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Plato's Allegory

Currently in the modern era for some reason despite how religion has the distinct overall purpose of bringing people to the stage of life called 'enlightenment' the modern day Atheist movement lives on claiming themselves as enlightened.¹ The most famous man in history known for this state of mind must be of Buddha. Buddhism has him as a central figure of their religion making this based around not a God of sorts but rather simply a man who achieved the state called enlightened. Even though it is a faith Buddhism is usually recognized as an atheistic religion as its beliefs do not rely on gods. In fact Buddha never himself stated if he believed in them or not.² So this dominating religion is based around a non-divine mortal who may have not believed in any gods at all. There is a possible theory around Jesus being a non-divine man as well. The Catholics strictly teach the trinity as separate beings, this is why he is remembered in the Bible as Jesus of Nazareth. Of course this has been done with purpose. The only outside account in the history of Jesus in written history would be credited to the account of the Roman Guard of Pontius Pilate and this is why the Apostles state his name in their writing- so it would be undeniable in history.³ With the current trending rise of Atheism in Western culture right now we should be researching into how Jesus as a person could have reached enlightenment and could have simply made himself a martyr for the creation of his religion.

There are mysteries around endlessly questioning why Jesus had offered another man entrance into his Kingdom while being crucified but it seems clear that it was because the man has fully acknowledged that his actions were that of evil. Not only does he accept the punishment for those evil deeds but he remains a voice for those who are innocent. These lines come after another criminal is trying to force Jesus to save them "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 26:37-43). This man has accepted his death and sins, now he has Jesus granting himself access to heaven. The execution of Jesus of Nazareth created such an unjust situation that it created the biggest religion from nothing and was eventually fully embraced by Rome.⁴ Another man in history

¹ Kaufman, W. *New Atheism and Its Critics*, This article is essentially a hate piece on Atheism and starts with commenting on how Darwin is willfully ignorant of theology

² Sharma, A. *Buddhism and Atheism*, 28-29

³ Matthew 27, Extremely important as recording in Pagan history makes Him undeniable

⁴ Bokenkotter, T. S. *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* 42 - This chapter on Constantine ends on the point how "The Church would never be the same again"

embraced his execution in such a way before him. This created a revolutionary period and his act lamented in history as the father of Western civilization. Socrates even stated just before his death “immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you... For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; ...For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable”.⁵

Socrates himself despite a huge memory and place in history never had any of his own writings. His memory thought had been preserved forever in time by students of his teachings- namely because of the work of Plato who became an academic and a writer to preserve Socrates’ teachings. Most of our knowledge of Socrates comes from his writings, including the story of his trial. This was done in two ways, in the working piece that was a statement of an unjust trial called *The Apology* and in another complete book of *Socrates: Final Days*. This book outlined his teacher's demise just before his execution. What the book was in its entirety was the dialogue Socrates had with Euthyphro where he attempted to manipulate him into proving his own innocence before the trial and then the events of the trial to his death. Socrates had run into Euthyphro and thought he could use this to his advantage. The Beginning of the conversation starts off with Socrates befriending Euthyphro and then with an introduction of wanting to become a pupil of his so that he could learn more about piety and impiety but then began debating him politely and fiercely.⁶ The dialogue between the two represents what is known now as the Socratic Method of argumentation which is used to find the critical catalyst of the reason for the debate.⁷ This was done by getting Euthyphro to break down his own argument and disprove himself. Despite this continued agreement on the side of Euthyphro, when Socrates has backed him into a corner with his questioning, essentially trying to force him to admit intellectual defeat to Socrates he simply refuses to answer. Something that Socrates seems to acknowledge in his trial is that the conclusion of his arguments are the reasoning for anger towards him; he also tells us how he gains the respect to continue such discussions “Why do people delight in continually conversing with you?... they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom”.⁸ This anger placed on him is in how he forces people in positions of authority to submit their fallacies of logic to him. Plato tells us in the end notes of *Socrates in Action: Euthyphro* “Socrates no longer asserts that Euthyphro *does* know. In fact he has done his best to

⁵ Plato, “The Last Days of Socrates” *The Apology*, 73

⁶ Plato, “The Last Days of Socrates” *Socrates in Action*, 17

⁷ Elizabeth, G. *The Socratic Method*

⁸ Plato, “The Last Days of Socrates” *The Apology*, 66

point out and to shatter Euthyphro's misplaced self-confidence and so to prepare him for the attainment of true wisdom."⁹ Just after the last statement made by Socrates to Euthyphro, it's decided the conversation is over and Euthyphro now abandons the conversation and declares he has somewhere urgent to be. Seemingly too embarrassed to finish the conversation and admit he has been teaching his students improper thought.

