

*The Peucinian Society at Bowdoin College kindles intellectual fire through hosting political and social disputations that encourage a articulation and explcatn of the Authorities that lucidate Right, the Goals that unif Culture, and the Sources that inspire Virtue.*



## Disputation XLII

Dear Peucinian Society,

As the autumn leaves spread like a blanket upon our quad, we are reminded that fall break is on its way. Before we adjourn for that long weekend, we will be holding a disputation followed by a special gathering at the Potter Institute. Last Thursday, we came together around the “American dilemma”—the political principles of our founders laid the groundwork for the most stable and enduring regime in modern times, but a regime with a few gaping problems.

The resolution was: “This house believes the American Founders deserve our Utmost Respect.” The resolution passed with a vote of 10 yeas and 9 yeas. John Cunningham ’10 diligently outlined the unique political innovations of the founders—an independent judiciary, an amended version of the separation of powers, and checks and balances designed to secure liberty. Cunningham argued that the vast opportunities and liberties we have available to us today would not be possible without the founders. Ross Jacobs ’10 contended that this liberty was a “negative liberty” and that while the founders should be applauded for their rebellion against tyranny, the founders also laid the groundwork for a “commercial republic” unworthy of our highest esteem.

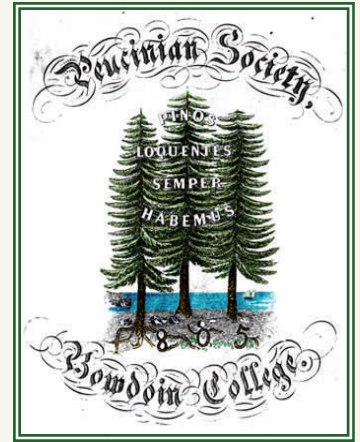
He argued that because Peucinian’s task is to create a Society pursuing a “republic of genius,” the Society should reserve its utmost veneration for those philosophers, theologians, scholars, and artists who had a vision of “positive freedom.”

This discussion of “republics” leads us to our next disputation, an ethical and moral topic at the center of Plato’s Republic—the topic of lying. With the accusations of “you lie!” coming from both sides of today’s political aisle, the attention to the category of “bullshit” in contemporary philosophy, and the religious and political concern with the rising tide of “relativism” we are returned to a fundamental questions about truth and lies. We celebrate truth-telling while know that politicians sometimes need to lie. We tell myths even though we would dislike it if other told us myths. The possibility that religion is at once untrue and necessary for political moderation also makes us wonder whether deception is sometime called for. At the same time, even those who take the Machiavellian position that religion is useful for the masses seem to have religious curiosities themselves.

**Resolved: There is no such thing as a noble lie.**

Affirmative: Ursula Moreno-VanderLaan ‘13  
Negative: Judah Isseroff ‘13  
Thursday, October 8, 2009  
7:30 in Massachusetts Hall

Yours Truly,  
The Peucinian Society Council



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[http://learn.bowdoin.edu/  
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