

Platos allegory of the cave assignment

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According to Plato there are all prisoners who see the light and understand the world around us because of education. In the allegory of the cave, Socrates describes a scene in a dark cave with “strange prisoners (43)”. Who have lived there their entire lives and never seen the light. These prisoners are tied in such way that allows them to only straight ahead and they cannot look around themselves. Behind them is a wall that has various statues that are handled by other people and due to a fire the statues cast shadows on another wall that the prisoners are facing.

The prisoners watch these scenes and believe them to be real because this is all they ever see. Even when they talk to each other, these shadows are all they talk about. Plato describes this as the stage of imagination. 2 One day a prisoner is freed from this cave and looks upon the fire and statues that were casting the shadows. The prisoner goes through a confusing period of pain and shock because of all the sudden exposure to light. The prisoner realizes that what he has just seen is more real than anything else. He realizes that the stories they saw were just shadows and copies of the real thing.

Plato describes this stage in the cave as belief. After this the prisoner is taken outside the cave into the real world. At first the prisoner is so confused that he only looks at the shadows. But then he realizes where he is and slowly moves onto the reflections and finally towards the real objects. He sees that these are even more real than the Statues and the fire and that the statues were only copies of this. Plato describes this as the prisoner reaching the stage of thought. The prisoner has finally seen the real forms and starts to think about them.

Once the prisoner has adapted himself to the bright lights in the real world he looks up into the heavens and sees the sun. He 'understands' that the sun is the reason the world looks like this and that it is the creator of everything that surrounds him. The sun is supposed to represent the 'Form of the Good' and the Plato describes this as the prisoner reaching the stage of understanding. However, the prisoner cannot stay in the real world forever. He needs to return to the cave and help the other prisoners find their way to reality.