

Plato's Cave, A Mirror To A Contemporary Condition

In the myth of the Cave, Plato paints an intriguing picture. On a wall shadows are being shown to a people whose eyes cannot but look ahead, that is, the wall itself; whose body moreover can difficultly move around, if not at all. The people who dwell there were in a fashion prisoners of a worldview; they were fed upon a single idea made by shadowy figurines. The capacity to carry change in such a human condition is null obviously. Like Plato's allegory the danger which threatens our "seeing" may well be imposed by the neon lights of a market economy, and its corresponding ideology, which is "consume or perish". Unlike the dialogue in the Republic whereby the protagonists are part of a state – the Athenian state of Plato's time – we are, as it were, subjects to a rule that stands beyond our making and imagining, whose dictate upon the course of the world effects in much irrationality – take for instance the 2007 crisis –; whose power is worldwide. There was a single individual, however, who by some chance got to reach the light from above after great efforts. There he learned to see again the trees, the waters that flow from the riverbeds; he smelt the rich earth, touched her deep red colour with amazement and awe, and his heart was never so free and ecstatic at the same time – freedom was like a host of birds set free from within. This one, according to Plato, has reached the true state of blessedness, that of seeing the Good, and the wisdom which it imparts. Plato lived around 500 BCE, and his allegory may remind us that unless humankind remembers his or her humanity, which cannot be found but through the help of the whole natural elements of life, that is, through its contemplation, the world will become a blighted area and an enslavement, for human beings would have forgotten who they are in truth. In other words, there is a correspondence in between who we are and the world we live in. To step into this path of change may be just reducing our time watching the TV or computer screen and tablets alike, mobile too, and see for ourselves our true need, that we belong to this blue earth.

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