

DISPUTATION CLX

February 16, 2017

Dearest Peucinians,

Last week we explored the relationship between religion and democracy, and we decided that religion does have something to offer a democratic society that purely rational deliberation cannot. This week we turn our gaze inward to ask what a certain familiar fixture of modern life has added or subtracted to souls...

RESOLVED: THE INTERNET HAS TAINTED OUR SENSE OF WONDER

Affirmative: Denis Diderot '19

Negative: Jack Rodgers '20

Isn't the mere existence of the internet a thing to wonder at? Human ingenuity has found a way to connect the entire world and distribute information over long distances at breathtaking speeds. This technology has opened doors that our ancestors couldn't even conceive of and it continues to do so every day. Our sense of wonder expands accordingly. We have unprecedented access to magnificent paintings, sublime symphonies, and libraries of literature. As a result, we also have more to contemplate and admire than ever before. Our infinite curiosity finds its match in seemingly limitless knowledge. Far from being content with what we know and what we have, we press past our boundaries and voraciously pursue new lines of inquiry that serve to elevate taste and culture. The internet has not erased all that is charming and worthy of consideration, it is only brought these things closer to us. If our sense of wonder has been tainted, we must look elsewhere for the culprit.

Unless, of course, the very act of compressing knowledge and powerful images into a tiny laptop screen robs us of an awesome and authentic mode of experience. Isn't sensitivity the impetus behind wonder? There is a great danger that all this access has not been accompanied by discretion or consideration for the value of what we are accessing. It is not a coincidence that the speed of the internet enables our propensity to discard ideas, people, and objects when they can no longer keep us entertained. It seems designed for this very purpose. Only the internet has made it possible to tear through large spans of history or complex topics as one would a picture book, feeling and thinking nothing along the way. All of the mystery that shrouded the art, the artist, and the subject has been dispelled by a single Wikipedia article.

How can expanded capabilities lead to diminished wonder? Has there ever been a time when people walked around feeling a sense of wonder permeating through the air, or are we romanticizing the past? Is living without a sense of wonder sustainable? And what shall we say about porn?

*Thursday February 16th, 8:15 PM
3rd Floor of Massachusetts Hall
Semi-Formal Attire*

Yours,
μὲνω - Meno

Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus