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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 the Philosophical Debate Group



## Money Talks

Whenever I meet someone for the first time, the inevitable question arises: So, what do you do? Why is this so often the first question that comes to mind when meeting someone new? Have our jobs and their ability to produce income become our principal source of identity?

Marx felt that humankind ought to be called *homo faber*, man the maker: We are what we make. Furthermore, he believed that we become "alienated labor" when the work we undertake does not derive from a natural creative impulse, but from the need to fill an avaricious or economic void. But how many of us work because it fulfills our creative impulses?

To explore the power of money is also to explore the power of symbol, since the actual coins and bills have only the value we place on them. In America, the cash system is so accepted that the symbolic aspect of money is nearly invisible. This aspect becomes visible only occasionally, like when

a dollar bill won't go into a coke machine. And what about the invisible codes associated with money? Why is it that flashing a roll of hundred dollar bills is considered vulgar, while wearing name brand clothes and driving a Mercedes is not?

In Plato's utopia, described in the Republic, only workers and artisans may own money, wear gold and silver, own property. The rulers, called Guardians, live in a thoroughgoing communist state. For Plato, money is a completely worldly tool, and we know from the allegory of the cave that Plato thought that the visible world was illusory, a shadow flickering on the wall. But is it necessarily the case that a material society will always place limited value on the spiritual world?

Money doesn't quite make the world go around, but it does hold social orders together. Rant as we may against materialism, materialism creates jobs, which create social stability. But how much materialism is necessary and how much is excess? Is our social order predicated on excess? Are most Americans employed to produce necessities—simple clothes, simple foods, simple shelter? Or are they employed to produce all the extras of a successful civilization? To produce a consumer market for the economy? And, if so, is this necessarily a bad thing?

--jmb

## The Power of Money

Money!!! From the second we are born, our lives revolve around it. We breathe money and we live money. Every other word we speak is money: "I am broke, I have to pay bills, I have to go to work, I need a raise..." and so on. Let's not fool ourselves; we are struggling through college, not for the sake of education, but to sell our acquired knowledge. Simple? Not really. Let's admit that we are all engaged in this never-ending competition: from the jeans that we put on in the morning to the car(s) that we drive and, of course, to our prestigious titles. The sad thing is that we are so consumed with money that we don't realize that we have become slaves. Money has power over us. We created our own slavemaster, and the shackles are becoming tighter with each credit card. Our society has completely forgotten about humanity and values that are invisible. We lie for money; we cheat. We suffer, struggle, and kill. But don't worry. There is justice and freedom, and you can buy it with money!

--Sema Long

What do you think? Come to Gamble Hall, Room 114, on Monday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 p.m. and share your ideas.

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## Thoughts and Announcements

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Sophocles, from *Antigone*

*It's money that sacks cities,  
and drives men forth from  
hearth and home; warps and  
seduces native innocence,  
and breeds a habit of  
dishonesty.*

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### Campus Question

**How much power does  
materialism have over us and  
our society?**

Sophomore: *I believe  
materialism has a great  
control over us. Money is  
the reason why we work so  
we can support our  
cravings, be it food or other  
things in life.*

Professor: *I personally am  
not motivated by  
materialism. Some elements  
of society, such as Wall  
Street and Hollywood are  
controlled by it. But I think  
most of us are not  
excessively consumed with  
materialism and are pretty  
satisfied with our lifestyles  
and, for example, would not  
kill for money.*

### Contributions

The Philosophical Debate Group is always open to new ideas. If you've got any ideas for topics, articles, poems, or just general suggestions, please e-mail us at one of the addresses below or drop a note in the thought box in the Writing Center in Gamble 109.

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The PDG is updating its mailing list. If you do not receive the next newsletter, and wish to remain a subscriber, please e-mail Jane Martin-Brown at [JCVerse@aol.com](mailto:JCVerse@aol.com).

### Meeting Times for Fall Semester

All meetings are at 7:30 p.m. in Room 114 in Gamble Hall.

Monday, September 28  
Thursday, October 15  
Monday, October 26  
Thursday, November 12  
Monday, November 23  
Monday, December 7

### CELEBRATION!

*Celebrate Armstrong Atlantic State with the Philosophical Debate Group at the annual AASU Day on Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>. The event is celebrated campus-wide with music, games, international cuisine, and prizes.*

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Visit our Website!  
<http://www.thales1.armstrong.edu/pdg>

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