

# Free level of reality in the allegory of the cave essay sample

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Allegory of the Cave, also known as the Analogy of the Cave, is a story narrated by the famous Greek philosopher (Plato) in his popular writing called the Republic. The story talks about three men chained to the wall such that they cannot turn their heads. Behind the prisoners is a fireplace. There is also a parapet (between the prisoners and the fire) along which puppeteers can walk. As the puppeteers hold up puppets, they cast shadows onto the wall of the cave. However, the prisoners cannot see the real objects; they can only see shadows on the wall cast by objects that they cannot see (Cahn 174). Through the Allegory of the Cave, Plato faults the conventional notion of confusing reality with illusion, and expresses the idea that there are different levels of reality.

Although the levels of reality illustrated by Plato's allegory appear complex to grasp, they become clear when broken down into discrete ideas. The allegory demonstrates that there are different levels of reality. For instance, the shadows on the wall represent illusions; the prisoners mistake the appearance of shadows for reality. Although the prisoners can recognize the shadows and give them names, they do not know that the terms of their language do not refer to the real objects that cast the shadows (Cahn 177). Apart from the shadows, there is the light that illuminates the objects held by the puppeteers so that they cast shadows. Here, the sun represents the nonphysical objects that illustrate forms. For example, beauty, goodness and truth are objective ideas that must be illustrated in order to express their true worth. In this case, the source of light is the medium that illuminates the objects held by puppeteers.

The objects held by the puppeteers above the ground represent the true

form of substances such as size, shape and color. Although the true form is invisible, the prisoners have an idea of what the objects look like. The whole idea behind the allegory is to express the point that the general terms of language used daily are not the real names of the objects seen every day. In fact, they are names of things that cannot be seen, but can only be grasped within the mind. This fact can be expressed when the prisoners get released. After release, the prisoners turn their heads around and realize their error. They see the cause of the shadows. This highlights the point that they can now grasp the forms with their minds.

The idea of reflective understanding is one of the things Plato highlights in his allegory. The ability to speak and think depends on forms. However, the terms of language require perception of objects before the terms gain their meaning. Perceptual experience of physical objects enables humans to acquire and experience concepts. However, the perception of the concepts, as grasped by the mind, is slightly different from the true experience of the same physical objects.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave is a classic example of how people mistake perception for reality. As the puppeteers behind the prisoners hold up their objects, the prisoners perceive the shadows that they see in front of them as their own reality. However, this is an imperfect interpretation of reality. The general terms of language do not describe physical objects rather they are names of things that the human can grasp. After turning their heads, the prisoners will realize that the new images in front of them are the accepted forms of reality.

## **Works Cited**

Cahn, Steven M. *Classics of Western Philosophy* . 8th ed. Indianapolis, IN :  
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