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In “In Plato’s Cave,” Susan Sontag examines photography as a force that shapes how people see, understand, and remember the world. Although the essay was written long before phones and social media, her ideas feel relevant today. Sontag argues that photographs do not just record reality but they build meaning and influence what we believe is important. Reading this text has made me reconsider my own relationship with photography and why I take pictures. I began to question how image making affects my understanding of experience, truth, and memory.

Sontag explains that photography teaches a visual code by framing what is worthy of attention. When I take photographs, I often feel that I am preserving a moment or giving it significance. However, Sontag challenges this assumption by suggesting that photographing can also distance us from lived experience. Turning moments into images can shift us from participants into observers, making the image feel more real than the experience itself. She also emphasizes that photography is an act of power. Every photograph reflects decisions about framing, timing, and selection, even when those decisions seem unintentional. This made me reconsider how often I prioritize aesthetic appeal rather than the moment. Sontag further argues that the constant circulation of images can dull emotional response. I agree with Sontag, In today’s world where we are constantly surrounded by social media, photography has become more about performance than presence. Many people put more effort into taking pictures for validation, attention or trends instead of living in the moment. Today, our phones make it so

much more accessible to take photos leading us to undermine the art of photography and truly understand what it is.

Throughout the semester, we are asked to complete multiple projects using different tools. Sontag's essay encourages me to view these projects as parts of a connected body of work rather than isolated assignments. Photography causes speculations rather than explanation, but thoughtful presentation can lead viewers toward deeper understanding. This perspective pushes me to think more critically about how my images relate to one another and what larger ideas they communicate. To represent our world at this moment, I want to focus less on spectacle and more on intentional seeing. It is easy to scroll through photos without considering their impact or meaning because of the current abundance of images. Inspired by Sontag, I want to slow down the act of looking by taking pictures that make people stop and think. I want to take pictures that depict me and not have a fear of being judged.

Ultimately, "In Plato's Cave" has changed how I think about photography and image making. Rather than seeing images as simple records of reality, I now understand them as powerful tools that shape perception and meaning. Moving forward, I want my work to be more intentional and reflective, using photography not only to capture moments, but to question how we see and understand the world around us.