**Speed Dating Questions: Plato’s Allegory of the Cave**

1. Why does Glaucon keep agreeing with Socrates? What’s the overall effect of Glaucon’s easy agreement? Why do you think Socrates wrote it this way?
2. Why do Socrates and Glaucon think that the community would put the enlightened man to death? What is at stake for them (what do they stand to lose), if the enlightened man persuades everyone that there is another reality?
3. We have read other accounts of people learning something that causes them to see the world in a new light. Consider, for example, the following passage from Frederick Douglass: “I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder up which to get out.” Are there any similarities between the experiences of Socrates’ freed man and, say, Douglass or Malcolm X? Important differences?
4. The people in the cave know nothing of their limitations. What is reality for them? What is reality for anybody? Can there be more than one reality?
5. Synthesize the allegory of the cave with ideas you have encountered in other places outside of class. For example, the move The Matrix aims to explore similar philosophical issues about knowledge and reality. Can you think of other movies or books? Some problems of American politics have been described as resulting from separate parties living in separate realities.
6. Describe the conditions of the people in the cave and what is significant about it.
7. Describe the experience of the “freed man.”
8. Consider this passage from the text:

“And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?”

What is he talking about? Is there anything in our society that might be like the “honors and glories” conferred by everyone? How are they alike? What are important differences?

1. Discuss: Plato intended this, in part, as an allegory (a story with a hidden meaning) describing

the actual life and death of Socrates (the real guy).

1. The Allegory of the Cave is part of a much larger work, Republic, in which Plato seeks to imagine, describe, and justify the perfect arrangement of government and society. What do you think the story about the cave has to

do with government? How do you imagine Plato would connect this story with larger ideas?

1. Light, the sun, waking up: these are frequently used as metaphors for learning something new – enlightenment, awakening. How does Plato use it in this story?
2. Share you annotations (or reading log notes, journal entries, daily summaries, etc.) with your partner. What makes them excellent? Which parts are you proud of? Describe your system of annotations to each other.