

THE SILO AND THE CAVE

A Research In Practice essay

Written by Chris Josty

In this essay I will provide an extensive retrospective look at the Apple TV+ series *Silo* when compared to the philosophy of the Greek philosopher Plato, especially his "Allegory of the cave". *Silo* is a 2023 TV series adaptation of the novelisation "Wool" by American author "Hugh Howey". The story is about *"Men and women live in a giant silo underground with several regulations which they believe are in place to protect them from the toxic and ruined world on the surface"* - (*Apple TV+ Silo logline, 2023, cited IMDB.*) Where Plato's "Allegory Of The Cave" follows a group of prisoners chained to a cave unable to move their heads. Forced to stare at a cave wall only illuminated by passing shadows created by man controlled puppets. The prisoners in the cave perceive these shadows cast by the puppets to be their only reality, staring at them for years. Until one day one of the prisoners escapes as they see that the shadows they were shown are not reality. As the prisoner returns to try and tell the others. Both the story of *Silo* and Plato's Allegory Of The Cave feature distinct similar themes such as that of understanding and perceiving reality, the limitations of perception and the human condition.

Silo uses the philosophy of Plato and the allegory of the cave to great effect in serving its narrative and it is here where I will dive deeper into its key philosophical influences from Plato's allegory of the cave. The characters of the TV series *Silo* and its novelisation counterpart *Wool* live inside of a huge silo underground in a post apocalyptic world. Often in the series characters will often repeat the following in a ritualistic prayer like fashion *"We do not know why we are here. We do not know who built the Silo. We do not know why everything outside the Silo is as it is. We do not know when it will be safe to go outside. We only know that day... is not this day."* - (*David Oyelowo, SILO, Apple TV+*) It's with these words spoken by the character "Sheriff Holsten" we are introduced into the world of the *Silo* and the comparisons between Plato's "Allegory of The Cave" begins. The *Silo* is a multi-layered underground superstructure in which a remnant of humanity live. With most floors in the silo representing a different social class. "The Down Deep" is towards the bottom of the *Silo* in a slum-like area and where we meet our leading character of "Juliette Nichols" who is a mechanic of the Down Deep who helps operate and maintain the mechanical heart of the *Silo*. It's through a series of often unfortunate and unexpected events that Juliette starts to learn the truth about the *Silo* and what the forces within the *Silo* are trying to hide from its population and what is actually outside of the *Silo* itself.

Like The prisoners in Allegory of The Cave the people within the Silo's reality and connection to the outside world is only what they are both experiencing and what they are shown. In the Silo its inhabitants can see into the outside world via giant screens connected to cameras outside of the Silo. However in this post apocalyptic world those cameras can get dirty and grubby distorting the view on the screens. This is what brings us to cleaning. When you are sent to clean in the world of Silo you are sent to your death. The world is a toxic wasteland afterall and breathable air can only last so long. When a person is sent outside they may choose to clean as they can't be forced however the inhabitants inside of the Silo prefer it when they do. Now if we are to link this to Plato's Allegory of The Cave like the cave and the shadows projected onto the wall the Silo and the camera's view of the post apocalyptic world outside is all the characters of Silo know and believe to be the only reality they must accept. It's not until things start to happen within the Silo that can challenge the belief of their perception of that reality changes.

"Reality is created by the mind, we can change our reality by changing our mind" - (Plato, Translated Quote, Goodreads) Like in the Allegory of the cave where one of the prisoners is released from the cave and sees the actual outside world and reality changes as they knew it. The same happens with characters Juliette and Holsten in Silo when the reality they know is questioned by the discovery of artifacts from before. In this case a hard-drive with encryption. Once finding out how to open the Silo the truth on how the Silo is built and the outside world is revealed to them. Juliette sees that in a POV video of a person sent to clean outside of the Silo from their perspective lushes green landscapes, birds and trees. It is at this moment Juliettes perceived reality changes and she attempts to reveal the truth to the rest of the population of the Silo. However much like the Allegory of The Cave, when Juliette tries to inform others of what she has discovered she is met with volatile backlash, danger, violence and skepticism. This is in contrast to the Prisoner in Plato's Allegory of the Cave when the prisoner returns to the cave to tell the other prisoners about the reality they have discovered they do not believe them. The people within the Silo refuse to accept Juliette's reality. It was actually confirmed by the creator of the book Wool Which Silo the TV series is an adaptation of that Plato's Allegory of the Cave was a deliberate inspiration for his story. On his own website in a Q&A writer Hugh Howey was asked *"When you wrote Wool, what inspiration did you take from literature history"* Howey replies *"The only thing I deliberately wove into Wool is Plato's Allegory of the cave"* - (Hugh Howey, hughhowey.com, interview Q&A) Furthermore this only enforces my comparisons of Plato's Allegory of the cave and Silo the TV series. Proving not only by its content and story but by omission of the creator it's deliberate inspiration and use to tell the story of Silo.

