe, Happy, and Thoughtful Holiday Season

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Student President: Tiffanie L.C. Rogers. 1-888-964-9543.

Visit our Website!! http://www.thales1.armstrong.edu/pdg