During Socrates' trial he told the story of how the Oracle deemed him the wisest man in Athen's and the meaning behind it. This was an explanation for his methods and to religious society attempting to penalize him for being an Atheist he thought it was more proof of his innocence as there were witnesses to the Oracle's claim. In the end it wasn't enough and he was sentenced to death. Nearly all we know of Socrates comes directly from Plato and some claim that Socrates as we know is a character redefined for the purposes of Plato's writings.¹⁰ Similar to Socrates Plato had divine inspiration, his was through mysticism.¹¹ His work on *The Apology* was a statement of wrongdoing on the court's side.¹² Plato continued to have impact through his School of Thought. His student Aristotle became the first Academic writer and between the two are our most influential philosophers in Western civilization.¹³ Socrates is known as the father as the ideas he taught were directly reflected in Plato's works and teaching to Aristotle. The political spectrum of their works are remembered as the foundations of the Great West. We can start however with the concerns surrounding Plato and the influences of his mysticism into his work. Many don't realize just how intimately Rome had intertwined Classic Greek philosophy in their empire in Caesar's era. Ovid memorialized their adoration for the Greeks in his work of the *Metamorphosis* which he did as political favour for Augustus. This came too after the first attempt which unfortunately had to be burned as when the author Virgil passed away.¹⁴ The laws of the *Pax Romana* that were established here just in time for the birth of Christianity had

⁹ Plato, "The Last Days of Socrates" notes to: *Euthyphro*, 187-188

¹⁰ Vlastos, G. "Modern Studies in Philosophy" *The Philosophy of SOCRATES*, 53

¹¹ Russel, B. *History of Western Philosophy*, 148 - He says in regards to Plato's uniqueness of writing "Throughout Plato's philosophy there is the same fusion of intellect and mysticism as in Pythagoreanism, but at this final culmination mysticism clearly has the upper hand."

¹² Leibowitz, D. "The Ironic Defense of Socrates: Plato's Apology" *The Problem of Truthfulness*, 11 - This following section is stating that the effects of the writings of *The Apology* directly say that if the court was correct in their morals they would not have sentenced him. We can see this in how Apollo's Oracle is mentioned in *The Apology*

¹³ Russel, B. *History of Western Philosophy*, 125,182

¹⁴ Robinson, C. E. *Apollo: History of Rome*, 254-258 - Ovid's great work of the *Metamorphoses* was the complete transition from Greek mythology to a new Roman in order to instill the same moralities Augustus adored

been essential to the spread of the religion.¹⁵ As we know this Roman Monarchy is the one who crucified Jesus and then destroyed Judah's temple to prevent Jewish uprising and claimed them responsible for funding two sides of wars.¹⁶ This peace lasted for nearly 200 years. After the destruction of this era of peace there was a long period without this order. Eventually the Emperor Constantine had come to restore the order. He did so by promoting Christianity and turning Rome into a Christian nation.¹⁷

Christianity has a long hard fought battle to get to this position within political governments. If we take the instance that had convinced Constantine of the Christian God it would be credited to a vision he had of Christ who directed him in battle that led to his victory.¹⁸ Constantine had directly helped the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church. Although he himself is not remembered as a mystic, the vision of Christ he spoke of would later be recognized as visions of mysticism. This wouldn't be until the 1900's when the Catholic Church officially declared St. Teresa of Avila, a doctor of the Church.¹⁹ She became the doctor of prayer for her writings that described the visions she so famously spoke of. It took over 400 years for the Catholic Church to fully recognize her writings by making her a Doctor. Divinely inspired writing must be difficult to interpret for the common man so it's no real shock that her writings were not fully recognized in her time. A similar story would go for St. Augustine who may have been the most impactful person on a philosophical level for the Church. The writings which contained the thoughts of Saint Augustine had such an impact on the Catholic Church that his ideas are still continuing to define our world today.²⁰ His writings were recognized by the Catholic Church as the prince of mystics when Pope John Paul II wrote the Apostolic letter *Augustinum Hipponensem*.²¹ The title of prince has been appropriate as he was a neo-Platonist before becoming a Catholic Bishop. As the neo-Platonists were attempting to bring Plato's works to the current time period this would make Plato the first Mystic of the Catholic Church.²²

¹⁵ This essentialness came in two main ways. First would be the era of peace laws that was championed by Augustus and second would be the vast Roman roadways which made the walking possible.

¹⁶ Josephus, F. *Of the War - Book VI - Chapter 6* "Till at length you became richer than we were ourselves, even when you were our enemies: and you made preparations for war against us with our own money"

¹⁷ Russel, B. *History of Western Philosophy*, 298

¹⁸ Bokenkotter, T. S. *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* 40

¹⁹ Pope Paul VI, *General Audience: Saint Teresa of Avila*

²⁰ Cadorette, C. *Catholicism in Social and Historical Contexts* 57

²¹ Pope John Paul II, *Augustinum Hipponensem* - "we understand how he was able to describe the mystical ascents with such precision, so that he has been called by many people the prince of mystics."

²² Cadorette, C. *Catholicism in Social and Historical Contexts* 68

As mysticism can be defined as a process which brings someone closer to Christ it must be wondered what mysticism was before Him. With the statement made of *The Apology* by Plato it was one of the official statements that he did not agree with the court's ruling. Plato thought the ruling was unjust and that Socrates was not an Atheist.²³ Although the Oracle of Delphi had claimed Socrates the wisest man he was only filled with doubt. The Socratic method which is a process of question and answering is the constant process in which Plato tries to write. The reasoning for this is because endless questioning was the only way to find absolute truth. During Socrates' trial he told the story of coming to terms with the Oracle's statement and implies that he is conversing with the Oracle the entire journey "I replied through myself to the oracle that it was best for me to be as I was."²⁴ Inside Socrates' mind constantly would be the method that he is now still remembered by. Confident in his subjective opinion he felt the need to prod a situation or question until his mind was content. What was most important in the mind of Socrates was his pursuit of the truth. This is the Light as we call it from the teachings of Jesus, for He called himself the light of the world (John 8:12). In what appears to be continued thought from Plato which were attempts at understanding how Socrates would have been a believer. In Plato's 7th book of *The Republic* he introduced his cave allegory. This was to be an explanation of the people they had come to believe as gods that were taught to them in their legends that we now memorialize in Classical Mythology.

As we look through the works of Plato we must remember that he would also have divine inspiration. Although Christianity had not come to the World yet the Jewish people had already been established. As we can see from the creation story inside of the Bible the Spirit has been on Earth working the entire time. We get asked of us to see the obvious truth that the Spirit has been on Earth since creation in Isaiah 40:12-15. The work of the Holy Spirit is to be known as the cause of mysticism. Plato can claim credit for much of the basis of Catholic theology as through Augustine it will be implanted in the Church for eternity. This is an interesting idea when we take a look at Plato's cave allegory. This is looked at as the fear man has when they are unknowing of the World and get introduced to it. The dialogue for the entire writing is of Socrates and his brother, where he introduces himself as Socrates. This is because the cave clearly came to him in a vision. We must remember the era in which Plato lived, one that worshipped Zeus as King of the gods. Much of this was fabled storytelling which inspired heroes for generations to come. It's easy to forget that the conquests of Alexander the Great came after Plato's academic works. With Hercules being the hero that resurrected into the heavens in Greek mythology it seems fairly easy to say that

²³ See 11

²⁴ Plato, "The Last Day of Socrates: *The Apology*", *Socrates defense* 52

any atheistic thinking then would prefer to have revolved around Hercules instead of Zeus. This is similar still with our modern era as the Church attempts to separate who Jesus of history is. With this idea of Hercules being the most important man in history and what he could have done to separate himself from the rest of the heroes must be inside of Plato's cave allegory as this was likely a vision given to him from the Spirit to explain how Hercules saved humanity from being cave dwellers like the minions of Poseidon.²⁵ "But whoever practices the truth comes into the Light, so that it may be seen clearly that what he has done has been accomplished in God." (John 3:21)

