

# The allegory of the cave philosophy essay



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In the Allegory of the Cave Plato represents mans condition as being chained in a cave, with only a fire behind him. He perceives the world by watching the shadows on the wall. He sits in darkness with the false light of the fire and does not realize that this existence is wrong or lacking. Much like the matrix, it merely is his existence he knows no other nor offers any complaint.

In the Matrix when Neo is freed he realizes his life has been a deception and is given a choice to go back to the cave (his reality) or embrace the sun (truth). Socrates plays the part of the prisoner who returns to the cave to save the others from bondage. Like Socrates, Morpheus cannot show Neo what he most needs to see because truth cannot be told it has to be experienced. When Morpheus asks Neo: What is real? How do you define real? he is echoing Socrates in his own search for the truth,

When Socrates denies the oracles prophesy, Socrates makes it his duty to prove he isnt the wisest man by questioning all who were believed to be the wisest men Athens. “ I must go to all those who had any reputation for knowledge [or, who were believed to know anything] to examine its meaning.” Socrates questioned well-established men, poets, craftsmen and failed to find any of them wise like he had thought. “ Those who had the highest reputation were nearly the most deficient, while those who were thought to be inferior were more knowledgeable.” Socrates persistent questioning and examining earned him many enemies as his scrutiny exposed the mens ignorance and left them feeling angry and foolish. This eventually led to his trial where he was charged with corrupting the youth and impiety.

In the Apology, Socrates references himself as a gadfly stinging the lazy horse (the Athenian state), claiming that a god has placed him in the city to do so. Socrates claims, the state is liable to drift into a deep sleep, but through his influence it can be wakened into productive and virtuous action. Socrates believes that his persistent questioning will lead to the realization of the mens ignorance and serve as a motivation to leave the cave. Socrates reference to himself as a gadfly is comparable to Morpheus as Neo only accepts his true nature after the series of strange clues Morpheus presents to him and the confusion this produces in him. In this way, Morpheus can be seen as a Socratic gadfly, stinging Neo to take the first steps he needs in order to discover the truth on his own.

One interpretation of Socrates statement, that the unexamined life is not worth living is that Socrates would rather die than abandon his love for wisdom, and care of the soul. Why would Socrates go back to the cave- to live the rest of his existence as a silent prisoner with only memories of his enlightenment? Like in the Matrix, you carry your memories with you no matter what realm youre in. Socrates feels this world would be unbearable for him to live in and looks forward to another existence. Socrates does not fear death and believes that death might be a blessing. Socrates is not sure what happens after death but he believes he will either fall into a dreamless sleep or that death is a change, relocation of the soul where he can continue his journey of wisdom by further examining and questioning. Socrates felt that life is not meant to be feared, it is meant to be understood and believed his mission from god would prevail that truth. Men of Athens, I shall obey

God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy

Socrates peacefulness and lack of fear of death stems from how he views the human condition- a state of prisoners bound in a cave seeing only shadows projected on the wall in front of them. In the allegory of the cave, the sunlight represents the truth and the shadows a false reality; Socrates believes transcending this state is the aim of wisdom- producing an upward journey from darkness to light and a release from imprisonment. Socrates then states that he is a blessing to the city and by putting him to death it will harm the Athenian state more than him. In his defense he claims that nobody can harm him because a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death, and that his affairs are not neglected by the gods. Later in his defense it seems that Socrates no longer worries about his own fate, but about that of the city wishing not to prevent them from wrong doing by mistreating the gods gift... Socrates is again playing the role of prisoner trying to go back to the cave to open the eyes of the blinded and awaken them to the truth. The city of Athens, however, does not recognize their imprisonment- satisfied with living life the way it is- they treat the freed prisoner (Socrates) with ridicule, disbelief and hostility.

I believe that the allegory applies today. It is easy to get lost in the matrix, pacified with pleasure and indulgence- people get lost in the materialistic world and abandon their soul. Are we so busy trying to maintain, trying to get ahead that we lose consciousness and become blinded by the illusions that lay before us? It seems sometimes that in lifes course we transcend in and out of the cave -for sometimes awareness of our present state is the

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result of recollection of past experiences out of the cave. Some call it enlightenment or dj vu- regardless, we leave the cave embracing the sun and we finally allow ourselves to be in the process of being- fully conscious and aware at the new reality that lies before us.