

Arts and politics in fifth century athens

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The 5th century proved to be the height of cultural and intellectual progression in Athens. Athens, during the 5th century, is an emerging powerful city-state whose military and organized political system is recognized by the world. At the pinnacle of democratic government within Athens there has been an undergoing active exchange of intellectual activities hailing from the philosophers and the artists which includes poets, tragedians, sculptors, etc. The cultural and intellectual achievements that happened in Athens are equated with its political institution - democracy (Join Association of Classical Teachers, 2003, p. 284).

This struggle is an apparent purpose of influencing the masses through public participation whether in debates, tragedies, or any form of rhetoric to be able to persuade people. Philosophers and poets alike became involved in a politically active environment aimed for political power through intellectual influence. Intellectuals such as Aristotle, Sophocles, Plato, and Socrates became successful in propagating their respective wisdom in different medium such as tragedies or impromptu debates. The latter is most commonly used by Socrates in which he initiated questions about morality, truth, and freedom to a common man.

When most thinkers used rhetoric to get political power and influence, Socrates concentrated on the ethical and morality within debates and critical-thinking. In Plato's *Crito*, Socrates has criticized the way intellectuals have run the political unit of Athens. He emphasized that is the men who ruled and implemented the laws who are wrong and not the law itself. From this perspective, the intellectuals who run Athens under corrupt ways can be the reason why Socrates did not participate in the politics of Athens.

Instead he reached to the ordinary men to ignite debates and makes them realize how it is to be a good citizen behaving under the laws of morality and the laws of the state. This intellectual struggle between the philosophers and the poets might have been the glamorous side of Athens, but it also became the cause of its downfall, as intellectual men clouded by self-interests interpreted the Athenian laws in their own hands, thus, even bringing down their wisest thinker of all time. Reference Joint Association of Classical Teachers. (2003). The World of Athens. UK: Cambridge University Press.