The cave is introduced to us as an allegory for the process of coming to the stage of enlightenment. To be in such a state requires absolute knowledge of your surroundings. To reach absolute knowledge requires being out of the cave and walking on land. Legends that were passed on from Homer were the attempted educating from the heroes that became known as gods. The reasoning for why these old myths live on is quite simple: they "compare our nature in respect of education".²⁶ The story of the cave-dwellers is there to represent how humans fear the unknown and how our instincts kick in. The escape to liberation has been presented as a three stage cycle. First you are locked in chains, second you are roaming the cave and at last you are brought up into the light of the Sun. Clearly setting the stage for the romanticization of divine heroes. Included are the words of Homer "'to live on the land [above ground] as the paid menial of another destitute peasant", which seems to imply that those born of the divine, of the hero, reach the stage of enlightenment and see more than all others on the labour of his ancestral past. With the intimate knowledge of the entire Greek history of philosophers coming into these theories we must question what happens to the people controlling the shadows. In the final dialogue written in regards to the freed prisoner attempting to free them all he is only met with ignorant retorts. They would like to argue points like "he had gone up but only in order to come back down into the cave with his eyes ruined -- and thus it certainly does not pay to go up."²⁷ This is only because he who has felt such warmth would be able to know and understand the necessity of the light. The wicked do so well in understanding the human emotion that they can even predict how the unenlightened cavemen will react to such information. Becoming forever wanderers as the fear of death remains on whoever forces those out of their safe cave. "And if they can get hold of this person who takes it in hand to free

²⁵ Homer, *The Odyssey*, 9, 187-492, This section is about an Island Odysseus travelled to. Inside is the myth of Polyphemus, a lone cave dweller who is a Cyclops descending from Poseidon which in myth are portrayed as evil beings "arrogant lawless beings who leave their livelihoods to the deathless gods"

²⁶ Plato, *The Allegory of the Cave* - This is part of the introduction before the scene of the cave is set

²⁷ Ibid. This is the quote from Homer that is used to try and bring the old legends into the tale.

them from their chains and to lead them up, and if they could kill him, will they not actually kill him?" "They certainly will."²⁸

This must be how we came to know the gods as Gods because they were spreading light into every cave they could find. The rise of Zeus to overthrow his father Cronus is remembered as the coming of order to the World. In origin in fear of his bloodline overthrowing his rule Cronus had been eating all the children his wife bore. This led Rhea to seek advice from her parents to save the next child- who became Zeus. She was instructed to give birth to Zeus in a cave and leave him there to be raised by nymphs.²⁹ This unusual birth circumstance would be important because this would mean that Zeus was born in the same darkness his father was. This can be the extended reasoning of how he was able to fully understand why his father was morally wrong with his attempts of justice. As Zeus would have full knowledge of the World in comparison to Cronus he would know that there are others stuck in caves. As asked by Plato on what a freed prisoner would feel as obligation for his life only can be said as "I think that he would prefer to endure everything rather than be that kind of human being." How can this be contested? Would those who walk around the cave leaving the people in shackles not be the most evil of all? How can one convince people of another kind to trust them? We know that this feeling is not one we ignore, today it is known as xenophobia. Their God of Justice, Zeus, protected the ideals of *xenia* above all other matters. This was a custom made in order for people to accept any Greek wanderers that may come about their land.³⁰ As the heroes of myth were the protectors of Greek society Zeus' first prerogative was to keep his people safe.³¹ This was needed as wanderers have no place to call home. As Cain once said to God "Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." (Genesis 4:14)

²⁸ Ibid. The dialogue here are Socrates' thoughts on what would happen when a freed prisoner returns to convince the others to come out into the Sun

²⁹ Powell, B. *Classical Myth*, 89 - This is the introduction page to Zeus overtaking Cronus.

³⁰ Powell, B. *Classical Myth*, 138 - *Xenia* would be known as the root for what we know now as xenophobia

³¹ Powell, B. *Classical Myth*, 324

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