The Promise of Conservatism

Dominic P. Nanni, English, Graduate Teaching Assistant

In the United States, conservatism is experiencing something of an existential crisis. To most the word refers to economic policies that call for lower taxes for the rich, deregulation of the economy, and cutting the social safety net. Conservatism also refers to religious extremists. The Republican Party, Andrew Sullivan argues, has become a religious organization rather than a serious political party. Over time this has eroded the ideological thrust of conservatism as an idea advocating moderation, restraint, and skepticism in politics. Once envisioned as the antagonist of ideologies and extremists, conservatism has itself become an ideology of extremes. There is a necessity for a strong moderate voice in our politics and conservatism should be that voice. It cannot be that voice if it does not resolve its existential crisis and return to its original motivating ideas. In this talk, I argue the promise of conservatism to be its potential to be a middle voice which can resolve partisan differences and build consensus.

Dominic P. Nanni is a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Rhetoric and Composition program in the Department of English at Wayne State University. He teaches both introduction to college writing (ENG 1020) and intermediate composition (ENG 3010) as well as community writing (ENG 3020). His research agenda is interdisciplinary, and incorporates elements of political theory and rhetoric and composition studies. He is interested in classical rhetoric and political philosophy. In particular, the work of Plato and Aristotle as well as Nietzsche. This Brown Bag talk incorporates many of the themes that motivate his scholarly research.