In deciding when to follow prominent people and when to disagree with them, Socrates had one huge advantage over us. He could always talk to them in person. Athens in his day had a population of just 150,000. And all the citizens came here to the Agora, the main market and meeting place of Athens. If you'd have visited in the 5th century BC, you'd have been likely to see amongst the bustle of the city a rather curious ugly figure, because for most of his adult life Socrates got up at dawn and came to spend the day amongst the shopkeepers and merchants who had their stalls here.

It wasn't just local people who came to this spot. It was also the most important people in Athenian society, so that you could meet here at any point in the day probably as it were the opinion formers, the great military generals, the great statesmen, the important rhetoriticians, the aristocrats. They could all be found here.

And what Socrates did rather than just idly chatting to people, he would go up to these very important people and ask them great questions on life. He'd basically ask them to explain why they were living the kind of life they were leading. And what happened is that he found there were surprising inadequacies in their understanding of the way of life they were leading, so that wealthy people couldn't really explain why they had money and others didn't. Military generals couldn't explain why they fought battles in a certain way.

And I think we take away from this a fascinating lesson, which is that if you have the luck or at least the courage to go up to important people and question the way that they're leading their lives, you might be able to find surprising inadequacies of which their very confident demeanor gave absolutely no indication.