

Plato's allegory of the cave argumentative essay



**ASSIGN
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Introduction

The Allegory of the cave is a symbolic story by Plato about prisoners in a cave who have been chained in a cave since their infancy; they have been chained to the floor with by their heads such that there is nothing they can see apart from the front wall of the cave. Behind the captives, a fire is lit and between the fire and the prisoners, there is a path where people talk and walk carrying some objects. Since the prisoners can only see the shadows of the people, objects being carried and echoes of voices made, they perceive them as reality. This allegory is an enlightenment of the education of the soul towards education and Plato likens it to what happens to a person when he or she has been educated to the level of being a philosopher. Despite being so knowledgeable, one has to go back and engage in the daily world of greed, politics and power struggles.

Analysis of the Allegory

The cave represents the world, fire represents the sun, and the prisoners' path represents the ascent of the soul to education and knowledge. The world of sight permit permits an individual to perceive virtual things as perfect circles and parallel lines. This is referred to as the intelligible world or the supreme perception of the world. This knowledge is likened to the knowledge that comes from personal reasoning and in-depth understanding. The shadows on the walls of the cave represent the initial stages of human growth which starts with recognition of images in the world of sight. In order for a person to understand abstract reality and the ideal of ll things, he or

she requires a better understanding of mathematics. This is represented by the world outside the cave in the allegory (Cliffsnotes, 2012).

Though the above seems the case, people's perception of the physical world is reflected in the mind by the way they think. It all starts with imagination and some creativity; later beliefs which though unfounded, they are real; opinion leads to knowledge which is stimulated by reasoning and lastly the perception of the forms is reflected in the people's minds by the way they think (Essayfrog, 2012). Note that in the allegory, the shadows in the walls of the cave keep changing and are of little importance but the realism outside the cave remains unchanged. These ideals represent the qualities in people's lives that remain unchanged such as courage, love, justice and friendship.

In "The Republic", Plato concludes his opinions with an image of ignorant people who despite being trapped in ignorance lack awareness of their own perspectives (Essayfrog, 2012). He presents a rare individual who escapes the discomfort of the cave after a lengthy agonizing intellectual voyage and discovers a higher territory with a mystical responsiveness of decency as the onset of everything that has come into being. In such a scenario, such a person is well equipped to rule in the society as he or she has knowledge of what is worthwhile in life and is impregnated with leadership skills. Often, such an individual will be misunderstood by the rest back in the cave who have not partook the intellectual insight (Sparknotes, 2012).

The most important part in the allegory is that the captives cannot see the reality but can only perceive an obscure representation of it (Sparknotes, 2012). Plato tried to insist that there are some invisible truths lying below

the visible surface of things which only the enlightened can get hold of. Initially, the prisoners in the cave reject enlightenment, just like children refuse education. Those who can achieve education are justified and more so deserve to be the rulers of the rest. Plato expresses another interesting idea that education should not be assumed to be a process of filling knowledge into empty minds but rather it is of helping individuals what they already know. This notion has the implication that is in some way embedded in the people's minds (Essayfrog, 2012).

Conclusion

From the above account, a general inference can be made that all humans are captives and that the physical world is the cave. All the things that people perceive are just but shadows on the walls of the cave. As the escaped prisoner in the allegory climbs into the gleam light of the sun, humans hoard knowledge and rise into the beam of the true realism which is precisely ideas in the mind. It is ridiculous that when one ascends into the light of the reality and tells the other captives about it, they only laugh at him or her because the only reality they know of is the blurry shadows on the walls of the cave. Such individuals cannot perceive any other dimension without beholding it themselves. Following the above arguments, a general conclusion can be made that Plato is describing our own society and not a radically different perspective on the society.