

Amor me Jubit Mechanoscribere

(Love Bids me Type)

I teach philosophy. Yes, ... I'm a philosopher. But I'm not just any philosopher. I'm an "Analytic" philosopher. I live by logic, hard, cold, brutal, and unyielding. It's a lot like reality. Reality slaps you in the face like ice water. Reality doesn't tolerate fluff, or slop, or laziness. Reality is Darwinian. Reality is a typewriter. That's why I type.

Typing is like logic -- hard, cold, brutal, unyielding. It's done on 40 lbs. of cast iron. It forces itself onto the paper. The paper has no choice. It takes its punishment and likes it -- or else. When you make a mistake, it slaps you in the face like ice water. You have to deal with it. It doesn't tolerate fluff, or slop, or laziness. When you goof, you know it. The eraser or the white-out becomes your task master. Typing is for real men, real philosophers. It's not for those namby-pamby French philosophers with namby-pamby names like 'Foucault', 'Derrida', or 'Lyotard' (what real man wears lee-o-tards anyway?). Typing is for men with cast iron names, like 'Russell', or 'Moore', and 'Searle' (and, yes, even 'Rice').

A computer is the stark opposite. It is un-reality. It doesn't punish you for your mistakes. It might even correct them for you. It coddles you. It turns you into a "Momma's" boy. It's pure avoidance. It's tailor made for the French, for the Dare-ee-da-s and the Foo-coe-s. It's tailor made for soft and fuzzy thinking.

Ah, but a typewriter! A typewriter confronts you with The Real. Drop an Underwood no. 5 on a laptop and see which survives. Throw a monitor at it and see which is still working five minutes later. You can beat a computer to death with a typewriter, but, as with implication, the converse does not hold!

The typewriter is tailor made for men of hard thinking, hard lives, and cast iron minds. It's tailor made for the Russells, the Moores, and the Searles (yes, even for the Rices!). Throw a Searle at a Derrida and see which survives. The picture won't be pretty.

When I type, I'm linked to all the hard thinking men of the past, the Raymond Chandlers, the Erle Stanley Gardners, the Dashiell Hammets, the Russell's, the Moores and the Searles. This is how they made their fortunes -- the ol' fashioned way. They typed it. It motivates me to do the same.

The writer is a craftsman, and to write is to craft something. He's the carpenter of words, the blacksmith of the paragraph. The typewriter gives you that feeling of craftsmanship that the computer doesn't. The typewriter is a tool and the finished product, tangible. The satisfaction is romantic. You can scan your finished pages at a glance, lay them side by side, and know it really is a manu-script.

Ask yourself this question: Has any great literature, or philosophy for that matter, been written on a computer? Can you imagine Hemingway or Vonnegut banging away in some remote

corner of the world on ... a computer? Can you imagine Mark Twain submitting his manuscript of Life on the Mississippi in Microsoft Word rather than all capitals from his Sholes and Glidden? No, of course not! The situations are not consistently imaginable. Hence, there are no possible worlds where it happens. Therefore, necessarily, great literature is not written on a computer. But, either it's necessarily written on a computer, or it's necessarily written on a typewriter. Therefore, it is necessary that great literature be written on a typewriter. Quod erat demonstrandum!

But, now, after wading through all the foregoing, what's my real reason for typing? Well, it's just that it's such a tantalizing connection with the history and romance of a great and culturally important machine, and those great figures of the past who used one. It's neat, and I like it. (Gad, now I sound like a Phenomenologist!)

Martin A. Rice, Jr.

(This manuscript was typed on an Underwood Standard manufactured in 1951.)