Like Howey and other writers Plato's Allegory of The Cave has also inspired my own work. Especially in the TV series "The Broken" that I am currently pitching. In the world of The Broken TV series disabled people are forced to live inside "The Block". A slum-like large industrial megastructure much like a tower block but at least triple the size. Outside of this Block is the "Perfect Society" where the rest of the non disabled inhabitants live. In a world built on the promise of perfection. Everyone is healthy, happy and wealthy. However, how much of this is actually true will eventually unravel. Like Plato's Allegory Of The Cave and Silo my TV Series The Broken uses the Allegory Of The Cave within The Block where the people with many varying disabilities are forced to live. Within this Block most of its inhabitants have never experienced the so-called new "Perfect Society" having been turfed out of their homes as it was starting to form. They have no idea on what living in a "perfect world could be like" The only reality outside of The Block that they know now is either the one they are shown on contained TV Broadcasts from The Perfect Society or stories from those who dare ventured outside of The Blocks walls. To many the only reality they know is within The Block most forgetting what the world was like before the Perfect Society was formed only having been kids at the time they were forcefully forced to live in The Block. "The Allegory of The Cave" however can also mean two radically different life perspectives as explained by "Laney College" who explain *"The Allegory of the cave is about the existence of two worlds or experiences. It's about two radically different states of consciousness and awareness, or two radically different life perspectives."* So looking at the perfect and clean "Perfect Society" - (A.S, Laney College, Allegory Of The Cave.) Against the dirty and grimy "Block" there is a stark reality difference between the two. That neither side would have experienced.

In The Broken the world outside of The Block might not actually be a better one however. Which also bodes the question to Plato's Allegory of The Cave. Which reality is the better one: the one inside the cave or the one outside? Let me explain. Now let's think that in The Broken these people are all together as one big community within The Block. Yes, the living conditions might not be the best but they have each other and they know their people. They know that a war will not just suddenly break out between them and that they will not be discriminated against or marginalized by their own people as they are all disabled. They are free to be whoever they want to be within the walls of The Block. In contrast, outside in the so-called "Perfect Society" anything could happen to them. It's an unknown world with infinite possibilities. In this world those possibilities are mainly bad but there are some good. So now we ask in the Allegory Of The Cave was the prisoner better off in the reality of The Cave or outside of the Cave?

You see in my TV series "The Broken" when a character looks at a possible reality the viewer has to think which reality is objectively better for them and that character. I mean The Block is safer for them than the Perfect Society so why are they trying to leave The Block? The same as in Silo would they be better off in trying to know that their reality was maybe a lie or are they better just to accept the reality they are currently living in as the true one for a safer life? The same can be argued with Plato's Allegory of The Cave? Okay yes they have escaped the cave but by doing so they are subjected to the fears of war, starvation, conflict which while within the Cave they did not know that those concepts even existed in their reality. So objectively were they better off never leaving the cave in the first place? Yes they were prisoners but the life they lead within the cave gave them safety and security. These are the questions I ask myself and want the audience to ask themselves when experiencing the world of The Broken I have created. It's now also the question of should they leave The Block? Like just because they can, should they attempt to leave the Silo and or in the case of Plato's Allegory of the Cave Should they leave the cave? Because sometimes just because we can doesn't mean that we should.

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." - (Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosopher)

As filmmakers we have to ask ourselves this question. Just because one can, it does not mean that one should. For example, should and how would I personally as a white male tackle concepts of race and the male gaze. Are these stories that I should attempt to tell? Is there a way that through philosophy and philosophical concepts that I can attempt to approach and tell these stories? For example could I take the Allegory of The Cave and look at something like The Holocaust? Most people in the outside world had little to no idea on what horrific atrocities were actually happening and taking place inside the Nazi concentration camps. Could Plato's Cave be used to tell a story like this? Yes, and so could many other philosophical practices. The importance of Philosophy to storytelling and film and TV can not be overstated. For as long as there have been stories there has been philosophy and philosophers to tell those stories and or concepts. As I move further into my journey as a filmmaker I wish to utilize and explore more of these philosophical practices in my work. Moving past Plato's Allegory of The Cave and onto new and exciting philosophical ideas. In my upcoming short film "Doors" I will be looking at the philosophy of life after death and how the choices we make in life can affect the outcome. Everything I write however already includes the Joseph Campbell hero's journey. Showing that already without even trying there is a little bit of philosophy in everything I create.

Bibliography:

"Men and women live in a giant silo underground with several regulations which they believe are in place to protect them from the toxic and ruined world on the surface"

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14688458/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

(Apple TV+ Silo logline, 2023, cited IMDB.)

"We do not know why we are here. We do not know who built the Silo. We do not know why everything outside the Silo is as it is. We do not know when it will be safe to go outside. We only know that day... is not this day."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xErpNvebO8I>

(David Oyelowo, SILO, Apple TV+)

"Reality is created by the mind, we can change our reality by changing our mind"

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/6876310-reality-is-created-by-the-mind-we-can-change-our>

(Plato, Translated Quote, Goodreads)

"The only thing I deliberately wove into Wool is Plato's Allegory of the cave"

<https://hughhowey.com/questions-and-answers/>

(Hugh Howey, Hughhowey.com, Wool Author, interview Q&A)

Allegory of the cave is about the existence of two worlds or experiences. It's about two radically different states of consciousness and awareness, or two radically different life perspectives."

So looking at the perfect and clean "Perfect Society"

https://laney.edu/humanities_philosophy/allegory-of-the-cave-a-modest-interpretation/#:~:text=The%20Allegory%20of%20the%20Cave%20is%20about%20the%20existence%20of,physical%20and%20the%20sensible%20world.

(A.S, Laney College, Allegory Of The Cave.)