

# **Allegory of the Blindfold**

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Imagine for a moment a society like none that you have ever seen before. Imagine a civilization of love, peace, and compassion where nobody goes hungry, nobody wants for anything, and everyone is equally loved. Imagine a perfect society with few worries, no suffering, and no wants. Imagine a society where a wise and shining population dance out their days in peace, prosperity, and joy. Imagine a garden paradise, an Eden Shambhala. Now imagine that one day everybody starts to wear a blindfold. One moment, the people are dancing in the Light, and the next they are plunged into darkness.

As you might guess, being suddenly blindfolded in this fashion made life a lot more difficult. With a blindfold on the people struggled in darkness. They crashed into each other. They dropped stuff. They broke things. As you can imagine, it was not too long before the bumping and the crashing caused them frustration, pain, suffering, and anger. It was bad and it got worse every day.

You would think that as things continued to deteriorate, these people, these Dwellers in darkness, would take off their blindfolds, but they did not. Eventually, they forgot they were wearing blindfolds at all. As the generations passed, these once shiny people gradually transformed into angry, bitter little ogres who no longer had the time or the energy to care about anything or anybody other than themselves.

Still, no matter how bad the pain and suffering became, no matter how many generations passed, there were always stories. Elders would tell tales of a shiny happy place that had once existed where the people danced and played. In this happy place, the elders said, there was no poverty, no war, and no disease. In this happy place, everybody smiled all the time. That is what the elders said, but most people thought these were just stories. Everybody knew, and everyone accepted, that life was a bitter pill. Still, some did wonder if maybe, just maybe, the stories were true. As they wondered these people, these “searchers,” began to ask more questions.

“Why is everything so dark and confusing?”

Why are we always bumping into things?”

“Did something happen to us?”

“Has it always and forever been this way?”

Some of these searchers, let us call them the **existential depressives** (EDs), came to the conclusion that there was no explanation for the darkness and confusion. They assumed the tales were simply stories and they accepted the darkness as status quo. In their typical manner, these depressives droned on and on about how the universe was empty and dark, how it had always been this way, how it would always be this way, and how it would eventually end in an inevitable and eternal dark. The best the people could do, said the depressives, was to simply accept this cold, bitter truth.

The existentialists were depressed, that's for sure, but not everybody settled into their funk. In fact, most of the Dwellers were not satisfied with their "truths" and so they kept searching. Eventually, some of the Dwellers, let us call them the **priests**, came up with different answers.

Some priests said that the people were stumbling in darkness and confusion because they were evil, dirty, and deserved it. Other priests said that the world was the way it was because the people had done something wrong and were now being punished for their past lives of sin. Still others said that people were fools and that this world was a school of suffering meant to teach them some grand cosmic lesson. Some even said that if you did not obey and learn your lesson, you would suffer in eternal fire. Yes, the priests said many ridiculous things, but perhaps you can understand why. Like everybody else, their life was a suffering in darkness. Who could blame them for thinking the world outside sucked?

And of course, just like some of the Dwellers believed the existential depressives, some also believed the priests. Indeed, some even gave the priests money. And really, what was wrong with that? The Dwellers were desperate for an explanation that would give meaning to the darkness, and the priest's answers at least offered that.

But of course, not everybody settled in with the depressives or the priests. These Dwellers were unsatisfied with the emptiness of the depressives and they were suspicious of the now wealthy priests. They gazed at the priests in their castles, they saw the troubles in the world, and they sensed a certain hypocrisy. Unsatisfied with the priests and depressives, these Dwellers continued to search. Just like everybody else, they struggled in blindness and confusion, yet they kept searching until finally, one day,

they stumbled into a forest where, hungry and alone, they ate from a **Burning Bush**, after which, their blindfolds fell surely away. Suddenly, the profits could suddenly see!

Which, to be honest, was not as great as you might at first think. One minute the prophets were walking in total darkness and the next they saw with full light. One minute they could see nothing at all, and the next the entire world was revealed. The revelations were not an easy thing to deal with. To eyes accustomed to the darkness, the new light was blinding. There was no reference point and nobody to talk with. Out there in the forest and facing the light on their own, the prophets were confused and quite scared. Instinctively, they reacted snatched the blindfold back on, thereby returning themselves to the “safe” familiarity of Darkness.

