

Outline the main  
points of the allegory  
in the cave essay  
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In book 7 Plato questions the validity of our perceptions by using the analogy of the cave attempts to describe human nature in both of its states, the educated and the uneducated. Uneducated people are like prisoners chained in a dark cave. Socrates then asks his audience to imagine a cave with prisoners in it. The cave has a long entrance and there is a fire burning above which gives them light. The glare of light from the outside world would cause pain to the prisoner's eyes and he would suffer. The prisoners are kept underground and forced to look upon the shadows of "real" objects. Kept there since birth, they have taken the shadows to be reality, and with their necks chained so that they cannot look around, they have assumed that these shadows of reality are reality itself.

The prisoners have been chained since childhood, and can only look from side to side. Between the fire and the prisoners, higher than the prisoners, there is a road with a low wall built alongside it, similar to the screen set in front of a puppet master. People, and animals, often walk along the road, sometimes talking and other times silent.

The cave is a metaphor for human existence. The people in the cave accept the shadows on the cave wall as reality because this is all that they have experienced. The echoes they hear are assumed by them to be real for the same reason. Plato is trying to illustrate that people know little truth about the reality of the world. The philosopher is the escaped person who goes into the light and can see the true reality of the world around them. Plato argues that it is the duty of the philosopher to inform the people in the cave of the light. This means the philosopher's role is to spread the word to the people of the true reality of the world.

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Plato described symbolically the predicament in which humanity finds itself and proposes a way of salvation. Throughout the conversation, ideas develop that are meant to teach people about themselves, their world, and how it should be viewed rather than the simple, uninvolved point of view that is common to most of the every day people of this world. The purpose of the “Allegory of the Cave” is to bring about clarification and explanation to people and give them motivation to help others to come out of their shells of darkness with this new knowledge or light. In order for man to become educated, they must search for knowledge according to Plato, and this is the knowledge that he refers to as light. The light brings the world into focus making the uneducated, educated. The “Allegory of the Cave” shows how the teacher questions the actions, thoughts, and ideas of the student so the student learns to think on their own.

Socrates explains that the quest for knowledge is not only a right, but it is also a duty and everyone has the ability to search for and find the light. When someone comes into the light their whole perception of life changes. You are able to see things you were previously not able to see and you learn things that you did not know. According to Socrates, once a person discovers himself and the light, it is his job to share this knowledge and understanding with the world. His purpose is now to become a writer of philosophy, to become a teacher in the school of thought and get others motivated to think for themselves and to pass it along to others. It depends on the level a person decides to do these respectable and honorable deeds, it is not enough. It is the educated man’s reason for being a part of this world that he has discovered the light.

Once man accepts reality he will attempt to relay the truth to the chained prisoners. The prisoners in the cave believe he is completely ridiculous and decide to close their minds to any ideas of seeking the world outside the cave. They will do just about whatever they can to keep from being led to the light outside of the cave. This is an example of pure ignorance, because the other prisoners refuse to accept the light of being an educated individual. Therefore they are just afraid of the light, from living in darkness from early childhood because it is all that they know. Instead of facing their fears of the outside world, they choose to live in their caves and hide their eyes to a higher education. Assuming that it is safer in the cave and that all they need to survive consists of their lifestyle inside the cave.