

## Disputation CXCIV

February 7, 2019

Dear Peucinians:

Please note the slightly late start and postscript.

Last week we soundly rejected a nihilistic outlook and embraced Adams's view that people's lives are enriched by a belief in the human soul because it provides comfort, a foundation for morality, and a sense of purpose. This week we consider a more radical proposal that will force us to examine our most deeply cherished political first principles. I'm excited to welcome the passionate Maya Angelou to the lectern for the first time, where she'll face off against the venerated veteran Gilgamesh.

### **RESOLVED: STATES SHOULD RECOGNIZE A HUMAN RIGHT TO MIGRATION**

**Affirmative: Maya Angelou '21**

**Negative: Gilgamesh, Fifth King of Uruk '20**

"The living expression of the nation is the collective consciousness in motion of the entire people. It is the enlightened and coherent praxis of the men and women."

—Frantz Fanon, "The Wretched of the Earth," 1961.

This is not a repeat of [Disputation CXL](#) (November 5th, 2015), "The state has a responsibility to accept refugees," which I'm sure you all remember well. Although we will undoubtedly discuss refugees tonight, our inquiry will consider all types of migration and different reasons for migrating. The question is, can a state ever be justified in denying entrance and citizenship to a human being who wishes to join its nation? If the answer is no, then states must *always* allow migrants through their borders. What are the reasons a state would want to keep migrants out, and are they justified?

It is one thing to talk about the moral obligations of people, another to speak of that of states. States have negative obligations (e.g., not to kill journalists), but do they have positive ones? To whom do states owe their duty: their citizens? their allies? the whole world? If a state has all these duties, are they tiered in a coherent way? Can a state be spoken of as an acting agent over and above its laws and citizens?

The most exhilarating part of this disputation, in my view, is that both Angelou and Gilgamesh will have to offer us a theory of the nation, state, and citizen that not only reasonably describes how these entities interact today but also prescribes just actions for the future. In turn, we will have to solve that problem for ourselves. How can a people assert nationhood without a sense of citizen (*politês*) and foreigner (*xenos*)? How can nations be called just while crowds of innocent people stand outside the city walls waiting to be let in before the night falls?

This topic may seem narrow and specific at first glance. But the conflict of principles it unearths in our guts is anything but that. See you soon.

Yours in the cause of radically free inquiry,  
Rousseau

**Peucinian Society Disputation CXCIV**

**Thursday, February 7th, 8:00 PM**

**Third Floor of Massachusetts Hall**  
**Semi-formal attire encouraged**

P.S. It is traditional for established, older members to have priority for sitting at the table.

*Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus*