****

**Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, Descartes Dreaming and *The Matrix***

**Answer in full sentences:**

1. Would you want to be released from the cave? Why or why not?
2. What is like the cave in our world?
3. How is the way you understand the world, your ideas and beliefs, shaped by the actions of others?
4. Who has the power to shape your ideas and beliefs? In what ways is this good and in what ways is it not so good?
5. Are there things you know to be true? What are they, and how do you know them?
6. What is Plato trying to tell us in the allegory?
7. Perception vs. reason – how can we know things about the world?

**The Matrix**

Based on Plato’s allegory. In the film, the humans trapped in the Matrix are like the people in the cave. They see only what the machines want them to see, but they believe they see reality as it really is. They accept what their senses tell them as all that exists. Neo suspects that this is all a lie, but he’s not sure how the Matrix works. Morpheus, who runs the resistance to the Matrix, brings Neo into the Resistance, believing that Neo is the person who has been foreseen by the Oracle to be able to defeat the Matrix.

In the film clip, one of the members of the Resistance, Cypher, is choosing to give information about the Resistance to an agent working for the machines, in exchange for being able to go back into the Matrix and forget all he now knows about it. Then Neo is taken to see the Oracle.

1. What does the oracle tell Neo? Would you want to know the future? She says that he thinks he is in control of his future – is he? Are you?
2. Cypher chooses to leave the resistance and go back to the Matrix. He doesn’t want to live the truth anymore, because it is too ugly and painful. He decides that he prefers the pleasurable lies of the Matrix. What’s wrong with the Matrix, if what we feel is pleasurable? Is it better in some ways to live in the Matrix than to see things as they really are? This is what Cypher concludes – is he wrong?

**The Experience Machine (ANSWER IN GROUPS)**

In his 1971 book Anarchy, State, and Utopia, Robert Nozick introduced a "thought experiment" that has become known as "the experience machine:"

Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's desires?...Of course, while in the tank you won't know that you're there; you'll think it's all actually happening. Others can also plug in to have the experiences they want, so there's no need to stay unplugged to serve them. (Ignore problems such as who will service the machines if everyone plugs in.) Would you plug in? What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?"

1. Should you hook up to the experience machine for life, pre-programming all of your life’s desires? Why or why not?
2. Would it make any difference to you if you were actually doing these things?
3. If in every respect it seems to you that you’re in a good situation, isn’t it true, at least for you, that you are in a good situation?
4. Do we care about certain things independent of the experiences they create for us? For example, is being in reality important even if the experience isn’t pleasant? Is it better to live happily in the Matrix than miserably in reality? Why or why not?
5. How do we know that we are not in an experience machine? Can we prove we are not? How do we know that what we perceive is real?