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### Plato's Theory of Forms

Plato's Theory of Forms makes a distinction between those objects that are real and the concepts that exist in our mind. His dialogues explain this in the form of knowledge. The path to knowledge is explained through three analogies, the Allegory of the Cave, the Divided Line, and the Analogy of the Sun. The Allegory of the Cave portrays knowledge as the process of leaving the cave into the sunlight. The back of the cave, facing the back wall, are the large amounts of people who are tied down so that they are restrained of movement. Their sight is limited to the back wall of the cave which depicts figures of shadows going back and forth, created by the flames directly behind them. Their reality consists of these shadows and they assume that there can never be anything beyond the shadows. Then one day a particular mind, not fully convinced, finds a way to break free of these bonds that bind them and turns their head around. Consequently, they will distinguish the fire and the figures marching back and forth before it. It is now that they will realize that it is the figures making the shadows, and that everything alleged about those shadows might not necessarily be true. Continuing further in his discovery, they reach the outside of the cave. Here they discover the sun which allows for sight (knowledge). Prior to seeing the fire and sun, light was the lack of darkness rather than the other way around. The theory basically postulates the existence of a level of reality or "world" inhabited by the ideal or model forms of all things and concepts. Thus a form exists, for objects like tables and rocks and for concepts, such as beauty and justice. Plato's goal is to illustrate the difference between what is real and what exist in our minds. To some extent, I agree with Plato, if something is truly real there has to be solid proof, whether it be visually seen or physically touched.

Several individuals are men. Therefore, there is a form of Man in which they all participate. The form of Man is a man (indeed, the Perfect Man). So all individual men, plus the form of Man taken together, are all men. So there is a single form in which they all participate. This new form cannot be the form of Man, for then it would have to participate in itself which is impossible, so this has to be a Third Man. But we can repeat the same reasoning for this Third Man as well, so there would have to be a Fourth, a Fifth, Sixth, etc. to infinity. So for a set of individuals there would have to be an infinity of Forms. But the Theory also states that there is only a single Form for any set of individuals. So the theory is inconsistent, whence it cannot be true.