

Ex Nihilo

The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of
the University of Texas at Austin

The Undergraduate Philosophy Association
Volume IV, 1999

Ex Nihilo

**The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of
the University of Texas at Austin**

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: *Ex Nihilo* is a publication that provides a forum for undergraduate students to explore and exchange ideas about philosophy. After 3 years as a departmental journal, this is the first volume of *Ex Nihilo* as a national undergraduate journal. The upgrade is a testament to the hard work of past editors and the commitment of the Philosophy Department at the University of Texas to the production of *Ex Nihilo*. We are confident that the high quality of the papers in this volume confirms that the Department's commitment was justified.

While University of Texas students receive no preference in the review process, 2 slots in the journal are reserved for the winners of the Matchette Essay Contest (a UT-Austin contest).

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CALL FOR PAPERS: *Ex Nihilo* will consider papers on any philosophical topic written by an undergraduate student. To submit, please send 3 paper copies and 1 disk copy (preferably in .rtf format) to: University of Texas at Austin
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Please do not include any identifying information on the papers. Instead, include a cover sheet with your name, address, school, phone number and email (if available). Include citations parenthetically; do not use annotated citation lists. Reserve footnotes for clarificatory and explanatory remarks only; do not use endnotes. Papers should not exceed 5500 words. The submission deadline for *Ex Nihilo* v.5 is January 28th, 2000. For additional information write to ndesai@mail.utexas.edu.

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An Analysis of the Anthropic Principle and its Place in Modern Science

Steven Harms

University of Texas

(Winner: Matchette Essay Contest)

Introduction

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the academic and scientific communities faced a crisis in physics. Confronted with revolutionary implications from the empirical research of Edwin Hubble and theories of relativity of Einstein, the science of the day was forced to rapidly face one of the most significant paradigm shifts known in the modern age. In its wake, new sciences such as cosmology appeared and new methods of explanation such as quantum mechanics systematized the new knowledge.

Beginning in the mid-1970's, a subset of cosmologists broke away from the empirical tradition and devised a series of principles that attempted to explain the seemingly inexplicable properties of the universe. These principles, collectively known under the title, "The Anthropic Principle", are philosophical, not empirical, in nature. They offer a new and largely unexplored method of explaining the universe's properties. Cosmologists turned to logical conclusion-drawing versus trial experimentalism. In the Anthropic Principle, cosmologists proceed in an order of investigative steps exactly opposite to scientific tradition – from conclusion to premises. The question is: "Is this choice a change for the better?" This essay seeks to evaluate these principles by examining their meanings, pertinence, scientificity, and explanatory power. It aspires to conclude whether or not the Anthropic Principle has a valid place in cosmological research; and if so, what sort.

The Anthropic Principle Defined¹

The Anthropic Principle is classified into two super-classifications: the Weak Anthropic Principle (WAP) and the Strong Anthropic Principle (SAP). The SAP is further divided into four sub-

¹ Barrow and Tipler's work (Barrow, John D. and Tipler, Frank J. The Anthropic Cosmological Principle. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986.) is the most definitive book on the subject of The Anthropic Principle. As such, I have taken their presentation of the anthropic principle and will be using it as the source for my definition of the AP. Particularities in interpretation are noted in the footnotes.

Steven G. Harms is a 4th year MIS/Philosophy major at the University of Texas. His interests include, among others, the pre-Socratics, the history of science and the relationship of information technology and man..

