

# **Tutorial Letter 202/2/2022**

**Introduction to Western Philosophy**

**PLS1501**

**Semester 2**

**Department of Philosophy, Practical &  
Systematic Theology**

This tutorial letter contains important information  
about your module.

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Dear Student

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This tutorial letter discusses assignment 2 and offers you guidelines for the final examination.

## 2 GENERAL COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENT 02

**Question:** Discuss Plato's Allegory of the Cave with special focus on its epistemological and ethical implications. (In your answer you must demonstrate both knowledge of the allegory itself as well as interpret its epistemological and ethical significance) [100 marks]

Maximum Length 1200 words. Following instructions is part of essay writing. Essays that exceed this prescribed length may not be marked at all.

All sources used must be acknowledged and any form of Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Tutorial Letter 301 provides you important guidelines on Referencing.

### Discussion

Each of you must read the allegory of the cave and describe what it says. Everyone is therefore expected to get this part of the essay right. You should not be tempted to create your own allegory but simply to recount it paying attention to the story as it is outlined by Plato's Republic. You can read the Allegory of the cave from Plato's Republic book 7 easily available online.

Men living in a cave as prisoners chained to the same position.

The shadow images appearing on the wall- from puppets outside the cave.

Prisoners believing that what they saw were real objects and even giving them names.

Imagine what would happen if a prisoner were to be freed from this cave and taken out to discover the true reality for the first time?

The prisoner comes face to face with reality and also the lie that his fellow prisoners and himself were living all this time. The discovery of the true reality is not without its challenges. It is not easy to leave behind the world of illusion and begin to appreciate knowledge of the true reality.

### Epistemological and Ethical implications

You will realise that there are different ways of interpreting the allegory but within those various interpretations by different authors and yourself included, there are some facts that seem to be central to any philosophical interpretation of the allegory. Below I proceed to outline some of these based on the idea of two worlds which this allegory revolves around: the world of captive prisoners versus the world of reality outside the confining walls of the cave. The implications that can be drawn for both epistemology (theory of knowledge) and Ethics (how to strive for the good) are very important and can be expressed in various ways. Consider the following contrasts and their implications for knowledge and ethics.

The world of the captive prisoners inside the cave and the real world outside.

The shift from the world of darkness to light.

The world of illusion and the world of truth, knowledge, and reality

The world of perception and the world of reality – this is similar to opinion versus knowledge which is accessible only through the light of reason.

This is our world of senses versus the world of Forms

Shadows versus the true objects in the world- the shadows are inspired by the real objects, but they are not themselves the reality.

The prisoners represent people in this world which is the world of governed by sensory perception.

Escape from the cave-Liberation and Freedom- the journey to true knowledge and enlightenment- a journey that is itself not easy. The attainment of the truth and knowledge.

The prisoners think they are looking at reality and that what they know is real. They believe that they have knowledge, but they do not. Instead, what they think they know is mere shadows and not reality. They do not have knowledge of reality at all. What they see is an illusion. Prisoners live in ignorance of the real world thinking all the same that they know reality. There is a distinction of importance that should be made here, and it is the difference between knowledge and opinion or mere belief. True knowledge is not opinion. True knowledge is attainable, but only if we escape the restrictions of this world which holds our minds as prisoners surrounded only by mere shadows of reality. True knowledge lies in the world of Forms and through the exercise of reason that knowledge of True reality is attainable. Remember the soul once existed in this world before it entered the human body to be born on this world of mere imitations.

Ethics and the life of contemplation: Knowledge of the Form of the Good and Justice is what individuals must strive to attain as an answer to the question of how one ought to live and in order to attain a good life. The idea of the Good and Justice- to understand the Good we must go beyond what we see and believe as instances of what is good on this world to grasp the highest Good, that is the Form of Good which all these instances of the good on earth are striving towards. Human beings must aim for the highest Good- The Form -reachable only through reason- and a life of contemplation. Remember, the rational part of the soul must lead all the time and other parts must conform or follow. The form of justice- striving for the Good and for justice is what humans should define as the ultimate sense of what is ethical and what it means to live a good life. There are various points that you will encounter in your research, but what you should never forget is that this allegory must tell us something about Plato's theory about knowledge and ethics.

### **3. THE EXAMINATION**

To prepare well for the final examination, please take note of the following:

A timetable will be sent to you with all the details pertaining to your final examination and you can also access the same online. There will be a three-hour take-home examination

consisting of two sections A and B. Section A is short descriptions and conceptual analysis and Section B is a long essay. You must keep your answers precise and to the point, it is unnecessary for example to provide the biographical history of Plato in a question about his epistemology, focus exclusively on the content of the question asked.

You will be able to access and download the Exam Question Paper from the Exam Link on the module exam site in myExams 15 minutes before the start of writing time.

You must upload your script via the Exam Link on myExams. A grace period of one hour is provided after the three hours to allow you time for uploading. Thereafter, no submissions are allowed. Scripts cannot be submitted to the lecturer via email. In the event that there are problems with uploading on the official link, a contingency link will be provided for students who cannot submit on myExams. The College specific links will be provided in due course and during the course of the exam itself.

The following link provides you with important information and guidelines on forthcoming examinations: <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Announcements/Step-by-step-guide-to-preparing-for-the-May-June-2022-Online-Examinations>

### Plagiarism

I have had instances of plagiarism in assignment 2 and I do not wish to encounter the same in the examination. Please do not be tempted to Copy. You must understand that the University has put in place strict mechanism to safeguard the integrity of examinations. It is therefore crucial that where you decide to use material from a source, proper methods of referencing must be used in the body of the essay itself including name of author and year, then quotation marks and page if direct words are taken from a source. The full reference must then appear in the bibliography at the end of the essay. Any source consulted must therefore be referenced properly including the Study Guide because this was authored by someone. Familiarise yourself with Tutorial Letter 301 which provides guidelines on intellectual integrity and referencing in Philosophy. It is also crucial that you visit the following website which speaks about Plagiarism so that you know what it is and also what not to do

<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Study-@-Unisa/Student-values-and-rules>

### Invigilator App

Our module has been selected to use the **Invigilator App**. It is crucial that you familiarise yourself with how this works and guidelines to that effect have been provided on myunisa. Read the guidelines and follow all the instructions on how to have the App ready so that you will not encounter any problems during the exam. Please follow the links below for important information and guidelines:

<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Announcements/Know-your-proctoring-tool>

<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Assignments-&-Examination/Examinations/Essential-tips-for-online-examinations>

### Revision

You will notice that the Study Guide is divided into Study Units each of which deals with a particular topic. Upon finishing one Study Unit, you should be in a good position to tackle the self-test questions included in your Study Guide. We have also included copies of previous examination question papers in a folder on the module site to assist you during revision. Please

follow the announcements on the module site as we will use these to communicate any important information as we move closer to the exams.

### **Selecting questions**

Take your time to read through all the **Instructions on the Question Paper** and the entire exam paper before deciding which questions to tackle. It may help to write down some of the main points you think should appear in each answer to measure your understanding of the question before you begin answering. Bear in mind that you will also need time to proofread your essay before final submission.

### **Conclusion**

We are available all the time to assist you via email with any subject related questions and discussions. Remember to make use of your Unisa student mylife Email when communicating with us all the time and even during the exam. I will also be on standby during the entire period when you are writing the exam.

All the best.

Prof P Mungwini