

Editor's letter

Peter Ponzio *

Harrison Middleton University, Illinois, United States

Welcome to the second edition of *Humanities Directory*. This edition includes articles from the Eleventh triennial conference of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA), which conducted meetings from June 26th through the 28th 2013 at the Findhorn Foundation, Scotland. We are pleased to present the works of David Leach, Nicholas Anastasopoulos and Ross Jackson, each of whom presented at the conference.

While reading the works of these authors, I was struck by the fact that many of the themes which they presented in their papers are well known. David, in his article *Greening the 'Burbs*, writes about the need for communal living, including a true sense of shared living where such things as car-sharing, cohousing and common kitchen areas are present. Plato, in his treatise on the foundation of a "proper" government, *The Republic*, dealt with many of the same issues (although he would perhaps embrace the need for wagon-sharing rather than car-sharing). Of course, Plato would be the first to admit that many of his ideas were borrowed from the Spartan law-giver, Lycurgus. It was Lycurgus who developed the idea of communal kitchens & property, and forbade private ownership of housing and the holding of money.

The global financial crisis of the past decade has served to highlight the growing disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots". This disparity is not limited to individuals, however; we have witnessed a similar disparity among governments. Nowhere was this disparity brought into such sharp relief as in Greece, the birthplace of Western civilization. Greece has experienced well-documented austerity measures and riots over the past several years. Nicholas Anastasopoulos provides his readers with a counterpoint to the doom and gloom of recent reporting from Greece. During the crisis which has gripped the country, new forms of communal associations have arisen which show promise for the future, and which give people a needed sense of hope.

Ross Jackson, one of the founding members of the Gaia Trust, provides us with a commentary on the need for a new form of democracy. The concept of democracy is not new; a form of radical democracy was practiced in Athens in the 4th century BC, and has been propounded as a panacea for many of the ills plaguing developing countries. As Ross points out in his article, merely implementing a form of democracy where the disparity between rich and poor is growing wider, is not the answer. This begs the question: "what is the answer"? Ross, of course, presents his ideas on this question in his thought-provoking article.

In closing, I'd like to return to Plato and *The Republic*. Among the many goals he set in writing this tractate was to establish an ideal, or utopian, community. Plato's belief was that the rulers of the state should not seek to increase their wealth, make themselves more

***Email: ponzio@foresitewireless.com or editor@humanitiesdirectory.com**

2 P. Ponzio

comfortable, or more happy. Rather, the true goal of the state "was not the disproportionate happiness of any one class, but the greatest happiness of the whole" (Plato 342). Plato was not naive enough to believe this would happen with common politicians. In order to implement his vision of the perfect state, Plato knew that:

'Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils — no, nor the human race, as I believe — and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day' (Plato 369).

Our authors have, I believe, embraced Plato's search for community — a community which is egalitarian, ecologically responsible, and self-sustaining — and in so doing, have brought us one step closer to Plato's ideal ruler. I remain,

Yours,

Peter Ponzio
Editor

Works Cited

Plato. *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. *Great Books of the Western World*. Ed. Mortimer J. Adler. 2 ed. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica. 814. Vol. 6 of 60 vols., 2007.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).