

Inner Pursuit of Happiness

A SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE OTHER SIDE
OF DARKNESS

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Chapter 1

Admit Desperation

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

In-depth Learning:
Critical Thinking Required



What is reality, knowledge, or the meaning of life? These are deep subjects that surprisingly few people actually think about. It's not uncommon to view our passage through life figuratively, such as explaining existence as a journey we take as humans; an adventure, a tragedy, a game played, or as Macbeth calls "a brief candle."

In 375 BCE (2,400 years ago), one of history's great Greek philosophers said, 'Life is like being chained up in a cave, forced to watch shadows flitting across a stone wall.' This was Plato who suggested in his Allegory of the Cave (found in Book VII of "The Republic"), that an ideal society should be envisioned by examining concepts of "Justice", "Truth", and "Beauty".

In this allegory, a group of prisoners have been confined in a cavern from birth, with no knowledge of the outside world. They are chained, facing a wall, not able to turn their heads, and a fire behind them shining a faint light. Occasionally, people pass by the fire, carrying figures of animals, trees, buildings, and other objects that cast shadows on the wall. The prisoners name and classify these illusions (i.e., dogs, cats, birds, houses, etc....), believing they are perceiving actual entities.

Suddenly, one prisoner is freed from his chains, and looking around, spots a distant light. He finds his way to the source of illumination, emerging outside of the cave for the first time. The bright sunlight brings pain to his eyes, blinding him, and he finds this new place disorienting. As his vision adjusts, he begins to see objects with depth and dimensions he does not understand.

When told that the things he sees around him are real, while the shadows on the ground (which he recognizes) are only projected shapes of these objects, he cannot believe this information to be true. The shadows appeared much clearer to him. Gradually, his eyes become accustomed to the light until he can look at objects directly, even his own reflection in the water, and finally sees the Sun itself; whose light is the ultimate source of all that is seen.

The prisoner returns to the cave excited to share what he has discovered, but once back in the darkness, he is unable to see clearly, having a hard time identifying the shadows on the wall he previously so revered as reality. Observing him dazed and confused, the other prisoners think the journey has made him crazy and blind to what they know is real, and violently resist any attempts to be set free.

Plato introduces this passage as an analogy of what it's like to be a philosopher trying to educate the public. Most people are not just comfortable in their ignorance, but hostile to anyone pointing it out. In fact, Plato's teacher, Socrates, was sentenced to death by the Athenian government for 'disrupting the social order.' As a result, Plato spends much of "The Republic" discrediting Athenian democracy, while promoting rule by philosopher kings.

With the cave parable, Plato suggests that the masses are too stubborn and ignorant (knowledge-resistant) to govern themselves; not much has changed from these ancient times. It's also important to know, this allegory is connected to the theory of forms, developed in Plato's other dialogues. The Theory of Forms

is expressed in the story by the ‘shadows on the wall’ which represent things in the physical world. The shadows are flawed reflections of ideal forms, such as the spherical nature of a ball, or the beauty found in a flower; both being concepts of reality. Forms, therefore, are beliefs that exist in our minds when thinking of what is ‘physically real’.

In this way, the cave leads to many fundamental esoteric questions, including the origin of knowledge, the problem of representation, and the nature of reality itself. For theologians, the ideal forms exist in the mind of a creator. Philosophers of language view the forms as linguistic concepts, revealing the Theory of Forms as a problem in grouping concrete entities with abstract terms. Others wonder whether we can really know if the reality outside the cave is any more real than the shadows within.

Can any of us be confident in what we believe to know? More importantly, if a ‘New-Light-of-Truth’ were to punch a hole in your most basic preconceived notions of life, would you violently resist? Or will you escape to struggle in this light of knowledge, even if it costs you your friends and family? It would be easier to just remain with recognizable and enjoyable illusions you have called real for so long. Definitely a hard choice to make, but if it's any consolation, you're not alone. There are a lot of people who wish to remain with the problems they know rather than rebuild a reality of problems they don't understand.

A notable postscript: Everyone I've ever encountered who learns of this Allegory, identifies with the freed prisoner; no one wishes

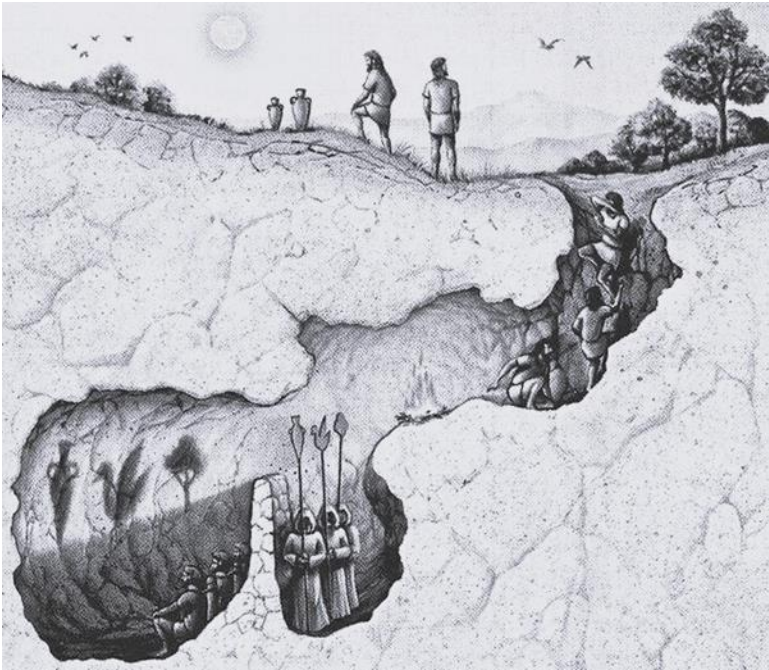
to acknowledge that they themselves actually remain chained to the wall. Therefore understand, that denial is your greatest obstacle to a life-rewarding change.

Did you know, denial is also the number one symptom of having a heart attack... something to think about.

“...denial even after a heart attack has happened is a common defense mechanism used to reduce anxiety by reducing the threat.” ~ Alberta Health Services

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Simplified Learning:
Easier-to-Understand Option



Plato's Allegory of the Cave is a powerful analogy that has been used to explain how those in charge of social order dictate our perceptions and understanding of the world. It is a philosophical tale that has stood the test of time and is still relevant today. In this article, we will delve into the allegory and explain its meaning in simpler terms than used before in an effort that all may understand.

The allegory begins with a group of people who are chained to a wall in a cave. They have been there since birth and have never known anything else. They can only see the wall in front of them and the shadows that are cast upon it. These shadows are created by a fire that is behind them, and they believe that these shadows are real. They have no knowledge of the outside world or anything beyond the cave.

One of the prisoners is eventually freed and is able to leave the cave. He discovers a whole new world that he never knew existed. He sees the sun for the first time, experiences the warmth and beauty of nature, and learns about the world beyond the cave. He realizes that everything he thought he knew was just a shadow of the real thing.

The freed prisoner tries to go back to the cave and share his newfound knowledge with the other prisoners. However, they do not believe him and think he is crazy. They are so accustomed to their way of life that they cannot even imagine anything else.

This allegory is a powerful analogy of how those in charge of social order dictate our perceptions and understanding of the world. The prisoners in the cave are like the people in society who blindly accept what they are told by those in power. They are not encouraged to think for themselves or to question the status quo. They are content to live in the shadows and accept what they are given.

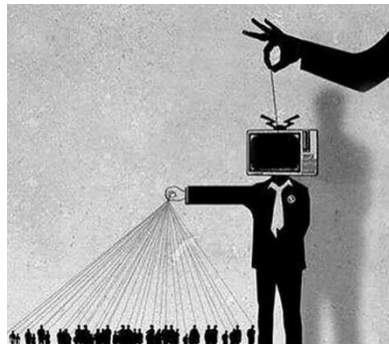


Image adapted from "Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda" by Noam Chomsky



Cartoon by David Suter

The fire in the allegory represents the media and those in power who control the narrative. They create the shadows that the prisoners see and dictate what is real and what is not. They control what information is given to the public and what is kept hidden.

The freed prisoner represents those who seek the truth and are not content with living in the shadows. They are willing to question what they are told and to seek out knowledge for themselves. They are not satisfied with blindly accepting what they are given.

When the freed prisoner tries to share his knowledge with the other prisoners, he is met with resistance. This is a representation

of how society often views those who challenge the status quo. They are seen as crazy or dangerous, and their ideas are dismissed without consideration.

In order to truly understand the world and to break free from the shadows, we must be willing to question what we are told and to seek out knowledge for ourselves. We cannot blindly accept what is given to us by those in power. We must be willing to challenge the status quo and seek out the truth.

In conclusion, Plato's Allegory of the Cave is a powerful analogy of how those in charge of social order dictate our perceptions and understanding of the world. The allegory serves as a reminder that we must be willing to question what we are told and to seek out knowledge for ourselves. We cannot blindly accept what is given to us by those in power. We must be willing to challenge the status quo and seek out the truth.

Commentary

The purpose of the commentary section is to provide further clarification on the symbolism in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, which may be difficult for some readers to understand at first glance. The descriptors in the commentary section help to break down the symbolism and make it more accessible, providing a more in-depth analysis of the allegory. The commentary section is meant to help readers better appreciate the allegory and its message and to encourage critical thinking and reflection.

Here are some comments regarding this story that may help clarify difficult parts where it might be hard to see the symbolism:

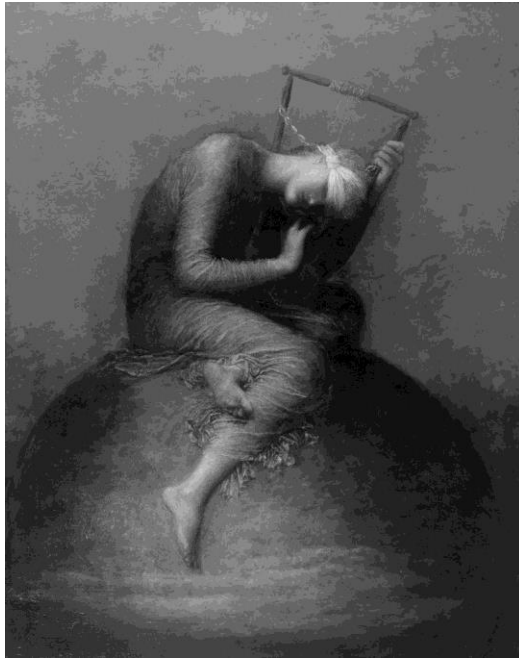
- **The cave** represents the world of appearances, where things are not what they seem. In other words, it is a metaphor for the illusion that our senses create, and the limitations that they impose on our perception of reality.
- **The chains** that keep the prisoners bound to the wall symbolize the limitations imposed by society and culture. They represent the social and cultural conditioning that restricts our thinking and our understanding of the world.
- **The shadows** cast by the fire represent the illusions created by those in power, such as the media and politicians. They represent the distorted and manipulated information that is fed to the public, to maintain control and power.
- **The freed prisoner** represents the philosopher, the seeker of truth, who is willing to challenge the illusions of the cave and seek a higher understanding of reality. He symbolizes the human capacity for reason and intellect, and the potential for growth and enlightenment.
- **The journey out of the cave** represents the process of education and the transformative power of knowledge. It is a metaphor for the pursuit of truth, and the willingness to question assumptions and challenge accepted beliefs.

- **The sun** represents the source of all knowledge and truth and the ultimate reality beyond the world of appearances. It symbolizes the enlightenment and wisdom that comes from the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of reason.
- **The reaction of the other prisoners** to the freed prisoner's return symbolizes the resistance to change, and the fear of the unknown. It represents the tendency to cling to old beliefs and ways of thinking, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

The allegory of the cave is a critique of the limitations imposed by society and culture on our thinking and understanding. It is a call to question accepted beliefs and assumptions and to seek a higher understanding of reality. It is a reminder that knowledge and truth are transformative and that the pursuit of wisdom is a lifelong journey.

Blind to the Truth

In-depth Learning:
Critical Thinking Required



Blind to the Truth: A Situational Reality

"People are blind to what they do not know, and they are deaf to what they do not want to hear"

~ Brené Brown

Shortly after hearing a Truth revealed, it is common to see people refuse acceptance of the truth told. This is a typical reaction of someone when confronted with harsh reality. For example, if we discover that one of our parents isn't our biological father or mother, and the person we consider our greatest personal enemy turns out to be our actual genetic link; in cases like this, the truth carries such a magnitude that accepting it can shake your own identity to its very core. Such a massive shift in perception generally terrifies people.

Total disregard for the truth is common. Many people prefer living in the safety of a belief system with a false narrative than looking beyond their current understanding and discovering the actual truth. Living in a familiar, false reality often proves to be convenient and comfortable; you just have to remain ignorant of everything that could cause a rupture in your beliefs. So instead, you go along with the deceptive portrayal of society, often amplified by the mass media and entertainment. We also see the opposite happening in our civilization; people opposing common knowledge and adopting a false truth, such as the idea of the Earth being flat. So, truth, by and large, can be easily fabricated to fit our need for comfort, safety, and ambitions.

Merriam-Webster's definition of truth says: "a judgment, proposition, or idea that is true or accepted as true." As long as people choose to seek a fabricated truth, they will continue to desire a system (a doctrine) that will support their chosen way of life to maintain a sense of stability and purpose. By pursuing this constructed understanding of reality, people provide incredible power to those leading such 'system doctrines' allowing these 'figureheads' to gain control over the masses. Religion, Politics, Race, etc., will ally with various forms (s) of widespread communication (music, movies, TV programs, social media, or news networks) to facilitate the group's own depiction of truth and thereby remain a viable entity.

Most individuals are not ready to have a true understanding or knowledge of their own existence. Like is seen in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the enlightened man breaks his bonds and sees the incredible reality of the truth, then tries to persuade the people in the cave to 'go outside and experience' this true world for themselves. Yet by this simple request, he is met with resistance and ridicule. Plato describes such endeavors to educate others regarding truth as "inserting vision into blind eyes." It's a waste of time trying to convince someone of the truth if they are not receptive to the possibility of its actuality.

As a result, many people have become hopelessly dependent on maintaining their individual philosophy of a chosen religion, political party, or organization which provides them with an identity. They will even fight fervently to protect this ideology.

Similarly, Socrates asked if people like this wouldn't even kill the messenger offering the truth about our existence. Nevertheless, Plato points to the philosopher's responsibility to act in the interest of the unenlightened, even if they are hostile.

Unfortunately, in this story, 'the enlightened man' goes back into the cave for the first time after his ascension and now seeing the shadows on the wall, faces the reality of what before he had dedicated his life to believing. It probably left him feeling disillusioned, perhaps disappointed, with the lack of mystique these shadow appearances once held. This is reminiscent of finding out how a magic trick works, which makes the illusion a lot less appealing if seen again; Truth, therefore, often goes at the expense of enjoyment.

An example of this can be seen with the legendary character called Santa Claus, which originated from the early Christian bishop named Saint Nicholas. For most young children, Santa Claus is a truly magical experience with the idea of an old-bearded man in a red suit, traveling from the North Pole in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer. According to this legend, Santa's elves make toys and other presents in a secret workshop and Santa brings them to the children on Christmas Eve. With all the stories, songs, fairy tales, and films about Santa Claus, his annual appearance is almost a religious experience to the undeveloped mind. But when children are around the age of 6 or 7, many parents begin to tell the truth about Santa Claus. These children often react emotionally and in disbelief. A once much-enjoyed illusion is

crushed and loses its magical appeal. Hence, it's not uncommon for adults to participate in nostalgia for the good old times when we were ignorant of existence and a "surrogate truth" was more appealing than reality.

However, people can still find pleasure in what they know is fake; humans show the capacity to treat an illusion as if it's real. A form of this is evident in our enjoyment of watching a play or being engrossed in a movie, both of which are unreal yet able to provide an emotional plethora of experiences without any physical interaction. The philosophical term for this phenomenon is "Suspension of Disbelief." This is the intentional avoidance of skepticism, critical thinking, and logic when facing something unreal. This experience explains how Plato's character upon returning to the darkness, if desired, could still choose to act as if the silhouettes on the cave wall are real entities; temporarily suspending disbelief in exchange for enjoyment, acceptance, and having a 'good time' with his 'old unenlightened' friends.

Today's technology is now trying to provide illusions even better than reality, as seen by the manner in which people immerse themselves in a video game, almost as though they are living a second life; an existence more pleasant and rewarding than their current perceived reality. Of course, the objects that appear on the screen are not real yet just a mere projection of reality. To enjoy these projections, the individual must suspend this truth temporarily. Humans seem to accept this suspension of disbelief (and appreciate the lie) when it suits them best.

Plato's work shows how people have disdain for a truth that threatens their understanding of reality. We have a tendency for an attachment to the familiar, the comfortable, the meaningful, and are sometimes willing to defend this belief with our lives. Just look at how people are ready to die for their religions, political affiliations, and racial norms. As a society, we tend to handle "facts" selectively, most likely because *facts* do appear in many different forms, and with varying magnitudes.

Truth can uplift us, it can leave us indifferent, or it can also make us depressed and miserable. For example, in the "Allegory of the Cave", learning the truth has virtually no negative consequence until returning to the cave, at which time, sharing the enlightenment with others will be met with resistance and hostility by those who remained in darkness.

Only when an individual seeks after the truth for themselves can this enlightened understanding of reality give you purpose and legitimize your choice in behaving towards others with empathy and compassion. An incredible goal to have in a life spent with years of pain and suffering.

"Why do men learn through pain and suffering, and not through pleasure and happiness? Very simply, because pleasure and happiness accustom one to satisfaction with the things given in this world, whereas pain and suffering drive one to seek a more profound happiness beyond the limitations of this world."

~ Seraphim Rose

Regrettably, people tend to adopt surrogate truths to cover up a painful existence while others actually love their painful reality and are often instrumental to their already dark worldview. Both those with surrogate truths and those who love painful realities will tend to ignore *facts* that oppose how they want to see the world, and in most cases seek to share this viewpoint with like-minded people.

Sharing a belief system, regardless of its validity, has benefits. As mentioned before, look at a religious group, political movements, and the powerful draw toward your individual racial culture. Being part of such groups can provide you with a sense of purpose and social connections, yet in return, further alienate you from other groups. If in one of these groups, you gain enlightenment (even just a corner of the truth), but this truth is in opposition to the group's viewpoint (beliefs), it will lead to members ostracizing you. Because of this fact, many people will keep subscribing to a false narrative against their own better judgment, just to belong and relieve their fear of rejection.

As people, we seem pretty opportunistic when it comes to the truth; we want to believe in 'A Truth', just not necessarily 'The Truth'. We want 'A Reality', not 'The Reality'. Unfortunately for us, both the truth and the lie appear in a story format. Fundamentally we don't want the truth but desire a story in which to believe, to identify with, share with others, and provide us with a sense of meaning and belonging.

“It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering.” ~ Gordon Allport



Blind to the Truth

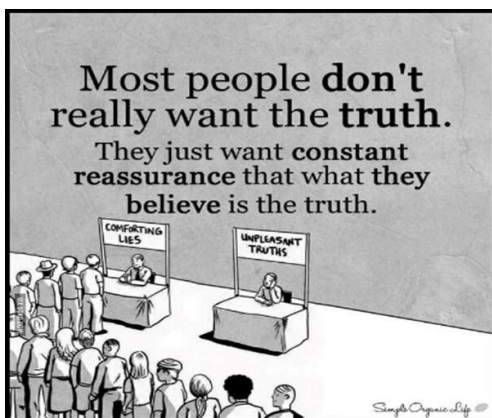
Simplified Learning:
Easier-to-Understand Option



Blind to the Truth

SECTION 1 – WHEN REALITY IS HARD TO ACCEPT

Sometimes, when people hear a truth that's hard to accept, they don't believe it. This is a common reaction. For example, if you find out that one of your parents isn't really your biological parent, or that someone you really don't like is actually related to you, it can be very hard to accept. The truth can be scary, and it can make you question who you are.



But some people just ignore the truth. They would rather believe in something false that makes them feel safe and comfortable, even if it's not true. They might ignore things that could change their beliefs. They might listen to what they see in the media or in movies, even if it's not true.

Other people do the opposite. They believe in things that aren't true, like thinking that the Earth is flat. People can make up their own truths to feel safe, and comfortable, or to fit their own goals.

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, truth is "something that is true or accepted as true." If people keep believing in things that aren't true, they'll keep wanting a system that supports what they believe. This helps the people in charge keep power over them.

SECTION 2 – THE POWER OF RELIGION, POLITICS, AND IDENTITY IN SHAPING OUR BELIEFS

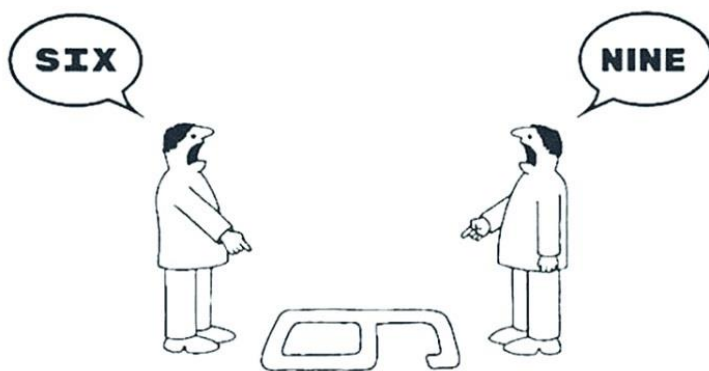
Religion, politics, and identity are powerful forces that can control what people believe. They can use things like music, movies, TV shows, social media, and news to shape what people think is true. This helps these groups stay in power.

Most people aren't ready to understand the truth about their own existence. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the enlightened person sees the truth and tries to tell others to come with him to see it too. But people in the cave resist and make fun of him. Plato says that trying to tell someone the truth is like "inserting vision into blind eyes." It's a waste of time if someone isn't open to the idea of something new.

Many people depend on their religion, political party, or organization to give them an identity. They will fight hard to protect it, even if it's not true. Socrates wondered if people like this would even kill the messenger who told them the truth about their existence. But Plato says that philosophers have a responsibility to tell the truth, even if people don't want to hear it.

It's common for people to reject the truth when it's hard to accept. For instance, if we find out that a person we hate is our actual family member, it can be scary to change our perception of them. Many people prefer to live in a world with false beliefs because it's comfortable and familiar. They don't want to know anything that could disrupt their worldview. Sometimes people even believe in fake things like the idea that the sun orbits the earth.

The media often helps these false beliefs spread. Religion, politics, and race are groups that use communication tools like TV, movies, social media, and news networks to promote their version of the truth. Most people aren't ready to face the real truth about their existence. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the enlightened person tries to convince people to leave their cave and see the real world, but they resist. People are too invested in their chosen religion, political party, or organization to accept any other idea. They might even fight to protect their beliefs.



SECTION 3 – INFLUENCE OF MEDIA

When someone finally learns the truth, it can ruin the enjoyment of something they used to love. For example, when children find out Santa Claus isn't real, they can be very upset. As adults, we might look back fondly on the time when we believed in Santa Claus. But people can still enjoy things they know are fake, like watching a play or a movie.

Indeed, selective handling of facts is a common human tendency. We often choose to believe only what confirms our pre-existing beliefs and ignore or reject anything that challenges them. This is known as confirmation bias, and it can lead to a distorted view of reality.

Moreover, the way we perceive reality is also shaped by the language we use. The words we choose to describe something can influence our understanding of it. For example, using words like "illegal aliens" instead of "undocumented immigrants" can lead to a negative perception of a group of people. It is important to be aware of our biases and to try to approach information with an open mind. Critical thinking and the ability to evaluate evidence objectively are crucial skills in today's world, where information is readily available but often biased or inaccurate. By examining our own beliefs and being open to new ideas, we can expand our understanding of reality and make more informed decisions.

It is important to note that the truth, while sometimes difficult to accept, is essential for personal growth and progress. It allows us

to understand the world around us, make informed decisions, and improve our lives and the lives of others. However, the pursuit of truth must be balanced with empathy and understanding towards those who hold different beliefs or worldviews. It is also important to recognize that some people may not be ready or willing to accept the truth, and it is not our job to force it upon them.

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION

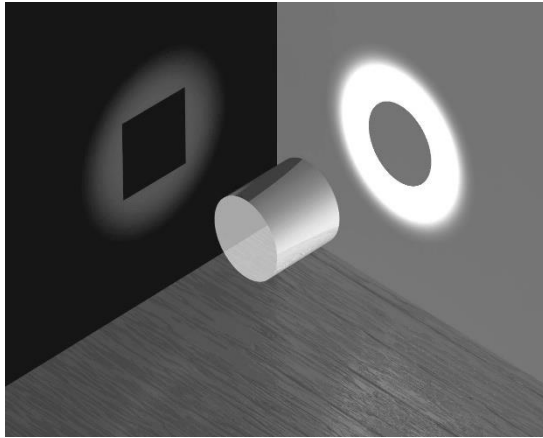
In conclusion, the truth is a powerful force that can shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. While sometimes difficult to accept, it is essential for personal growth and progress. However, the pursuit of truth must be balanced with empathy and understanding towards others, and we must recognize that not everyone may be ready or willing to accept it.

