

Tor is Peace, Software Freedom is Slavery,
Wikipedia is Truth
The Political Philosophy of the Internet

Adam Obeng
adamobeng.com/27c3

27th Chaos Communication Congress

30th of December 2010



What Is Politics?

Definition

Politics is the study of **power**.

So, What's Power?

$$P = \frac{dW}{dt}$$

Definition

Power is the ability to make other people do things.

So politics happens wherever there are people.

So, What's Power?

$$P = \frac{dW}{dt}$$

Definition

Power is the ability to make other people do things.

So politics happens wherever there are people.

So, What's Power?

$$P = \frac{dW}{dt}$$

Definition

Power is the ability to make other people do things.

So politics happens wherever there are people.

So, What's Power?

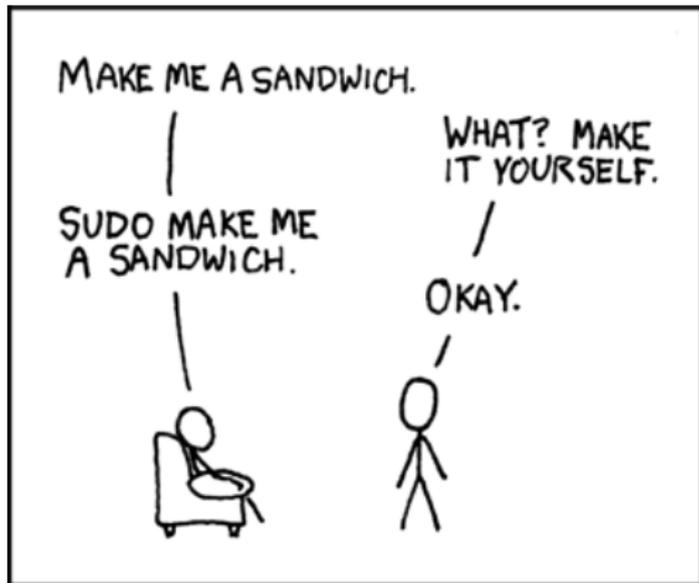
$$P = \frac{dW}{dt}$$

Definition

Power is the ability to make other people do things.

So politics happens wherever there are people.

An Example Of Power



Source: xkcd.com, used under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 License.

'sudo': An Example of Political Power

On Unix:

```
$ sudo something
```

'sudo': An Example of Political Power

In the real world:



What is Philosophy?

- Thinking about stuff.

Definition

Thinking about stuff *really hard*.

- More specifically:

What is Philosophy?

- Thinking about stuff.

Definition

Thinking about stuff *really hard*.

- More specifically:

What is Philosophy?

- Thinking about stuff.

Definition

Thinking about stuff *really hard*.

- More specifically:

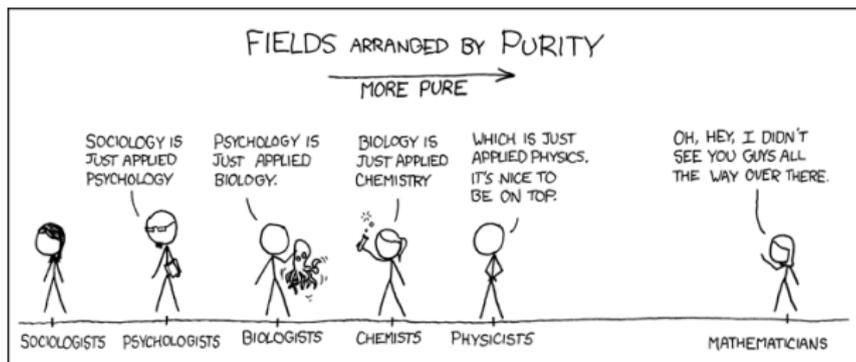
What is Philosophy?

- Thinking about stuff.

Definition

Thinking about stuff *really hard*.

