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Philosophy 101

Prisoners

Every person who reads and understands Plato's allegory believes they are the escapee. No one wants to believe they are a prisoner, which explains why it is so difficult for the escaped prisoner to free the other prisoners. Every prisoner, chained or unchained, believes the prisoner they interact with is the one truly chained. The actual chained prisoner in the story resists the unchained prisoner attempting to "set him free." Because "setting him free" is a subjective term. To the chained prisoner, they themselves are free and the unchained prisoner is the one needing salvation.

Is Plato truly the unchained prisoner? From his perspective of course, but from the chained prisoners perspective, no. The unchained prisoner is said to have experienced the world in its true form, but this truth is unknown to the chained prisoner. Is the chained prisoner wrong for calling the unchained prisoner crazy? Maybe, but it is certainly wrong for the unchained prisoner to call the chained person crazy. A lack of experience makes for a personal truth, which supersedes any seeming world truth to the individual.

Meaning in life comes from the individual, there is no greater meaning. The meaning for one man may be family time and the meaning for another man may be in his career. Neither is wrong or right, but when face to face, both men personally categorize themselves as unchained, and categorize the other man as chained. Most men believe they are righteous, a change would likely occur if a man knew he was acting wrong to his own set of personal beliefs. All men are unchained from their own point of view, yet chained from the perspective of a dissimilar man.

The modern republican for example, thinks what they believe and do is that of an unchained prisoner, yet when they are looked at by someone with opposite beliefs, they become chained in that person's eyes.

To be the chained prisoner in a cave is to lack experience, but what good does experience do to an unhappy individual. It is quite possible that an unlearned man is a far of a deal happier than the learned man. Sure, maybe the meaning of existence isn't pure happiness to everyone, but does that mean the so called "chained prisoners" are truly chained? If meaning is fulfilled, and the so called chained prisoners are content with their life and the things they know, the chains are broken.