

A Cave Allegory

By Philip Bold

Abstract. A retelling of Plato's famous cave allegory. Inspired by Dōgen, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein.

The philosopher was born under the sun – much as the rest of us. But while others moved about in the light of day, more or less content with the beauty and clarity of things before them, dealing with the myriad events of life as they come, the philosopher found himself continuously puzzled. "What are the natures of these things before me? – what is the essence that unifies them? – how can I make sense of it all in simpler and more definite terms? – this world of light contains many shadows where nature hides itself and many reflections so brilliant they are blinding – how can I so much as proceed in a world that is unfit even for eyes?" And so the philosopher, with a handful of curious followers, descended into a cave, where one could not be distracted by the variety of things under the sun, where one might discover (as they say) the unity of the world by sketching pictures and playing with shadows on the wall.