

## Things

*“There is great freedom in simplicity of living. It is those who have enough but not too much who are the happiest”.*

I came across this quote today and I am struck by the deep truth underlying it. I have long been of the opinion that we are ever in danger of becoming owned by our possessions, thereby enslaving ourselves to them.

We will go to almost any end to protect what we have, and while this is laudable and virtuous when it comes to our rights and freedoms, it can become inane when we apply it to physical possessions.

Not long ago, I had related to me the story of an elderly person who insisted and often repeated that, as her end was nearing, she wanted to be buried with her favourite pillow, ostensibly for whatever comfort she would garner from it in her coffin. Those around her perceived this as touching request and, though recognizing it as essentially irrational, hastened to reassure her that they would certainly comply with it as her “last wish”.

In due course, the cushion was duly placed under her head as she reposed in her coffin. It was only at the last viewing of her remains that one of her mourners, in attempting to adjust the cushion to somehow improve its location, thought there was something amiss in the way the cushion felt. Upon closer examination, it was found to be filled with wads of money.

I have no idea what further occurred in that situation, nor does it matter for my purposes in relating it here. What is of interest is the mindset of the lady who wanted somehow “to take it with her”. It seems absurd that one would be so enamoured of possessions having no earthly use beyond the coffin. It seems also insensible to in fact invalidate the earthly use of those possessions to the benefit of survivors. Most people, after all, do “leave it for their children” or “give it to a good cause”, or if there is a great deal of “it”, perhaps both.

The good cause is, I think, a better option. When we pass along our wealth, and especially great wealth, to our heirs, we simply transfer the enslavement from our dead shoulders to their living ones. This is not to say that it is somehow desirable to leave our heirs destitute. How much to leave then becomes a part of knowing when enough is in fact enough. This takes us full circle to the quote above.

Knowing the “enough” of possessions and accoutrements is the wisdom of life. It is circumstantial, variable and certainly not inflexible, depending upon the innumerable factors that may come to play upon it. Getting it right, however, is critically relevant to the achievement of that simplicity of living which renders immunity from the enslavement that inanimate possessions can and do perpetrate upon us via our own skewed perceptions of their vaunted worth.

As a sidebar to the above, and in support of my argument that our possessions control and enslave us, I would draw your attention to the skyline of almost any city in the world. The tallest, most elaborate and costliest edifices are emblazoned with names and logos belonging primarily to the banking and insurance industries --- and what do these industries rely upon but the holding and preservation of our earthly possessions. This speaks more eloquently and cogently than can I as to how completely we, the world society, are in fact enchained by our possessions.

I am not insensitive to the old saw that it is easier to bear the ills of the world on a satin-sheeted bed than under a piece of cardboard on a park bench or in a back alley, but that is only a specious juxtaposition of extremes and represents a clear example of not knowing the “enough” of things.

Fitting corollaries to the quote above are the ones that follow:

***“He is not the richest man who has the most; it is he who needs the least.”***

***“It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor.”***

Wise words, I think.