Indeed, stories are a powerful tool for conveying truth, whether they are based on actual events or completely fictional. Stories can capture our imaginations, stir our emotions, and provide a framework for understanding the world around us. However, as I've mentioned before, people often prioritize their desire for a certain story or narrative over the pursuit of objective truth. This can lead to the propagation of falsehoods and misinformation, which can be harmful to individuals and society as a whole. It is important to remain vigilant and seek out the truth, even if it challenges our preconceived notions or makes us uncomfortable. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.

Commentary

S1 - *When Reality Is Hard to Accept* – key points:

- It can be difficult to accept a truth that challenges our beliefs about ourselves or the world around us.



- Some people choose to ignore the truth and instead believe in something false that makes them feel safe and comfortable, even if it's not true.
- People can ignore things that could change their beliefs or listen to what they see in the media or in movies, even if it's not true.
- Some people believe in things that aren't true, like thinking that the Earth is flat.
- People can make up their own truths to feel safe, and comfortable, or to fit their own goals.

- Merriam Webster's dictionary's definition of truth is "something that is true or accepted as true."
- If people keep believing in things that aren't true, they'll keep wanting a system that supports what they believe, which helps the people in charge keep power over them.
- It's important to be willing to accept and confront the truth, even if it challenges our beliefs.
- Perpetuating falsehoods can have consequences.
- Readers should be critical of what they see and hear and seek out evidence-based information to inform their beliefs.

S2 - *The Power of Religion, Politics, and Identity in Shaping Our Beliefs* – key points:

- Learning the truth about something we once believed in can ruin our enjoyment of it.
- The example of children discovering that Santa Claus isn't real and how this can upset them is used.
- As adults, we can still enjoy things that we know are fake, such as watching a play or a movie.
- Confirmation bias leads to a distorted view of reality.
- It is important to be aware of our biases and to approach information with an open mind.
- Critical thinking and the ability to evaluate evidence objectively are crucial skills in today's world.

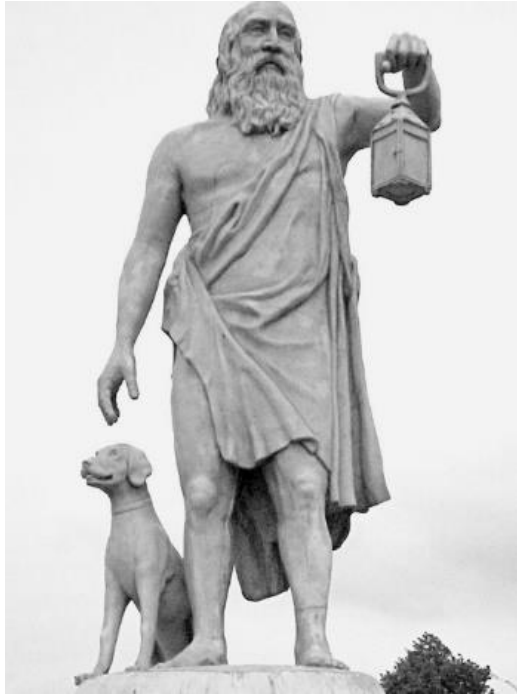
- The importance of language and how the words we use can influence our understanding of things is discussed.
- Using words like "illegal aliens" instead of "undocumented immigrants" can lead to a negative perception of a group of people.
- Pursuing the truth must be balanced with empathy and understanding towards those who hold different beliefs or worldviews.
- Some people may not be ready or willing to accept the truth, and it is not our job to force it upon them.
- The section emphasizes the importance of truth for personal growth and progress.
- Empathy and understanding towards those with different beliefs are also emphasized.
- The section provides insightful commentary on critical thinking, objective evaluation of evidence, and being aware of our biases in shaping our understanding of reality.

S3 - *Influence of Media* – key points:

- The passage explores the concept of truth and how people interact with it.
- Examples such as Santa Claus and video games are used to show how we can suspend our disbelief and enjoy things even if we know they aren't real.

- Sometimes people cling to falsehoods because they provide a sense of belonging and purpose, even if they go against the truth.
- Seeking after the truth for oneself can lead to empathy and compassion.
- Many people would rather believe in a comfortable story than confront reality.
- The passage encourages readers to consider their relationship with truth and whether they are willing to pursue it.
- Pursuing the truth may mean leaving behind familiar falsehoods.
- The overall message of the passage is to encourage readers to confront and pursue the truth, even if it is uncomfortable.

