

Chapter 6: The Allegory of the Cave

Here is a small synthesis of the previous chapters: the world is sinking into obscurantism and the path taken leads to our end. The reversal of this tendency can only be done in consciousness. The consciousness of a problem, the consciousness that we do not cure evil with evil but in Love.

The next step is the solution. But are the consciences in a position to find it or even to accept it if it is given to them? At the time of Socrates and Plato, they were not. To explain this, Plato reports the symbolic story that his master Socrates used to explain the illusion in which men find themselves and their categorical refusal to accept another interpretation of their world. It is the allegory of the cave. I invite you to read this allegory, which is not very long, but which allows us to see Socrates' clairvoyance, his pedagogical talents and his oratory art. You will discover that men are like slaves chained in a cave and that puppeteers shape their reality with the help of projected shadows. They are chained so that they cannot observe the puppeteers. If a man manages to escape and persevere towards the light of day, despite the dazzle and fear of the unknown, he will discover another reality, new and therefore destabilizing. But with practice, he discovers freedom and can contemplate the world in the open air and in the sunlight, he discovers the true nature of things and not their shadows. His compassion for other men pushes him to return to the darkness of the cave to help them. But Socrates specifies that the task is arduous because it causes great psychological insecurity for the slaves, who may even go as far as to murder him.

What the wise man tells them is simply incomprehensible and unacceptable to them. And this is precisely what happened to Socrates. He was accused and sentenced to death for corruption of spirits.

I think that, at the present time, few people would be able to accept a solution to the problems described in the previous chapters. Of course, there might not be the killing of the philosopher carrying the solution, but mankind would either ignore it or laugh at the proposed solution. The next step is therefore to understand that there is already a way to go to realize that we are in a world based on many illusions. What the world believes for some is based only on beliefs and cannot claim any certainty. The next step is therefore to provide the means to evaluate the solidity of our knowledge and achievements and to be able to accept solutions that are appropriate for a better future. In the language of Socrates, this means identifying the chains that keep people in mental slavery.

Everything is based on our assessment of what we call 'true'. Because everything we consider true is integrated as certain. And these certainties together

form the framework for our experiences and our evolution. It is our living environment, our universe. For example, if I believe that all bacteria are dangerous, there are a lot of things I don't do: there are a lot of places I don't visit, a lot of food I don't eat, a lot of things I don't touch. And if someone wants to prevent me from going to a place, all he has to do is say that there are bacteria in that place. My world is therefore limited to sanitized places. I am afraid and I spend a lot of energy to protect myself. And since my immune system is not stimulated enough, I get sick at the slightest deviation, which comforts me in my certainties. If someone questions this certainty, I am then faced with a major dilemma: either they can contaminate me if they are wrong, or I recognize that everything I said and did was completely useless or even harmful. This provokes a profound discomfort: I have the choice between being attacked or being absurd. This phenomenon is called cognitive dissonance. And the natural reaction is to avoid it. Or even to do everything not to be confronted with it, even if it means killing Socrates. It is much more comfortable to reaffirm one's certainty in opposition to this insecurity, but it is to lock oneself into one's certainty.

That's why, it's not enough to ask for a solution, you have to prepare yourself to be able to accept something new. This preparation is as important as the solution. The path is as important as the destination. The goal and the means are inseparable.

You may experience this cognitive dissonance in the next few paragraphs.

So let's look at how we establish what is true. In fact, we need evidence. We consider something to be true if the evidence we bring is already considered to be true. For example, a table is horizontal because the bubble on the spirit level indicates it. And we consider the spirit level to be evidence. But we come to the following problem: how did we decide that these proofs are true? For the spirit level, it is that we trust the manufacturer or the merchant who sold it to us. In general, we have inherited the knowledge of the truthfulness of information from our education or our environment, these being shaped by our predecessors. This simply reflects the trust we have in our predecessors and the system they put in place. This is explained in the fable of the Monkey Theorem.

