

## Getting Up and Walking Away

As most people know, Plato is famous for his analogy of the cave at the beginning of Book Seven of the **Republic**. I say this somewhat tongue-in-cheek either being a bit too optimistic or naive in the sense of assuming that such familiarity continues to exist among the general population. This familiarity was a given fact not long ago but seems to have evaporated almost overnight. Anyway, this is not the place to discuss the issue. That can be a topic for another article.

Within this cave are people who are seated and chained in place permanently, they being representative of the human race in its default condition. They can look only forward and see images projected onto the wall as illumined by a fire. Nothing is said about them being able to look at anyone to their left or to their right. As for the images projected onto the wall in front of them, their source consists of artifacts and statues, *skeue* and *andrias*. The former is a vessel or implement of any kind and the latter, the image of a person.

Both *skeue* and *andrias* are in the possession of mysterious individuals called puppeteers who go by the intriguing word *thaumatopoiros*, literally those who are makers of wonders (*thauma* and *poieo*). The mere mention of this noun suggests they're experts...artists, really...at duping people. In a word, we could call them manipulators. Actually they've been at it a long time, for those so confined (they're not called prisoners outrightly) have "been there since childhood." From the temporal point of view, this isn't possible because there have been human beings who had come into existence, lived and then died over an extended period. Plato thus infers all humans from all times at all stages of development are inhabitants of the cave, a rather dreary but spot-on assessment of our condition.

This image has fascinated countless generations down the ages with people putting their own spin onto what the cave symbolizes. All pretty much boil down to the same conclusion: the cave = human existence and what lies outside the cave = reality. Obviously when educated Christian apologists

came across this, they had a field day. They found all the material necessary to develop a spirituality based on the cave analogy with a Christian twist to it.

Although a lot is said as to what transpires within and without the cave, it's interesting to consider what it is in and by itself. Is the cave natural or manmade? Although the two words *katageios* and *spelaiodes* are used (literally, below the earth and cavern-like), it seems they can go either way. Let's assume that the cave is in fact man-made or something dug out eons ago by forefathers of the puppeteers. Somehow the latter seem to be the better candidates. Those within the cave have been there since Day One which means they consider it home and if told a whole world exists outside, they wouldn't believe it. Actually they'd curse you for denigrating what they hold most dear.

As tempting as it is, going into all the elements of the cave analogy would be too much for the purpose of this article. I will take for granted the general outline laid out in the previous paragraphs as an accepted thumbnail summary and move on from there. More specifically, I'm interested in the man who alone among all the others got up and left the cave. He does it simply as that, no announcement, no fuss. Obviously he had an intuition that some kind of reality must exist apart from the cave to do so. You just don't pull up your stakes and leave. A simple but important distinction should be made. He doesn't leave the human race but instead leaves their environment.

Putting it like this is a bit tricky because we're taking into consideration one of the most extraordinary events that has ever happened. Of course, there are no historical precedents but even more important, it happened mythically and was inserted into the psyche of our Western heritage. Thus we're dealing with a condition that profoundly affects every person now alive as well as everyone who had gone before...and presumably those who will come after us. This isn't an exaggeration, for rarely if ever has such an event with far-reaching consequences happened.

As for an important part of the text of interest here, consider the following with attention focused upon the sentence in bold, in particular the underlined. Here we're at the precise point I wish to delve into. It isn't to be read in isolation but within the broader context of Book Seven and if you want to push this a bit further, Book Six which is an important prelude. After this paragraph is presented, the rest of the document consists in an unfolding of its content.

Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their ignorance would naturally be like, if something like this came to pass. **When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light, he'd be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows he'd seen before.** What do you think he'd say, if we told him that what he'd seen before was inconsequential, but that now – because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned towards things that are more – he sees more correctly? Or, to put it another way, if we pointed to each of the things passing by, asked him what each of them is, and compelled him to answer, don't you think he'd be at a loss and that he'd believe that the things he saw earlier were truer than the ones he was now being shown? [515c-d]

*Skopeo* or to behold, contemplate, consider or examine. Such is the invitation Socrates extends with regard to something he knows isn't real in the physical sense but knows that it appeals to our mythic imagination, that we may entertain what he's about to offer (*hoia tis an eie*). Actually he makes a very compelling appeal, one certain to capture anyone's attention because it deals with two universal situations: *luisis* and *iasis*, being loosened being released. The former suggests something like chains alluding to neck and legs being shackled as such in 514a. As for the latter, it implies more than a healing, a restoration which is the removal of ignorance or *aphronsunē*. This word which is alpha privative means not having the ability to *phroneo* or to be prudent.

And so Socrates asks what would happen if such a thing pertinent to *luis* and *iasis* were to happen in the course of nature or *phusis*. This very general

term fundamentally is in reference to circumstances determined by birth. Given what we're up against which will become clearer shortly, we're dealing not just with a run-of-the-mill rare situation but one that's rare to the max. Note, however, the positive accent represented by the verb *sumbaino* which literally means to go with, *sum-*. I.e., both *luisis* and *iasis* would not just set in motion a whole new way of looking at reality but would accompany that person, be in one's *phusis*.

Now for the sentence which is in bold, the very heart of the matter. To understand what that means to the best of our ability is the Key to Everything. One word that can be overlooked but of great importance is *tis* along with *hopote*. Here *tis* is rendered as "one of them," that is, one of those in the cave which is akin to picking out one-in-a-trillion from all humans who've existed since homo sapiens branched off from the other homo-related species or whatever they're called. At first this may come across as a super-wild exaggeration. We ask ourselves something like "How the hell can that be? Are we really that bad off, and only one person knows this? Perhaps he's the problem." To both questions, of course, no answer can be given.

Nevertheless, posing these questions brings up an important distinction requiring clarification. The gloomy outlook of our human condition just presented has nothing to do with being bad from birth. That's a logical assumption we can make and is to be avoided. We find nothing of the sort in the text concerning those fettered in the cave. As for their condition, we can assume that the chains were present at birth and that successive generations were born into them. For them the chains are perfectly natural. If a bell were rung and everyone had the opportunity to be released, they'd remain right in the same position not knowing what to do nor where to go.

As for the key sentence at hand, I break it down into six parts as follows. The conclusion turns out to be quite exciting, but we'll wait until then.

-*Luo* or to be loosened (cf. *luisis* above with *iasis*). The person...again, one-in-a-trillion...doesn't do this on his own. He's just sitting there with

everyone else watching the images being projected on the wall. This *luisis* is the first and most important step. How it comes about is presented, not explained, which can be bothersome to a lot of readers. Realizing this is important.

-*Anagkazo* or to be compelled, to be subject to necessity. It is closely connected with *luo*; in fact, it follows right on the heels of that verb. There's an adverb associated with it, *exaiphnes* which consists of the root *aphno* or unawares prefaced with the preposition *ex-* or from. *Ex-* serves to describe the action of *anagkazo* to be realized at once.

-*Anagkazo* and *ex-aiphnes* don't stand alone. They lead to the next four verbs which can be taken as happening all at once. *Anistemi* or to stand up is the first verb, the preposition *ana-* signifying upward motion.

-The next verb is *periago* or to turn one's neck around which in the case at hand means to look at one's fellows chained, not ever having been able to do so until now. At this moment crying out to these people would be useless. They would be incapable of understanding what this fellow is doing because never have they witnessed such a spectacle.

-Turning one's head leads to *badizo*, simply to walk, nothing dramatic. Only those behind this person which means the puppeteers would see this. They were so dumb-founded that they'd like to restrain him and return him to his place. However, because he's the first person ever to get up and walk away, they found themselves powerless to do anything.

-The sixth and final verb which ends the sequence beginning with *luo* or to loosen is *anablepo*, to look up. Note the preposition *ana-* (above, upon) prefaced to the verbal root along with the preposition *pros* which signifies direction-towards-which. Here *ana-* and *pros* have their attention fixed upon the light or *phos*.

The extended sentence in bold doesn't stop here. Rather, the text says that if the man does all six, the result will be painful, at least initially. While what follows is very important, it's secondary to the prime concern here,

how this man among apparently gazillions of human beings was able to pull off what he had done. Nevertheless we'll get back to this after having gone through the rest of the paragraph. After all, everything thus far has taken place in the dim light of the cave.

Note the two ways which describe the man's condition, *poieo* or to do in reference to the six verbs and *algos* or pain. Both are by reason of *marmaruge*, a flashing light not of the cave which makes him unable to discern those shadows which he had been accustomed to see along with his fellows who are permanently chained. Here we find two verbs pertinent to sight: *kathorao* more precisely to look down upon (*kata-*) and *horao* which is the source of the former and looking which implies perceiving.

Socrates now moves to a different phase. He asks us to be at the side of this man and assume we were present, informing him of what he had seen before. *Tote* or then covers a whole lot, actually his entire life in the cave along with all the other troglodytes. We have to ultra-careful here, for we have no idea what his response will be. Nevertheless, something impels us to put forth the question. If we failed to do so, we'd lose the opportunity of a life time. We might not know all the details involved, but at least we have a clear realization that a lot is at stake. So we ask the question in what initially comes across as bland, harmless words. We tell him that what he had seen throughout his entire life until now is pure nonsense, *phluaria* also as foolishness.

Note the word *tote* or then is contrasted with *nun* or now, the present or shortly after the man has gotten up and just before he leaves the cave. At this point he seems to be dreaming, really not knowing what's going on and can't find the words to express himself. This is a very delicate situation, for easily he could falter and decide to return to his old spot which at this critical juncture looks quite comfortable. Nevertheless somehow he feels he's closer to a reality other than the one projected on the cave wall, the comparative of *eggus* or near to *tou ontos*, literally of being or of what is. As for those objects projected on the cave wall, the verb *trepo* or to turn infers all six verbs as noted above starting with *luo* and ending with

*anablepo*. Furthermore, he's reassured that he now sees more clearly, *blepo* being the common verb along with the comparative *orthos* which fundamentally means straight and is an apt description of his current condition. He simply needs time for this *orthos*-ness to take root within him.

Thus we have a description of the man leaving his chains behind and exiting the cave. As to the inspiration or inner mechanism that brought this about, we have no description. That's where the idea of the lottery will come in and discussed later.

Socrates takes another approach or one parallel to that which he had just presented. This consists of presenting each of the objects on the wall as they pass by, *pariemi* perhaps better rendered as to go beside or *para-* those who are chained after which they keep on moving. In other words, they pass by close enough but by reason of their continuous movement have the potential of opening the prisoners' to the fact that such movement is illusory. *Para-* is a great way to pinpoint how these objects really work. Instead of them being out there at some distance, now they're up close and personal. Once perceived as such, they turn out to be non-existent. The process as just noted is summed up by the verb *deiknumi*, to point out as well as to prove.

Such *deiknumi* involves a bit of roughing up, if you will. Socrates sees the necessity to have this man give an answer, to identify each of these objects. That indeed is something that had entered his mind seminally, if you will, and doesn't seem to be the case with any of his fellow prisoners. They were too taken up with the objects projected on the wall, the very essence of the deception employed by the puppeteers or those makers of wonders. Actually the man would admit that he'd be at a loss, *aporeo* also as to be puzzled which implies he can't give a response. This would be embarrassing and shake him to his very being.

Next in this process of examination comes the earlier mentioned *tote* or then. It sets up a distinction between the man's former belief or opinion

rendered as *hegeomai* which applies to something that had come earlier. This includes what he had seen or *horao* which pertains more to perceiving compared with the more direct *blepo* or seeing what's right in front of him. In other words, the man would stick to his original way of perception – his original *horao* of the objects on the wall – and claim they were truer than what now has been pointed out. Here the literal meaning of the common adjective *alethes* (it's in the comparative) applies nicely. It means that which is unconcealed. Though the man may still stick to his guns, he realizes that his perception has changed and has done so more radically than imagined. Though he's caught in between the cave and what lays outside it (he isn't quite there yet), he has to make a choice between the two. Western Civilization hangs in the balance. Literally.

Obviously we could move on with the text, but it's time to stop here because this paragraph is so important, especially the vital highlighted sentence within it.

When most of us read it we're looking for the point when this man came to the realization that he was chained from birth along with his fellows. Socrates goes ahead and describes what it would be like...notice how *hoia tis an eie* couches it...not necessarily that it happens but what would happen. Even putting it this way intimates some hesitation, that the possibility of anyone of leaving the cave or entertaining the thought is impossible. As for the paragraph cited, the former can apply because as of yet the man hasn't made his way out to the light. And so everything is held in abeyance. It isn't so for the man but for the entire human race which he represents.

Easily we can remain stuck with the dynamics of the passage and not go beyond the elements comprising it as outlined above. This is a kind of limbo, an in-between land that's pretty much the same as remaining chained in the cave. As much as we scrounge around for what makes this man...this sole man among the human race...get up and leave, it remains a mystery. The best approach is to avoid trying to explain it away.



An answer always will escape us. Like the man under discussion, we have to leave it behind and not look back. It seems that Plato left it this way deliberately. That means each and every one of us has to discover what's is going on. Of all the six verbs the first rendered as "freed" is the most important though the other five depend upon it. Better put, *luo* means to unfasten, to unbind. If we grasp this, we're on the way to getting a handle on the situation which on the surface, defies explanation. *Luo* or being loosened obviously refers to being tied down from birth in the cave. Despite the gloominess we associate with it, the cave does provide shelter and a sense of solidarity along with one's fellows who are similarly held in bonds. The puppeteers...those makers of wonders...know this too and keep their charges occupied so as not to entertain any thoughts other than the object projected onto the cave wall.

*Luo* provide an opportunity to sneak in an interpretation that, as it were, goes under the radar. It may not be something Socrates had in mind, but ties in with the notion of having won the lottery. As for winning the lottery, it's comprised of hundreds of not thousands of people. They've bought tickets and form a kind of corporate ownership awaiting ownership by one person. Millions more are involved if it's national in scope. Thus more precisely a lottery isn't an abstract entity comprised of a freaking large lump sum of money but represents the sum of many parts. If no one wins it on the drawing day or whatever it's called, it increases in value even more. We hear stories of this constantly, especially ridiculous "what if" scenarios. Chances are so remote at hitting the jackpot yet people come up with all sorts of scenarios as how to win. Yes, there may be lesser prizes, even substantial ones. Such is the grip the lottery has upon the imagination of so many people.

The lottery applied to the man who was freed → compelled → stand up → turn → walk → look up seems to make as good sense as any other to understand the situation at hand. The first mistake we make is to consider him as someone special. He's a schmuck just like all the others chained in the cave. Should we be able to stand beside him, we'd be roundly disappointed and say something like "Why him?" Should probe further in

an attempt to see what makes him tick, we'd run into another disappointment. In fact, it'd be a bigger one because we expect a genius or a spiritual master...in sum, someone truly out of the extraordinary.

Once we've examined him thoroughly both outside and then inside, our anger would flare up out of sheer disappointment. If possible, we'd send him back to his place in the cave and even better, make sure he was tied down with extra chains so he'd never get up and leave. What a waste of time. Actually such an attitude is identical to anyone chained in the cave. Who or what caused the *luo* or loosening of this fellow so he could leave? We didn't see anyone sneak in here, let alone a fellow prisoner who after all is too constricted to do anything.

Anyone in the cave or otherwise can come up with innumerable explanations as to this *luo*. All fall flat on their respect faces. For some reason not known to the prisoner nor even to the puppeteers, a force or whatever you want to call it has been quietly and unobtrusively at work. We designate it as the lottery. What else? The man who has literally stood out from his peers is just as dumbfounded as anyone else as to what makes him get up and leave. At the same time or when it does happen, he knows only one thing. He picked the right ticket and has won the Big Bucks. He also knows that his winnings is comprised of bets from those countless number of people who came off empty-handed. Nothing...absolutely nothing...which he has now results from personal effort, let alone being special. He just hit the jackpot, nothing else. Everyone else has lost. That's all you can say about someone who hit it big with a conventional lottery.

Insight into the cave situation using the example of winning the lottery bears upon something we just cannot accept. It's pure gift where we have nothing to do with how or why we had won. The response? First of all, it's sudden as all get-out. We don't know we've won until we've checked the ticket we had bought with the official results, not just check but do so over and over again since it's so unusual.

As for the physical lottery, we have two ways of accepting it. We either take it as one large sum or have it doled out in a given amount over time. After all, we're face-to-face with something huge and easily can lose sight of what a gift had fallen into our laps. Choosing the latter seems a more secure way because at least some brakes are put on us from squandering away the whole thing, not entire uncommon. If with these smaller batches we do spend some of the winnings indiscreetly, hopefully by the time the next allotment rolls round we've learned our lesson. Indeed, plenty of stories are out there saying how winning the lottery has damaged the lives of those who had won. This can be a valuable lesson to the situation at hand.

This example so commonly reported can apply to winning a lottery that can be visualized physically though we can learn much from it. What had come upon us all at once is something of an order that's transcendent, and the transcendent is immune to measurement. This is an insight easy to comprehend but another thing to realize.

Just as having won a physical lottery requires management by a professional, so does our winning on the plane at hand require something similar. We need advice to take care to comport ourselves in a manner unlike those who've thrown away their winning by living extravagantly. It'd be more accurate to say that such a way of life somehow casts a spell over us as winners who easily can squander it. So to win the lottery in the sense of getting up and leaving the cave, runs the risk of falling back into where we had come from and being imprisoned all over again.

The very idea of winning the lottery makes sense only to the person involved. Everyone else is excluded. That's how exclusive it is as borne out by the cave analogy or more precisely, what happens when the man leaves and decides to return and "preach the good news," if you will. To borrow a popular expression where the words are jammed together, *forgetaboutit*. An outside observer naturally concludes this is as selfish as it gets, so un-Christian. Actually it's more than Christian, if you will, supra or beyond in the sense of over or above Christian to put it somewhat awkwardly.

Why so? Two reasons follow. The first is that gratitude is the sure-fire proof that winning the lottery is for real. Indeed, gratitude is a kind of transcendent reality in that it doesn't require anything more than itself. Either you're grateful or not grateful, nothing in between. Secondly, winning the lottery reveals that the person involved – including his still bound prisoners awaiting *luo* should it ever come – realizes suddenly that he is made whole and entire. This was true even when bound and compelled to look at the objects projected on the wall by the puppeteers.

Just think. By the rarest of all chances this fellow had won the lottery which means he has won everything. It'd be better to say that his *luo* has made him realize there's no need to be bound as well as being confined to the cave. When you consider the six verbs already noted, there's nothing forced about them. All emerge freely and spontaneously. Although Plato has to finish off the analogy with leaving the cave, seeing the sunlight and returning, all that is secondary to the six verbs. They follow naturally or consequentially.

This is where that thorny issue of divine grace is resolved, the issue some Christian theologians love to throw into the mix to distinguish the cave analogy from the supposed Real Thing. While the intent is fine, bringing in Christ's redemptive work fouls things up by reason of some inner compulsion that keeps them chained to their ideas just like the troglodytes. This compulsion is that we have to...we must...do something in order to earn the *luo* mentioned so often. While the two may seem miles apart and almost irreconcilable, in effect they are not. I venture to say that perhaps here is where we can witness possible future developments with regard to theology and spirituality so the two can work together.

As for those chained in the cave, by no means are they bound when it comes to mental or spiritual gifts. That is to say, many might be quite bright but are shackled by the belief that something is inherently wrong with them or more inclusively, with human nature. If someone pointed that out to them, they'd look back completely puzzled. Indeed, an element seems to be missing which gives rise to the all-pervasive belief that we're

chained here because we deserve it. Shades of that religious influence noted in the last paragraph. Yes, someone might get up and leave, but that's a rarity of rarities. We *must* remain here and *must* suffer the punishment that is our due. When pressed as to the source of this belief, no one can come up with an answer. Surprise, surprise. It turns out to be contrived. All the cave inhabitants do is repeat this belief that has been handed down through generations of prisoners. The guy who got up will suffer even more dire consequences, just you wait and see.

So the man leaving the cave does so on his own power or so it seems. Actually out of the clear blue he got insight into having been informed of that he won the lottery and takes the next step of claiming it as his own. Another way of putting this comes from a deceptively simple quote which I believe is either from Carl Jung or someone close to him, "the psyche is real." Nothing much, really, but stop for a second and be aware of the depths to which this points. Indeed, it reveals the situation in the cave vs. the light outside. Apart from the precise source, it's easy to presume that this statement comes from years of study, practice and above all else, from personal suffering.

Somewhere somehow it's author woke up to the fact that knowledge we associate as coming from the book or someone else's experience doesn't hold as much water as we had presumed. That's a commonly held view, but more pervasively infers being lectured at. This may be valuable for such and such an amount of time, but it's shelf life is ultimately short. Another way of putt this is that everyone resents a lecture. Often it has the opposite effect and hardens one's position and result in continuing with aberrant behavior.

To shake this off requires coming face-to-face with the psyche. If I understand it correctly, this is Jung's way of speaking of the philosophical life as propounded by Socrates and articulated by the paragraph from Book Seven of the **Republic** around which this article is centered. In short, the psyche is pretty much equivalent to a *daimon*, a guiding principle which can span the range from the good to the bad to the ugly.

For Socrates the *daimon* always was good. We follow it not on our own accord but by simply having won the lottery. If a person asks how we've picked the winning ticket, we really don't know. There are plenty of stories of how people use birthdays and the like to pick the perfect number, all pretty much nonsense. So the man who for no apparent reason experiences *luo* or being loosened from his bonds, walks out of the cave in accord with the other five verbs having been set in motion by this first verb. No small wonder that *iasis* follows, a cure which is ever so deep.

We could say...hopefully with Socrates by our side...that the man's *daimon* made him do it. Search everywhere, and you won't find a better explanation. According to the excerpt, this man faces no hostility from those in chains. Even if they felt as such, their bonds would prevent them from going after him. Although the **Republic** devotes most time to the prisoners, the real culprits are the puppeteers...the makers of wonders... in back of the cave. They're the ones who keep the show (the illusion) going.

As for the puppeteers, more astonishing is that they too are taken aback to intervene. Never has anyone gotten up and left. The cave was set up with this in mind which brings us back to the fact that most likely it's man-made, not a natural cavern. Once the man left, the puppeteers wished they had come up with a bounty to place on his head. However, too late. They realize now they're just as much victims as those chained before them. At the same time we have no account of any other prisoner following this man's example which shows how incredibly rare was his gesture. Yes, rare but strange enough, it prevents the human race from self-destructing. Once thing we can be pretty sure about. There's at least one of these fellows alive and roaming the world at any given moment. How do we know? Simply that the world is still revolving around the sun. Recognition of this, miraculous to say, has a way of expanding to just the right point where other persons, albeit a tiny minority, can participate.

A final note of caution, if you will. It's not worth your effort seeking these people you. You'll never find them. It has to be that way or the world will suffer dissolution.

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