

## Disputation CCI

April 11, 2019

Dear Peucinians,

In the past two weeks, we have celebrated this Society's accomplishments over the course of 200 disputations and have given earnest consideration to the ways it can further serve our membership and the Bowdoin community. At our most recent disputation, we resolved that Bowdoin needs our Society, and that what we do helps to advance the College's mission – even if we only reach some subset of the student body. We also elected a new council for the coming academic year, and I know each of us is honored and excited to be getting underway.

The decision we discuss this week has always lurked, phantom-like, behind the most contentious issues in our polity. This country has seen its share of existential crises – when Americans of all stars and stripes have had to confront this option:

### **RESOLVED: DISSOLVE THE UNION**

**Affirmative: Pliny the Elder '21**

**Negative: Theodore Roosevelt '19**

Do you have a real say in government? On the issues of justice most immediate to your life? Under such a powerful federal government, and when contending with the votes of such a large and diverse electorate, one can feel estranged from even the most important political issues of our time. The ability to self-determine is essential not only for a functioning democracy, but also for the creation of a robust identity and a shared conception of the good. It is worth considering whether we have either of these things – with inaccessible elites in Washington, and commonalities that perhaps only go so deep as the vague rights we are afforded. Why not divide our country into smaller regions with greater affinity?

On the other hand, it could be precisely the immense diversity of views and desires among American citizens which give this country its strength. We have a marketplace of ideas where numerous interests are reconciled against each other – preventing a slide into dogmatism or fanaticism. According to Plato, the decline into tyranny is always a risk for self-determining, democratic peoples. With an empowered central government, we can ensure justice and morality are upheld in all corners of the republic. Lincoln gave numerous speeches against the notion that slavery could be permissible simply because it was the self-determined will of the Southern states. Furthermore, so many men and women have died for our Founding Principles. Do they really leave us wanting for a common identity or creed?

An interesting point of historical fact – the Peucinian Society of the 19th century was known to have a Federalist leaning. I am excited to see where we stand now. Will the naturalist succeed in taming the Bull Moose? Unclear. Will they both bring the intellectual fire? Undoubtedly.

We look forward to welcoming prospective students this week, and I encourage you to bring along any of those you meet.

**Thursday, April 11th, 7:45 PM**  
**3rd Floor of Massachusetts Hall**  
**Semi-Formal Attire**

Sincerely yours,

✉✉✉✉✉

Gilgamesh

*Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus*