

PLATO'S CAVE FOR DOMESTICATED PRIMATES

PLATO'S CAVE IS, AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT PUT FORTH BY PLATO, IN WHICH SEVERAL PRISONERS ARE SHACKLED IN A CAVE WITH A FIRE BEHIND THEM. THE FIRE CASTS SHADOWS ON THE WALL AND, SINCE THE PRISONERS HAVE THEIR BACKS TO THE FIRE, ALL THEY SEE IS THE SHADOWS. WHICH THEY TAKE TO BE REALITY.

BUT THEN ONE DAY, ONE OF THE PRISONERS SEES THE FIRE FOR SOME REASON. PERHAPS HIS SHACKLES RUSTED AWAY. WHO KNOWS. ANYWAY, HE SEES THE FIRE AND IMMEDIATELY CONCLUDES THAT THE SHADOWS ARE AN ILLUSION. AND THAT THE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN HIS SENSE OF REALITY ARE FALSE. A NUMBER OF THINGS HAPPEN. ONE, HE TELLS HIS FELLOW PRISONERS HIS DISCOVERY. SOME OF THEM MOCK HIM FOR HIS INSANE BELIEF THAT THE SHADOWS ARE FALSE. SOME DECLARE THAT HE IS A HERETIC FOR CLAIMING THEY ARE FALSE. AND SOME SIGN ON AND BEGIN WORSHIPING THE FIRE. SOME EVEN DECIDE THAT THE FIRE IS A CONSPIRACY, LIT AND TENDED BY THOSE THAT WANT TO MIRE THE PRISONERS IN ILLUSION FOR VAGUE YET NEFARIOUS REASONS (THIS IS WHERE WE GET RON PAUL VOTERS).

AND THEY COULD BE RIGHT. OR MAYBE THE FIRE WAS LIT BY A TOTALLY UNRELATED GUY. WHO'S JUST TRYING TO COOK HIS DINNER OR STAY WARM OR DO ONE OF THE OTHER THINGS THAT REQUIRE FIRE.

OR MAYBE THERE'S MORE THAN ONE PERSON TENDING THE FIRE. AND THEY ALL HAVE DIFFERENT MOTIVES. ONE GUY IS COOKING DINNER. ANOTHER IS DRYING OUT HIS CLOTHING. AND ONE BASTARD IS BUILDING THE FIRE UP TO FUCK WITH THE PRISONERS. WHO DESERVE IT. BECAUSE THEY MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING TO BECOME PRISONERS IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE BASTARDS.

ALL OF THIS IGNORES THE FACT THAT THE SHADOWS ARE REAL, IN THAT THEY ARE THE SPACES ON THE CAVE WALL THAT ARE NOT DIRECTLY EXPOSED TO LIGHT FROM THE FIRE. THIS WOULD INFER TO THE PRISONERS, IF THEY'D STOP BEATING UP THE GUY THAT NOTICED THE FIRE, THAT THEY THEMSELVES ARE REAL, BY VIRTUE OF HAVING CAST THE SHADOWS IN THE FIRST PLACE. BUT HE'S A HERETIC. AND WE KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH HERETICS AROUND HERE.

AT NO POINT DOES IT OCCUR TO THE PRISONERS TO MASH THEIR MANACLES WITH ROCKS AND EXIT THE CAVE. THEY WOULD IN FACT KILL YOU FOR SUGGESTING IT, BECAUSE THE CAVE IS A KNOWN SPACE AND OUTSIDE THE CAVE IS UNKNOWN AND FRIGHTENING, AND WHERE WOULD THEY GET THEIR SHADOWS IF THEY LEFT, ANYWAY?

WELL, MOST OF THEM. ONE GUY MIGHT BRAVELY LEAVE THE CAVE AND THEN RETURN TO EXPLAIN, BUT HAVING WATCHED THE SHADOW OF HIM LEAVE, THE PRISONERS ARE ENTERTAINED AND THUS FEEL NO NEED TO TAKE ANY FURTHER STEPS (THE APOLLO PROGRAM COMES TO MIND). SINCE IT'S BEEN DONE ALREADY AND THEY'RE WAITING FOR THE NEXT BIG THING. PROBABLY SOME LOUD GUY WITH A FUCKED UP HAIRDO THAT LOOKS INTRIGUING AS HELL WHEN CAST IN SHADOW.

- THE GOOD REVEREND ROGER