- More specifically:



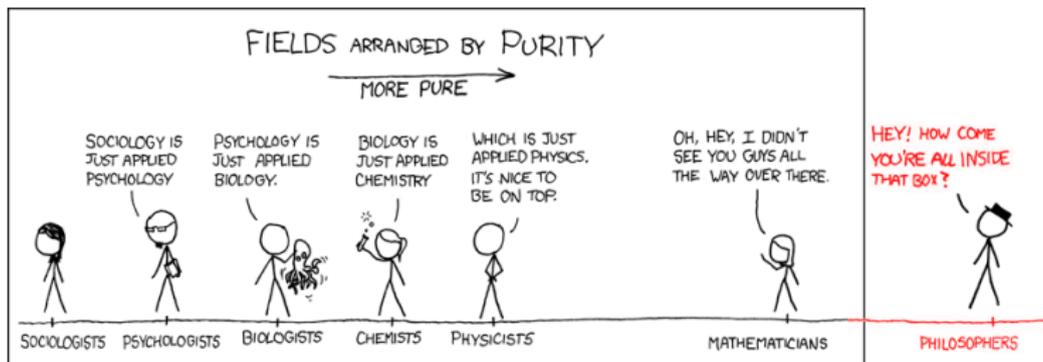
What is Philosophy?

- Thinking about stuff.

Definition

Thinking about stuff *really hard*.

- More specifically:

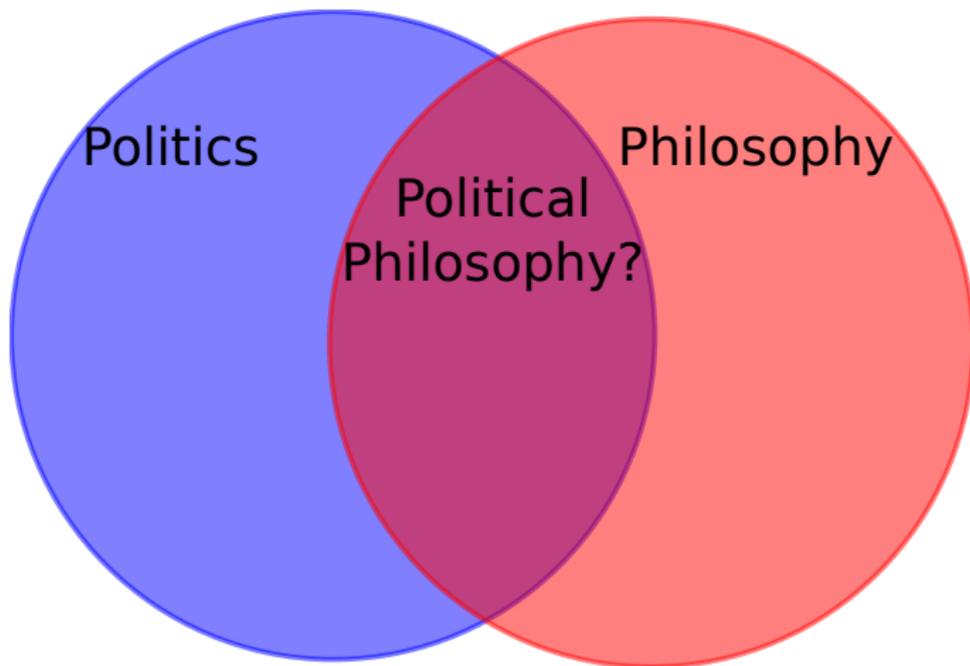


Philosophy is a way of thinking

Definition

Philosophy is **critical, rational and systematic.**

What is Political Philosophy?



political philosophy = *politics* \cap *philosophy*

What is Political Philosophy

Subject matter of Politics + Method of Philosophy

Why Should You Care?

there are elaborate arguments, claims rebutted by unlikely counterexamples, surprising theses, puzzles, abstract structural conditions, challenges to find another theory which fits a specified range of cases, startling conclusions, and so on. [...] some may feel that the truth about ethics and political philosophy is too serious and important to be obtained by such “flashy” tools. Nevertheless, it may be that correctness in ethics is not found in what we naturally think [11, p. x]

Why Should You Care?

there are elaborate arguments, claims rebutted by unlikely counterexamples, surprising theses, puzzles, abstract structural conditions, challenges to find another theory which fits a specified range of cases, startling conclusions, and so on. [...] some may feel that the truth about ethics and political philosophy is too serious and important to be obtained by such “flashy” tools. Nevertheless, it may be that correctness in ethics is not found in what we naturally think [11, p. x]

Why You Should Care

- Because **philosophers are hackers** of ideas.
- And **politics is everywhere** that people are.

Why You Should Care

- Because **philosophers are hackers** of ideas.
- And **politics is everywhere** that people are.

