

## Disputation CCX

November 21, 2019

Dear Peucinians,

Last time, we decided that it is better to root oneself in a local community instead of seeking to become a global traveler. This week, we will be investigating a more personal kind of journey. And no, this resolution does not pertain to cheese (though cheese puns will be very welcome). It is derived from a passage in John Milton's *Comus*, which captures a familiar refrain in the Western philosophical tradition: reject the body as an end in itself, as worshiping it will only frustrate true happiness. I expect you all to bring the best of your organic and cognitive machinery to bear as we evaluate this claim, so be sure to leave nothing at home.

### **RESOLVED: TRANSCEND THIS CORPORAL RIND**

**Affirmative: Susan Sontag '21**

**Negative: Olympe de Gouges '21**

The body is important, but only as an instrument for the excellent exercise of the mind. All of our significant experiences are ultimately handled by the mind (or, perhaps, the soul), which creates our memory and our identity. Aristotle plots the human being somewhere between the animal and the divine. The undisciplined risk becoming slaves to their instincts, but better humans can utilize their reason to overcome this, habituate themselves to virtue, and become more like gods. The exercise of the mind is both freeing and edifying, while fascination with the body risks detaining us in baser pleasures. All that is fulfilling about bodily experience, which participates in a form of the good, is infinitely amplified when this form itself is grasped within the mind. It is therefore a contemplative and even moral necessity that we prioritize the cultivation of mind and spirit.

On the contrary, the best moments of human life are realized via bodily sensation. Our feelings and impulses make us human, and we should cherish them. This does not necessitate hedonism, but rather an approach which recognizes the preeminence of human feeling in a fulfilled life-feeling which by no means participates exclusively in base pleasures. The affirmative rests on a precarious distinction between body and mind, corporeal and incorporeal. Even if what we call "mind" actually exists, its unhealthy glorification risks alienating us from a natural harmony with our physical selves. We would do well to explore and vitiate our impulses, which can bring fulfillment inaccessible to the mind alone.

Does each of us possess an incorporeal human soul? Are we infinitely beautiful minds weighed down by cumbersome sacks of meat? Or have we been given spectacular sensory conduits which crave the fullness of human experience? I look forward to thinking and learning with you all around the table soon.

**Thursday, November 21st, 7:45 PM**

**Massachusetts Hall, Third Floor**

**Semi-Formal Attire**

Sincerely yours,



Gilgamesh

*Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus*