Chapter 15
Cyber Transparency as a Possibility of Modern Agora: A Contribution to Democratization of Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

The digital age we are living in allows the knowledge to enter the market more efficient than ever, and the cyber transparency has provided people more possibilities to attain and spread the knowledge. The new digital technologies have also created more democratic spaces for dialogue, along with e-learning possibilities they provide. There are many risks about cyber transparency, but it also provides to establish a dialogue like the Socratic method. Socrates distinguishes knowledge and wisdom and he believes that true knowledge can be obtained by wisdom and wisdom needs the dialogical and argumentative method. In our age, cyber space presents us with variable forms of knowledge especially in cyber transparency. Cyber transparency provides an “agora” for people in the modern age. In this chapter I will analyze cyber space as an agora and I will try to reach some possibilities for the democratization of education.

In our age, there is a cyber revolution coming to the classroom and daily life and so online learning is spreading day by day. In the changing life we must rethink our position regarding education, its global aspects and evaluation of knowledge. What is real knowing? How can we provide the appropriate condition for efficient learning in the changing world? Accordingly, we should revive the ancient questions of philosophy on knowledge and investigate the method of learning by new questions relating to the new requirements. In Ancient times, Plato presented the questions of knowledge in the Apology:

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? And what is the interpretation of his riddle? For I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? (…)

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At last I went to the artisans, for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I wasn’t mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets; because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was. (Plato, Apology, 1871 pp. 345-346)

In the paragraph above, Plato points out Socrates’ criticism of knowledge. Socrates criticizes the common meaning of knowledge and he refers to the idea of ignorance. Ignorance is can be defined as not to know anything specifically; adversely, to know about himself/herself one should accept that he/she doesn’t know anything about being a wise man/woman. In other terms, one person should recognize that he/she doesn’t know anything. So, ignorance shouldn’t be defined as not to know any specific issue but should be seen as not to recognize himself/herself. For knowing himself one should think about his/her capacity to criticize himself/herself.

The person who thinks he/she knows nothing when he/she doesn’t know anything is wiser than the person who thinks he/she does know something when he doesn’t. Self-awareness is the key concept to understand Socrates’ thought; if we want to comprehend his thought on knowledge we should bear in mind that Socrates’ concept of knowledge is based on inquiry. Inquiry is the best foundation for knowledge because by that method the person can easily produce his/her argument. Socrates believed that questions are more important than answers when it comes to the stimulation of learning. Rather than teach the facts, information or any special, sophisticated instruction, Socrates encouraged students or young people to question their beliefs, assumptions and values. By doing this, students or learners can become more adept at critical thinking and being eager to learn. Through this questioning process, they can uncover their prejudices, beliefs and misconceptions. Thus, Socratic inquiry has become an efficient way of learning. To free oneself from the barriers that lead to dead end learning is the first step for coming through learning disabilities which originate in noncritical, scholastic thinking. Therefore, the role of the teacher in education has to change and resituate itself. In the Socratic method, the role of the teacher shifts from direct instructions and (unmediated) information transfer to facilitating discussion. Socratic inquiry demands discussion and participation. Using the dialogical method Socrates wants to bring into the open all prejudices, misunderstandings and the things which are believed to be knowledge.

In our age, the meaning of publicity has been differentiated. We should redefine the concept of public realm and the meaning of acting public realm by dialogue. We are using social media, forums, limitless information sources and discussion platforms and acting freely without an instructor in cyberspace. The use of internet technologies has developed a kind of learning content grounded in Socratic discussions that are more useful as a teacher’s guide. For example, in the classical class environment, the teacher gives some instruction or content to a student for discussion. But this kind of discussion leads the students to think within the confines of a specific view or content. It can be said that in this method the conventional