

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Tonight's response is brief (though not necessarily easy). Please come up with THREE questions about the reading:

1. The first question should be based in the text. A question, for example, about a specific word, phrase, or passage.
2. The second question should be more of a discussion question, a question raised about some larger aspect of the reading.
3. The third question should also be based on the reading, but be more personal, and perhaps relate to morality/ethics in some way.

You do not need to answer any of your questions or respond to anyone else's questions for this response. Do make sure that you don't repeat anyone else's questions.

[Allegory questions](#)

"And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?" What is the other side? I'm confused about what's literally happening here.

Plato offers a direct parallel for the allegory in political involvement, but are there any other situations where 'the cave' could apply besides governance?

Plato talks about seeing the light as being as simple as walking out of a cave. But what if others disagree with someone's idea of true enlightenment? Does that mean that they're just still in the dark, or is it possible to have different versions of enlightenment/ to see different lights? (<-- metaphor could use some tweaking)

[Allegory of the Cave Questions](#)

1. I'm confused by the line "*Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?*" Does "their manner" refer to the lifestyle of the poor master? What point was Socrates trying to make with this statement, and in what context did Homer originally use this quote?
2. Why does the man who leaves the cave claim to be the creator of the season and the years and the guardian of the visible world? Is it a natural human instinct to assume that oneself is the creator if one is the first to find something? If so, does that mean that babies think they are the creators of everything until they are taught otherwise?
3. In this story, we can all agree that the real world is better than the fabricated world in the cave. But what if the real world was worse than the fabricated world? In that case, would it be better to introduce others to the real world, or to leave them in ignorance?

[Allegory Questions](#)

1. I got a little hung up on the last couple sentences of the allegory, and I'm not quite sure if I'm getting what it means. Is he saying that the real sun/the 'sun' of the intellectual world is the idea of good? And that goodness/the real, inner 'sun' is the origin of reason and truth?
2. the overall point that Socrates is trying to make is that "Once you've tasted the truth, you won't ever want

to go back to being ignorant!", but I think it's strange that he is able to claim that he knows what the 'real' truth is. At the end he does admit that his view may be incorrect. But I still find it strange that after describing this "world within a world" theory, he thinks that you only have to peel back one layer to discover the one true truth. He talks about how great "true enlightenment" is, but I don't think that it matters how true anything is- it only matters how true it is to each individual. So I guess to put this in question form: Is Socrates' allegory more of an almost religious faith in a higher truth, or is it really philosophical reasoning?

3. Assuming that this theory is correct, what is the purpose of the initial hiding of the truth? Is it so that only those worthy or capable get the privilege of seeing the truth?

Allegory of the Cave

1. In the quote, "and they see their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave," what is the fire? What is it symbolic of?

2. If the truth is essentially what we are exposed to first, how do we find real truth? If everyone's perception of truth depends on his/her upbringing, is there such a truth?

3. If truth is based almost entirely on individual perception of the world, is morality based on the same? Are there defined morals?

Plato's allegory of the cave

1. Who is him in the line "Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is." By "him" does plato mean "himself", or someone else?

2. If such a situation existed, how could the people not notice the chains that bind them, and prevent them from moving around? Wouldn't it be obvious that they were missing something from their inability to move around?

3. Can the people in the cave truly be held responsible for their "error" of not knowing about the real world? The fact that they were chained and held in a cave prevented them from knowing more, and thus they had no control of whether or not they could learn more. In modern day terms, can someone truly be held responsible for something they had done, or not done, based on lack of knowledge over which they have no control?

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

1. How do the people eat? Or are we assuming they can survive without food?

2. What about imagination? Can a person conjure up an original image not based on material previously seen? Would they only imagine-shadow like images?

3. If the two 'realities' are switchable then what is reality?

Allegory of the Cave

1. In the quote by Homer, where it says "rather than think as they do and live after their manner," who is "they?"
2. Would the prisoner who'd gone outside be able to tell the others of the wonders outside and convince them that going outside did not lead to loss of sight?
3. Are the people who don't leave the cave actually more moral because they have not experienced anything to corrupt them?

