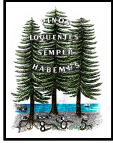


CHRONICLE



Treatise Presentations



“The Selfish Life of Selfishness”

Patrick Pierce ‘08

To preface, Pierce asserted that people are essentially selfish but must affect concern for others to succeed. Through activism and involvement in community, people satisfy their selfish desires. Modernity is but a radically selfish form of hedonism. Because our selfish inclinations lead only to nihilism, however, Pierce affirmed, “the only life of meaning is for the common good.” As citizenship begets a unifying secular morality, Pierce concluded that one must be “selflessly selfish, not better, but good.”

“Personal Convictions”

Jordan Browning ‘08

In a more organic fashion, Browning affirmed his personal convictions concerning four areas of thought: commitment to the environment, selfhood, foundationalism, and communitarianism. Browning asserted that because humans are reflective members of one universal substance, destroying our planet is a poor existential decision. To stop this senseless destruction of our commons, government must intervene. Finally, he concluded that the because the self is “a chaotic mix of perceptions,” it is important to affirm one’s identity and articulate one’s beliefs.

“Between Nantucket and Peru: The Virtue of Divine Communitarianism”

Steven Bartus ‘08

To highlight his convictions, Bartus portrayed an intellectual struggle between his hometown of Nantucket, MA and rural Lima, Peru. His experience abroad revealed “something incomplete in Northeast liberal suburbia,” and abject poverty seemed truly “real.” Bartus asserted that despite differences, some fundamental force pushes everyone toward greatness and justice. He concluded by affirming the necessity of “refined humanitarianism,” a beautiful balance between passion and indirect involvement.

THE SOCIETY DEBATE

After listening carefully to each treatise presentation, members provided presenters with valuable feedback, engaging and refining their personal convictions. Responding to Bartus’s assertion that a fundamental force pushes everyone toward greatness and justice, Aisha Woodward ’08 posited that we all hold similarly fundamental questions about our existence. To Bartus’s hope for a “refined humanitarianism,” others affirmed the difficulty of significant, individual impact, but asserted that individuals must pursue their strongest convictions regardless of

outcome because the purpose-driven life is indeed the good life.

Though these treatises revealed the strongest convictions of three Senior members, the debate and continued wrangling with treatise topics following their presentation revealed the continually-evolving nature of these ideas. Most of all, these treatise presentations highlighted the incredible importance (collectively asserted by the assembled group) of articulating and engaging with one’s beliefs.

