

Dear Peucinian,

Welcome home, all.

This week, we shall engage with a fundamental question of American democratic political theory--the right of an entity to dissociate from the Union and claim sovereignty upon its own premises. But as all things are more interesting when viewed upside-down, the converse will be our point of entry:

Resolved: We must preserve the Union.

Affirmative: Allan Bloom (Samuel N. Karson, '14)

Negative: David Steury '15

Stasis-- civil war-- was regarded as the most potent weapon that the Furies could level at the ancient Republic. Discord, distrust, destruction, and polarization were the result of internal challenges to the State's sovereignty, and it was considered meet to end the strife by any means, however bloody or ungodly (c.f. the forced suicide of the oligarchs of Corcyra while mendicant at the temple of Hera, Thucydides Bk. 3). Slaughter and sin were preferable to living without the rule of law.

The American political structure includes the doctrine of the dual sovereignty of the state and federal, and thus the state control of violence is not so monolithic as in the ancient hemlock-pouring city-state. So too is our modern view of stasis, in theory, less axiomatic-- and the principles espoused in the Declaration of Independence might even support the general principle of a people's radical self-determination. But historically, the Federal reaction to the attempt of States to renege on their contract has attained Greek levels of violence and vitriol.

President Abraham Lincoln found great worth in the preservation of the Union, and was willing to wager the lives of hundreds of thousands of Union soldiers and the entire productive capacity of the Northern war machine against the idea that the Union was something to be lightly dispensed with. Did the secession of the South present so grave a threat to the rule of law in the American republic that it warranted Sherman's March? Is engaging in civil war to keep the Union intact in-keeping with the foundational principles of American political theory, especially the concept of state sovereignty?

Was the Civil War a necessary sacrifice to calm the Furies of internal political discord, or an veiled and hypocritical war of Northern aggression? Is there something inherently valuable in a Union intact, or has the Federal stance on secession weakened our government?

Where do you stand?

Please join us on Thursday, March 19th at 7:30 PM in the Faculty Room of Massachusetts Hall.

Full business dress expected.

Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus,

The Peucinian Council of Seven