

9-1996

# The Philosopher's Stone

Philosophical Discussion Group, Armstrong State University

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## Recommended Citation

Philosophical Discussion Group, Armstrong State University, "The Philosopher's Stone" (1996). *The Philosopher's Stone*. 45.  
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Volume 2 Number 1 / September 1996

# The Philosopher's Stone

The Newsletter of The Philosophical Debate

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## What did *you* think about this summer?

### What is the Philosophical Debate Group?

The Philosophical Debate Group formed in Winter quarter of 1996 to provide an informal environment for discussion of philosophical questions, insight into philosophical issues, and opportunities to learn from one another. Our meetings are open to all faculty, staff, and students. No previous knowledge of philosophy is needed for you to enjoy exploring questions with us. The 96-97 academic year promises to be very interesting for us. Please join us for our first meeting of the year on Thursday, October 3 in The Writing Center. We will discuss Ethics and the Television: Are we really "Amusing ourselves to Death"?

### The Box

By : *Tiffanie L. C Rogers*

(the following paragraphs are my opinions alone and do not necessarily reflect the thoughts of other participants in the Philosophical Debate Group)

One of the things that I thought about this summer was a series of questions about the Television. I was inspired to continue thinking about these questions by two of [Neil Postman](#)'s wonderful books: Amusing Ourselves to Death and Technopoly. Admittedly, I don't watch much TV, but every once in a while I get a glimpse of what The Box has to offer. For example, this summer I saw about 30 seconds of a program in which two immortals were attempting to kill one another. In the climax of an elaborate and poorly choreographed fight scene, a gentleman was shown burning to death-complete with forced screams, unenthusiastic groaning, and a ritualistic waving-of-the-arms display. Even more impressive was the censorship of the word 'ass' from a character's comments directly following this scene. What is the message conveyed by this selected deletion? It's OK to burn

someone alive as long as you watch your language so as not to offend anyone while you are doing it? What is the point of censorship? Does it have a moral basis, and if so, to what does, or should, it apply?

I listen everyday to friends and family as they plan their schedules around television programs. (Or they make sure if they cannot be there that 'their' show will be taped for them.) I sit alone at the dinner table while my family watches TV. Often when I am with a group of people, the discussion is about television programs-and they speak of the plots as if they were real. I am afraid that if someone were asked to turn off their TV for a month-or even a week-it would not come to a question about whether or not they would, but rather, whether or not they could.

What is the appeal of The Box? It is so important that we have a room in our house named after it. The TV Room. We don't have a game room, a studio, a den, or even a library or study. And every month we pay obeisance to the Cable Company. Why? Why is watching people kill each other accepted as a valid form of entertainment? Why is a talk show, where people either make up or put on display their outrageous personal problems, so popular? What messages do "children's shows" really give to children? Is educational programming really educational, or would we do better with the Aristotelian value of learning by doing? What messages do religious programs give: is religion also becoming just a form of entertainment? Do the types of popular programs tell us something about the morals and character of the population in general? Do you think the people in charge of the programming care what we get out of the show, or do they just want people to watch it?

### **Next Meeting**

Thursday, October 3rd,  
at 8:30pm,  
in The Writing Center

\*for copies of last year's *Philosopher Stone* issues or for more information, contact Tiffanie Rogers, student tutor, C/O the Learning Support Office or through the English Department.

### ***\*Announcements\****

\*Congratulations to Dr. Jamison and Dr. Murphy on the birth of their son!!

\*Special thanks to Dr. Baker and Dr. Nordquist for their support of the Philosophy Discussion Group.

\*Look for announcements in upcoming newsletters for information about future events, such as a Philosopher's Costume Party for Halloween and Philosophical essay contests.