Samuel Peter February 29, 2024

Professor Eric Miller COLT 28: Mind Reading

**Final Paper Part 3: A Report For An Academy**

Has the ape just made the best of a terrible situation? (Who are we to judge him?) Make the case for him as a heroic survivor.

In A Report For An Academy, Red Peter, an ape, reports to a panel of humans on why he should be a free ape because he has been ‘civilized’ and adapted to human society. While many debates and arguments surround whether or not Red Peter is sincere in his intentions, it is evident that he is trying to make the best of his current predicament to minimize any future pain or suffering he might face.

One such quote that highlights Red Peter’s willingness to adapt and make the best of his situation is, “Almost five years separate me from my existence as an ape, a short time perhaps when measured by the calendar, but endlessly long to gallop through, as I have done, at times accompanied by splendid men, advice, applause, and orchestral music, but basically alone, since all those accompanying me held themselves back a long way from the barrier, in order to preserve the image. This achievement would have been impossible if I had stubbornly wished to hold onto my origin, onto the memories of my youth.” The selected quotation shows Red Peter’s awareness of how long he has been in captivity, indicating his sharp temporal cognition as an ape. As a result, we can conclude that he is smart enough to weigh the consequences of his actions and strive for an outcome that would benefit him the most. This thought process shows the heroic survivor in him as he is an ape surviving in human society without any assistance or resources from anyone or anything. The fact that Red Peter describes his five years as “endlessly long to gallop through” shows us that he is sentient and that the five years have not been pleasant. Thus, Red Peter might want to be free from his suffering and captivity, which prompts him to report to the academy. Another option for Red Peter to free himself could be to try and break free from the cage containing him, which he describes as “those accompanying me held themselves back a long way from the barrier, in order to preserve the image.” The fact that Red Peter does not pursue this course of action shows him making the best of his situation because of his ability to identify that any action of his that could be perceived as violent or as a threat could only give the humans more of a reason to keep him in captivity with added security. Finally, we see Red Peter making the best of his situation by saying, “This achievement would have been impossible if I had stubbornly wished to hold onto my origin, onto the memories of my youth.” This quotation shows us that he has given up his hopes of returning to the jungles of Africa and instead has learned to accept the tragic reality of being locked in a cage far from home. This section of the selected quote highlights Red Peter making the best of his unfortunate circumstances because of his ability to identify that his dreams of returning to the life he led before being captured would only hurt him more emotionally and mentally.

We also see Red Peter making the most of his situation later in the story as he explains his fur getting burnt and when the sailors make him drunk for amusement on the way back home from Africa. Although it is evident that Red Peter was being harmed by the sailors, he describes these instances in a naive positive manner. He says, “I have already emptied a number of bottles of good red wine with the leader of that expedition,” when referring to the sailors making him drunk, and “Sometimes he held his burning pipe against my fur in some place or other which I could reach only with difficulty, until it began to burn. But then he would put it out himself with his huge good hand. He wasn’t angry with me. He realized that we were fighting on the same side against ape nature and that I had the more difficult part,” when describing the time his fur was burnt by the sailor. The above quotations show Red Peter failing to acknowledge the damage the sailors do to him and being naive about the sailors’ intentions with him. Why Red Peter thinks this way is a question for Kafka, but we can conclude that Red Peter is naive to either lie to himself about the reality of events and/or is lying to the academy reviewing his proposal to be a free ape after being ‘civilized’. Either way, Red Peter is making the most of his situation by reducing the pain of reality he would remember and lobbying for his freedom in the most diplomatic manner possible.

In conclusion, we see Red Peter being a ‘heroic survivor’ throughout the story based on his narration of the events of his capture and the five years in which he went from apehood to manhood. Although his sincerity in his transformation is debatable, we can see Red Peter making the best of each situation he is in, making him a heroic survivor in this story.