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# Assignment

# Plato’s Cave

Many people (Arthur Schopenhauer is one) have said that Plato’s story of the cave, short as it is, is one of the most provocative and influential stories ever told. This is the story you’ll be discussing in the next two days.

The assignment here is a simple one, in four parts. I’d like to see you start this discussion on the first day of class (Thursday), and continue it for another day or two after that.

Then, starting Saturday, there will be another assignment (on Plato’s dialog, The Euthyphro) posted on Friday or Saturday, and you’ll be discussing that for the rest of the week. Remember, the weeks this quarter will start on Thursday mornings and end at 6pm on Wednesday evenings.

The assignment for Plato’s cave is this:

1. Read the story of Plato’s cave, which can be found in the first 2-3 pages of Book VII of Plato’s Republic. You can read this anywhere you can find a copy of The Republic (libraries, bookstores, etc). The Republic is also available lots of places online -- including [here](http://www.constitution.org/pla/repub_07.htm) and [here](http://philosophycourse.info/Resources/The%20Cave%20in%20Repub%20VII.pdf) -- and at any number of sites (if you do a google search several will turn up). So just locate The Republic in some convenient place, turn to Book VII, and read the first 2-3 pages in that book.

2. Scribble out your answers to the study questions for Plato’s cave.

3. In the classroom discussion area, in the Plato’s Cave forum, discuss the question: What is this story really about?

Now just a few additional notes on these things:

1. For all the other required study questions you’ll be doing this quarter, you’ll be required to "turn in" your answers (i.e., post them to the "Study Questions" folder), but for these Cave study questions you don’t need to actually turn them in. I do want you to scribble down your answers to those study questions, though, just to capture your own thinking on each of them before you start to read other people’s thoughts and get influenced by them. Writing out your answers first, before discussing the story, is an important part of this assignment.

So it might be a good idea to print out the questions so you’ll have them right there with you while reading the book or watching the film. The study questions can be found [here](http://philosophycourse.info/SQsite/sq-homepg.html).

Then the assignment is this: scribble out some quick and dirty responses to those questions right after reading the story or watching the video, before you talk to anyone else about them. So if you’re reading or watching the video with another person or two, don’t talk to them about the story until after you (and maybe they’ll do this too) first capture your own thoughts by taking a few minutes to write down your own ideas. After that you can talk all you want. Especially in the classroom.

2. The way you enter discussions is to simply open the Plato’s Cave forum (under the Discussion Fora button), start a new message, write it and post it. It will then automatically go into week one.

The question to discuss is: What is this story really about?

That’s the question to focus the discussion on, but you will probably also want to bring in your thoughts on some of the other study questions you responded to, such as "Why does he leave the cave? What moves him to go out? Why does he return to the cave? When he returns, if he says something to the others, what do you suppose he would say? Why would the people in the cave attack him at that point? Why do you suppose their chains have no locks on them?" and so on.

On Friday or Saturday I’ll be posting a mini-lecture about Plato’s cave, but I want to first hear your thoughts on this story.

After that, probably on Saturday, I’ll be posting the assignment for the rest of the week. It will involve reading Plato’s dialog titled The Euthyphro, writing out answers to study questions for it, reading a couple of online lectures, and then discussing some "Discussion Questions" that I’ll be posting for you.

So this first week is actually broken into two parts. The first part (Thursday & Friday) will be spent with Plato’s Cave. The second part (Saturday through Wednesday afternoon) will be on The Euthyphroassignment. It would probably be a good idea to get started reading and thinking about The Euthyphro even today.

Good luck, and let’s go to it.

Tom