

The Allegory of the Cave: *Methodos* and *Kathodos*

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The allegory of the cave deals with the Platonic concept of education. This Platonic image has been received, interpreted, and transformed throughout the entire course of the history of philosophy. Aristotle adopts the Cave in a cosmological proof for the existence of the divine. At the threshold of modern times, Bacon introduces the *idola specus* as one of the false notions which distort the truth and from which the inquirers of knowledge have to free themselves. As the symbol of a two-world metaphysics, this influential image has even given rise to a severe critique of a certain kind of metaphysics and Platonism in post-modern times. Not to mention the ongoing debates in Plato scholarship, to which many of the participants here present have made significant and numerous contributions. Hence we cannot help but continue working with this image throughout our own philosophical education.

It was first with Plato that philosophy reflected *on its own* method and so distinguished itself as an über-science from its rivals like the arts and sophistry. And through this dialogue and conflict over boundaries, philosophy became aware of its own distinctive nature, and proceeded to define it. The cave reveals very important aspects of the philosophical method according to Plato.

In my re-narration, I shall reveal some of my interpretative commitments as well as my reflections on what claims we should raise and how we should deal appropriately with this complex “discursive image”. In the second, and main part of my paper, I shall then focus on the hotly debated descent of the philosopher into the cave. On the one hand, I shall raise this issue with regard to the ontological distinction between being and becoming: the ontological version of the descent, as I label it. On the other hand, I shall consider a well-known crux: the ethical/political version of the problem. I intend to offer my solution on the latter and show how the *Republic* cannot solve, simply because it does not yet raise, the ontological version of the problem. We encounter the limits of this *middle* dialogue, in which the Cave will find anew its place.