To have an idea of the political stand of the Old Oligarch, it might be useful to consider these words: “In every land the best element is opposed to democracy. Among the best elements there is very little license and injustice, very great discrimination as to what is worthy, while among the commons there is very great ignorance, disorderliness and rascality; for poverty tends to lead them to what is disgraceful, as does lack of education and the ignorance which befalls some men as a result of lack of means” (Pseudo-Xenophon 1900, 16). The Neo-Illuminist, instead, believes in democracy and the equality of men.

Dialogue between the Old Oligarch and the Neo-illuminist*

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: Good morning, good morning! May I come in?

**OLD OLIGARCH**: Oh, well! Well! You have come. I am very pleased.

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: How are you? You're looking well. You look wonderful.

**OLD OLIGARCH**: And you? How are you? You seem fine, are you not?

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: I'm fine, yes. I'm fine.

**OLD OLIGARCH**: Please, take a seat! Shall we have something to drink? A cup of coffee? A cup of tea?

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: A coffee will be fine. Thanks.

**OLD OLIGARCH**: Good! Let's go with a coffee. I'll prepare it straight away. (While the old oligarch fumbles in the kitchen, the neo-illuminist turns to the living room, looking at books, paintings, valuable objects)

**OLD OLIGARCH**: (Coming out of the kitchen) Here it is; the coffee is ready ...

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: Ah, thank you (sipping); it is really good.

**OLD OLIGARCH**: Ah, it's the mixture, the water ... and maybe even a bit of ancient wisdom ... But let's come to us.

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: Yes, let's come to us.

**OLD OLIGARCH**: So ... I sent to look for you because I wanted to have a chat ...

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: And on what? May I know?

**OLD OLIGARCH**: What! Can't you figure it out? On your last book. I've heard about it. It seems new and intriguing – at least so they say! I have had a look at it and I would like to pursue the matter with you, if you agree.

**NEO-IILLUMINIST**: Ah, I'm glad. Especially if you are interested in it. In fact, I'd be curious to know why and what interests you.

**OLD OLIGARCH**: Easy, easy. Not so fast. I am not interested for a specific reason. I'm curious, yes, to get to know more about ideas on power which, I am told, are quite original. I hope you might wish to talk about this.

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NEO-IILLUMINIST: Ah, well, well. I am very happy to discuss it with you. Good criticism is just what I need. But where would you want to start?

OLD OLIGARCH: Well, I don't know ... I think with the more general issues, the aims of your work; what do you think?

NEO-IILLUMINIST: Oh, yes, that makes sense. So ... I would like to make a point clear ...

OLD OLIGARCH: Please, please ...

NEO-IILLUMINIST: This is not an academic book, especially in its structure. It is the result of an ‘ancient’ interest that had been with me for a long time. In recent years, however, it has become stronger and has led to a writing project. I have to admit, though, that this is something unusual, at least for me. So I had a certain reluctance to talk about and publish it.

OLD OLIGARCH: Yes, but here it is now, and you might as well talk about it ... So, the general aims ...

NEO-IILLUMINIST: Yeah, yeah ... I took a ritual practice and showed that it is nothing more than a power structure, a field of struggle and conflict between those who want to impose and those who oppose this power practice. In particular, through some historical investigations (Alexander the Great, Constantine the Great, a British–Chinese clash of civilizations) I have tried to shed light on a claim rather common among those in power, that is, their desire, at some point in their life to be considered gods and worshipped as such. Moreover, sometimes they have developed a theory, if we can call this scam so, for which there would be a ‘royal race’, of course of divine origin, and an inferior race, the brute, uneducated and unintelligent mob. And these are not only things of the past. They appear, in various forms, even today. On this last point, however, I have only made indirect references.

OLD OLIGARCH: Ah, I understand, I understand. But – please excuse my frankness – isn’t it the old story of the critique of power and, in particular, of its demonic face?

NEO-IILLUMINIST: Well, yes and no. There is no doubt that the way I see the issue fits into the path of the critique of power. It is also true, however, that this criticism analyses ritual practices once taken for granted; and it is still so, after all.

OLD OLIGARCH: Well, we should not exaggerate! In your opinion, then, when Christians kneel or Muslims prostrate themselves