

1. How does The Allegory of the Cave illustrate Plato's view of the physical world?

The Allegory of the Cave illustrates Plato's view of the physical world as a "dark place" in which knowledge can only be obtained through your senses. The physical world doesn't automatically mean a true reality. It requires knowledge and thinking to understand true reality. In order have true knowledge, we must gain it through philosophical reasoning.

2. According to Plato, how can we find the "true essence" of an object?

Plato believed that true reality is not found through the senses. The senses are not trustworthy. Thus, they do not represent an object's true essence. He believes that true essence of an object can only be obtained by intellect and deep understanding of things. Through developing our intellect, we can attempt to gain greater understanding of reality. Only through abstract thinking, we can learn the "true essence" of an object.

3. In this parable, how is the human soul described?

According to Plato, the soul is universal, pure, and immortal. It helps us understand that there is a reality beyond our sense experiences. The soul has the ability to sense reality or the "true essence" of objects.

4. How does the allegory describe the process of acquiring knowledge?

The allegory describes the process of acquiring knowledge as learning and seeing things in a different perspective. In the allegory, the prisoner is now faced with a blinding light from the Sun. The light that the Sun has brought is immensely painful for the prisoner as he has only been living in a dark cave his whole life. This can be seen as the prisoner being dragged from the cave towards the true reality. Plato viewed this as the difficult process of acquiring knowledge.

5. After reading this allegory, how do you think Plato would describe “happiness?”

Plato would describe “happiness” as when you have found the true form of reality. When you have experienced and faced pain and sacrifice and see things in a way that you have never experienced before. Once you have emerged from the darkness and into the light, once you have acquired knowledge and faced it despite its difficulty, then that is happiness.

6. Who are the “people chained in the cave?”

The people chained in the cave is the prisoners and all they can see in front of them, for their entire lives, is the back wall of the cave. There are men, who pass by the walkway and carry objects made of stone behind the curtain-wall, and they make sounds to go along with the objects. The prisoners come up with names for the objects; they are interpreting their world intelligible to them. This is their view of reality because this is what they have experienced; reality for them is a puppet show on the wall of a cave, created by shadows of objects and figures.

7. According to The Allegory of the Cave, how should the process of education be approached?

This should be approached like the prisoners progressing out of the cave. It is indeed a very difficult process. It requires assistance and sometimes force. Plato is implying that in the process of education there is a struggle involved. He is telling us about our struggle to see the truth, and to be critical thinkers. The person who is leaving the cave is questioning his beliefs, whereas the people in the cave just accepted what they were shown, they did not think about or question it; in other words, they are passive observers. Education focuses on what the soul already knows and desires.

8. According to The Allegory of the Cave, what is the main task of the philosopher?

The philosopher is considered to be enlightened, therefore his main task is to go back to the cave, which is the darkness, and encourage the people to seek out for the true form of reality and see and learn things in a different way. From what is usually experienced. The philosopher must help people to understand true reality and face the struggles.

9. Who are the “guardians” or philosopher-kings?

The philosopher-kings are seen to be the most enlightened. Not only have they found reality, but are seen to be rulers and help people still not enlightened. They are meant to share their knowledge with everyone.

10. Why should philosopher-kings rule?

Philosopher-kings are believed to rule because they are able to understand true goodness and justice in a way that other cannot. Thus, they would be the best rulers of the society. They are meant to encourage people and expand their knowledge to people who still haven't found the true essence of reality and enlightenment.

11. How does Plato's The Allegory of the Cave relate to science and scientific research?

It does not relate to scientific and scientific research. Scientific research involves factual evidence and experimentation to test hypotheses. However, Plato believes that intellect is enough to obtain true knowledge. He does not see factual evidence and experimentation important in acquiring true knowledge.