

## Metapoetic Qualification in Plato's Cave

This paper draws attention to metapoetic features in the narrative framework and rhetorical development of the cave scenario in Plato's *Republic*. The cave is, after all, an image about the use of images. While many scholars after A. S. Ferguson (1921, 1922), in particular, have stressed the philosophical unity of sun, line, and cave (cf. J. Ferguson 1963), others (e.g., Brann 2004, Ferrari 2005, Rosen 2008) have emphasized literary elements of the dialogue yet have nonetheless tended to take Plato's literary techniques to be acting in the service of philosophy. Against the presumption that Plato's cave is a positive installment in a systematic expository project, however, the metapoetic aspects of this text emphasize literary self-criticism and qualification (cf. Cook 1996). Neither Plato nor Socrates presents the cave as an authoritative statement; instead, narratological and linguistic evidence reveals the scenario's experimental status, whereby Plato raises questions about the viability of Socrates' project in the *Republic*. Plato uses the cave to reflect on the risks of getting seduced and tied down by a seductively vivid image.

### Works Cited

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