

Free Your Life From The Superfluous

The purpose of this article is to help you to bring back into your life “la joy de vivre” – the cheerful enjoyment of existence as the natural condition of man and as his birthright. There is a way out of the labyrinth, and a way to escape from the self-created prison of human metaphysical anguish and from the modern sense of despair: free yourself from anything superfluous. The secret of an enjoyable life journey is to travel lightly.

A Badly Managed Shop

Our life looks like a badly managed shop, which is not only overcrowded with too many articles, but where the items are priced at random. Those things which are of great value we sell cheaply, but the junk has ridiculously high price tags. To continue in this way means certain failure...

Take over this shop and bring in new management. Bring the light of your attention into any corner and recess in your life, make an inventory of what is necessary and what is not, and get rid of anything superfluous; eliminate the physical and emotional ballast and you will see that all that which is not part of freedom, of integrity, and of reality disappears and only what is worthy and significant will stay.

We must do so because our energy is limited and if we use it for unnecessary things we cannot use it to access higher zones of our being where dwells creativity, innovative ideas, solutions, beauty, victory and a sense of greatness and absence of all limits.

An overcrowded life

Observe your life: look inside and outside of yourself, look into your wardrobe, open your drawers, explore your refrigerator and with a minimum of attention and impartial observation you will find that there is overcrowding wherever you look, with a variety of cloth, garments, dresses, garbs, outfits, costumes, holiday attires and objects of all sorts which just take space without doing anything. And if you observe your Being and make an inventory of what you see, you will find the same overcrowding of sentiments, desires, likes, dislikes, pessimistic thoughts, feelings and fantasies, hopes, ambitions, secrets, painful memories, fears and uncertainties and conflicting attractions, opposed desires, loves and hates, aversions, and above all a ballast of unpleasant feelings, negative emotions and destructive imaginings.

A sense of Discernment

In order to lighten your life, you need to use discrimination to determine what is essential and what is superfluous, what is useful and what is useless, what is real and what is false and deceitful. This requires a person to develop a sense of discernment in order to be aware of what comes first in your existence.

Diogenes and the Cynic Philosophy

In the late 5th century BC, an ancient school of Greek philosophers known as the Cynics, believed in living a simple life in harmony with nature and free from all possessions. Therefore, they were rejecting all conventional desires for wealth, power, sex and fame.

The leader and role model of the cynic philosophers was Diogene of Sinope (today's Turkey) who took this philosophy to the extreme of dwelling in a barrel on the streets of Athens.

There are many anecdotes about this man. The most famous one is about his meeting with Alexander the Great. When Alexander went to him attracted by Diogenes' fame of great philosopher, found him idle, out of his barrel, sunbathing. When he asked if he could do anything for him, Diogenes replied: step out of my sunlight! Alexander was so impressed that said: “truly, were I not Alexander I would have wished to be Diogenes”.

He is said of walking around Corinth with a lit lamp in daytime, looking for “a human being” and evidently not finding not even one. Diogenes is also a good example that frugality can extend our life span. He died in his barrel at the age of 96 on the same day as Alexander the Great.

The Algebra of happiness

We have been convinced since childhood that more is better than less, that adding is better than reducing. As a matter of fact, the capacity to achieve power, lucidity and happiness work in the exact opposite way.

The abstinence of the ascetic, the solitude of the hermit and the frugality of the monk, reveal themselves to be the expression of the same intelligence – different aspects of one, timeless quest that was once connected to the martial disciplines and to the wakefulness of the warrior.

Especially in education we think that to add contents and multiply notions is the real essence of our psychological and intellectual growth. In reality, true education involves eliminating more than it fosters adding. Eliminating fear, prejudices, and any limits, along with second-hand ideas, obsolete conceptions and mental schemes is far more important than memorizing any particular notion. To know oneself has no parallel with any other knowledge.

A very first, simple step, or let us say, a good beginning toward lightening your life, and your body, could be to start with the refrigerator, promising yourself that soon after clearing it, you will move further along by getting rid of all your useless cloth.

