

# The allegory of the cave assignment

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Illustrating Plato's 'The Allegory of the Cave' Camille Rodriguez Mr. Minifie HZT4UR-01 September 28, 2009 Bibliography Pacquette, Paul G. and Gini-Newman, Laura (2003) Philosophy: Questions and Theories. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd. , p. 4-63, 117, 440-441 One way to understand philosophy is to draw the meaning of Plato's story "The Allegory of the Cave" (Philosophy: Q&T, p. 8). Plato is a 360 BCE Greek philosopher who focused on metaphysics, ethics, knowledge, and he interpreted the human nature (Philosophy: Q&T, p. ). He believed that 'the ability to reason is the highest and most important distinguishing feature of human beings (Philosophy: Q, p. 38). The Allegory of the Cave raises one of the central debates in metaphysics ??? the area of philosophy that deals with the study of the basic structure of reality (Philosophy: Q, p. 440). In the parable, Plato describes a group of prisoners chained in a dark cave. One of the prisoners is released and was forced to climb upward out of the cave into the distant light.

Plato then concludes that the prison is the world we see in our eyes; the fire is the sun; and the climb upward is the journey of the mind towards knowledge (Philosophy: Q, p. 9). The Allegory of the Cave deals with one of the vital discussions in metaphysics: to distinguish between reality and appearance. Just like ontology, it deals with the nature of being and reality (Philosophy: Q, p. 114). The prisoners symbolize the majority of people.

Just like how the prisoners perceive the shadows as real, most people believe that everything they see, taste, hear, and smell is real. They don't try to question appearances. Their lives are spent unexamined and unreflective.

The world of flickering shadows is the world of common sense perception <https://assignbuster.com/the-allegory-of-the-cave-assignment-essay-samples/>

and belief. Unlike this world of illusion, the real world lit by the sun is clear and visible. The light of fire which stings the prisoner symbolizes the truth of reality.

Truth for those who are ignorant is overwhelming just like the tremendous power of the sun. Similar to reality, the sun is the source of all light, life, and vision. Furthermore, the prisoner's mount from the darkness into the open represents the search for knowledge. The journey commenced by the prisoner who departs the cave signifies the mind's journey from the world of temporary and imperfect objects, which are accessible on to sense perception, to the world of ultimate and perfect forms, which are accessible to pure reason (Philosophy: Q&T, p. 117).

Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" illustrates that philosophy ??? thinking about thinking or the love of wisdom (Philosophy: Q, p. 441) ??? is a task, can be difficult, liberating, and it leads to more fundamental questions.

According to Plato and Maslow, an American psychologist, the highest self-actualization (finding fulfillment) need is transcendence (Philosophy: Q, p. 15). Just like the prisoner who returns to the cave to share his newly acquired wisdom to others, a philosopher has an obligation to help others by sharing his knowledge (Philosophy: Q, p. 6). In contrast to modern era thinking that ignorance is bliss, most of the ancient Greek philosophers believed that happiness and knowledge are intertwined and that the pursuit of both is part of the human nature ??? characteristics that make human beings different from anything else (Philosophy: Q, p. 26). Visualize a student who is given the opportunity to attend school. The journey towards receiving

a diploma is a long process of development, essays, homeworks, projects, and it requires a consistent attendance. It is task that entails commitment and determination, just like Brenda Almond's, the author of Exploring Philosophy, description of philosopher's commitment to truth and virtue (Philosophy: Q, p. 5). But amidst all the difficulties, knowledge is liberating. One can feel his hands being slowly released from the chains which disabled the person to be free. However, the lessons being studied may lead to more questions rather than enlightening. With all the distractions at home or from friends, education for a student can be difficult and it may lead to confidence deprivation.

Imagine yourself troubled finishing an essay for school and one day you see youths smoking pot outside the mall. It is a large crowd and everybody is laughing at someone's lame joke. Would you trade your education for their innocence and shallow pleasure? As Voltaire describes in the story of The Good Brahman, ignorance may be bliss but no person would want to be part of such happiness (Philosophy: Q&T, p. 27). Therefore, as a student who is granted with free education, you might as well do your best to be knowledgeable and you shall be one step closer to reality.