Or at least, that was what you hoped would happen. Unfortunately, a safe return was not always the case. The new light was quite bright and with minds and emotions weakened by generations of trauma, some faltered, some fell, and some, quite unfortunately, went mad. But even those who did not falter or go mad, even those who successfully returned to the dark, struggled. They had gotten a glimpse and it was so different from what they expected and at such variance with what the priests and the depressives had taught that they struggled to process and ground. For many, it was simply too much to bear. Out of fear and self-preservation, they left the forest, vowing to never return.

Of course, refusal to go back into the wilderness for another glimpse did not stop some of the prophets from exploiting their “greater knowledge” for money and power over others. The prophets had seen the priests in their castles and tempted, they said, “I gotta get some of that.” So, the prophets said to the Dwellers, “Follow us because we’ve seen the light.” They spoke about “presence”. They proclaimed the “power of now”. They said, “Live in the moment.” They said, “It’s all about ‘attraction.’” The Dwellers who had not visited the forest, were easily dazzled by the partial glimpses and limited “wisdom” of the prophets. Desperate for meaning and purpose, they willingly handed over their cash.

And who could blame them? The existential depressives saw only an empty universe and the priests called them weak, stupid, and evil, but the prophets had sure seen the light, if only for a moment. The Dwellers could see that the prophets provided more and so, desperate for meaning and purpose, they followed, which was great for the prophets who bought fancy cars and big houses, but bad for the Dwellers because, despite lofty claims, nevertheless the prophets remained mired in darkness, and it showed in their thin and trite knowledge. Still, and as you might expect, a few of the Dwellers grew unsatisfied, and they began to question. Having seen the prophets enter the forest, the Dwellers asked the prophets, “what happened to you in the forest,” but the prophets, well, they refused to tell!

And why would they?

The prophets knew that if the people went out into the forest and found the same bush, their blindfold would fall off and they would have no more use for the depressives, the priests, or the prophets. In order to protect their profits and privilege, in order so that the Dwellers would not go out into the forest and find out for themselves, the prophets lied. They said, "Don't walk in the forest, you're too weak. Don't eat of the bush, you're not ready. We did it because we are God's special, chosen, silver seed. You just have to have faith and believe."

And of course, some of the dwellers had faith and some found it within to believe, but others, let us call them the **Visionaries**, did not. Dissatisfied with the depressives, the priests, and the prophets, they continued to search until one day, just like the prophets before them, they stumbled into the forest and ate of the bush. And just like the prophets before them, the blindfolds fell fast from their eyes. As you might expect, initially, they were scared and confused, and they snatched their blindfolds back on. However, having seen the prophets had survived their first "test," they did not run away. They put aside their deep fear, they worked through their confusion, and they ate of the bush once again. Once again, the blindfold fell off. Once again, they were scared and confused, but not as much as the first time, and so blindfold stayed off a bit longer. As a consequence, the visionaries saw more. Excited by their progress, they tried again and again and again until one day, after much trial, tribulation, and practice, the fear and confusion were gone and their sight was fully restored.

And what a great day that was, because with the blindfold off, the visionaries did not have to suffer the depressives, bow before the priests, or attend to the prophets. Now, they could see for themselves. Now, they knew the full truth. The people were all wearing blindfolds. The darkness was completely unnecessary. The answers were all so darn simple. All the people had to do to make everything better was to take their blindfolds off. If they could do that, the laughter and the dancing would return.

Excited by what they discovered, the visionaries ignored the depressed existentials, the greedy priests, and the dissembling prophets. They put aside powerful temptation and they began to teach.

They said, "Don't be afraid, eat this bush."

They said, "Take some deep breathes and stay calm."

They said, "Soon you'll see as clearly as us."

And though there was much fear, confusion, skepticism, and doubt, the visionaries persisted. Slowly but surely the blindfolds came off, the Dwellers were healed, and the whole entire world was transformed. And the dancing began one again.

