

Disputation CCV

September 19, 2019

Dear Peucinians,

Last time, we rejected the life of isolation in favor of the sweet fruits of society. This week, we will consider one particular element of our consumption as members of society: art. We manipulate the world around us to make manifest our own interior sentiments – illuminating the human experience we share. Yet, certain modes of expression are liable to grow controversial within the context of the political community and may even warrant an outright ban. I hope you will join us this Thursday as we examine the competing claims which ethics and aesthetics make upon the heart.

RESOLVED: NO ART IS OFF LIMITS

Affirmative: J. Robert Oppenheimer '22

Negative: e e cummings '22

The list of artistic works marred by history, social context, authorial character, or even their own content is incredibly long. But we must take a mature view of the tumultuous narrative that is the human life. If we recognize those moments of depravity or evil in the art we consume, we can build a more explanatory theory of behavior, a more resilient moral sense, and even a greater capacity for beauty. Who are we to determine what individuals can or cannot handle? If we withhold the darkest scenes of the human imagination from others, how will they fare when the fantastic becomes real?

However, there are some evils which risk consuming man and society alike – evils which destroy any hope of salvation from their depths or otherwise promise especially enduring pain. Any society necessarily interested in promoting some good must have standards about the art which should be transmitted and consumed. As self-governing adults, we should be conscious of the causes we support by our engagement with art. We must prevent those without such personal control from continuously harming themselves and others. Do we risk falling into the same sins as our forefathers if they can reach us through these objects from beyond the grave?

Is not life simply too short to be irredeemably detained by vice? Is it foolish to think that the removal of certain works of art will account for human nature or have the desired effect on collective memory? I look forward to seeing you all around the table as we discuss these important questions.

Thursday, September 26th, 7:45 PM

Massachusetts Hall, Third Floor

Semi-Formal Attire

Sincerely yours,

✍️

Gilgamesh

Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus