

The Allegory of the Cave

By Plato

Written 360 B.C.E

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

The son of a wealthy and noble family, Plato (427-347 B.C.) was preparing for a career in politics when the trial and eventual execution of Socrates (399 B.C.) changed the course of his life. He abandoned his

the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

[Glaucou] Certainly.

[Socrates] Last of all, he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

[Glaucou] Certainly.

[Socrates] He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

[Glaucou] Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

[Socrates] And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

[Glaucou] Certainly, he would.

[Socrates] And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do

and live after their manner?

[Glaucou] Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

[Socrates] Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

[Glaucou] To be sure, he said.

[Socrates] And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

[Glaucou] No question, he said.

[Socrates] This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucou, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible

world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

[Glaucou] I agree, he said, as far as I am able to understand you.

[Socrates] Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted.

[Glaucou] Yes, very natural.

[Socrates] And is there anything surprising in one who passes from divine contemplations to the evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner; if, while his eyes are blinking and before he has become accustomed to the surrounding darkness, he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavouring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice?

[Glaucou] Anything but surprising, he replied.

[Socrates] Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter light, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he

will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den.

[Glaucou] That, he said, is a very just distinction.

[Socrates] But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes.

[Glaucou] They undoubtedly say this, he replied.

[Socrates] Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

[Glaucou] Very true.

1)-4.451.0015(t)-4.45045(h)0.275832(a-1.40568(e)-1.40568(16(b)0.275832(o)11.1394(d)0.275832(i)-4.5045(s)0.275832(j)0.275832(k)0.275832(l)0.275832(m)0.275832(n)0.275832(o)0.275832(p)0.275832(q)0.275832(r)0.275832(s)0.275832(t)0.275832(u)0.275832(v)0.275832(w)0.275832(x)0.275832(y)0.275832(z)0.275832(aa)0.275832(ab)0.275832(ac)0.275832(ad)0.275832(ae)0.275832(af)0.275832(ag)0.275832(ah)0.275832(ai)0.275832(aj)0.275832(ak)0.275832(al)0.275832(am)0.275832(an)0.275832(ao)0.275832(ap)0.275832(aq)0.275832(ar)0.275832(as)0.275832(at)0.275832(au)0.275832(av)0.275832(aw)0.275832(ax)0.275832(ay)0.275832(az)0.275832(ba)0.275832(bb)0.275832(bc)0.275832(bd)0.275832(be)0.275832(bf)0.275832(bg)0.275832(bh)0.275832(bi)0.275832(bj)0.275832(bk)0.275832(bl)0.275832(bm)0.275832(bn)0.275832(bo)0.275832(bp)0.275832(bq)0.275832(br)0.275832(bs)0.275832(bt)0.275832(bu)0.275832(bv)0.275832(bw)0.275832(bx)0.275832(by)0.275832(bz)0.275832(ca)0.275832(cb)0.275832(cc)0.275832(cd)0.275832(ce)0.275832(cf)0.275832(cg)0.275832(ch)0.275832(ci)0.275832(cj)0.275832(ck)0.275832(cl)0.275832(cm)0.275832(cn)0.275832(co)0.275832(cp)0.275832(cq)0.275832(cr)0.275832(cs)0.275832(ct)0.275832(cu)0.275832(cv)0.275832(cw)0.275832(cx)0.275832(cy)0.275832(cz)0.275832(da)0.275832(db)0.275832(dc)0.275832(dd)0.275832(de)0.275832(df)0.275832(dg)0.275832(dh)0.275832(di)0.275832(dj)0.275832(dk)0.275832(dl)0.275832(dm)0.275832(dn)0.275832(do)0.275832(dp)0.275832(dq)0.275832(dr)0.275832(ds)0.275832(dt)0.275832(du)0.275832(dv)0.275832(dw)0.275832(dx)0.275832(dy)0.275832(dz)0.275832(ea)0.275832(eb)0.275832(ec)0.275832(ed)0.275832(ee)0.275832(ef)0.275832(eg)0.275832(eh)0.275832(ei)0.275832(ej)0.275832(ek)0.275832(el)0.275832(em)0.275832(en)0.275832(eo)0.275832(ep)0.275832(eq)0.275832(er)0.275832(es)0.275832(et)0.275832(eu)0.275832(ev)0.275832(ew)0.275832(ex)0.275832(ey)0.275832(ez)0.275832(fa)0.275832(fb)0.275832(fc)0.275832(fd)0.275832(fe)0.275832(ff)0.275832(fg)0.275832(fh)0.275832(fi)0.275832(fj)0.275832(fk)0.275832(fl)0.275832(fm)0.275832(fn)0.275832(fo)0.275832(fp)0.275832(fq)0.275832(fr)0.275832(fs)0.275832(ft)0.275832(fu)0.275832(fv)0.275832(fw)0.275832(fx)0.275832(fy)0.275832(fz)0.275832(ga)0.275832(gb)0.275832(gc)0.275832(gd)0.275832(ge)0.275832(gf)0.275832(gg)0.275832(gh)0.275832(gi)0.275832(gj)0.275832(gk)0.275832(gl)0.275832(gm)0.275832(gn)0.275832(go)0.275832(gp)0.275832(gq)0.275832(gr)0.275832(gs)0.275832(gt)0.275832(gu)0.275832(gv)0.275832(gw)0.275832(gx)0.275832(gy)0.275832(gz)0.275832(ha)0.275832(hb)0.275832(hc)0.275832(hd)0.275832(he)0.275832(hf)0.275832(hg)0.275832(hh)0.275832(hi)0.275832(hj)0.275832(hk)0.275832(hl)0.275832(hm)0.275832(hn)0.275832(ho)0.275832(hp)0.275832(hq)0.275832(hr)0.275832(hs)0.275832(ht)0.275832(hu)0.275832(hv)0.275832(hw)0.275832(hx)0.275832(hy)0.275832(hz)0.275832(ia)0.275832(ib)0.275832(ic)0.275832(id)0.275832(ie)0.275832(if)0.275832(ig)0.275832(ih)0.275832(ii)0.275832(ij)0.275832(ik)0.275832(il)0.275832(im)0.275832(in)0.275832(io)0.275832(ip)0.275832(iq)0.275832(ir)0.275832(is)0.275832(it)0.275832(iu)0.275832(iv)0.275832(iw)0.275832(ix)0.275832(iy)0.275832(iz)0.275832(ja)0.275832(jb)0.275832(jc)0.275832(jd)0.275832(je)0.275832(jf)0.275832(jg)0.275832(jh)0.275832(ji)0.275832(jj)0.275832(jk)0.275832(jl)0.275832(jm)0.275832(jn)0.275832(jo)0.275832(jp)0.275832(jq)0.275832(jr)0.275832(js)0.275832(jt)0.275832(ju)0.275832(jv)0.275832(jw)0.275832(jx)0.275832(jy)0.275832(jz)0.275832(ka)0.275832(kb)0.275832(kc)0.275832(kd)0.275832(ke)0.275832(kf)0.275832(kg)0.275832(kh)0.275832(ki)0.275832(kj)0.275832(kk)0.275832(kl)0.275832(km)0.275832(kn)0.275832(ko)0.275832(kp)0.275832(kq)0.275832(kr)0.275832(ks)0.275832(kt)0.275832(ku)0.275832(kv)0.275832(kw)0.275832(kx)0.275832(ky)0.275832(kz)0.275832(la)0.275832(lb)0.275832(lc)0.275832(ld)0.275832(le)0.275832(lf)0.275832(lg)0.275832(lh)0.275832(li)0.275832(lj)0.275832(lk)0.275832(ll)0.275832(lm)0.275832(ln)0.275832(lo)0.275832(lp)0.275832(lq)0.275832(lr)0.275832(ls)0.275832(lt)0.275832(lu)0.275832(lv)0.275832(lw)0.275832(lx)0.275832(ly)0.275832(lz)0.275832(ma)0.275832(mb)0.275832(mc)0.275832(md)0.275832(me)0.275832(mf)0.275832(mg)0.275832(mh)0.275832(mi)0.275832(mj)0.275832(mk)0.275832(ml)0.275832(mn)0.275832(mo)0.275832(mp)0.275832(mq)0.275832(mr)0.275832(ms)0.275832(mt)0.275832(mu)0.275832(mv)0.275832(mw)0.275832(mx)0.275832(my)0.275832(mz)0.275832(na)0.275832(nb)0.275832(nc)0.275832(nd)0.275832(ne)0.275832(nf)0.275832(ng)0.275832(nh)0.275832(ni)0.275832(nj)0.275832(nk)0.275832(nl)0.275832(nm)0.275832(no)0.275832(np)0.275832(nq)0.275832(nr)0.275832(ns)0.275832(nt)0.275832(nu)0.275832(nv)0.275832(nw)0.275832(nx)0.275832(ny)0.275832(nz)0.275832(oa)0.275832(ob)0.275832(oc)0.275832(od)0.275832(oe)0.275832(of)0.275832(og)0.275832(oh)0.275832(oi)0.275832(oj)0.275832(ok)0.275832(ol)0.275832(om)0.275832(on)0.275832(oo)0.275832(op)0.275832(oq)0.275832(or)0.275832(os)0.275832(ot)0.275832(ou)0.275832(ov)0.275832(ow)0.275832(ox)0.275832(oy)0.275832(oz)0.275832(pa)0.275832(pb)0.275832(pc)0.275832(pd)0.275832(pe)0.275832(pf)0.275832(pg)0.275832(ph)0.275832(pi)0.275832(pj)0.275832(pk)0.275832(pl)0.275832(pm)0.275832(pn)0.275832(po)0.275832(pp)0.275832(pq)0.275832(pr)0.275832(ps)0.275832(pt)0.275832(pu)0.275832(pv)0.275832(pw)0.275832(px)0.275832(py)0.275832(pz)0.275832(qa)0.275832(qb)0.275832(qc)0.275832(qd)0.275832(qe)0.275832(qf)0.275832(qg)0.275832(qh)0.275832(qi)0.275832(qj)0.275832(qk)0.275832(ql)0.275832(qm)0.275832(qn)0.275832(qo)0.275832(qp)0.275832(qq)0.275832(qr)0.275832(qs)0.275832/qt)0.275832(qu)0.275832(qv)0.275832(qw)0.275832(qx)0.275832(qy)0.275832(qz)0.275832(ra)0.275832(rb)0.275832(rc)0.275832(rd)0.275832(re)0.275832(rf)0.275832(rg)0.275832(rh)0.275832(ri)0.275832(rj)0.275832(rk)0.275832(rl)0.275832(rm)0.275832(rn)0.275832(ro)0.275832(rp)0.275832(rq)0.275832(rr)0.275832(rs)0.275832(rt)0.275832(ru)0.275832(rv)0.275832(rw)0.275832(rx)0.275832(ry)0.275832(rz)0.275832(sa)0.275832(sb)0.275832(sc)0.275832(sd)0.275832(se)0.275832(sf)0.275832(sg)0.275832(sh)0.275832(si)0.275832(sj)0.275832(sk)0.275832(sl)0.275832(sm)0.275832(sn)0.275832(so)0.275832(sp)0.275832(sq)0.275832(sr)0.275832(ss)0.275832(st)0.275832(su)0.275832(sv)0.275832(sw)0.275832(sx)0.275832(sy)0.275832(sz)0.275832(ta)0.275832(tb)0.275832(tc)0.275832(td)0.275832(te)0.275832(tf)0.275832(tg)0.275832(th)0.275832(ti)0.275832(tj)0.275832(tk)0.275832(tl)0.275832(tm)0.275832(tn)0.275832(to)0.275832(tp)0.275832(tq)0.275832(tr)0.275832(ts)0.275832(tt)0.275832(tu)0.275832(tv)0.275832(tw)0.275832(tx)0.275832(ty)0.275832(tz)0.275832(ua)0.275832(ub)0.275832(uc)0.275832(ud)0.275832(ue)0.275832(uf)0.275832(ug)0.275832(uh)0.275832(ui)0.275832(uj)0.275832(uk)0.275832(ul)0.275832(um)0.275832(un)0.275832(uo)0.275832(up)0.275832(uq)0.275832(ur)0.275832(us)0.275832(ut)0.275832(uv)0.275832(uw)0.275832(ux)0.275832(uy)0.275832(uz)0.275832(va)0.275832(vb)0.275832(vc)0.275832(vd)0.275832(ve)0.275832(vf)0.275832(vg)0.275832(vh)0.275832(vi)0.275832(vj)0.275832(vk)0.275832(vl)0.275832(vm)0.275832(vn)0.275832(vo)0.275832(vp)0.275832(vq)0.275832(vr)0.275832(vs)0.275832(vt)0.275832(vu)0.275832(vv)0.275832(vw)0.275832(vx)0.275832(vy)0.275832(vz)0.275832(wa)0.275832(wb)0.275832(wc)0.275832(wd)0.275832(we)0.275832(wf)0.275832(wg)0.275832(wh)0.275832(wi)0.275832(wj)0.275832(wk)0.275832(wl)0.275832(wm)0.275832(wn)0.275832(wo)0.275832(wp)0.275832(wq)0.275832(wr)0.275832(ws)0.275832(wt)0.275832(wu)0.275832(wv)0.275832(ww)0.275832(wx)0.275832(wy)0.275832(wz)0.275832(xa)0.275832(xb)0.275832(xc)0.275832(xd)0.275832(xe)0.275832(xf)0.275832(xg)0.275832(xh)0.275832(xi)0.275832(xj)0.275832(xk)0.275832(xl)0.275832(xm)0.275832(xn)0.275832(xo)0.275832(xp)0.275832(xq)0.275832(xr)0.275832(xs)0.275832(xt)0.275832(xu)0.275832(xv)0.275832(xw)0.275832(xx)0.275832(xy)0.275832(xz)0.275832(ya)0.275832(yb)0.275832(yc)0.275832(yd)0.275832(ye)0.275832(yf)0.275832(yg)0.275832(yh)0.275832(yi)0.275832(yj)0.275832(yk)0.275832(yl)0.275832(ym)0.275832(yn)0.275832(yo)0.275832(yp)0.275832(yq)0.275832(yr)0.275832(ys)0.275832(yt)0.275832(yu)0.275832(yv)0.275832(yw)0.275832(yx)0.275832(yz)0.275832(za)0.275832(zb)0.275832(zc)0.275832(zd)0.275832(ze)0.275832(zf)0.275832(zg)0.275832(zh)0.275832(zi)0.275832(zj)0.275832(zk)0.275832(zl)0.275832(zm)0.275832(zn)0.275832(zo)

implanted later by habit and exercise, the of wisdom more than anything else contains a divine element which always remains, and by this conversion is rendered useful and profitable; or, on the other hand, hurtful and useless. Did you never observe the narrow intelligence flashing from the keen eye of a clever rogue --how eager he is, how clearly his paltry soul sees the way to his end; he is the reverse of blind, but his keen eyesight is forced into the service

But we have brought you into the world to be rulers

[Socrates] The process, I said, is not the turning over of an oyster-shell, but the turning round of a soul passing from a day which is little better than night to the true day of being, that is, the ascent from below, which we affirm to be true philosophy?

[Glaucón] Quite so.