

Socrates, Truth and Peer Production

Herbert Hrachovec

Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna

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Agenda

Artisans and Social Skills

Socrates and the Sophists

Plato's Open Cave

The Politics of the Cave

Open Source Truth

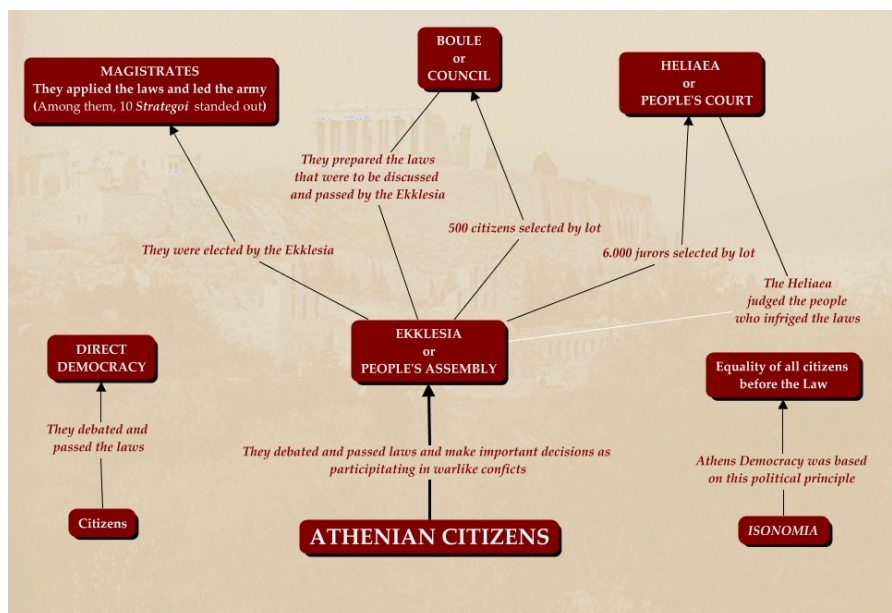
Democracy and the Division of Labor

The Athenian city-state was based on a fairly well developed exchange economy, comprising the usual variety of occupations: farmers, artisans, merchants, entrepreneurs . . .

Its political system was carefully constructed to prevent oligarchic or plutocratic power structures.

Most of the executive and judicial bodies were determined by rotation and by lottery, diminishing the possibility of an entrenched bureaucracy. Of course, educated elites with good speaking ability could be highly influential within assemblies, but they had to operate within the discursive context of the *demos*, the body of citizens.

Athenian Democracy



The Athenian constitution gives rise to the following questions:

- ▶ In a society of farmers, artisans, merchants etc.
- ▶ Lacking authoritarian control
- ▶ Which principles and abilities should prevail?
- ▶ How should this question even be approached?

What cost Wisdom?

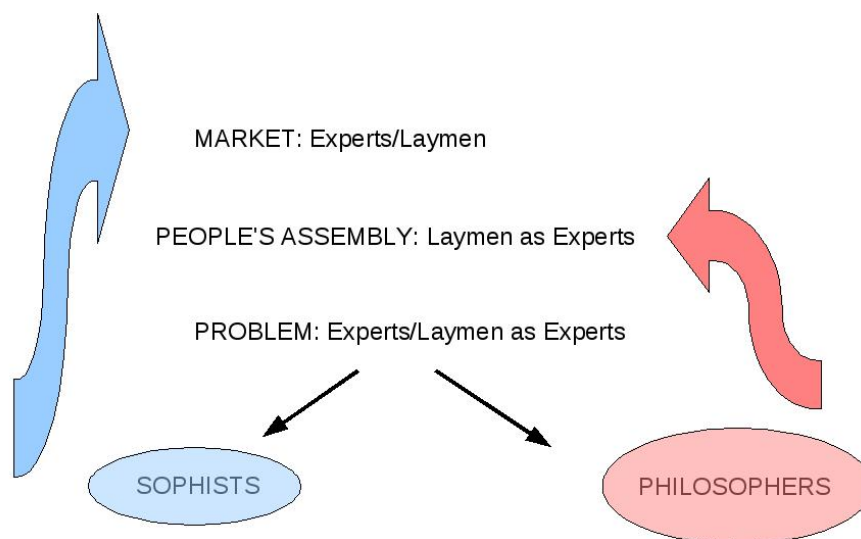
Then I, noting the man's gallant spirit and the flutter he was in, remarked: Well, what is that to you? Has Protagoras wronged you? At this he laughed and, Yes, by the gods! he said, by being the only wise man, and not making me one.

But, by Zeus! I said, **if you give him a fee and win him over he will make you wise too.** Would to Zeus and all the gods, he exclaimed, only that were needed! I should not spare either my own pocket or those of my friends. (Protagoras 310d-e)

Cash value

Thrasymachus said, “if I show you another answer about justice differing from all these, a better one – what penalty do you think you deserve?” “Why, what else,” said I, “than that which it befits anyone who is ignorant to suffer? It befits him, I presume, to learn from the one who does know. That then is what I propose that I should suffer.” “I like your simplicity,” said he; “but in addition to 'learning' you must pay a fine of money.” (Republic 337d)

Two Options



Socratic Peer Review

“Did you hear,” said I, “all the goods that Thrasymachus just now enumerated for the life of the unjust man?” “I heard,” he said, “but I am not convinced.” “Do you wish us then to try to persuade him, supposing we can find a way, that what he says is not true?” “Of course I wish it,” he said.

“If then we oppose¹ him in a set speech enumerating in turn the advantages of being just and he replies and we rejoin, we shall have to count up and measure the goods listed in the respective speeches and we shall forthwith be in need of judges to decide between us. But if, as in the preceding discussion, we come to terms with one another as to what we admit in the inquiry, **we shall be ourselves both judges and pleaders.**” “Quite so,” he said.” (Republic 348a)

Peer Productivity

But about this business of finding the way to be as good as possible, and of managing one's own household or city for the best, it is recognized to be a disgrace for one to decline to give advice except for a payment in cash, is it not?

...

The reason evidently being that this is **the only sort of service that makes the person so served desire to do one in return** and hence it is felt to be a good sign when this service that one has done is repaid to one in kind; but when this is not so, the contrary is felt. Is the case as I say? (Gorgias 520e)

Stupidity of the Crowds

Consider:

... the man who thinks that it is wisdom to have learned to know the moods and the pleasures of the motley multitude in their assembly, whether about painting or music or, for that matter, politics?

For if a man associates with these and offers and exhibits to them his poetry or any other product of his craft or any political service, and grants the mob authority over himself more than is unavoidable, the proverbial necessity of Diomedes will **compel him to give the public what it likes**, but that what it likes is really good and honorable, have you ever heard an attempted proof of this that is not simply ridiculous? (Politeia 493e)

Wisdom of the Few

Can the multitude possibly tolerate or believe in the reality of the beautiful in itself as opposed to the multiplicity of beautiful things, or can they believe in anything conceived in its essence as opposed to the many particulars?" "Not in the least," he said.

Philosophy, then, the love of wisdom, is impossible for the multitude. "Impossible." "It is inevitable, then, that those who philosophize should be censured by them." "Inevitable." "And so likewise by those laymen who, associating with the mob, desire to curry favor with it." "Obviously." (Politeia 493e)

The Bald-headed Tinker

Consider:

... the ambition and aspiration of that multitude of pretenders unfit by nature, whose souls are bowed and mutilated by their vulgar occupations even as their bodies are marred by their arts and crafts.

Is not the picture which they present," I said, "precisely that of a little bald-headed tinker who has made money and just been freed from bonds and had a bath and is wearing a new garment and has got himself up like a bridegroom and is about to marry his master's daughter who has fallen into poverty and abandonment?"

"And so when men unfit for culture approach philosophy and consort with her unworthily, what sort of ideas and opinions shall we say they beget?" (Republic 495e)

Bottom Up

Sun		Idea of the Good
Natural things		Ideas
Shadows of natural things		Mathematic Objects $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$
Fire		Sun
Artificial things		Living and dead things
Shadows of artificial things		Symbols
Level of analogy	Sun and lines analogy	

Whose Chains Get Broken?

Jacques Rancière:

At this point, I stumbled across the famous passage in Book II of The Republic where Plato speaks of the workers who have no time to do anything but work, and the passage in Book VI where he criticizes the 'little bald tinker' and those with 'disfigured bodies' and 'battered and mutilated souls' who 'betake themselves to philosophy'. I recognized that the structure was the same.

It was a largely empirical structure relating to the temporality of the worker's activity. And there was a close correspondence between that structure and **the fully elaborated symbolic structure that denied the worker access to the universal logos** and, therefore, to the political.

The Promethean Threat

The absolute simplicity of artisans, their absolute lack of leisure, and the endless process of perfecting their trade must be postulated to exorcise the Promethean threat: not that workers would become or seek to become gods, but that they would set in motion a city of productive work that is at the same time a city of absolute artifice **a city producing its discourses as its tools – in a word, a democracy**, or, what comes down to the same thing for Plato, a technocracy where the power of the tradesmen and that of the people are equivalent.

(Jacques Rancière, The Order of the City, Critical Inquiry 30/2, p. 280)

Governing by Detachment

The Platonic scenario, according to Jacques Rancière, rests on those presuppositions:

- ▶ Workers are restricted to their specific area of competence
- ▶ Imitation and Art are not allowed to transgress the boundaries established by the division of labor
- ▶ The Rulers determine the state's Founding Myth. Their's is the license to lie.

“The artisan in his place is someone who, in general, does nothing but accredit, even at the cost of lying, the declared lie that puts him in his place.” (Rancière p.291)

Platonic Communism

The so-called “common good” is put in the care of the intellectuals. Abdication is the prerequisite to domination.

“In short, to say that the worker cannot be a guardian or warrior is simply to say that he is unworthy of being a communist.

Work and community are strictly antagonistic. Communism is not the fraternity of the classless society but the discipline of a class domination ideally removed from the logic of work and property.

For the city to be well organized, it is necessary and sufficient that the authority of the dominators over the dominated be the authority of communists over capitalists.”

(Jacques Rancière, *The Order of the City*, *Critical Inquiry* 30/2, p. 283)

Professionalism

Against parvenue socialism: Getting rich does not overcome domination. Superior insight is still the crucial element of politics. It can be provided by experts:

“Now I observe, when we are collected for the Assembly, and the city has to deal with an affair of building, **we send for builders to advise us on what is proposed to be built** . . . and so in all other matters which are considered learnable and teachable: but if anyone else, whom the people do not regard as a craftsman, attempts to advise them, no matter how handsome and wealthy and well-born he may be, not one of these things induces them to accept him; they merely laugh him to scorn and shout him down,” (Protagoras 319b)

Back to Square One

Yet – after all those years – the Socratic challenge remains:

“But when they have to deliberate on something connected with the administration of the State, **the man who rises to advise them on this may equally well be a smith, a shoemaker, a merchant, a sea-captain, a rich man, a poor man, of good family or of none,** and nobody thinks of casting in his teeth, as one would in the former case, that his attempt to give advice is justified by no instruction obtained in any quarter, no guidance of any master; and obviously it is **because they hold that here the thing cannot be taught.**” (Protagoras 319d)

Teaching Wisdom, Second Take

Socratic *aporia* may be overcome by various means:

- ▶ if you can pay for private tutors (The Sophists)
- ▶ if you decide to change your life (The Platonists)
- ▶ if you assume a role within the symbolic order maintained by the State (Gramsci, Rancière)

Start with the Cave. Break free of Chains. Aspire to Knowledge.
You are still under the control of a superior force.

Dilemma

The problem with democratic aspirations is the interference of two distinct forces:

- ▶ The Ascent to Wisdom: Enlightenment
- ▶ The Distribution of Resources: Egalitarianism

TRUTH at cross-purposes with PROPERTY

Excluded from leisure and dedicated to the ceaseless fabrication of commodities, the worker is condemned to the shameful privileges of thrift, accumulation, and wealth. He is always a potential capitalist, and, for this reason, the philosopher can stigmatize him while reserving to highborn souls the symbolic currency of honor and power associated with the rulers' lack of ownership.

(Jacques Rancière, *The Order of the City*, *Critical Inquiry* 30/2, p. 283)

Unless: Enlightenment and Egalitarianism can be merged. Upward mobility can be made compatible with societal polymorphism. First class achievers commute with everyday citizens.

Non-commercial Network Cooperation

Vorlesung 	MP3	Transkript 	Stoffzusammenfassung Christian Sieberer 
Vorlesung 03.10.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Andreas Kirchner	Lippenbart und Remixing
Vorlesung 10.10.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Andreas Kirchner	Gelebte Open Source Philosophie
Vorlesung 17.10.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Helene Hagmann	Geistiges Eigentum und Verkäuflichkeit
Vorlesung 24.10.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Elisabeth Seidl	Redekunst und Fachwissen
Vorlesung 31.10.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Sabine Klinger	Überleitung zur Gegenwart
Vorlesung 14.11.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Doris Wertgarner	Handwerksgeschichte, GNU und Linux
Vorlesung 21.11.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Amin Hassan	OSP praktisch
Vorlesung 05.12.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Martina Dobner	Das theoretische Potenzial
Vorlesung 19.12.08	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Celina Drössler	Wissensökonomie und Wachstumstheorie
Vorlesung 09.01.09	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Andreas Hubmer	Wissensökonomie und Eigentum
Vorlesung 23.01.09	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Gerald Scheuringer	Intellectual Property und Innovationen
Vorlesung 30.01.09	Teil 1  Teil 2 	Sabrina Gaugusch	Conclusio

Polymorphism

Truth is neither the expertise of the philosopher-expert, nor the distributed melange of contributions. It is a multifunctional tool.

“It is right for the shoemaker by nature to make shoes and occupy himself with nothing else, for the carpenter to practice carpentry, and similarly all others.” (Republic 443c)



On Unity and Diversity

Is this correct? Yes or No.

Does this fit into a pattern of argument? Explain.

