

Disputation CCVIII

October 24, 2019

Dear Peucinians,

Before the break, we decided that the Constitution is dead. Of interest to our discussion this week: laid down in the stone-cold words of the document itself, there are invocations of the concept of race. This concept has been an enduring source of both community and conflict among humans. It continues to be an important factor in the nation's legislation and court decisions, as well as in plans for reparations and affirmative action. This Thursday, we will analyze the theoretical underpinnings of this human category. Does it stand up to strict scrutiny? Is it, as many contemporary theorists argue, culturally conditioned and therefore subject to our preferences? What practical implications might this understanding have for the aspects of government and society just mentioned?

RESOLVED: CONSIDER TRANSRACIALISM

A Forum presented by Aldous Huxley '20

Race seems to be radically contingent on the place in which we find ourselves. Visual and cultural understandings of delineations between races vary greatly across the globe and begin to look blurry. For some, and especially among mixed-race individuals, the notion of "passing" would seem to further destabilize this category. When thinking about those who have the ability to alternate how their racial identity is perceived, or who are capable of avoiding the cultural experience of one of their racial identities altogether, the idea of race begins to fizzle. Why shouldn't we claim race as another aspect of our character which we choose to present to the world?

Yet, the category of race holds experiential and historical content for all of us. It has practical effects with which deconstructive theories appear ill-equipped to deal. This supposed "choice" may just be the next stage of the damaging project of ego liberation we find under liberalism. Is it a bias of our society to believe that the individual is somehow most authentic as a result of choices he has made about his identity, rather than by harmonizing himself with the historical and cultural obligations and expectations into which he is born and continues to live?

Is there a meaningful distinction between race and ethnicity? Between ethnicity and culture? Is it a short jump from transracialism to trans-speciesism?

I am excited to contemplate all of these questions around the table with you. As a reminder: forums function like roundtables in that only one disputant will present the resolution from a range of perspectives. However, because this topic lends itself to better consideration without a dichotomous vote, we will only ask questions at the end of the evening.

Thursday, October 24th, 7:45 PM
Massachusetts Hall, Third Floor
Semi-Formal Attire

Sincerely yours,

✍️

Gilgamesh

Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus