

Disputation XLVIII: The Rise of The Internet has been to the Detriment of Artistic Genius

Dear Peucinian Society,

Last weeks disputation, "Resolved: secular liberalism is a political religion" failed with a vote of 10 nays to 7 yeas. Steven Robinson argued that secular liberalism contained narratives, practices, and beliefs that give meaning and ultimate truth to its adherents. He argued that the quest for freedom from religion, the demand for an ideology implemented through the state, and apocalyptic doomsday theories including anthropogenic global warming are all the components of an 'ersatz religion.' Several members supported the thesis on less conservative grounds by arguing that the messianic content and unquestioned belief in progress incipient within contemporary secular liberalism actually makes religious claims that even secular Greek philosophers would resist. Foremost among these claims is the idea that religion is a strictly personal matter and that encouraging others to be religious is a sin. A few leftist voices argued that the eschatological neoliberal economics of secular liberalism supports the claim that secular liberalism is a blind ersatz religion.

Ultimately, Hannah Scheidt's disciplined argument informed by her studies of religion at Bowdoin solidified a thick definition of religion that disqualified secular liberalism. She summarized the Clifford Geertz's criterion as 'a system of symbols which create an aura of factuality,' Williams James's as 'feelings and acts related to the divine,' Emile Durkheim's criterion as a 'unified system of practices related to sacred things,' and Mary Douglas's criterion as a 'system of shared taboos.' Arguing that religion is more than something around which people convene, she argued that secular liberalism lacked the 'faith and obligation' and element of force or coercion in most religions. She argued that the goals of secular liberalism-- reinforcing the distinction between public and private, preventing things like creationism from being taught in school, and guaranteeing free inquiry are important and reasonable goals rooted in American tradition-- not religious dogmas. A dogma does not leave room open for questions, and even scientific atheists, she contended, do not believe everything can be answered through science.

Those few warriors of knowledge that survived last week and wish to return will be treated to our final disputation of the semester. The most salient technological feature of this third millennium is what many refer to as "the internet." This strange invention is breaking down barriers between cultures, allowing for an explosion of access to pornography, transforming our political lives, and mid-wifing the emergence of new identities. For the past few millennia, human beings have been creating art. Thinkers such as Marx, Heidegger, and Kant have even suggested that making art is the distinctively human attribute. What is the relation between the internet and art? Two artists-- a dramatist and a Jazz pianist will navigate us through the torrents of internet-age aesthetics to clear the way for interpretation and evaluation.

Resolved: The Rise of The Internet has been to the Detriment of Artistic Genius

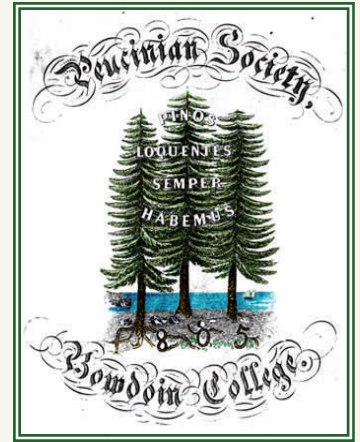
Affirmative: Hassan "DuBois" Muhammad '10

Negative: Bryant "Melville" Johnson '11

Thursday, December 10, 2009, 3rd Floor Massachusetts Hall, 7:30 P.M.

Sincerely,

The Peucinian Society Council



Council of Eight

President: Ross D. Jacobs
 Provost: Christine M. Carletta
 Mstr. of Sessions: Sam Smith
 Treasurer: John Cunningham
 Chronicler: Nick Daniels
 Herald: Rashd Harvey
 Impresario: Daniel Jose
 Poet Laureate: Steven Robinson

Board of Advisors

Mr. Paul Franco, Gov't.
 Mr. William Watterson, English
 Mr. Robert Sobak, Classics
 Mrs. Jean Yarbrough, Gov't.
 Mrs. Jill Pearlman, Architecture
 Mr. Scott Sehon, Philosophy
 Mr. Craig McEwen, Sociology
 Ms. Ariel Saiber, Italian
 Mr. Stephen Meardon, Econ.
 Mr. Angus King, Frmr. ME Gov.

Website

<http://studorgs.bowdoin.edu/apps/peucinian/drupal/>

Address

380 Smith Union
 Brunswick, ME 04011

Phone

847-212-4682