A community of about twenty monkeys are isolated in a room where there is a ladder with a banana on top of it. As soon as one monkey starts climbing the ladder, the others are given a cold shower. The monkeys therefore start violently preventing any monkey wanting to access the ladder. After some time, a monkey is replaced by a new monkey who has not attended the cold shower event. Seeing the banana, he will try to climb the ladder, but immediately, his fellow monkeys violently attack him and push him away. Then a second monkey is replaced again. He too is repulsed by all the other monkeys including the one who does not know why he should not climb the ladder. The phenomenon is repeated until all the monkeys are replaced. We then see that the monkeys prevent all the others from climbing the ladder without anyone knowing why. Thus most of what we take for certain or true, is in fact only a legacy of which we have no idea of the origin. Also, some revolutionary minds have gone on a crusade against beliefs they consider absurd. And since our mode of operation is

based almost exclusively on inherited certainties, there are many opportunities to see absurd certainties. The idea over the last few centuries, especially in the West, since the Renaissance period, has been to find rules so as not to be invaded and controlled by inherited certainties. Thinkers have thus thought about defining concepts and methods to challenge certainties and assert the superiority of their certainties. This initiative has been called science. And some have achieved convincing results. For example, the prediction of the return of Halley's comet. Science-based technologies have brought about transformations in lifestyles that everyone has seen. Thus, some truth seekers have defined protocols to convince themselves, not by inheritance, of certain truths and refute others. These "truths", or knowledge, could be verified by many people. And we have come to the conclusion that if we apply the scientific method, we have the truth. For many people, especially in the West, there is the certainty that what is done scientifically is true. However, very few are scientific, and therefore have not conducted research using scientific protocols. And among the few who do implement these protocols, how many have found any truth? They are very, very few. Thus humanity, to protect itself from the inherited certainties, which we can call beliefs, has built up an enormous one. Namely that truth is acquired through the scientific method. But this is nothing more than an inherited belief. Drive out the natural and it comes back at a gallop. This is manifested in common expressions such as "this is true because a scientific study has proved it". However, the person does not know what experiments have been carried out, but is convinced simply on the basis of the word scientific. No, the scientific approach was developed to convince oneself and to provide elements for others to make up their own opinion. One can simply read the protocol followed by a study. But there can be mistakes. Repeating the experiment described in the protocol increases confidence in the result found. But some people may still be skeptical, others may find conditions that invalidate the previous result. The evidence is in fact subjective. For some, it will be necessary to follow a very strict, repeatable protocol, to integrate measurement uncertainty...for others, a calculation is enough, for others it only needs to be logical.

The mistake is to believe that one can prove it definitively. Truth is an inner notion, whereas proof is an element that one brings to prevent any contestation. One imposes from the outside a certainty on another individual. The incontestable is an illusion. The judicial institution speaks well of intimate conviction in order to judge. It is in the depths of oneself that one can judge the interest and the relevance of the elements brought in, which are called "proofs".

We have thus seen that our universe is built by our certainties, and that these can only have a true foundation if they are based on our interior. In other words, the reality of our exterior is the reflection of our interior.

Now let's look at what we call a religion. It is a set of knowledge and rituals that allow us to understand the world and to live our daily lives according to this understanding. Every great religion has at least one prophet (Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, Zoroaster, Confucius, ...). Great worship is often associated with these people because they left a deep mark in the consciousness of the people of their

time. This trace is that the witnesses attended exceptional events that could be explained or provoked by these prophets, making it obvious that they were touching the Truth. Prophets also have the gift of communication. The explanations and advice given by these prophets have been transmitted from generation to generation in the form of knowledge and rites. But the Truth, which these prophets touched, cannot be limited to knowledge and rites. It is like the wise man pointing to the moon to the fool who sees only the finger of the wise man. Socrates and Plato talked about concepts or ideas not to be mistaken with their materialization in form. The finger is not the moon, but is useful to find it. Religious writings can describe with a lot of information the finger, the hand, the arm of the wise man, but it is not enough to know the moon. One must also keep in mind that the other arm, hand or finger can point to the moon. It may be a stick, or even a telescope. Thinking that the means by which the prophet showed the Truth is the only valid one is equivalent to thinking that only the finger of the wise man is called the moon. Gandhi said "he who has gone to the heart of his religion has gone to the heart of all religions". Yet we argue, often violently, to impose the superiority of our religion. But I understand that one is very sensitive to a prophet and to the texts that tell his story and his precepts. One can feel the transcendence of this person and his message. This should in no way diminish the value of another religion.

Let us now look at science, it follows the same path: some men seek explanations, they want the truth and try to understand and explain the universe and its laws. Other people are then subjugated by this knowledge and its implementation, such as healings, predictions, or technology. The rites of this quest are the scientific method or protocols and the manipulation of equations. The Nobel prize winners in science are the correspondence of the saints of the Catholic Church. They are those who have understood a little better than others and have applied good practices to get a little closer to the Truth. Pythagoras is the first prophet of science.