Diogenes



By carrying a lantern in broad daylight, Diogenes emphasized the rarity of finding a truly honest person.

The lantern was a symbolic act of believing that most people were dishonest and insincere, motivated by selfish desires and societal expectations.

Powerless to Change

The reason those two philosophies (Plato's Cave and Blind to Truth) were shared with you upfront is because you need to understand how it's possible to believe in a "false reality", and why you might become resistant to believing anything else. I need you to have this awareness about yourself, to recognize when it is happening, and then question "Why am I fighting this new idea?" Is it out of fear? Did my current religious beliefs warn me against "false prophets"? Will I go to "hell" if I accept what I'm being told? Maybe you're agnostic, and can't see why a "Loving God" would let people suffer as they do... especially the innocent like children or babies? If I wouldn't be so cruel, how can a "Loving God" allow such pain? After all, the only "Acts of God" I've ever seen have been disasters like earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes, suffering on a biblical scale.

For this book to work and your life truly change forever, you must embrace a willingness to trust what you currently do not believe. Yes, a Leap of Faith. The belief system that your life is based on, is also the one promoting and propagating the pain you are currently experiencing as well as the additive behaviors you are displaying. Your understanding of reality and reasons for existing are not working; it is failing you right now. Your beliefs have not been able to control the wreck your life has become. At this point, you truly are powerless to change; otherwise, you would have done it by now.

How is it possible for “a leopard to change its spots, or for a tiger its strips”; our belief systems are so deeply embedded into our consciousness that it often makes us unable to see we even have a problem. Others might tell you how drug use is destroying your life, or you are starting to have issues with work or lose your job. You might start saying to yourself, “Even the legal system is harassing me over nothing... why don’t they go after real criminals? After all, it is just a victimless crime, if I’m hurting anyone it’s only myself”! Our belief systems will continually allow us to feel like the victim; we are being “picked on”, or just having a “run of bad luck”. Not that we have a serious cancer of addiction which is slowly eating us away.

Admitting you are powerless to change stops your descent into this abyss. You never really hit “rock bottom” because it can, and will, get worse! Ultimately, the bottom you reach is death. By acknowledging you are powerless may sound daunting, but it’s an important step in your recovery. It means acknowledging the reality of your addiction and the impact it has had on your life. It’s not easy to face, but it’s necessary to move forward and create positive change.

By admitting powerlessness, you can also let go of the need to control everything in your life. This is a common characteristic of addiction that can be a major source of stress and anxiety. By surrendering to a higher power, you can find peace and serenity in your life, and begin to heal from your addiction.

Speaking of higher power, it doesn't have to be a religious or spiritual entity. It can be anything that you believe in that is greater than yourself. It can be a belief in the goodness of humanity, the beauty of nature, or the strength of the human spirit. The important thing is that you find something that resonates with you and that you can turn to for support and guidance. In the following pages, I will introduce you to the concept of an existence greater than yourself that you can utilize as a “higher power”.

Another important feature of admitting powerlessness is seen by it increasing your accountability; this will make it easier for you to seek help and support from others. You'll be able to recognize that you can't control your addiction on your own and that it's okay to reach out for help. There are others out there who have been through what you're going through and are willing to support you every step of the way. Let others who know and understand work together with you, make positive changes in your life, and help you find the peace and serenity that you deserve.

Several evidence-based practices criticize the concept of admitting we are powerless and seeking a higher power to improve from our addiction; believing it is more critical to “empower” the individual who is struggling with mental illness and/or substance abuse than surrender and conceptualize a higher power or an entity. Empowering is exactly what is needed, but not by the belief that ‘I can fix myself’ through education

alone. If you are still facing the same issues with your same foundational beliefs that have repeatedly failed to solve your problem of addiction... well, what did Einstein say about this repeated fallacy?

“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

This failed “operating system” programmed in your head from a childhood racked with various traumatic events and repeated neglect, needs to be irradiated of those corrosive beliefs. The concept of empowering with this faulty belief system inside of you is all wrong. How would you remove mud from a glass of water? Not by continuing to add fresh water until it's clean. The water only dilutes to a solution of muddy slime but never renders the contents clean.

Secular-based or Spiritual-based treatment approaches, in reality, are just opposite sides of the same coin arguing who should be face-up. If One side fails to solve the problem, then by all means, try the other side. There is always hope for change.

