

Q. Relate the physical experience of “up,” “down,” and “at ground level” to the sociological experience of “above,” “below,” and “equal to.”

Rising upward, he is seduced by his eyes. The world expands in all directions, people diminish and places reveal their true forms and connections. His body enlarges in relation to all that is below – his arm the size of a river, his fingernail the size of a house, his freckle the size of a person – and he feels power over all he sees. His mind, perceiving from above, names “sight” insight and privileges its new perspective. No walls restrict his view, that which was hidden is revealed. He does not see that he is displayed and disconnected. Food and water are limited, and must come from the ground. Few pathways extend over and across, but many extend down. His community is small and friends are scarce.

By what means do those above experience the physicality of up? Rising without solidity beneath is simply a prelude to falling, and narrowly circumscribed peaks are known to collapse. What measures protect the human above from attack by masses below? What preserves their veneration? Above his fellows, he looks down on those below, sees connections but is disconnected, feels empowered but is displayed and vulnerable. He must secure his footing and enlist the help of those below for nutrition and protection.

From the ground, rising is an act of betrayal. The rising body disconnects from its fellows and their world of entrances and pathways, activity and community. The steps leading

upward and downward meet and exchange at the ground. Doorways welcome and exclude, shadows mix with sunlight, illusions abound. Endless possibilities for movement are yet bounded by walls, fences, rivers, cliffs, mountains, oceans, deserts. Ground level is compromise, cooperation, and choice. Sight is limited, so the viewer engages the eyes of his fellows. He engages their ears with his voice. He blends invisibly into crowds or sets himself apart – off to the side. He leads or follows, changing position without changing levels. Relatively safe, the ground still shakes: that which is up may fall, that which is down may open. Amongst equals, his vision is limited, but opportunities and pathways open all around. He exercises caution as he knows he cannot see all that surrounds him. He learns to beware disguises and illusions, learns that trust must be earned. His safety is, perhaps, relative, but his community is large and his power resides in cooperation.

Down is a space of narrow tunnels, of dirt and darkness. Without warmth from sunlight above, the human beneath ground shivers. Without nourishment from food at the surface, the human beneath ground starves. Here is a place for hiding from eyes peeled above. Here is a place for digging for secrets hidden or buried. Move down by choice and be protected; move down by force and find yourself imprisoned. Vision is limited by walls and darkness, but eyes adjust to darkness. Spaces are narrow and bounded, but paths can be felt. Rules are redefined as the world above has no place but as a glimmer at the surface with no form. Below his fellows, the human is disconnected, hidden or trapped. Opportunities are limited and resources scarce. His world and its inhabitants are invisible to those who live above their rest and barely visible to the masses.