
“The Myth of the Cave” by Plato

“The Myth of the Cave” by Plato, depicts a very important message. This book was written over 2500 years ago in the year 400 B.C. The excerpt is a conversation that Socrates speaks with Glaucon. Socrates tells Glaucon the people in an underground cave, these people have been in the cave since childhood, they have been in chains so they are only able to see what is in front of them. The cave has a mouth opening and a fire is lit behind them. There is a raised wall between them and the fire, the prisoners cannot see each other or themselves. The only things the prisoners can see is the shadows of themselves, each other, and things that are carried over the fire. They also see puppeteers, when they see the shadows of the puppets they think it is real. The prisoners only know the world as an illusion. If a prisoner is released and forced to turn his neck, the fire will cause pain in his eyes. He will be in pain to see those things that are casting the shadows, “he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion” (Plato 514).

He will be unable to name the things which he used to see as a shadow, if he leaves the cave, it will be even more painful. However, he will slowly recover and when he does he'll see the state of the other prisoners and consider himself lucky. If he went back, however, if he came back to tell everyone the false life that is there own, “would he not be ridiculous?” (Plato 517). He would be a laughing stock to the prisoners, he would have a hard time walking since his eyes are not adjusted and make a fool of himself, they would think the sunlight ruined his eyes, “Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending” (Plato 517).

The prisoner will be scared to go out and kill anyone trying to take them out of the cave. Plato's analogy is that the ignorant people are the ones who will see the shadows and not question whether or not they are real. However, the smarter people are those who see the shadows and the puppets in which cast them, they also see the light in which they are cast in the first place. Smarter people are more conscious of their surrounding. He also says that the average person is stuck in a boring life, that they are stuck inside their own sort of cave unable to see the true beauty life has to offer, people are imagining seeing real things. Only once that they leave their caves will they see the true beauty of reality, at first it will be overwhelming and be blinded by reality but once accustomed they will see their past as depressing and be fortunate for seeing so. They are unable to tell their friends about their new discovery and they will get laughed at if doing so.

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