What Of Death?

-pdg

Perhaps the greatest paradox of human consciousness lies in the riddle of death. We live all of our conscious, adult lives in full knowledge that we will cease to exist, yet most people (particularly Western people), cannot conceive of a cessation of consciousness. Thus we are led to conclude that consciousness may outlast the body, perhaps outlast it infinitely (another difficult concept to grasp). In Homer, the afterlife was primarily a world of shadows. But with the influence of many philosophers, including Parmenides, Pythagoras, and culminating in Plato, a fundamental change occurred in the way some Greeks saw death, a shift in thinking that affects Western thought still. Slowly, it began to be thought that the afterworld was not a meaningless, joyless land of shadows; in fact, for Plato, it is THIS world, the world of the body that lacks meaning. For Parmenides, Pythagoras and Plato, the supersensual world is superior to the sensual. Socrates calmly awaits his death, certain that he will be carrying on his arguments in the next world. The Socrates of the Crito still epitomizes dignified death, and Plato’s ideas here still influence our thinking today.

Questions to Consider

-Does the individual have the right to choose his or her own death?
-Do our fairly luxurious material attachments make it harder to accept death?
-Why are American movies so filled with violent death?
-What does the career of Jack Kevorkian tell us about the American way of death?
-Why is one death a tragedy, but a million deaths a statistic?

-What impulse in the American society is indicated by the carnival atmosphere when notorious criminals die at the hands of the state (e.g. people in clown costumes at the John Wayne Gacy execution)?
-For that matter, why are Americans so obsessed with mass and serial murderers?
-Why do only Americans and Canadians practice embalming with such regularity, so much so that cremation is more likely to be thought a gruesome practice?

Lasher said to Murray,

“We ought to have an official Day of the Dead. Like the Mexicans.”

“We do. It’s called Super Bowl Week.”

-Don DeLillo
conflict in a person born as a biological male, yet who truly perceives himself to be a female? Finally, some felt that focusing on the differences between males and females does more to promote divisiveness than to fight it. Instead, they felt that we should focus on the unity in humanity, on things that both genders have in common, on being human before being male or female. For them, ultimately, humanity must precede gender.

**Thanks to Those Who Gave**

The PDG wishes to thank Books-A-Million and Media Play for their generous donations of coffee-table books, cd’s, and computer games for the PDG raffle this October 21st at AASU. Much thanks also to Kathy Miller, a local artist and proprietor of K Miller Studios, Inc. on 2 S. Stillwood Ct., for her donation of original art. Please stop by our Philosophy Booth on the day of the fair and purchase a chance to win these prizes. Tickets are only $1.00 apiece.

**Visit our Website**

http://www.thales1.armstrong.edu/pdg

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**Contributions**

The Philosophical Debate Group is always open to new ideas. If you’ve got any ideas for topics, articles, poems, or just general suggestions, please e-mail us at one of the addresses below or drop a note in the thought box in the Writing Center in Gamble 109.

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**Meeting Times for Fall Semester**

All meetings are at 7:30 p.m. in Room 114 in Gamble Hall.

Monday, October 26
Thursday, November 12
Monday, November 23
Monday, December 7