


# Lessons from Plato's Cave

Stepping into a Larger World



# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **Transformational Learning:** Education that significantly changes the student's knowledge, desires, and way of life, as seen in the enlightened prisoner.
  - Can education foster substantive change in the thinking and living of students?
  - To what extent does sin and the sin nature inhibit life change educationally? To what extent does redemption make life-change possible?
  - Why are we so resistant to change and comfortable with custom and convention?
  - What should teachers do as a prerequisite exercise to pique students' curiosity and make them open up to the teaching and learning process?
  - What content, example, teaching methods are pre-eminently effective?
  - Are teachers themselves lovers of wisdom, models of curiosity and wonder, motivated to learn, open and receptive to truth, and in short, solid examples of what they say they want their students to be?
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# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **The condition of learning:** the personal condition in which people approach the learning process
- According to the cave analogy, the human condition (since childhood) is one of ongoing darkness (“in an underground, cave-like dwelling”) and slavery (“fixed in the same place”) and as a result people are unable to know the truth (“their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around”).
- To learn, they will have to be set free from “their prison,” from their as yet unrecognized ignorance (of themselves, others, things, and the language used to describe things, by some kind of agent of freedom and change
- In what condition to Christian students arrive on campus and are they capable of learning in this condition?





# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **Liberating Learning:** Education can set students free from blindness, foolishness, closed-mindedness, narrow-mindedness, and pride.
  - Plato states that the whole goal of education is for students to be “released” from intellectual “bonds” and “cured” of their deep ignorance.
  - This is known as liberal, that is, liberalizing education, and from a Christian point of view, cannot truly be achieved apart from the liberation from sin, death and satan supplied by Christ and the grace of the gospel.
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# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **Coercive learning:** Education that is forced or compulsory.
- In Plato's language, a student "is freed" (passive voice) and "compelled" to make discoveries that would otherwise remain undiscovered ("to stand up, turn your head, and look up toward the light").
- This kind of coercive learning is required by the nature of fallen human nature and is present in any academic system that imposes a variety of rules, regulations, requirements, and grades on students who otherwise would probably not apply themselves voluntarily to the teaching, studying, and learning process.






# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **Hard or Difficult learning:** Education is not easy, but is a taxing and arduous process.
  - As Plato points out, the exit to the cave is “a long way up” and when students begin to learn, they will be “pained and dazzled” as well as shocked and in a state of disbelief at what they are learning.
  - A part of the difficulty lies in the discovery that their previous beliefs are false and thus “inconsequential.”
  - Because of the arduous nature of the educational process, progress is often very slow.
  - Students will even resist new discoveries strenuously and flee from them, and seek to return to old convictions.
  - But a good teacher will force the student on, and not let him/her give up, but will press for more discoveries that will require even more time to adjust to.
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# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **Gradual or incremental learning:** Education is a slow process and personal change takes place incrementally.
  - Plato suggests that learning is indeed a slow, gradual process in which a student moves from strong resistance to learning to deep affinity for the truth discovered.
  - Once a student has discovered Truth, and recalls his former condition and its false wisdom, and his deceived and enslaved friends, he feels a new happiness at his discoveries, and feels sorry for his former companions,
  - He would care nothing for them or their honors or opinions or ways of life.
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# Lessons from Plato's Cave

- **Persecution for learning's sake.** Those who take a deep interest in education are often ridiculed and rejected by those who fail to see its value. Why read and study when you can party!
  - Plato reveals that attempts to share one's educational discoveries of the Truth with benighted friends can result in ridicule, rejection, and even death (so Socrates and Christ).
  - To the uneducated, the educated appear silly, awkward and just plain weird. They are unwilling to change.
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# From the Goldfish Bowl to the Open Sea!

