

## DISPUTATION CXLIII

December 3, 2015

Good Morning Peucinians,

Hope you all enjoyed your Thanksgiving breaks. This week we meet again to discuss a familiar topic...

### **RESOLVED: SOCIETY NEEDS NOBLE LIES**

**Affirmative:** Ὑπατία '17

**Negative:** Allegra Hill '19

Can you handle the truth? What purpose does the truth serve? Do all people have the right to be told the truth?

We are discussing this question specifically in the context of the body politic. There seems to be some value to telling your citizens lies, especially if it advances the aims of the whole. Collective action becomes easier if you lie and give your citizens a common uniting thread.

Yet if the state is simply guiding us along, bringing us to some noble end - are we any better than cattle in a herd? Sure, we're well fed, and the path to comfort is easy and sure. But what about human dignity? Aren't we all, as fully rational members of a modern democratic society, deserving of something better?

Consider the following excerpt in which Socrates proposes a tale that will induce citizens to pursue the occupation and life style to which they are best suited...

#### ***Republic, Book III, by Plato***

True, I replied, but there is more coming; I have only told you half. Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently.

Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children.

But as all are of the same original stock, a golden parent will sometimes have a silver son, or a silver parent a golden son. And God proclaims as a first principle to the rulers, and above all else, that there is nothing which they should so anxiously guard, or of which they are to be such good guardians, as of the purity of the race.

They should observe what elements mingle in their offspring; for if the son of a golden or silver parent has an admixture of brass and iron, then nature orders a transposition of ranks, and the eye of the ruler must not be pitiful towards the child because he has to descend in the scale and become a husbandman or artisan, just as there may be sons of artisans who having an admixture of gold or silver in them are raised to honour, and become guardians or auxiliaries.

**For an oracle says that when a man of brass or iron guards the State, it will be destroyed. Such is the tale; is there any possibility of making our citizens believe in it?**

*7:45 PM Thursday December 3rd  
Massachusetts Hall Faculty Room (Top Floor)  
Semi-Formal Attire*

Sincerely,  
Ajax

*Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus*