



The

CAVE

The Allegory

Imagine prisoners chained since childhood deep inside a cave. Not only are their limbs immobilized by the chains, their heads are as well so that their eyes are fixed on a wall. Behind the prisoners is an enormous fire, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way, along which men carry shapes of various animals, plants, and other things. The shapes cast shadows on the wall, which occupy the prisoners' attention. Also, when one of the shape-carriers speaks, an echo against the wall would cause the prisoners to believe that the words come from the shadows. The prisoners engage in what appears to us to be a game--naming the shapes as they come by. This, however; is the only reality that they know, even though they are seeing merely shadows of images.

Suppose a prisoner is released and compelled to stand up and turn around. His eyes will be blinded by the firelight, and the shapes passing will appear less real than their shadows. This would no doubt cause the prisoner confusion, fear and anger. Suppose then, that he is dragged up out of the cave into the sunlight, his eyes will be so blinded that he will not be able to see anything. At first, he will be able to see darker shapes such as shadows, and only later brighter and brighter objects. The last object he would be able to see is the sun, which, in time, he would learn to see as that. Understanding what the sun is would require the freed person the learn and experience new things in this new universe.

Once thus enlightened, so to speak, the freed prisoner would no doubt want to return to the cave to free "his fellow bondsmen." Descending back into the cave would require that the freed prisoner's eyes adjust again, and for a time, he would be inferior at the ludicrous process of identifying shapes on the wall. The freed person would no doubt tell the captives of his experiences outside the cave. His descriptions and language would be difficult for them to interpret and understand, this would causes, confusion, fear and anger in them as he did experience. Many of the prisoners would not want to be freed. His attempts to free them would make his fellow prisoners murderous toward him and anyone who would attempt to free them.

The CAVE



Mountaintop Part II



Mountaintop Speech excerpt

Respect:

- 5 Reasons we don't get it:
1. Do as I say...
 2. Because I said so
 3. Earn my respect
 4. Not my baby
 5. Disrespect=Violence

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered this speech in support of the striking sanitation workers at Mason Temple in Memphis, TN on April 3, 1968 – the day before he was assassinated.

Why does this story not stop here?

What was the Rev. Dr. King's commission or expectation?

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