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# The Philosopher's Stone

Philosophical Discussion Group, Armstrong State University

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# THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

The Newsletter of AASU's Philosophical Discussion Group

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*Please join us for a philosophically imperfect discussion of perfection.  
We will meet in Gamble Hall 106 on Thursday, April 17 at 3:30 pm.*

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## Nothing is Perfect

By Christina Schaller

Many times I find myself lost in my own mind, seemingly infinite ideas all swimming in chaos. This happens when I do not need my thoughts to be organized in any form, allowing the ideas to dance, spin, and frolic. Not always are these ideas favorable. Numerous times I have been told to “think happy thoughts” when my mind goes blundering off the cliff. I am then taken away by contemplating what a happy thought should be. The thought should be perfect, but Perfection should not exist since a human mind is too imperfect to contain what complete Perfection should represent. Perfection is a complete whole, but humans will constantly look at the parts by breaking down the whole.

Tom Sorell points out Descartes' arbitrary affirmation of “finite intelligence”:

In the *Meditations*, Descartes purports to be giving a theory of the soul not a theory of the mental capacities and ideas that put us in touch with the essence of matter. And as a theory of the soul – of what animates

the human being – what is offered in the *Meditations* has a certain arbitrariness. It seems arbitrary to claim that the soul is only contingently a sensing and imagining thing but necessarily a pure finite intelligence (77).

If the soul is a ‘finite intelligence’, could we as a soul-being think of such a thing as infinity, or are we just imagining mere continuation an idea of “after my existence”? If we were to just imagine a continuing existence as infinity, it is innately flawed from our own understanding of mortality. The same concept can be applied to the thought of Perfection, Descartes considers the ‘perfect being’ to be just that, and argues for his existence, as a certainty (Descartes, 35-42).

The Human soul is imperfect because it is considered distinct from the body, such as a mind is distinct from a brain.

Locke, believing there are perfect parts to a Rational Being, still points out that the mind and soul could be thinking, albeit irrationally separate from one another:

‘Tis true, we have sometimes instances of Perception, whilst we are *asleep* and retain the memory of those *Thoughts*: but how *extravagant* and incoherent for the most part they are; how little conformable to the Perfection and Order of a rational Being, those who are acquainted with Dreams, need not be told. This I would willingly be satisfied in, Whether the Soul when it thinks thus apart, and as it were separate from the Body, acts less rationally than when conjointly with it, or no: If its separate Thoughts be less rational, then these Men must say, That the Soul owes the perfection of rational thinking to the Body: If it does not, ‘tis a wonder that our Dreams should be, for the most part, so frivolous and irrational; and that the Soul should retain none of its more rational Soliloquies and Meditations (113).

I am not making the argument of whether any human is perfect, or could be perfect, but exploring our understanding of

Perfection. My question is: how could we imagine something if we cannot have any experience of it? The perceived concept of any Perfection is whole, without flaw; one. If you see anything in nature and break it down, one is seeing nature as the sum of parts. Like a tree, broken down into pieces: the tree is roots, leaves, branches etc., but the tree is not perfect. A human mind does not have the capacity to understand Perfection, because we are constantly breaking down every experience into smaller parts, analyzing every detail to be described and explored perpetually.

Some would argue that Perfection is not an experience, but a theory. Perhaps the same kind of theory in which we have a thought and symbol for nothing: 0. Often I have wondered on this, I have thought of 'nothing' but, an empty space comes to mind. That space is contained though, and my mind begins to form what would contain the space, thus breaking even nothing into parts. Even using the mathematical nothing; zero, it is a placeholder used to save a space, so many zeros before or after an integer gives the number a different value.

Then a question came to mind, how does someone explain nothing? Nothing is defined, and perceived, so it is something. Even if I have the thought "there is nothing in here," a space is still contained. Nothing must have some existence, because it has a name. While thinking about this nothing, I conceived an absent-

nothing, which in the English language would be a double-negative, but I think of it more as a negative neutral, or in mathematics, a symbol such as 0. Anyone would tell me this symbol, or the value, does not exist. Also in that absent-nothing, I contradict myself, because I have named something, even if it represents a vacancy.

Would the thought of nothing be the same for Perfection, a absence of flaw? I do believe that a mind could not contain such a thought without giving Perfection its boundaries. Containing Perfection within any criteria, walls we put up around something that is perceived to be an ultimate freedom, is problematic. Composing a standard from a mind that cannot be the same as any other being, and then sectioning that standard so it may be explained creates the parts that would make Perfection meaningless. The human mind would break Perfection into its tiniest parts, analyzing the very fabric of what it is, and in that destroy what Perfection is.

### **Works Cited**

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translated by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.

Locke, John, and P. H Nidditch. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Sorell, Tom. *Descartes: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

## **WrestleMania: The Battle Between Nothings**

**“Ex nihilo nihil fit”**

**VS.**

**“Creatio ex nihilo”**

### **Thoughts from last meeting:**

The discussion endeavored to assimilate the dilemma of technology with the unintentional byproduct of boredom – or is it really unintentional? Does technology prevent us from becoming bored or does it provoke boredom? Is this good or bad?



A challenged was issued and accepted by the PDG community to give up one piece of technology in order to evaluate our dependence and the effects technology imposes on us.

Please join us on April 17<sup>th</sup> where our findings will be presented and discussed.