

## DISPUTATION CXLV

February 18, 2016

Hello Peucinians,

Last week's Symposium was something else, really. This week, although we return to the table, I still want you to bring the same passion that you demonstrated while celebrating Eros.

### **RESOLVED: USAGE OUGHT DETERMINE MEANING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Affirmative: Jerome David Salinger '16**

**Negative: Samuel Lewis '19**

Who gets to decide what words mean? In writing this sentence, I am (hopefully) following the conventions of the English language. Each word, placed carefully in the phrase, is meant to convey my message to you, the reader.

Yet, how ought we decide what these words mean? Should it derive from an official standard? When asking for the meaning of the word, maybe it's best to leave definitions to the definers. Perhaps those educated in the art of linguistics and who have some learned authority on the words we use should decide how to best use them. For the sake of clarity and effective communication, let us look to a trusted style guide or dictionary, and not the common tongue.

But on the other hand... why hand the meaning of our words to someone else? Language is spoken by the people and is for the people to use, so let them speak however they wish. Who is to say what is "bad" or "good" usage so long as whatever is being conveyed reaches its audience? Allow the tools of communication to float free and effortlessly among the speakers, who assign meaning to their own words.

*7:45 PM Thursday February 18th  
Massachusetts Hall Faculty Room (Top Floor)  
Semi-Formal Attire*

Sincerely,  
Ajax

*Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus*