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CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Plato's Allegory of the Cave is drawn from his tremendous works on the Republic. It is literally a conversation that takes place between Socrates and Gaucon. The conversation is categorized into three parts. The first section is the scene within the cave. According to Kernan, the second part of the discourse deliberates on the three stages of liberation and the third creates a picture of the prisoner returning to the same cave.

The scene in the cave is one of gloom and darkness, with prisoner chained and unable to move around, even their heads could only face one single direction-forward. Behind the prisoners, there is a wall and behind the wall is a huge flame. Unaware of what is behind them the prisoners see images cast in front of them. Images they perceive to be real. In essence these images were shadows created by the fire. Socrates refers to the shadows as forms. Cohen asserts that " What the prisoners see and hear are shadows and echoes cast by objects that they do not see."

One prisoner somehow loosens his chains and attempt to move around. His efforts are met with pain because since birth, he has been immobile.

Curiosity and a desire to perceive the small light that peered at the end of the tunnel drove the released prisoner onwards. His movement, made difficult by pain almost makes him turn back but he moves on.

Socrates states this in the following manner, " Watch the process whereby the prisoners are set free from their chains and, along with that, cured of their lack of insight."

Once outside, the previously chained and imprisoned soul soon gets a

glimpse of reality. Their ability to distinguish between reflections and real images is fortified in mind. " It would be obviously take some getting accustomed". The beauty of the sun sets things in proper perspective for him.

The prisoner's delight is short lived. His desire to stay longer in the sun and enjoy the beauty and magnificence must come to an end because he has to return to the cave to inform his other friends, still in bondage.

The prisoner returning to the cave is subject to ridicule and denigration whenever he interprets the images in the context of this newly discovered knowledge. Socrates proposes that the man even risks death, " And if they can get hold of this person who takes it in hand to free them from their chains and to lead them up, and if they could kill him, will they not actually kill him?".

In addition, extols the experience of the prisoner as a process of intellectual empowerment. He emphasizes that what is required for man to gain enlightenment is within him already.

This dialogue is a work of art, a masterful process in the dissemination of carefully woven, philosophical tit bits of knowledge and must not be taken for face value. It is practical in the following number of ways.

The cave represents a section of society that adheres to empirical knowledge, that things, in the manner that they appear must be perceived in the same sense. However, it indicates the risk with this type of analysis. This risk is the possibility of being trapped in a ' cave' of rigid beliefs without the choice of accepting external knowledge.

The shadows represent the beliefs of those that adhere to empirically supported evidence, that what is true is that which is seen. Notably, shadows
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are strangely ever consistent. Their shape and size is always determined by the flame that projects them. In all cases, the end of the flame marks that of the shadow as well.

The prisoner can be interpreted as a philosopher, who finds himself eager to learn albeit the hardships and pains of the process. He is eventually enlightened when he encounters the sun, a symbol of complete enlightenment. The sun illuminates everything that the eye sets upon; this symbolically indicates that knowledge and truth are pure. They are brought out in the light.

The reaction of the rest of the prisoners in the cave, on the return of their colleague, shows the universal reaction to knowledge and to those that are knowledgeable. Socrates refers to the returned prisoner as a person risking his life, because the rest will not resist killing him for he stands to question the very core of 'knowledge' in that dark cave.

In a modern cum contemporary interpretation, the Allegory of the Cave has important tenets it offers to society as a whole and to seekers of knowledge in particular. Students engaged in academic endeavors in 2014 must appreciate the primary fact that they are out to learn. Academic endeavors are as tedious as the pains that the escaped prisoner experienced as he struggled towards the light at the entrance of the tunnel.

In fact, this concept can be interpreted further in the sense of education to connote the previous lack of knowledge in all young persons. This explains the practice and tradition of schooling. There is a point in the lives of all persons when they are considered to be without the basic, mandatory knowledge. Common sense is largely considered to be available to all and needs no form of instruction.

In a learning environment, it is important that when a person learns the truth, it is shared with companions in the same endeavor. Considering this point in the light of skills and gifts, students cannot all be gifted equally. Each has a strong suite in certain subjects and disciplines. This factor carries forward, even into extra-curricular activists. An important example is that of a Soccer team that must work together, using team work to develop the skill of each player and yet at the same time incorporate overall improvement for the whole team.

The period of adolescence learners in 2014 is one of difficult choices and decisions. This is a time, when any and all roads seem to lead to Rome, as long as Rome is the happiness of the teen. The shadows that appears in the Dialogue between Socrates and Gaucon, can be interpreted as the push and pull factors that all teens experience or face. These factors include drinking, smoking, rebellious behavior and experimentation with sex. The flames which determine the nature of the shadows can in this case be equated to friend and peer pressure which in adolescents are a guiding and influential factor. In most cases this pushes young person's down a road of regret. There is a need for students to develop analytical and progressively objective methodologies of study. The skill of reading between the lines becomes a mandatory practice later in life. The choice of a partner, job, religious belief and important life decisions must be all be evaluated with a degree of importance. This skill is developed in the classroom, for instance through analysis of classical works.

In the same way that the shadows blind the prisoners in the café, modern day governments, equally use blocks and walls of propaganda to delude their citizens and prevent them from acquiring knowledge or facts about <https://assignbuster.com/authordatesubject-essays-example/>

occurrences and government action. A number of these hidden issues may be for national security, but a larger portion is to prevent the population from seeing into wrong doings of the establishment.

The chains that shackled the prisoners are by far the most sinister creation in this dialogue. It can be applied to mean a plethora of things. The world today is riddled with problems of political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. Consider for instance, slave trade, human trafficking, prostitution rackets and money laundering rings, all exists and propagate their agenda by enslaving or shackling certain persons, to be used as in whatever way that benefits their captors.

In an International sense of interpretation, terrorism, aid dependence and territorial acquisitions are also shackles that states use on one another. The history of colonization cannot be separated from this phenomenon.

A cursory reading of the dialogue, minus deep philosophical sieving of context, hinders the understanding of Plato's intention. It instead leads to loose process of knowledge deduction. It may be asked for example, whether the primary priority of a chained prisoner is a quest for philosophical enlightenment or physical and by all means tangible freedom. In a real world application, the sense of action by any escaped captive, is to seek help to release his colleagues, attempt personally to release his colleagues but never to plunge one's self back in the same abyss, in an attempt to quench a disordered belief in the sharing of knowledge.

In conclusion, the Allegory of the Cave is a dialogue of emancipation. It is a call to arms, where the arms refer to knowledge. Socrates weaves a tale of helplessness, self-help, enlightenment, and then the enlightening of others. The possible connotation to each and every factor that was in the dialogue is <https://assignbuster.com/authordatesubject-essays-example/>

literally limitless. The shadow could be bad because it deludes the prisoners or it could be good because it sets a plane for the sun to shine and herald knowledge.

In the same vain, the prisoners can be castigated not for rejecting the knowledge from the returnee, but for choosing to remain chained in the dungeon of the cave. Such possibilities of varying explanation are limitless. The moral of this experience is single and universal, that there is an effect of education and knowledge or even enlightenment on the nature of people, the behavior, actions and ways of interpreting events.

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