

PLATO

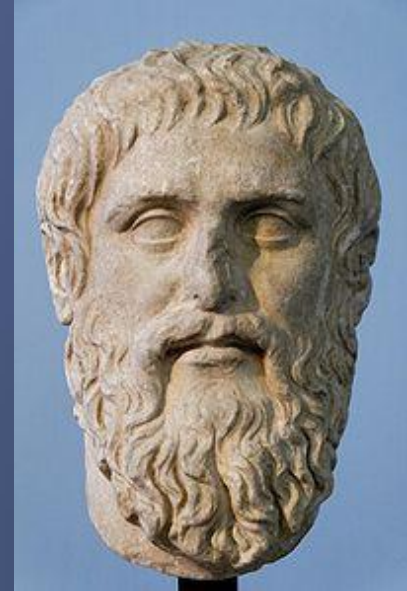
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Learning Objectives

- ▣ Know that Plato's *Republic* is a dialogue about justice and the major question is "What makes a good person/state"
- ▣ Understand Plato's theory of 'knowledge and reality'
 - Idealism - Eternal Forms
 - Hierarchy Of Relations In Reality
- ▣ Understand Plato's theories of :
 - Knowledge
 - Role Of The Teacher and education
 - Of God
 - Of The Soul

Plato

427 – 347 BCE



- ▣ First Greek philosopher whose entire work survives
- ▣ Established school of philosophy - academy
- ▣ Dialogues – featuring Socrates

- ▣ Presents important aspects through
 - Indirect discourse
 - Parables
 - Conscious playfulness of myth
 - Allusions

Plato's Motivations

- ▣ Felt democracy was bad
- ▣ Prime interest
 - What makes a good person
 - What makes a good state
- ▣ Sought an objective rational principle of morality

Plato's *Republic*

- ▣ Purpose is to seek a definition of justice
- ▣ Thesis that is the health of the soul
- ▣ Considers the justice of both the individual and the city-state
- ▣ Considers the soul
- ▣ “Ideas” and the ‘Idea of the Good’
- ▣ Education and Learning
- ▣ The types of rulers

Plato's Theory of Knowledge and Reality

- ▣ Problem of constancy vs change
- ▣ Reality - not single dual
 - World of sensory experience – changing
 - World of “forms” – unchanging
- ▣ Forms perceived by the mind
 - Plato called them “ideas”
 - Theory known as “idealism”

Idealism

- ▣ Squares
- ▣ Oak trees
 - Behind the acorn to tree cycle is the esoteric form of the “oak tree” that never changes.
- ▣ Eternal form – “essence” of that kind of thing

Hierarchy of Relations in Reality

- ▣ Physical shadows of physical objects
- ▣ Real physical things
- ▣ Form – “horse”
 - No matter how many horses
 - No matter how many differences
 - All share “horseness”
- ▣ Higher form – “animals”
- ▣ Even higher form – “living things”

Forms

- ▣ High forms –
 - Seen only by the mind – not the senses
 - We can see physical things because of the sun

- ▣ Highest form – the good
 - Mind attuned to the good
 - Senses attuned to sun

Knowledge

- ▣ Knowledge is recollection (*anamnesis*)
 - Inwardly continuous with the whole order of reality
 - The good, the true, the beautiful
 - The true nature of particular things
- ▣ Learning is
 - An illumination
 - A perceiving
 - An understanding
 - Recalling or recognition

