

The republic plato: the cave essay

Philosophy



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Plato has Socrates portray a crowd of people who live chained in a cave of their lives while facing a plain wall. These people watch the shadows on the wall by the objects that pass in front of a fire behind these people and begin to assign shadow names.

Socrates starts by asking Glaucon to visualize a cave occupied by prisoners who were imprisoned since childhood in a way that their necks and legs are fixed, which they are unable to move their heads so they are forced to stare at a wall in front of them. Behind them is a fire, and between the prisoners and the fire is a raised alley. Since these walking people are at the back of the wall on the alley, their bodies do not emit shadows on the wall that prisoners are facing, but the objects they carry do. Prisoners are unable to see any of this, being only able to see the shadows direct upon the wall in front of them.

Additionally, there are echoes off the wall from the sounds of the people who walks sometimes make that the prisoners mistakenly believe are caused by shadows.

Socrates claims that, the artifact shadows would represent reality to prisoners. They would not recognize that what they perceive is a shade of the artifacts is themselves motivated by true animals and humans outside the cave. Moreover, the prisoners would give credit and regard to whomever between them could rapidly memorize which shadows came before, guess which shadows would come after and name which shadows were usually found together.

Socrates then supposes that a prisoner is unchained. Abruptly and in pain he is then obliged to stand and look to the fire. The freed man was told that

what he previously saw has no essence and that what he sees now, which are the carried objects, projects a bigger reality. He was also asked to name objects that were carried. He was unable due to do so because of the confusion that he believes that the shadows are more real.

The freed prisoner was then forced to face directly at the fire that hurts his eyes. While in hurt, Socrates continues, the unchained one would run back to what he can identify which now the objects are being carried that he formerly introduced.

The freed prisoner was hurtfully dragged and pain up and outside the cave. When he saw the sunlight, he was not able to see anything because his eyes were overwhelmed.

Gradually, his eyes get used to the sunlight. He was first able to view only shadows of objects. Next, he was able to see the things reflection in the water. Later on, he was able to actually see objects themselves. He was then able to see the moon and stars by night and lastly, he is able to view the Sun.

In time, he deduces that Sun is the basis of the years and the seasons, and it is the guide of all things in every place, and is in an assured way the reason of all those objects that he and his companions see.

Plato then asks Glaucon to think about the state of this man if he still remembers his former home, and his fellow chained prisoners, and deem his self as happy and the prisoners pitiable? Moreover, was he to go back in the cave, wouldn't he be somewhat bad at their game, being no longer used to the darkness? Wouldn't it be in his thought that he looked up and came back after his eyes were hurt? And, if they were able to use their hands and kill the person who attempted to release them up, wouldn't they take the

person's life? The prisoners, unaware of the world would see the unchained prisoner with his pained eyes and be scared of something but what they knew. Philosophers who analyze the story claim that the prisoners would incongruously conclude the freed prisoner stupid because of the present condition of his eyes and temporarily being unable to see the shadows that are the prisoners' world.