Allegory of the Cave Questions

1. a) In his quote, "*But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort,*" what does the idea of good refer to? Why does it appear last of all?
1. b) Who controls the marionettes and the shadows that the men see? What do they represent?
2. Such a world perspective seems to portray mankind as perpetually stupid, gullible, and in the dark. Homer's quote, "*Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?*" portrays the ways of common men to be utterly disgusting and partaking in such activities degrades the "freed man" to their level. Why is there such disdain and, frankly, hate directed towards the chained minds? Is there a danger of this arrogant and supremacist world view, regarding greater intellectual thinking and the common world? Is there ever a case where ignorance is bliss and the truth leaves you worse off than the fake world you knew before? Moreover, should being freed from the cave be the utmost importance for people? What is more important, the pursuit of greater intellectual understanding, or the pursuit of greater emotional goals and happiness?
3. From some previous knowledge of the Allegory of the Cave and European History classes last year, it is assumed that the individual who gets to see the world in its proper and real form is an allegorical philosopher. From a personal perspective of "freeing your mind" and "experiencing reality" how does one break from the chains of the cave?

Allegory of the Cave--Brittany

1. Plato mentions that there are "men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials," casting shadows to trick humans into a false sense of reality. Who are these "men" and how can they be in a higher state of awareness than the humans while still being human?
2. What defines an allegory? How does an allegory compare to or fit in with a fairy tale or fable?
3. In this allegory, the truth is deliberately hidden from humans for no benevolent reason (in fact perhaps it is a malevolent decision of the "marionette players"), but often we are shielded from the painful truth by someone burdened with the it for the sake of our own protection as the more naive, innocent, or sheltered. When the truth is discovered, should we feel betrayal or appreciation toward those who mean well in keeping us "in the dark"?

Saehee - Allegory of the Cave questions

1. What does Plato mean by "He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold"?
2. Who or what do the chains represent in comparison to modern society?
3. Is enlightenment something that can be taught? Or does one have to discover it and experience it for themselves before they accept a new reality?

Allegory of the Cave Questions

1. What does Plato mean when he says "[good] is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life, must have his eye fixed"?
2. How does one become accustomed to and in tune with the intellectual world? Plato does not specify what happens to the inhabitant of the cave other than that greater experience changed him. Why do some people never accept the intellectual/real world despite prolonged experience and evidence?
3. Why is it inherently more rewarding to live burdened with truth than in ignorant bliss? What makes one form of framing the world better than the other? Is there intrinsic value in being educated? How do you know if that education is the "truth"?

Allegory of the Cave Questions

1. What does it mean for the prisoners to be "disabused of their error"?
2. Why do you think that the punishment (death) for any further exploration of the world outside of the cave was so severe?
3. Have you ever felt like your perception of reality was drastically altered from your previous assumptions by a new experience? If so, did you tell anyone (and what did they think)? If not, do you think such a change is possible?

Allegory of the Cave

1. What does "conferring honours" mean?
2. It seems as if the two characters in the story are agreeing with each other and speaking on the same level, although at points it seems like the bold faced confirmations are in control and at other points Socrates seems to be teaching Glaucon about the cave. Who is teaching who in this story?
3. In the italics, is it truly better to live as a servant, or would it be better if you were completely ignorant, and without a care in the world, or knowledge that there is possibly a better life out there for you, watching a cave wall? If you had no idea of anything better, why suffer through the life of a mistreated slave?

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

1. Why does Plato put this in the form of a conversation between Socrates and Glaucon? Would just laying

out the idea in an essay be equally effective, or not?

2. Is the part where Plato says that someone who had seen the light, but had come back down to the cave, would be perceived as crazy, what is he making a point about? Is he criticizing society at large, as persecuting thinking men? More importantly, with this in mind, does the man who has seen the light still have a moral obligation to try to show others the true way, even at the risk of being perceived as crazy?
3. Is the person who has come back into the cave after being in the light now at an advantage, or a disadvantage? He now has incredible knowledge that the others have no way of gaining, but if he is trapped again, is that knowledge useful? Is ignorance bliss? Finally, are there any situations where this has happened to a philosopher or scientist in history?

[Allegory of the Cave - Caleb O'Reilly](#)

1. Why does Glaucon, the student, respond with things like, "No question, he replied." Who's "he"?
2. As the person left the cave, I find it hard to believe that anyone would be so quick to understand the fallacy that was their life in the cave. If everything you've ever known was suddenly turned upside down, wouldn't it be more likely that they would simply return to the cave?
3. I find myself almost incapable of wrapping my head around the idea that our entire sensory experience could be incorrect. It's kinda a Matrix situation (actually, the Matrix shares a lot with the Allegory of the Cave), what if our world was somehow a fabrication? And in addition to that, think about what you'd think of someone who told you that our world wasn't real. I at least would think they were crazy. But what if they've somehow discovered the truth? Wouldn't they have a moral obligation to try and enlighten the rest of humanity?