

Veritas Discussion Questions - Fall 09 - Spring 10

Veritas Hour - Introduction

What we hope the group will be A chance to talk together about issues that matter.

Who are we?

Veritas

Moderators

Discussion Group Members

Who are you? Introductions:

Talking about things that matter: How can we have conversations that help us learn from one another?

Think about a conversation that has really influenced how you think. What were the things about that conversation that helped you learn from one another?

Some values that we are committed to.

Social Tolerance

Intellectual Integrity

Real Life Relevance

Sustainability

Tolerance What is it? What isn't it?

What would you say tolerance is?

Veritas Values

Social Tolerance -

Social Tolerance - Tolerance of different lifestyles

Legal Tolerance - Some things may be legal but not good.

Intellectual Tolerance - tolerance of other peoples' ideas Voltaire - "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

How have you seen these different approaches to tolerance at work?

Intellectual Integrity - We don't have to agree with everyone's ideas. We need to examine ideas to find out what is true.

To be fair we need to examine ideas equally to find out which ones hold up.

What are some ways we can examine one another's ideas in a way that helps us continue to communicate?

Real Life Relevance - unpack real life implications

Sustainability - respect time frame.

First meeting: Seven elements of a World View

According to Apostel, a worldview should comprise seven elements:

1. An ontology, a descriptive model of the world
2. An explanation of the world
3. A futurology, answering the question "where are we heading?"
4. Values, answers to ethical questions: "What should we do?"
5. A praxeology, or methodology, or theory of action.: "How should we attain our goals?"
6. An epistemology, or theory of knowledge. "What is true and false?"
7. An etiology. A constructed world-view should contain an account of its own "building blocks," its origins and construction.

Veritas Meeting 10-02-09

How would we sum up what we think the world is like? (We discussed this last week.)

Why do we think the world is like this?

What is our vision of what the future will be like? Where are we heading?

In light of what we think the world is like, what should we do? What are right and wrong ways to live?

What are the best ways to attain our goals?

How can we determine what is true and what is false?

What do we think has caused things to be the way they are?

Veritas Meeting 10-09-09

Is truth absolute or relative?

What are the arguments for relative truth?

What are the arguments for absolute truth?

Try to make the best case you can for the view opposite yours.

Veritas Meeting 10-16-09

This week let's look at what kind of evidence you examine when you are trying to determine if something is true.

What evidence do you consider reliable at indicating truth? Why?

What evidence do you consider insignificant, unconvincing or unreliable? Why?

When you decide that something is true, how true do you think it is? True for everyone? True just for you? Why?

Are there any absolute truths? What are they? Why?

Do we have any responsibility to respond in some way to things that are true?

Veritas Meeting 10-23-09

What is the difference between morals and values?

How can we define morality?

Veritas Meeting 10-30-09

Morality - How do we determine what is right and wrong?

Are we the source of our own morality?

Are we accountable to anyone or anything when it comes to morality? Who? What?

What difference does it make if we do something we know is wrong? if we do what is right?

Veritas Meeting 11-06-09

What makes a person good or evil?

Environment? To what extent do you think our environment/experiences influence whether we are good or evil?

Genetic makeup? To what extent do you think our genetic makeup influences whether we are good or evil?

Choices? To what extent do you think our choices influences whether we are good or evil?

Leads to the question of whether we really have free choice. How free do you think we are to choose good or evil?

Do we all have the same amount of freedom? Or do some have more freedom to choose good or evil than others?

Do you think there are a spiritual or transcendent factors that influences whether people are good or evil? Why or why not?

What are they? How do they work?

Are there other factors that you think are important influences?

Veritas Meeting 11-13-09

What brings about personal and social change.

Some questions that relate to that are:

What brings about personal change? What hinders it?

What brings about social change? What hinders it?

What kind of personal and social change do you think is good, desirable or necessary? Why?

Veritas Meeting 11-20-09

Do our lives have purpose?

If so, how do we go about finding it?

