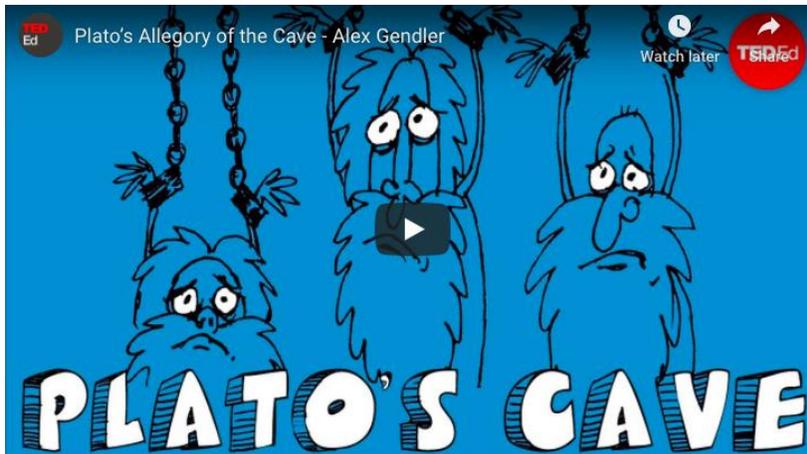


# Introduction to RS and Philosophy

## Plato's Allegory of the Cave

### Let's Begin...

Twenty four hundred years ago, Plato, one of history's most famous thinkers, said life is like being chained up in a cave forced to watch shadows flitting across a stone wall. Beyond sounding quite morbid, what exactly did he mean? Alex Gendler unravels Plato's Allegory of the Cave, found in Book VII of *The Republic*.



### Watch

Watch the film clip [Plato's Allegory of the Cave - Alex Gendler](#) and have a go at answering the questions below (you might want to watch the clip once all the way through, and then again to help you answer the questions). If you come across any unfamiliar words, use a dictionary app to look them up. You can even read the original text (Plato is quite unusual among philosophers in being quite fun to read!)

LESSON CREATED BY JULIE ARLISS VIDEO FROM TED-Ed YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Online version here <https://ed.ted.com/on/BIQXoKF#watch>

## Think

<p>1. How does the allegory of the cave first come up in 'The Republic'?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As a true story about Greek captives in the Peloponnesian War</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As a thought experiment about how we see the world</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As a description of the ideal prison system the Republic should have</li> </ul>
<p>2. How do the prisoners respond to being chained?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They struggle to break free and scream for help</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They sadly and passively accept their fate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They are unaware that their situation is anything but normal</li> </ul>
<p>3. How does the prisoner respond to seeing the world outside the cave for the first time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He is disoriented and has a hard time believing that it is real</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He is overjoyed and exhilarated by the new possibilities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He is disappointed at how dull and repetitive it is</li> </ul>
<p>4. Why would the other prisoners resist being freed after seeing the first prisoner return?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They hear about the dangers of the outside world and decide to remain safely inside</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They think the returned person has been impaired by the experience</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They are afraid that their captors will hunt them down if they escape</li> </ul>
<p>5. Which of the following is NOT one of the themes in the allegory?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The basis of our everyday knowledge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Symbols and representations versus the real things they represent</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ethical issues regarding the humane treatment of prisoners</li> </ul>
<p>6. Why do the other prisoners consider the first prisoner to have been ruined by venturing outside?</p>	
<p>7. What do the shadows on the wall versus the real objects symbolize in Plato's theory of forms?</p>	
<p>8. How does this imaginary dialogue relate to what actually happened to the real Socrates?</p>	

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## Taking it further: Additional Resources for you to Explore

Want to read the Allegory of the Cave in its complete format? Unlike many philosophers, Plato is actually quite easy and fun to read. Go to [this site](#) and get started.

Want to see two different visual representations of this allegory? Watch this version of Plato's allegory in [clay animation](#) or [this one](#) narrated by Orson Welles! Each is a bit different, but provides a unique representation of Plato's allegory. How does the visual representation give you a different perspective from reading the Allegory of the Cave?

You may also want to read a [summary of the Theory of Forms](#) and [how it relates to language](#). Even if none of that interests you, you might already have seen a version of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, without realising, as a major [blockbuster film](#).

Interested in comparing Plato's Allegory of the Cave to a real-life issue such as alcohol and addiction? Visit the [New York Times Learning Network Text to Text](#) and follow the lesson. Read through it and compare the two texts presented. What other everyday situations can Plato's allegory help us understand?

### Discussion question: your thoughts

What conclusions do you draw from the allegory? If people have developed a way of understanding the world that makes them comfortable, does it matter if it's false? Is there some higher moral duty to expose them to the truth regardless of their own preferences?

Write your thoughts on Plato's Cave here: