

CIVISTI and the ideal conversation: A comparison of two modes of setting the scientific research agenda

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In this presentation I will defend the thesis that Philip Kitcher's model of the ideal conversation under conditions of mutual engagement falls foul of ideals of equality such as those proposed by Scanlon (1996) and Rancière (2014), and I will present an alternative egalitarian model for setting the scientific research agenda. From the comparison of the ideal conversation with the CIVISTI model – a model originating in a European Union Framework Programme (FP7) project and used in scientific research agenda public consultations – I will identify an underlying tension in efforts of the democratization of the scientific research agenda. I will claim that this tension (and Kitcher's strategy in resolving it) goes all the way back to Plato's criticisms of democracy as a political system of government.

More specifically, I will first introduce Scanlon's and Rancière's ideals, before focussing on two features of Kitcher's model of the ideal conversation under conditions of mutual engagement: a) the cognitive condition for mutual engagement and b) Kitcher's position on and occasional advocacy of paternalistic altruism. I will argue that these two features effectively render the ideal conversation inegalitarian and exclusive. As opposed to this, I present a model which has flesh-and-bones deliberators at its heart, both in terms of the proposals made but, more importantly, in the assessment of the quality of the output.

In conclusion, I will claim that principles of democratization and the assessment of output quality by parties other than the lay participants (with respect to the setting of the research agenda) pull in different directions and that this reflects wider objections to democracy already present in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*.