

PROLEGOMENA VOOR EEN MEDIAFILOSOFIE

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Abstract

Why has philosophy been so nearly completely successful at ignoring media? A number of reasons suggest themselves. First, philosophers throughout the ages have been prone to identify media with language as a single 'super-medium'. Moreover, they have consistently understood the message of a medium as a 'propositional' content that is largely neutral with respect to the medium expressing it. Thirdly, the common conception of rationality entails that reasoning is the processing of propositional contents according to a system of rules for producing and managing them. Fourthly, the mind is commonly viewed as either the seat of these media-neutral contents, or as a capacity for grasping them in a media-neutral way. In addition, there is a deeply felt confidence in what may be called the 'psychological unity' of man; in particular it is presumed reasonable to believe that the essence of man has remained constant through all and any changes of media. Moreover, our consciousness of self and world is so profoundly bound up with the media for articulating it, that it seems impossible to study that relationship; the metaphysical intimacy implies a methodological impossibility. Finally, philosophy at large tends to understand itself as a perennial quest for answers to the same problems as posed since the dawn of thought, unaffected by the ways in which these problems are communicated and discussed.

A media philosophy worthy of the name will not be possible until these and similar presumptions against its *raison d'être* are cleared out of the way. 'Worthy of the name'? Well, maybe it could not possibly be philosophy. But philosophy has seen worse happen in its name.