

Allegory of the cave by plato



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The philosopher Plato was the first to state about uniform, circular and regular movement of celestial bodies. In his works, we meet for the first time the planets named after the gods completely conterminous with Babylon. Plato was the first to formulate a problem for mathematicians: to find by means of what uniform and regular circular movements it is possible to rescue the phenomena represented by planets. In other words, Plato gave a task to construct geometrical model of the world in the centre of which there is the Earth.

Plato in 387 BC established a school of philosophy based on deduction rather than experimentation and observation. He stated that all heavenly bodies had a spherical shape and their motion in the Universe was circular. One of his pupils, Eudoxos, worked out a theory of homocentric spheres. This theory was meant to give account of the positions of celestial objects. It easily explained the motion of the stars, but the motions of planet still remained a complex question. The Sun, the Moon and the planets were regarded as the points on the surface of interconnected spheres. The Earth occupied the central place. The spheres were aligned along various axes revolving in different directions at constant speeds. Eudoxos presented 27 spheres in order to explain the motions of all the celestial objects (Fine, 1999).

In Allegory of the Cave, Plato presents two forms of human existence: a form of motion and a form of motionless. It is referred to an allegory connected with the highest value of education, or enlightenment. A figurative meaning of a chain is ignorance, but the opposite meaning of it is knowledge. Therefore, Plato positions a thorny path of an individual who is striving for

knowledge and his counterpart, an ignorant person, who is striving for motionless (Okin, 1977).

Plato wrote Allegory of the Cave, and he implemented a rich world of metaphors in his narration. In this creative writing, the great philosopher compared and contrasted different modes of reality perception. He claimed that initially we perceive imperfect representation of ultimate Forms. These Forms refer to Truth and Reality. Moreover, the philosopher applies to key states of our being: motion and motionless conditions of a human essence. Motion is the allegory connected with education, knowledge development etc. A motionless way of being is the one without enlightenment and education. The prisoners are chained, i. e. they are forced to be motionless, or in a figurative meaning, they are prevented from self-development and knowledge is hidden from them. Plato is focused on the issues of " being" and " becoming". People must see what they are told to see from the very childhood. It is a great and a complicated thorny path for every individual to reach the depth of knowledge, which is high above the cave. Thus, every individual finds himself on a constant way of self-development when he manages to open his eyes and look above the cave, then free himself from chains and be released in a free and easy way of existence full of knowledge. A road to knowledge is very challenging, and Plato claims about challenges and difficulties, but he justifies the results reached. Human existence cedes on motion and motionless forms of human existence. Light is the allegory to knowledge, and cave is the allegory for ignorance. Thus, every individual lives between real life and invented life. The world is full of illusions and

metaphors, and it takes much time and knowledge to differ between two realities.

To master abstract and conceptual thinking, a person must be aware of different tactics of analytical thinking, widen one's horizon and develop one's knowledge. Human mind is a powerful and a strong trigger for potential successful development of a person. Allegory of the Cave from The Republic combines many metaphorical explanations of our reality. Education, knowledge and human life is an unbreakable unity. Each of these three elements is an integrative one, and Plato underlines the necessity of knowledge development and a state of motion in comparison with a state of motionless and a sensual perception (Brown, 2002).

Plato develops his ideas in terms of two main backgrounds: one based on the fictional metaphor of the prisoners, and another strong background based on philosophical implications. The prisoners are chained to the floor, and they cannot look around. The reality is perceived by the prisoners on the basis of shadows, which are produced by the puppeteers on the walls. The ideas of prisoners are reflected in the dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon (Plato's brother). Socrates claims about a perverted perception of reality by prisoners. The prisoners would perceive shadows as their own reality. It means that from the very childhood, children are told false things, and they are unable to perceive reality in its essence. Allegorical names are the names of things which are invisible to us, i. e. at this point Plato mentions "imagination". When prisoners are released, they can hardly stand the real truth. Their eyes are aching, and it is now interesting for them to look at the

difference between truth reality and an imagined reality, which is referred to as a "belief".

When the prisoners are looking at the Sun, they are bewildered and scared, but they claim that this light is a "Form of the Good!" Plato is focused on the novice vision of a prisoner of his own knowledge and enlightenment. Glaucon and Socrates claim that the prisoner suffers from previous understanding and previous experiences. When the prisoners come back to the cave, they re-enter the world of darkness (ignorance). The Forms of Goodness can be opened only to responsible leaders and enlightened individuals. The allegory is not a perverted representation of the given reality. Plato develops his ideas about a potential leader, and his skills depend on his knowledge directly. A leader is an ex-prisoner who managed to return to the cave and who can govern from goodness and truth. A real leader is expected to take care of the followers, "...you have been better and more thoroughly educated than those others and hence you are more capable of playing your part both as men of thought and as men of action." It is a great goodness for every leader to get acquainted with the Forms of Goodness, because it is a way for favorable development of responsibility of a qualified leader. At this point, Plato correlates the visions about just society and the leaders. Allegory of the Cave is a challenging philosophical background for considerations about our lives and possible modes to live it through. There are four stages of thought, or four different modes of thinking in our lives. To live our lives as aware and cognizant individuals, it is necessary to realize the most virtuous ideas of self-development and in such a way just society can be created. Socrates and Glaucon told an interesting story of a person's life at two

different levels: at the level of real truth and a perverted reality or "imagination". Plato finds the roots of leadership and just society in knowledge and enlightenment, in the Forms of Goodness. Qualification of leadership and government depends on knowledge and motion and is prevented by motionless way of being and ignorance.

Plato discusses two realities of being and becoming. A human being is positioned by the great philosopher as an object, which is unable to "see" the essence and truth of human being. From the very childhood, people are in the cave, and they can see only before them. In order to get knowledge, human beings must follow a thorny path from a deep cave of ignorance to a bright space of education and knowledge. Thus, the state of being is a limited human condition of existence, while a state of becoming implies a deep and profound sense of human being transformation to the highest level of his existence.

There are two basic forms presented by Plato. These are a form of becoming, or motion, and a form of being, or motionless. The importance of the former form for human existence cannot be underestimated. It is a way to get knowledge. The latter form of motionless, or being, is a way of staying ignorant. As a result, a human being is responsible for his knowledge gaining, an interesting and fruitful life. Moreover, it is very hard to get knowledge, and Plato underlines challenges and difficulties, which may occur on the way to knowledge gaining.

Consequently, motion and motionless are two basic forms of human existence. A human being turns his head to the light (knowledge) and for this

purpose he has to break the chain otherwise he stays ignorant and remains in the darkness of the cave (ignorance) for the rest of his life. Still, the philosopher underlines a great pain of a human being striving for knowledge, and it would be difficult for him to differ between illusions and realities.

Two realities of Plato can be referred to human beings who are the prisoners of their minds. Those who are triggered by their senses cannot differentiate between illusions and realities; those who are able to think freely and analyze their thoughts and make conclusions can differentiate between abstract and conceptual thinking. A limited horizon of predictions, illusions or false explanations can be easily overcome by those who can think properly and refer to their knowledge.

Many people agree with every Plato's arguments, and they are very close to their own persuasions. Plato's main point is that any art should have power on people's souls, and because of this power it can make the souls better. Plato's ideas are very close to the Christian ones, and if at present time we have a religion to bring up our souls, at the ancient time the art and the philosophy were good means for it. The philosophers revealed humans' inner world with the help of their reflections at the time when Greek religion paid attention just to the appearance.

Therefore, Allegory of the Cave from The Republic is a masterpiece of metaphorical explanation of the importance of knowledge and education on the lives of human beings. A sensual perception and a state of motionless is nothing in comparison with an unlimited world of knowledge and a state of

motion. A thorny path of an educated person in a masterful allegoric manner is shown by Plato in this work.