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*Status, and functions of the allegory of the cave*

I propose to defend two related theses, the first one on the status and meaning of the allegory of the cave, and the second on its functions.

If we want to understand this allegory as being central in the construction of the *Republic*, I suggest that it should be read on 2 different levels. On the first level, it represents an illustration of the way the guardians are now to be philosophically educated (the prisoner who is delivered from his chains being the image of the choice of the future philosophers from among the warrior class, and the way out of the cave representing the difficult scientific training the future philosopher is to be offered in Kallipolis, the different sciences representing the various stages on the way out of the cave). And on the second level, it also represents the way Glaucon (and the other members of Socrates' audience) have to free themselves from commonly, unphilosophical (and in fact, immoral), received opinions. Since, I claim, the carriers of the statues are basically the poets, and the statues are the representations of the 'heroes' of the poets (and their shadows in movement represent their deeds), the cave therefore represents both the world of the first stage of the good (yet insufficient) 'poetical' education the young future guardians have received in Kallipolis, and the city of Athens where the Homeric-tragic poets transmit their worldview to the young citizens.

My second thesis is about the functions of the allegory. On the one hand, it functions as a multi-faced (intellectual) metaphor addressed to the reader who must decode the complexity of the relations between philosophy and (good and bad) poetry; in this regard, the allegory can, and should, be read as the link between the first (in books 2 & 3), and second (in book 10) critiques against poetry. On the other hand, since images address the irrational part(s) of the soul, it functions as a protreptic encouragement addressed to Glaucon to help him in undertaking the difficult ascent; and in this regard (since in fact Glaucon got his 'first' education from Athens, and its poets), it should also help him prepare himself to take part in the second critique in book 10 (where he is presented as a lover of Homeric-tragic poetry).