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Entrapped by the Melancholia of our Minds

Plato, a famed philosopher born in 428 B.C.E. in Athens, Greece, is well-known for being a student of Socrates's and a teacher of Aristotle's. Plato's philosophical piece titled "The Allegory of the Cave" is taken from *The Republic*, a well-known Socratic dialogue which takes on hefty subjects such as arguably universal concepts of justice and ethics; common themes in Plato's writings. Additionally, the text focuses in on the complicated workings of the composite human mind when dealing with ensnaring feelings of downheartedness and guilt. In "The Allegory of the Cave," the speaker uses extensive persuasion, an ethical appeal, an emotional appeal, a solemn tone, analogies, and a graphic allegory to convince his audience that sin brings on depression, and that people should strive to be wiser and more righteous in their actions.

The goal of the text is most prominently to scare people out of evil wrongdoings and into practicing only what the writer believes to be good, honest, ethical, moral, and righteous behavior. The text is also meant to illustrate a human's thinking process, and the negative effects that a disheartening turn in action and/or thinking may have on the person at hand. The wall is meant to illustrate a blockade in a human's forward-thinking once he or she has sinned and is trapped in a whirlwind of guilt and depression. The puppet show is meant to taunt the prisoners with what they are missing in the sunlight and outside of the cave. It represents happy people, free of sin, appearing in the world of a depressed individual. This happiness makes the depressed

person jealous of or nostalgic for the days when he or she was pure and happy as well. The speaker appeals primarily to ethos to make people consider what is right and wrong; why he believes evil will take people to an unstable and very dark place. With the first paragraph describing how some are sent into the gruesome cave as children, he may be implying that those who have no life experiences and have not achieved wisdom, and have not yet been raised with the wisdom of those around them, should be directly sent to the cave because they are already more prone to mistakes. He argues that “wisdom, unlike anything else, contains a divine element which always remains” (Plato 289). Here, he appears to assert that wisdom is a great thing which may only be achieved through a unique practice of universal rectitude. He is implying that one must live and see the good and bad parts of life to achieve to a resolute state of mind where darkness and deep sadness are out of the question, and a reasonable level of happiness, as well as a will to do only good, has been achieved. A major theme seen throughout the document is the idea that humans live in a fairly constant fear of change and share a common knowledge that evil is wrong. Additionally, the speaker asserts that because the eye may not turn to light without the rest of the body, the instrument of knowledge can only “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” (Plato 288). In summary, one needs their whole soul and all of their willingness to move past changing into being in order to move from the darkness of the cave into the brightness and brilliance of the sun and good, pure life without being blinded. This blindness is one’s painful adjustments to a life they are not used to, and the last of the punishments that they must go through after being released from the cave. Alas, one is not free just because their chains are lifted. One is always human and therefore always capable of

making mistakes sending them back, once again, to life as a prisoner in the cave where evil sinners, and those who were misled, are deposited and forgotten. Plato uses a multiplex bricolage of rhetorical strategies to convince his readers of his claims and show his audience why his allegory should be taken into deep consideration and respected in its truth value and real-life applications.

All through the oeuvre, the tone of the speaker is very somber and cautionary. The speaker is acutely persuasive. He states his points with great confidence but adds his own opinions every now and then so as not to appear overly forceful. He makes convincing arguments with strong and reliable evidence. In the second half of the composition, the speaker relies primarily on ethos to make his arguments more convincing and to force his readers to consider right from wrong and good from evil in the context. He uses analogies to further convince his readers of his main points and ideas, as well as to show the intense difference between various human emotions and how they tend to make people feel. His utilization of pathos becomes prominent when he speaks of the horrendous conditions in which the prisoners must live. He does this in an attempt to provoke fear, as well as sympathy, in the hearts and minds of his readers. He aims to achieve sympathy for the prisoners in their depression and immense pain, and uses objects such as the wall, the puppets, the chains, and the fire (Plato 284) to support the emotional appeal he is conveying specifically within the pictorial descriptions of the cave. Additionally, he implies that there is no true escape from this dark state of mind and overwhelming guilt because even if the prisoners were to somehow escape, the light would blind them and their bodies and joints would ache and cause them tremendous amounts of pain due to the extended time that they spent in the dimly lit cave in chains and unable to move (Plato 285).

He also uses his active and attentive listener within the text, Glaucon, to show the readers an example of an audience member who is interested and engaged, as a way of convincing his audience to listen carefully and engage themselves as well. Glaucon is just another human being. By this understanding, the readers can conclude that he is subject to making mistakes and feeling disheartened just as all human beings are. Perhaps Glaucon is fearful too, the allegory is very dark as well as very alarming, with a strong sense of warning.

The speaker is very skilled at using fear and relatable emotions to persuade his readers into believing in, and concentrating on, his personal ethical beliefs and morals which are carefully weaved into his bold assertions. He immediately identifies his purpose as being “to show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened” (Plato 284). He uses an analogy in the fifth paragraph comparing the fire in his allegory to the sun, as well as a striking comparing and contrasting of the darkness of the shadows to the brilliance of sunlight (Plato 285). These analogies help to make the setting and feeling of the text more dramatic and thoughtful. He uses descriptions of the sun blinding freed prisoners as an emphasis of the difference between good and evil, and a showing of a belief that just because one has been somewhat freed from their past sin, they are never completely free from the prospect of sinning and falling again. People are frequently sent back to the cave, the chains, and the mental darkness with only a tempting glimmer of light that is unreachable. This inability to reach and feel the light is a representation of the hopeless feelings that come with complete and utter woe, and the desperation of escaping. When one is depressed, he or she will do anything to follow the smallest flicker of hope, for hopelessness is an inevitable feeling when one is at their lowest. Additionally, depression is quite possibly the most difficult emotion to escape, for it is the one

emotion in which you are always fighting with yourself. The author's allegory expresses this despair with an illustrative physical description of the gory and agonizing bondage of the cave. Furthermore, he uses an emotional appeal in his description of the lives of the prisoners. People see how awful life may become mentally for those who sin, and immediately develop a deep sympathy for those who have been sent to the cave, and an urgency to avoid evil and wicked behavior at all costs.

"The Allegory of the Cave" is very dark and admonitory in its essence. The use of Glaucon in the context and the realness of the human emotions he displays are just a couple examples of the many auxiliary strategies the author has inserted into his writing processes. The careful usage of various rhetorical strategies such as analogies, an ethical appeal, an emotional appeal, a grave tone, strong persuasion, and a graphic allegory helps to bring the writing to life. These highly advantageous tactics assist in convincing the audience of the writer's intentions and claims. They convince others to make good and ethical decisions in their lives so they will be liberated from the state of being trapped and pained within one's own miserable, dejected, gloomy mind.