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# The Philosophical Impact of Plato's Allegory of the Cave on My Perception

From the time we are born, our minds are shaped by the environment in which we interact and are taught to view life in a certain way. We are limited by controlling forces that result from what we learn generally and from our parents, siblings, television, teachers, school text, and many other avenues. The problem is that while we are confined in these norms, we miss the opportunity to see what is beyond and what is truly real, and instead keep our eyes focused on the shadows perfectly projected in front of us. In Plato's allegory, those in the cave, much like us, humans, have been there since birth and have not seen the light and are doomed to ignorance or at best, opinion. In this paper, I will show how my understanding of reality has changed after reading Plato's Allegory of the cave.

In Plato's Allegory of the cave, we are introduced to fictitious prisoners who since their birth have lived in the depth of a cave their whole lives. Truly, there is nothing else they would know other than what is provided for them. The prisoners are in chains, so they can only look forward. Behind them is a path with a blazing fire, which projects objects to the wall in front of them of shadows of people who travel, objects, and other things.

For them, there is certainly one thing that is real, which is the shadow projected in front of them. This can be translated as a low form of understanding because of what the prisoners choose to believe as reality. Plato then provides a description of what might happen in case one of the prisoners were capable of escaping the bondage and leaving the cave. Facing directly in the sunlight would cause his eyes to ache, and he might even choose to go back to the cave because truly its more comfortable to be somewhere where there is less pain.

But if this does not happen, he might adjust and see the individuals and objects of which he had initially seen as shadows. Plato proceeds that in case the prisoner continues his escape and manages to leave the cave, he would be blinded by true reality. But after some time, he would adjust and would be able to see things in this upper world and recognize that they were more real than the shadows that he had experienced in the cave.

If this escaped prisoner finally returns back into the cave with intentions of enlightening his fellow prisoners, still partly blinded by the illuminating experience, the prisoner would have a hard time readjusting to the life of shadows. Thus, he would not be able to convince the other prisoners of the good he had seen. Humans and the reality of what the universe is all about are perfectly reflected by prisoners and the shadowy world where we constantly experience

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shadows of reality.

Much like prisoners in the cave, human beings spend most of their lives in a cave chained in place so that we can only see the shadows of reality projected on a wall in front of us through a large fire. Most people will be content to see the changing patterns of shadows in front of them, but few others will try to see them and learn from them, but in either case, they are seeing only the shadows of reality. Nevertheless, if one such person manages to break free and escape 'the cave.' He is bound to see the true nature of existence. He might, undoubtedly, return back to the cave and try explaining to others what true reality is, and the how different it is from projection but there is a high chance they will not believe him. They are more likely to be content to continue to hold their long-time beliefs no matter how ill-informed they could be.

People take what might be considered shadows of imagination as reality. Leaving our caves symbolizes learning the true nature of humanity in its divine form, of couchness and all the rest, but most importantly, of morality, goodness, beauty, and truth. For Plato, the light of the sun is a representation of truth, and the divine while the fire in the cave is an inferior source of light and does not make part of the true and the good. Once a person can attain this knowledge of the ideal, they can have a difficult time going back to the ordinary world where ordinary objects are but a reflection.

Personally, I may not be in a position to perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows like that of the prisoners, but at least I understand that the true form of reality rests beyond us and what we perceive in the world is only a shadow projected on a wall creating our minds to believe it as the real object. Thinking based on shadows bounds humanity to the chains of ignorance. Therefore, we see and hear taste and feel, smell and interpret the world and form our beliefs in ways that are shaped by the experiences we perceive from the world. These beliefs, however, are not any closely related to objective reality.

We, therefore, live two lives, one which is the shadow of our reality are propelled by imagination and shaped from birth by societal experiences and those which are unseen to us, which according to me encompass the actual reality. One of these two realities unfolds before the human eye, day after day, reflected right in front of us for thousands of years.

As humans, we live in the reality of what we see, feel, and experience –the shadows on the wall of the cave. Plato's allegory is intended to provide encouragement for the human race to go forth from the darkness of their ignorance onto the brilliance of the sunlight, for example, knowledge of things as they really are. The writing shadows cast through flickering fire shows people's imaginations. The irony makes it apparent that only natural sunlight can shed light on the errors that our beliefs are subjects.

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Plato's allegory of the cave shows the way in which our primeval sub-consciousness has kept us in the dark of superstition and also of ignorance. Through questioning those who assumed they possessed the knowledge, he discovered the awkward fact that we normally live by vague half-truths, and he proved the falsity of the sophistry we normally use in disguising our ignorance. In the dialogues, Plato left a record of the inimitable wisdom of Socrates. Plato himself believes that personal dedication to an ideal was necessary for a soul to become immortal. Therefore, I believe that when a person lives true to himself, when he or she devotes his life to work, to faith or to an ideal, the person hardly does so for purposes of ego. The I, me, and myself have little to do with the love or dedication.

The search for perfection, in this case, transcends personality and requires determination and dedication. Only when the mind is a supernal state of concentration do eternal becomes apparent. This state is experienced beyond every individual limitations, emotions, and intelligence. Today, most of us are too much concerned with success, money, reward and not realism. However, not a lot of virtue resides in such form of passion. What someone does for his own sake, seeks and finds its own reward. Any sense of true accomplishment tends to be greater than any vanity of success. What the mind conceives transcends the reality of this world.

The cave metaphor suggests that it can be challenging to understand ideal reality since we get accustomed to thinking that apparent reality is all there is. Even though we are all born with an understanding of ideal reality, the problem is, most of us forget what we were born knowing because we get folded by the appearances of things. Even though we might forget ideal reality, sometimes we can remember it again. The point of the story is to show how difficult it can be to understand ideal reality.

The shadows reflected on the wall of the cave represent the thing that is real. A picture of something or a reflection seen in something is not the actual thing itself, but sometimes we can choose to believe that it is, in fact, the actual thing. Similarly, the shadows in the cave are not the things that cast the shadow, even though they can assist us in figuring out what these things are. The things carried out in the cave reflect our ordinary experiences. The world outside the cave represents the ideal world of forms.

In conclusion, I have argued that based on Plato's Allegory of the cave, the truth of what is real can only be perceived once a person gets out of the cave and stays there despite the difficulties they might endure. Other than this, humans and the reality of what the universe is all about is perfectly reflected by prisoners, we are limited by controlling forces that result from what we learn in general, what we are taught and of course the education system implemented. These, however, are shadows of imagination taken as reality and we spend our lives in our own caves chained so that we can only see the shadows of reality. At this point, it takes an individual to

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truly realize what is true and what an imagination involves. The shadows on the wall of the cave become a reality once a person leaves the cave.

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