

Disputation XLVI: Bowdoin Should Adopt Gender-Neutral Living Facilities

Dear Peucinian Society,

We want to thank and congratulate all of you who have contributed to the current strength of the society. With increasing passion, members anticipate the Thursday occasion as an opportunity for both relief from, and expression of, a week of intellectual toil. Last week's resolution: "The Great Leader need not be Morally Good" further cemented the ritual aspects of the weekly Peucinian event while offering a forum for comprehensive reflection on matters moral, psychological, political, economic, and philosophical.

The resolution failed with a vote of 10 nays and 8 yeas. Without condemning or praising immorality, Christine Carletta made the stern argument that there is a difference between what should be done and what must be done. She argued that acting outside the sphere of morality must be within the realm of possible actions for great leaders working to maintain the state. Citing Machiavelli's concept of *Virtu*, she enumerated immoral qualities that might be necessary for a great leader acting in the interest of his or her state. While arguing that immoral qualities must be obscured from public view, Christine emphasized that while no leader should ever sanction unnecessary wicked acts, the great leader must learn how not to be good. Tim O'Brien essentially argued that the distinction between private morality and public good built by Christine was hollow and pernicious. Returning the society to Aristotle, Tim argued that all of our action emanate from one primordial ethos. Contrasting the courage of Sir Thomas More with the cowardice of Wolsey in *A Man for all Seasons*, Tim argued that the greatness of a leader is the glorious public manifestation of the ethos or character cultivated in private life.

The remainder of the evening consisted of taking specific historical examples of people we considered "great leaders" and deliberating about whether immorality was an indispensable or unnecessary means for the achievement of that greatness. Lincoln, Burke, Mandela, Thatcher, Bismarck, Robespierre, David Ben Gurion, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were given the most consideration as we tried to determine whether the lying, corruption, brutality, false promises, constitutional violations, and other immoralities perpetrated by the leaders were necessary to the achievement of their greatness. After being complicated and interrupted by the incendiary suggestion that most conceptions of morality are products of the human imagination without a binding character, the conversation ascended to a consideration of the goals of a great leader and a discussion of whether those goals can be achieved within the confines of morality.

This week, we will explore a local eruption of a deep, tectonic conflict that has developed in North America and Europe over the past thirty years-- the issue of whether gender norms are ennobling or repressive. Indeed, the identity politics of the 90's might be succeeded by a *kulturkampf* between the partisans of Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* (2004) and the partisans of Harvey Mansfield's *Manliness* (2006). The former favors active subversion of gender stereotypes where the latter calls for a strengthening of them. The "local" eruption is the quarrel at Bowdoin about whether we should move towards more gender-neutral housing.

Resolved: Bowdoin Should Adopt Gender-Neutral Living Facilities

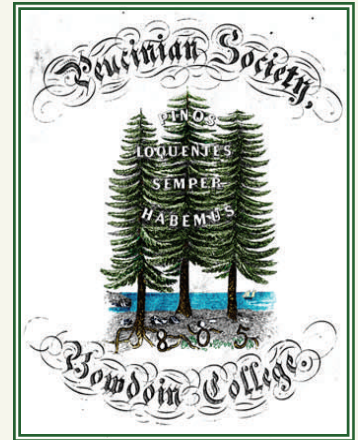
Affirmative: Rory Brinkmann '10

Negative: Nick Daniels '12

Thursday, November 12, 2009, 3rd Floor Massachusetts Hall, 7:30 P.M.

Sincerely,

The Peucinian Society Council



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