Why You Should Care

- Because **philosophers are hackers** of ideas.
- And **politics is everywhere** that people are.

Why the Internet?

It...

- ... has organic communities
- ... is like the real world
- ... and unlike the real world
- What happens on the Internet... stays on the Internet

Why the Internet?

It...

- ... has organic communities
- ... is like the real world
- ... and unlike the real world
- What happens on the Internet... stays on the Internet

Why the Internet?

It...

- ... has organic communities
- ... is like the real world
- ... and unlike the real world
- What happens on the Internet... stays on the Internet

Why the Internet?

It...

- ... has organic communities
- ... is like the real world
- ... and unlike the real world
- What happens on the Internet... stays on the Internet

Why the Internet?

It...

- ... has organic communities
- ... is like the real world
- ... and unlike the real world
- What happens on the Internet... stays on the Internet

Where Power Isn't: Liberty

Where Power Isn't: Liberty

Liberty

... or freedom

Definition

Freedom is ... uh-oh.

Liberty

... or freedom

Definition

Freedom is ... uh-oh.

Definitions of Freedom

Freedom in Free/Libre/Open Source Software (FLOSS) groups

- 'free as in speech' versus 'free as in beer'

Definitions of Freedom

Freedom in Free/Libre/Open Source Software (FLOSS) groups

- 'free as in speech' versus 'free as in beer'

FLOSS licenses are Constitutions

Defining the basic terms of the community BSD vs. GPL

The (new) BSD License

BSD License clauses

- Redistributions of source code must retain the [...] copyright notice, this list of conditions and the [...] disclaimer.
- Redistributions in binary form must reproduce the [...] copyright notice, this list of conditions and the [...] disclaimer in the documentation and/or other materials provided with the distribution.

[8]

Attribution!

The GPL

The Foundations of the GPL: the Four Freedoms

Nobody should be restricted by the software they use. There are four freedoms that every user should have:

- the freedom to use the software for any purpose,
- the freedom to change the software to suit your needs,
- the freedom to share the software with your friends and neighbors, and
- the freedom to share the changes you make.

[14]

Copyleft: The Harm Principle for Software Communities

Copyleft is a general method for making a program (or other work) free, and requiring all modified and extended versions of the program to be free as well.

[6]

"First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others."

[13]

Is Copyleft Less Free? Take 1

Measuring freedom

Freedom \propto things you can do

Restrictions imposed by the BSD license

Copyright (c) <YEAR>, <OWNER>
All rights reserved.

Redistribution and use in source and binary forms, with or without modification, are permitted provided that the following conditions are met:

- * Redistributions of source code must retain the above copyright notice, this list of conditions and the following disclaimer.
- * Redistributions in binary form must reproduce the above copyright notice, this list of conditions and the following disclaimer in the documentation and/or other materials provided with the distribution.
- * Neither the name of the <ORGANIZATION> nor the names of its contributors may be used to endorse or promote products derived from this software without specific prior written permission.

THIS SOFTWARE IS PROVIDED BY THE COPYRIGHT HOLDERS AND CONTRIBUTORS "AS IS" AND ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE ARE DISCLAIMED. IN NO EVENT SHALL THE COPYRIGHT HOLDER OR CONTRIBUTORS BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, SPECIAL, EXEMPLARY, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PROCUREMENT OF SUBSTITUTE GOODS OR SERVICES; LOSS OF USE, DATA, OR PROFITS; OR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) HOWEVER CAUSED AND ON ANY THEORY OF LIABILITY, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, STRICT LIABILITY, OR TORT (INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR OTHERWISE) ARISING IN ANY WAY OUT OF THE USE OF THIS SOFTWARE, EVEN IF ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

Restrictions imposed by the GPL

GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE Version 3, 29 June 2007

Copyright (C) 2007 Free Software Foundation, Inc. <<http://fsf.org/>>
Everyone is permitted to copy and distribute verbatim copies
of this license document, but changing it is not allowed.

Preamble

The GNU General Public License is a free, copyleft license for
software and other kinds of works.

The licenses for most software and other practical works are designed
to take away your freedom to share and change the works. By contrast,
the GNU General Public License is intended to guarantee your freedom to
share and change all versions of a program--to make sure it remains free
software for all its users. We, the Free Software Foundation, use the
GNU General Public License for most of our software; it applies also to
any other work released this way by its authors. You can apply it to
your programs, too.