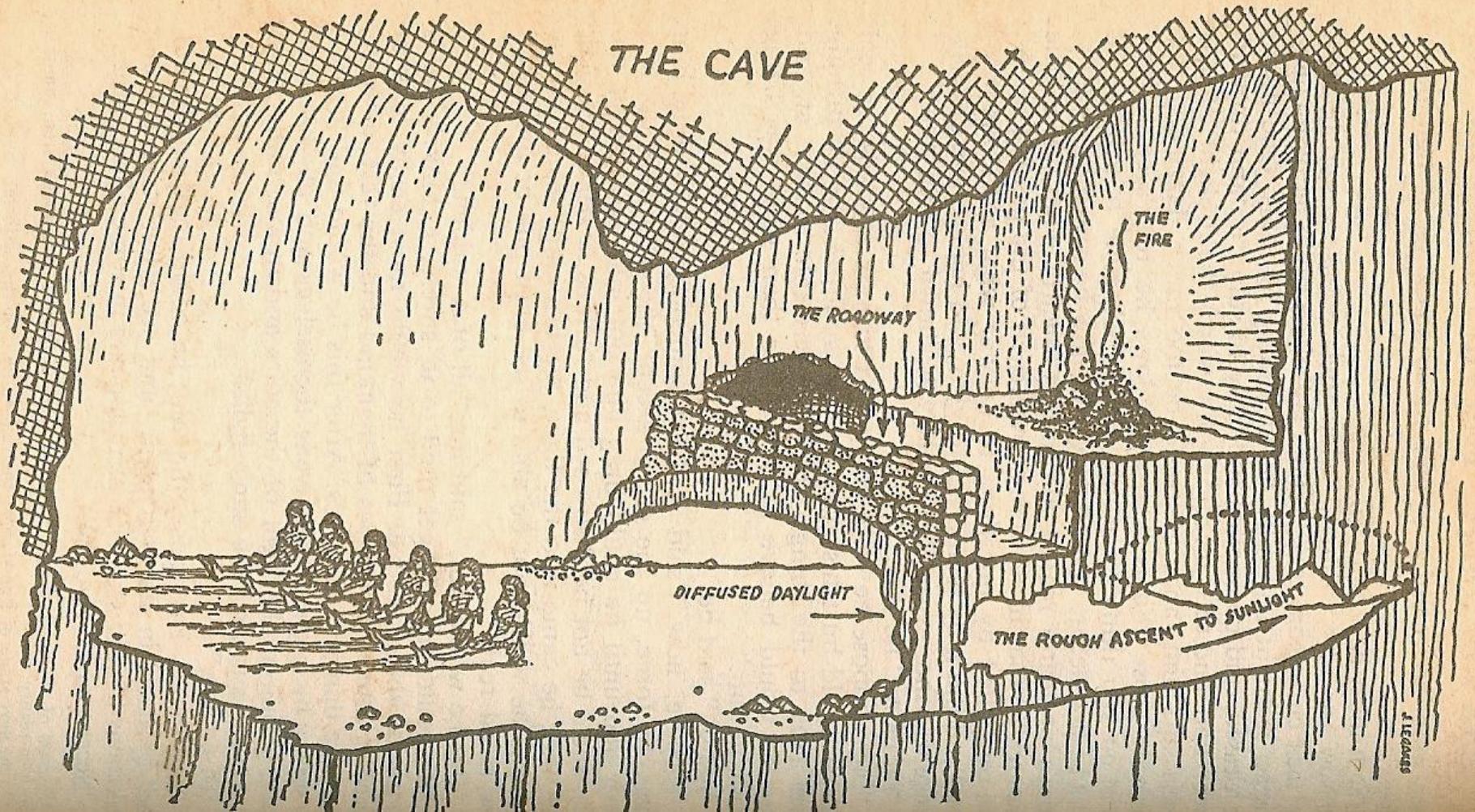
Teaching

- ▣ Problems achieving true vision
 - Senses monopolize our attention
 - Senses involve bodily pleasure and pain

- ▣ To see the invisible things perceived by the mind takes effort

- ▣ Role of teacher is to point the student toward the vision of the forms

Pluto's Cave Analogy Republic



“But anyone with any understanding would remember that the eyes may be confused in two way and from two causes, namely, when they come from the light into the darkness and when they’ve come from darkness into the light.” *Republic VII*

Plato's Theory on the Soul

- ▣ Death effects only the body – soul is immortal
- ▣ True knowledge placed in soul from beginning
- ▣ Soul is called on to ascend past the material world to true knowledge

Plato - Ethics

- ▣ Moral “forms” for which moral acts were copies or shadows
- ▣ Justice is the ultimate and constant good
- ▣ Search for the nature of justice

Plato's "Just" Society

- ▣ Three basic levels of society
 - Producers – virtue was temperance
 - Guardians or military class – virtue of “spirited nature”
 - Rulers – virtue of wisdom
- ▣ Good society
 - Individuals – where best fitted by nature & training
 - Not interfering with others

Politics

- ▣ The art of ethics applied at state level
- ▣ Best government is a wise aristocracy ruled by philosopher kings
- ▣ Four degenerate forms of government
 - Timocracy
 - Oligarchy
 - Democracy
 - Tyranny

Plato - Who Should Rule

- ▣ People who were gifted in the arts of reason
- ▣ People who truly perceived the eternal forms
- ▣ Who act only for the good of society
- ▣ Who do not want to rule
- ▣ Who are forced to rule by threat

Plato – Theory of God

- ▣ Monotheistic – god is the creator
- ▣ God was knowable by reason
- ▣ Proposed a prime mover – god
 - Caused the mixing of forms with the primal chaos to produce the natural universe.

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