

As we do not live in Paradise, and I am not a Bohemian Bourgeois, I will not make the reality-divorced claim that justice systems should be based on "truth" or Truth (with a capital "T") derived from philosophical argumentation (Platonic logos). Because a justice system is meant to maintain and promote a “better” society, I claim that the more practical basis is conventional agreement (nomos), as systems with this basis are generally more stable, longer living, and more fostering of long-term social progress. I use the social critique on logically-driven, counter-culture, upper-class Americans by David Brooks, "Bobos in Paradise," to highlight the difficulty of “real-world” implementation of Platonic logos, and the utopian society (a purposefully imaginary paradise) living in perpetual contradiction, created by Thomas More, to highlight the probable scarcity in synergy of systems derived primarily from truths. Each show that a Platonic logos-based system more often suffers from at least one major flaw that works to either inhibit or prohibit its social evolution. On the other hand, nomos-based systems inherently have high social agreement, and, thus, are often stable. Stable, they better withstand perturbation and less often crumble, allowing for better support of long-term social evolution.

With the Bohemian Bourgeois (or Bobos), I present an ironic social phenomenon. Of the bourgeois, Bobos hold large influence over the social and political systems they inhabit; however, their effective influence is minimized by idealized, unrealistic proposals for social restructure that rely mainly on Platonic Logos. All people hold their own bias, and naivety about the opinions and circumstances of others within their society—thus, proposals derived from Platonic logos that do not consult nomos for the cultural and social trends that describe contemporary society can easily stem from bias and ignorance and be unrealistic. These proposals often conflict with their society’s current form, leading the society to resist its adoption. This lack of consideration is the same problem that plagued pluralists when they

attempted to find and describe the motivation for growth in urban governments—the idea’s manifest function (for us, the proposal) didn’t account for its latent function (for us, the process of implementing the proposal) (Levy). As an example, take Bobos economic views: wealth and capital are not ends but means—means by which one achieves one’s ends (Brooks). This can include supporting local entrepreneurship and economy, philanthropy and general support for those less fortunate, high quality of life, etc. It is meant, among other things, to counter materialism and greed, and promote practical, conscious living. The Bobos fails to realize, however, that for sections of society, the thing that they need is money, so that is what they desire. They cannot divorce themselves from this. Not consulting nomos, Bobos propose and promote an ideology difficult for those from a different social class to adopt, a proposal that would likely be met by opposition and poor adoption by poorer economic groups.

Thomas More explores the idea of a society built on Platonic logos in his book “Utopia.” Utopia is a nation that uses rational thought to define its structure (e.g. communal property, irrelevant class distinction) and derive the philosophy it puts into practice (e.g. greed is uncommon, there is little crime, there is little inclination for war) (More). Now I pose the question: are systems founded on Platonic logos founded on “truth” or Truth? Henceforth, I denote “truths” with lowercase t’s, and Truth, the absolute value, with an uppercase T. By definition $t \leq T$, and it is often the case that t at best approaches the value of T asymptotically. This means that for these systems, lets say N systems, there is a distribution of values for t_i ($i = 1, 2, \dots, N$), such that it is often the case that $t_i < T$. This means that one can find some value, t_i' , such that $t_i < t_i' < T$ – that is, one can find some other “truth” that is closer to Truth then the current “truth.” Now what happens if t_i' contradicts t_i ? For all values t_i' between t_i and T, I claim that it is often the case that at least one will contradict t_i . This is simply due to human

imperfection. Being a species that is constantly evolving, we constantly find better, more correct answers, many of which contradict the answers they supplant. Systems with a t_i' that contradicts t_i are comprised of truths but are based on faulty rationale so they are not true, and hence lack synergy. This system, based on rational thought but with an irrational conclusion, continues in perpetual contradiction. Worse—either the discovery of t_i' or the argument for its existence can undermine the authority of such a system. Once this happens, the system loses its integrity and begins to collapse—no longer capable of serving the role it was created for. This is precisely what was bound to happen in Utopia. Utopia claimed religious tolerance, yet it was not tolerant of those with no religion—atheists. They did not correctly follow the rationale of tolerance – as they were not tolerant of Atheist social groups – and once that is learned, the validity of their rationale comes into question. They can no longer claim that they follow a system of rational thought, as they have just been proven to follow an irrational thought.

Systems based on Platonic logos are certainly logical ones, with structural frames made of truth that approaches (albeit asymptotically) the quality of Truth. However, these systems suffer from flaws that impede their social evolution—flaws that a system based on nomos would less likely suffer from. Take the unrealistic proposals of the Bobos: should they use nomos as a basis and begin from the social and cultural trends of society, they are less likely to face opposition and more likely to have their proposal adopted. The Bobos can further improve on their proposals by using nomos as a basis, and then Platonic logos to derive the rest of the proposal, so that it is towards some “rational” next step for the current society. Onto the basis of a system: systems built of nomos do not require that their next implementation be rational. They do not sway when confronted with contradiction. They only require that the implementation does not conflict strongly with the community, otherwise it will not be adopted—either way the

community remains intact. With this system, we have a sturdy foundation on which we can continue growing in a rational manner as dictated by Platonic logos as long as the proposed implementations are based on nomos, even if their results are derived with Platonic logos. Indeed, the superior option is to have nomos as the basis and Platonic logos as the means by which an idea or system develops – but always with nomos as the basis.

Works Cited

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Levy, John. Urban America: Processes and Problems. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2000.

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