When we speak of free software, we are referring to freedom, not
price. Our General Public Licenses are designed to make sure that you
have the freedom to distribute copies of free software (and charge for

Take 1

Copyleft: More restrictions, so less freedom.

Measuring freedom

Freedom \propto things you can do

Measuring freedom

Freedom \propto things **\$you** can do The definition of 'you' is assumed!

MacCallum's Tripartite Definition of Freedom

\$x is free from \$y to do \$z

The subject of freedom under the BSD license

“Redistribution and use in source and binary forms[...]

\$x = Redistributors!

Redistributors are free from legal constraints to do use, copy, modify, etc.

The subject of freedom under Copyleft

“free software for all its users.”

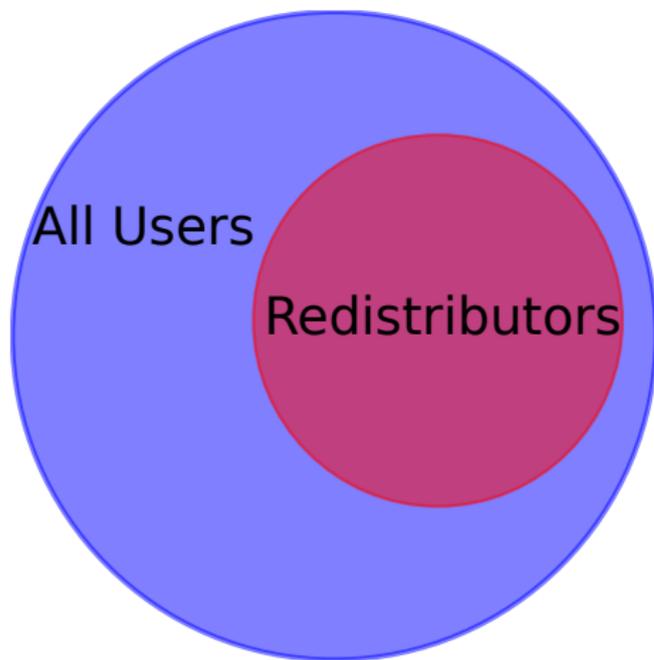
$\$x = \text{All users!}$

All users are free from legal constraints to do use, copy, modify, etc.

The Crux: users and redistributors, different subjects of freedom

BSD cares about the freedom of *'redistributors'*. GPL cares about the freedom of *'all users'*.

Is Copyleft Less Free: Take 2



Redistributors \in All users

Copyleft is Positive Freedom

$x = \textit{groups}$ 'redistributors' = 'individuals' 'all users' = 'the community'

The General Slavery License

“Each user is required to contribute 4KLOC or 500 man-hours, whichever is higher to, maintaining, updating, or improving the Software” The community is freer (better code), individuals are not.

What positive freedom cares about?

Not the extent of the restrictions, but the source of the restrictions.

Two of Berlin's arguments against positive freedom

- Allowing any restrictions to be part of freedom is too much...
- ... it leads to an $\text{Ä}\text{©}$ lite of Platonic guardians
- Different people have different goals, would want different restrictions...
- ... satisfying everyone would create conflicts

So...

Freedom is a property of **individuals, not groups.**

Copyleft and Freedom

TL;DR version:

- Copyleft reduces freedom ...
- ... unless you define freedom to include things that aren't actually freedom.
- Positive freedom considered harmful.
- Copyleft really does reduce freedom

Nothing I Just Said Really Matters

Because *software freedom isn't just about freedom*

Nothing I Just Said Really Matters

Because *software freedom isn't just about freedom*



Isiah Berlin.

Two concepts of liberty.



Tim Berners-Lee.

Long live the web: A call for continued open standards and neutrality.

Scientific American, 2002.



Free Software Foundation.

Categories of free and nonfree software.



Inc. Free Software Foundation.

Gnu general public license.



Inc. Free Software Foundation.

What is copyleft?



Thomas Hobbes

Tor is Peace, Software Freedom is Slavery, Wikipedia is Truth

The Political Philosophy of the Internet

Adam Obeng
adamobeng.com/27c3

27th Chaos Communication Congress

30th of December 2010

Thanks to reviewers



Copyright ©2010 Adam Obeng. This work is licenced under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California 94105, USA.