

## Disputation CXCVIII

February 28, 2019

Dear Peucinians:

Last week we voted rather certainly that AI can achieve personhood. (Let us hope we are wrong.) Then we enjoyed a stimulating lecture from Professor Botting on the ethics of genetic engineering, touching on many of the same subjects that we have over the years. If you see Sontag around, congratulate her on a successful program—Botting’s visit was wonderful.

This week we expand on a [previous disputation](#) I’m sure you all remember the one. On October 22, 2015, we held Disputation CXXXIX: We Ought to Get Married. With passionate orations from Natalie Edwards ’18 in the affirmative and Lucy Knowlton ’16 in the negative, we ended the night in a draw. (I cannot recall how we voted, but it was probably in the negative.) Tonight, we’ll leave behind our own marital ambitions and instead consider what the effect of this institution is on society...

### **RESOLVED: MARRIAGE DAMAGES SOCIETY**

**Affirmative: St. Dominic de Guzmán ’19**

**Negative: Jane Jacobs OC ’20**

“Harmony in the marriage state is the very first object to be aimed at. Nothing can preserve affections uninterrupted but a firm resolution never to differ in will, and a determination in each to consider the love of the other as of more value than any object whatever on which a wish has been fixed. how light in fact is the sacrifice of any other wish, when weighed against the affections of one with whom we are to pass our whole life.”

—Thomas Jefferson [to](#) Maria Jefferson Eppes. Philadelphia, Jan. 7, 1798.

We live in a society. (Etymology: Latin, *socius*, an ally or friend.) The institutions—practices, entities of power, and norms—of a society regulate and influence the ways we interact with and treat each other, some for the better and some for the worse. An important task for political and cultural theorists is analyzing (literally, breaking down) these institutions to their conceptual innards, in service of positive projects of understanding and normative political projects such as abolition (slavery), expansion (marriage), reconstitution (gender), or restoration (race).

In America, marriage has undergone some innovation in recent years. More people than ever before are able to participate, yet fewer and fewer are choosing to do so. Should we bemoan marriage’s decline or cheer on its death? Has it—and the conception of family which accompanies it—been a force for good or harm in society, both within this country and without? What has its affect been on politics, culture, and the experiences of individuals—as women, as men, as children, as nonconforming?

I’m curious what you think and I’m excited to hear your unrestrained passion on this topical question.

Yours in the cause of radically free inquiry,  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau

**Peucinian Society Disputation CXCVIII**

**Thursday, February 28th, 7:45 PM**

**Third Floor of Massachusetts Hall**

**Semi-formal attire encouraged**

**P.S.** Another reminder that seats at the table are traditionally first offered to named and more established members (though all are invited to participate in discussion!).

*Pinos Loquentes Semper Habemus*