If not, should we make our own?

How do we live it out?

Is it valid to make for yourself/be born for an immoral/evil purpose? (depending on one's point of view)

Veritas Meeting 12-11-09

The stories we live by have a powerful impact on our lives.

Since this is our last meeting before Christmas, lets talk about the veracity and impact of the widespread story of Christmas. (We can also examine ideas from other seasonal holidays if some one wants to do that and can tell us about them with an informed understanding.)

What do you think of the idea that a real God entered into humanity in the form of a baby in order to save us?

truth?

delusion?

deliberate lie?

myth recycled from other cultures?

story that isn't true - but should inspire us to live by the good values it embodies?

other?

What do you think the impact of that story has been?

positive?

negative?

mixed?

other?

What story influences your life?

First meeting: January 29, 2010

For this week we'll be kind of recapping, brainstorming, and going through the following questions. Please be ready to respond with an answer to these if you feel you can/want to!

1. Was there a particular discussion last semester that really got you thinking more deeply or in a different way about something? What did you learn, and would you like to go deeper with that subject?
2. During the course of our practical discussion time, has anything we've talked about affected your life at even a basic level? How?
3. Although we briefly talked about future topics at the end of last semester, perhaps over the break you've been inspired in some way. Are there any new topics you think you'd like to discuss?

February 5, 2010

This week the folks at Veritas Hour want to examine the idea of faith.

What is faith?

What is it based on?

What does faith mean to different people and in different belief systems?

What impact does faith have on people who believe?

On the people around them?

Do you see faith as positive negative or neutral in it's impact on society?

Do you have a concise quote with a perspective on faith that you'd like the group to respond to? If you get it to me by Thursday evening I will try to include it on a short handout of quotes with different perspectives on faith.

Come prepared to discuss what YOU think about faith.

February 12, 2010

For this week let's look at the impact of faith on individuals and society.

What do you think is the impact of faith on people and societies?

Negative? positive? Handle with care? Helpful in the past but it's time to move on? Our best hope for the future? It depends on what faith you're talking about?

February 19, 2010

So what do you really think? Why do some people "believe?"

And how do they choose what to believe?

Is it reason? facts?

Need? Fear of the unknown? Response to authority or environment?

Something supernatural? Psychological? Neurological? Deeply rational?

And then again, why do some people choose not to "believe?"

What do you think? Come and let people know.

Let's tell each other why we have made the choices we have.

February 26, 2010

What does skepticism mean to you?

What exactly does it mean to be skeptical?

Is it a positive or negative thing? In what specific situations would skepticism be considered one or the other?

March 05, 2010

Are there miracles?

What would make an event miraculous?

Does belief in miracles undermine science and scientific learning?

Does belief in miracles undermine peoples' motivation to help with concrete problems in practical ways?

March 12, 2010

Spring Break

March 19, 2010

How much influence should our religious faith or our skepticism have on the laws and policies we make for ourselves as a community?

Are there parts of life that religious faith or skepticism should have a strong impact on?

Are there parts of life that religious faith or skepticism should stay out of?

What are some helpful ways for religious faith or skepticism to influence community life?

March 26, 2010

What is prayer? What does prayer mean in different religions and thought systems?

How does it affect people and events?

Is it helpful? harmless? harmful?

April 2, 2010

Good Friday

April 9, 2010

The resurrection of Jesus - Do you think it really happened?

If you don't think Jesus rose from the dead, what do you think really happened?

If you do think Jesus rose from the dead, why do you think this is true?

What difference would it make to people and society if the resurrection were true?

What difference would it make to people and society if the resurrection were proved not true?

April 16?

Are all religions alike? How can we evaluate religious claims?

What are some similarities and differences between belief groups?

do you think there is something spiritual beyond the material world?

If so, do religions communicate effectively what it is like or obscure it?

Can a person be spiritual without being religious?

April 23?

What is one thing that you wish people would think more about?

What has the experience of the Veritas hours been like for you?