



Microensayo

In what ways contemporary human is analogous to Plato's caveman (from his Allegory of the cave), and how does philosophy can help overcome this state of ignorance?

¿De qué maneras el ser humano contemporáneo es análogo al prisionero de la cueva de Platón (de su Alegoría de la cueva), y cómo puede la filosofía ayudar a superar este estado de ignorancia?

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Abstract

This text explores Plato's allegory, which represents the knowledge process and the distinction between perceived reality and true reality. Through the metaphor of chained prisoners in a cave, it analyzes how human beings often live in ignorance, perceiving only shadows of reality. Fire, as a source of light, symbolizes partial knowledge that distorts our perception. Furthermore, the importance of philosophy in reaching a deeper understanding of reality and the challenges faced by those who attempt to reveal the truth to those who prefer to remain in illusion is discussed. This essay addresses the following topics: 1) the symbolism of the prisoners

and the shadows; 2) the function of the fire as limited knowledge; and 3) the role of philosophers in the search for truth.

Keywords: Plato's allegory, knowledge, perceived reality, ignorance, philosophy, true reality, Illusion, superficial knowledge.

Resumen

Este texto explora la alegoría de Platón, que representa el proceso de conocimiento y la distinción entre la realidad percibida y la realidad verdadera. A través de la metáfora de los prisioneros encadenados en una cueva, analiza cómo los seres humanos a menudo viven en la ignorancia, percibiendo solo sombras de la realidad. El fuego, como fuente de luz, simboliza el conocimiento parcial que distorsiona nuestra percepción. Además, se discute la importancia de la filosofía para alcanzar una comprensión más profunda de la realidad y los desafíos que enfrentan quienes intentan revelar la verdad a quienes prefieren permanecer en la ilusión. Este ensayo aborda los siguientes temas: 1) el simbolismo de los prisioneros y las sombras; 2) la función del fuego como conocimiento limitado; y 3) el papel de los filósofos en la búsqueda de la verdad.

Palabras clave: Alegoría de Platón, conocimiento, realidad percibida, ignorancia, filosofía, realidad verdadera, ilusión, conocimiento superficial.

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In Plato's allegory, we talk about a representation of the knowledge process and the difference between perceived reality and true reality

(Mitchell, 2016, p. 29-31). In the cave are the prisoners who have been inside the cave all their lives, chained in such a way that they cannot move and can only look ahead. The only thing they can do is observe some shadows that are shown to them. At the end of the cave, there is a doorway to the outside world, but the prisoners are unaware of this, as they are tied to the wall. Also, "Above and behind the prisoners, a very large fire burns, and between the fire and the prisoners, there is a path that goes next to a low wall. There are people who pass by this wall carrying statues and figures of animals and plants made of wood or stone, occasionally talking to each other" (Mitchell, 2016, p. 31).

At first glance, you cannot understand Plato's allegory as it is presented, but this has a lot to do with what we experience every day. Each of these aspects has its explanation or meaning. We start with the tied and chained prisoners, who symbolize human beings trapped in ignorance and a limited perception of reality. They can only see shadows of reality and live in a kind of illusion without knowing the whole truth. This is something that often happens to us: many times we are shown things that indicate what, why, what is wrong, and what is right, but without knowing the reality of things, only listening to what people who educate us say or what is sold to us by those around us.

The shadows are the only images that the prisoners can see, and these shadows represent the illusions or false perceptions of reality that we have when we only trust our senses. The shadows symbolize superficial knowledge and the distortion of reality. The fire is another of the elements mentioned in this allegory and is the source of light that projects the images on the wall. It symbolizes partial knowledge or limited ideas that allow prisoners to see something, but not the complete truth. It is a deceptive light that distorts the perception of reality; the objects that create the shadows in the cave are copies or appearances of true things. They are elements that symbolize the sensible world, where what we see is not the true essence, but a limited and distorted version of reality.

Just as Glaucon and Socrates wondered what would happen if a prisoner left the cave, what would be the true reality outside the cave, illuminated by the light from outside? This light symbolizes philosophers in real life who, despite being rejected or considered crazy, try to spread the reality of things and offer another version of reality beyond what is believed in everyday life. Philosophy helps to understand various aspects that at first glance seem incomprehensible or difficult to believe.

However, through philosophy, one can share knowledge of the situation and the reasons for things; it provides a broader perspective on reality.

A clear example is what Glaucon and Socrates mention: what would happen if one of the chained slaves untied himself and went out to explore the outside world? He would be illuminated by the sun's rays and would not be able to open his eyes properly, but he would realize everything that is outside the cave, the real world. He would realize that what his companions are observing and what he was observing is not really true, but speculations or duplicates of reality.

Another question arises in Glaucon: what would happen if the young man who left the cave returned to tell his companions? Socrates answers him by saying: they would not believe him and would take him for crazy; even if he tried to untie them, they could attack or hit him, preventing them from being untied out of fear and ignorance of knowing the reality. They prefer to stay with their half-truths rather than seek and see the true reality with their own eyes. And this is what usually happens in today's society: many people prefer to remain in ignorance and in what they see as real rather than to carry out a philosophical process to know the true reasons for things.

References

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