

# Essay on platos allegory of the cave

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



Plato's allegory of the cave tries to depict how valuable education is and portrays the difference between the people that are educated and those that are not. This allegory has been given several names. These include Plato's cave, the analogy of the cave and the parable of the cave. The idea is known as Plato's as it originated from one of the greatest philosophers of all time, that is, Plato. According to research this theory was being presented to Socrates, Plato's mentor as well as Glaucon, his brother. This discussion was participated by Socrates and Plato. The idea and concept however, belongs to Plato.

The parable however goes beyond explaining simply how much education enlightens a person but also how much more a philosopher is enlightened than a regular scholar. Plato has Socrates describe a prison in which a number of people have been chained to the wall. The victims of this prison have been held there since birth and thus do not know any other life. It is important to note that the victims in question are chained on all their appendages, that is their arms, legs, and neck, facing the wall; therefore, they cannot move in any direction and have faced the wall all their lives. The prison itself is described as a cave thus the name " Plato's cave."

The place is further described by stating that the prisoners have a fire lit behind them. Moreover, a footpath is present between the place where the prisoners have been tied, and the fire. There is also a wall that is slightly elevated along the footpath. People, that are outsiders, normally walk along the footpath carrying their loads of various shapes and sizes. The prisoners however have never seen the people, their loads, the materials these things are made of or the colors. In fact, the only thing they are accustomed to is

darkness. Consequently, the only things that the prisoners ever see are the shadows of the goods carried by the people passing by and the echoes of the sounds that they make. The shadows of the people are not visible to the prisoners as they (the people), are walking behind a slightly raised wall. Due to the fact that the prisoners have never interacted with other people, they believe that the shadows they see are the actual realities and are responsible for the sounds they hear.

According to Socrates, the prisoners (a metaphor for those not enlightened) can only judge their world based on the things they have seen and interacted with, and since they only know shadows, the shadows to them constitute the actual realities as objects. Plato believes that one can only behave or draw conclusions based on what they know. The prisoners do not know of people, animals, colors or materials and thus cannot relate with such things. They do not know of their existence but know only the shadows and thus to them, the shadows are the realities and the realities are non-existent. The prisoners, based on their limited knowledge of the world, and exposure, would esteem highly one who would easily identify the shadows and know the patterns and behaviors of these shadows based on their experience with studying the shadows.

According to Socrates, having lived such lives and unfamiliar with the unknown, if one of the prisoners was to be released into the outside world, the experience would be overwhelming. The prisoner would be expected to interact with things that he has never known existed before. His senses would take too long to adjust to the excess light emitted by the fire as this would be the first thing he would observe when he turns to leave. The

prisoner would be surprised to discover that what he has known all his life were just but shadows and that the objects that caused this shadows were in fact the real objects. Even if this prisoner was the greatest at identifying shadows among his fellow prisoners, he would be completely lost in the new world as he cannot identify anything, and to him the shadows would remain realities as the realities cause confusion. Similarly a person that is uneducated is accustomed to a certain way of thinking and living and cannot be easily changed. Being introduced to the ways of a learned person, he would have a very difficult time accepting the new ways. This is because to him, the shadows form greater realities.

Socrates elaborates this by stating that the free man would have a very hard time adjusting to the realities and would prefer to accept first, only the things that are casting the shadows, in this case, the objects. It would however take time for the person to accept all the new things that he is seeing around him. This is true to the uneducated person. It is hard to change his ways except if you win them slowly into the new culture one step at a time. Eventually the freed man gets accustomed to the light of the fire and eventually even to the light produced by the sun. a source of light that he never knew existed.

Plato concludes that after the free man has explored several avenues of life outside his grim prison, he would look at his past and feel sorry for himself for having been so ignorant. Moreover, he would feel sorry for the other prisoners for the kind of darkness they live in knowing very well that knowing how to distinguish shadows is nothing compared to the realities out there. Plato states that if the man were to return to the prison, having gotten

accustomed to the light, then he would be unable to see through or even identify the shadows. He would see no pleasure in their pride and those that he had previously left there would see him as a fool for telling them of the things out there believing that he has lost his mind and that his eyes were damaged. He would face hostility from his friends. Plato thus believes that the reason why philosophers are not understood or are seen as different is because their “ eyes” are enlightened and they are aware of the truths that the rest of mankind is not. What many consider realities, are to them but a shadow.

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