The Macedonian warriors themselves, considered throughout all antiquity to be the unmatched models of bravery and strength, were of legendary frugality. They slept on the naked earth and, even at times of extreme endurance and while undertaking the most daunting endeavors, would eat only a handful of olives. And yet, they were tireless, the most fearsome of warriors, and a true nightmare for their enemies.

Upon further investigation, I discovered that Arrian, one of the two historians who wrote of the exploits of Alexander the Great, in his book ‘Anabasis Alexandrou’, had summed up the dietary rules and the secret of his boundless energy in a single sentence: “...he had been trained to be frugal: for breakfast, a march before dawn; for dinner, a light meal.”

You will find out that the deliberate elimination of anything superfluous – avoidance of just one gram of food or abstinence from just one minute of sleep – is so powerful as to cast serious doubt on man’s entire system of beliefs and upset his artificial equilibrium.

The Fairy tale of the Wise Wizards

I have a fairy tale for you; it is a fable that you have never heard before about an imaginary land which was bountiful in the extreme, and overflowing with all a man’s heart could desire. Even the word scarcity did not exist in their thinking or in their language. Nevertheless, its inhabitants were irreparably unhappy. Nothing seemed able to bring joy into their gloomy existence, nor could anything bring even a momentary relief from their permanent state of sadness.

One day, the wise wizards gathered in consultation and decided to apply an exceptional remedy. They outlawed any possible source or manifestation of happiness and ‘dolce vita’, making illegal even the slightest exultation of spirit. Night clubs, bars and discotheques, open-air restaurants, music halls and theatres were closed. Television was returned to black-and-white and was allowed to broadcast only unbearable greyness and boredom or horror. People were separated by gender, at school as at work, and contact between males and females restricted in every way. Women were obliged to cover their heads and hide their bodies. A special police unit was established to prevent any contact amongst the youth, who were prohibited from having a kiss or a cuddle, or even the slightest effusion affection outside of the bridal chamber.

The Smuggling of Happiness

It happened exactly according to the plans of the wise wizards. Banning happiness encouraged and boosted its smuggling. So it was that in no other country in the world had it ever become such a

refined art to have a party (underground), to have an affair (forbidden), to drink alcohol (outlaw) or in general to look for any possible expression of a worldly delight, and nowhere else was happiness ever pursued with such an unceasing, obstinate and dogged determination.

What was taken for granted anywhere else, like drinking a glass of wine or to have a social or romantic appointment, in this country gained the savour of the forbidden and the unmatched scent of temptation and sin. As it happened with prohibition of alcohol in the United States, the smuggling of happiness, even though risky, became a popular activity which was impossible to stop or prevent. La joy de vivre, the cheerful enjoyment of existence, reached new heights unknown even in the world capitals of refinement and good taste.

In return for such a result and for their unceasing philanthropic activity, the wise wizards did not receive any gratitude. On the contrary, they became the object of the hostility of the citizens. They bore with patience these unfriendly attitudes, and sometimes tolerated even an outburst of riots, persevering in their repressive actions, and being conscious that denying happiness to the people was the only way to strengthen and promote their search for that pleasure that, absurdly, is more difficult, even chimerical, to pursue in those countries where it appears to be free for everyone, and where so much is done to grant its pursuit as one of the fundamental rights of Man.

A tingling vibrating sensation

If you start eliminating the superfluous from your life, you will soon recognise the sensation of happiness. It is a feeling that signifies being complete, united, and whole, which we receive through listening to the body when it resonates with pleasure and joy like a child. It is a tingling, vibrating sensation beneath the skin which we felt in our childhood, and that nearly all adults have forgotten. The adult is a child who has lost his capacity to dream and rejoice. That sensation beneath the skin, lost or ignored by so many others, is most precious. It is the physical indicator of your integrity, and a sense of completeness that only a man who has gotten rid of all the useless burden of things and emotions can sense.