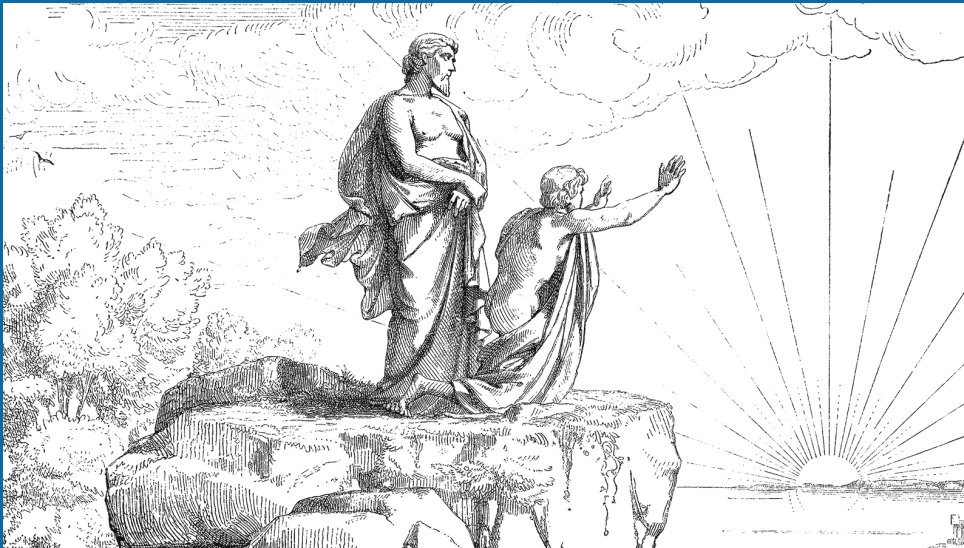


Rafael Ferber

# Key Concepts in Philosophy

An Introduction

2<sup>nd</sup> edition



ACADEMIA

**Rafael Ferber**

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An Introduction

2<sup>nd</sup>, revised and enlarged edition



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„Antique illustration of Plato’s cavern“. From: Magasin Pittoresque, Paris, July 1855

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*To be useful as a foundation,  
a textbook must contain no more  
than the core of a science or art in  
the briefest concentration so that  
the teacher will easily find cause to  
explain the topic concerned.*

*Georg Christoph Lichtenberg*



## Preface

This book is addressed not so much to expert philosophers as to students of philosophy and interested laypersons. It aims to introduce the reader to six key concepts that provide a first understanding of the contents, methods and claims of philosophy. Being an introduction, it is elementary, but not unsophisticated. I try to elucidate those elementary issues clearly, simply and without the use of jargon. At the same time, I do not shrink from adopting a position of my own. My philosophy is indebted in several respects to the analytical school, but its spirit, in a broader sense, is Platonic in so far as it presupposes that the expressions of the concepts under discussion have objective meanings to which we can come nearer, at least to a certain extent. Some new aspects, which could also be of interest to professional philosophers, are found in particular in the chapters about knowledge, truth and the good.

The following people were kind enough to read and make critical comments on selected chapters: Hans Ambühl, Jean Louis Arni, Marcel Zentner. However, I also benefited from the help of the students and non-specialists I have had the privilege of teaching in recent years, and it is to them that I dedicate this book.

Sachseln (Switzerland), autumn of 1993

*R. Ferber*

## From the Preface to the English Translation

As a result of its warm reception, the book has now appeared in eight editions, the latest of which also provides the basis for this English translation. As well as a few minor additions, I have included a section about the problem of universals and a reference to the power of judgment. I thank Ladislaus Löb for the translation and Elisabeth Longrigg for looking through most of the book. I wish to thank all those readers who have sent me suggestions for improvement or critical remarks, which I have taken on board as far as I could. I am also grateful to those colleagues who use the book or parts of it in their teaching.

Sachselsn, August 2014

*R. Ferber*

## Preface to the Second English Edition

For the second edition, I have revised the English translation and made some additions here and there. But I did not change the structure of the book nor its main content, based as they were on the rule to introduce these six key concepts together and limit the main text to authors and contributions that have passed the test of time. It is very easy to find more information on the six key concepts in, for example, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and other electronic resources. A problem for beginners in philosophy in our digital age is not the lack of information, but the confusing overload of information.

For the revision, I enjoyed the help of Chad Jorgenson and Drew Walker for which I am grateful. I also took into consideration reader critiques. I hope that the present volume will still help students and laypeople to find their way “out of the (digital) cave”.

Sachselsn, September 2020

*Rafael Ferber*





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