

Possessed by Possession: the other one-tenth of “the law”

“Possession is nine-tenths of the law” according to the very colonial British phrase, but if we ask what happened to the other one-tenth we are faced with the question of what possession actually is!

When we look at the “items” we supposedly “possess” and consider how much we genuinely possess anything, the foundational fabric of society starts to unravel. Assuming it were possible to possess someone we need to look at the basic raw material of the “Possessor”, the one who possesses. Even from the perspective of a court of law it is plainly obvious that we need to establish who possesses in order to “pass judgment”, but herein lies the problem.

As illustrated by the work of Douglas Harding (www.headless.org) when we *really* look it is very difficult, nay impossible, to actually identify this so-called “individual” with which ownership is supposed to be associated! Any physicist worth his/her salt will acknowledge that the human body itself, while appearing to be “our very own”, defined by edges and borders, is in fact connected to all things. All the particles in the universe are bound in a field known to the Ancients as the universal energetic field and/or to indigenous cultures as the spirit background to reality. This fundamental level is where all things are acknowledged as One. This is sensed at the core of our being, but constantly ignored or displaced by the ideology of “separate self” which rings in the ears like a metaphorical tinnitus. The problem of possession is brilliantly depicted by the bewitched Gollum in “Lord of the Rings” who in fact is defined by ownership (of the ring) of power.

Possession can take many forms including the obvious material “possession”. It becomes a way of controlling the environment in order to preserve the idea of “self”. It is as if the person is “possessed” by a “demon” of sorts, hence “possessed” really does mean what it implies exactly: possessed/ infatuated by an image or an idea. The common ideas of possession includes our family members: “my mother”, “my father”, “my brother”, “my wife”, “my boyfriend/ girlfriend” and all labels in between. Children are key ownership pieces, “my children” is very often a key idea in people's lives. In ancient times and still too in remote “primitive” tribal cultures the whole tribe is a singularity, a child is born into the tribe not to a specific mother, the child then has 50 mothers and 50 fathers or whatever the number is of the tribe's males and females. The idea of nuclear and absolute structures like owning each other in partnership is seen as total non-sense as there is a sharing of food, the body, the heart and soul everything, nothing is held for “ones-self” and as a result no one is hierarchically held “superior” (please read “Sex At Dawn” by Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jethá). There are other kinds of possession too, that of a teacher for a student or a student about a teacher, that of a practitioner owning patients or patients having “my practitioner”. Further there are: bosses owning workers, industry owning bosses, industry owning government! There are people owning knowledge, people owning religion and more fundamental than all, people owning their “own” body and soul.

On a purely practical level, if I love my guitar so much that I want to take it everywhere I go, I won't be able to actually function. We attach to things only for the time they are useful then discard them just as easily. We may love the guitar while we are playing but try to take it with you into the shower or while crossing a busy high street, or going to bed (especially with someone else) and problems then arise!! The same pertains to the notion of another person being "owned" by you. In the romantic *idea* of love, which relates to ownership of a thing called "love", we want to be totally connected to this person or object-of-desire all the time, addictive and obsessive patterns ensue and then it becomes impossible to function, like two fingers of the same hand which are physically bound together thereby impairing the function of both. In the universe things appear to have physical borders and edges but the tease is that these are fundamentally limitless, simply manifestations of form/vessels of the sea of energy, or like leaves floating on water. No matter what the shape of the vessel, the energy of life is still imbued in every aspect with Oneness.

Therefore possession is impossible. We can either consider that we own no-thing or we own everything, in the end each equates to the other, as essentially the no-thing or Source of all form appears as form in objects and things in the world. It is said that Wittgenstein and his fellow philosopher friends would on special occasions gift each other major national monuments to show their esteem for one another, one might offer the other the Eiffel tower, who in turn might suggest Westminster Cathedral. Of course the monuments had to stay in situ as removal costs would be prohibitive for a couple of philosophers!

Herein the big joke of possession is clearly defined, for how could we ever truly "own" anything, even the "important" things we buy like cars and houses which we routinely acquire, inhabit and then discard. Even though we may lock up our possessions, as so many Japanese families affected by the Tsunami know, that which one leaves at the beginning of the day will not necessarily still be there at the end. Such is the transient nature of all forms which exemplifies the total impossibility of possession, from the clothes we wear, the people to whom we are connected, all will wear out, live, die and change form.

As the writer Lao Tzu explains in the Tao Te Ching, the universe understands the human as a "straw dog". A "straw dog" literally is a doll made of straw which is used in ceremonial celebrations signifying an auspicious event. They are held aloft with high esteem and celebrated, until the end of the ceremony when they are discarded and trampled underfoot, returned to the earth and forgotten. This demonstrates the nature of the impermanence of everything, including the human or any other form, everything being an expression and celebration of nature and then returning to the dust of its origin.

Why this is important is that possession is associated with permanence and the separate "self" attempting to have a strong-hold, to attain an "absolute" realm which is permanent, a place to hold onto or identify with, in order that the feared reality of non-existence of this "self", will not materialize. This is literally the end of the world for such a "self", final recognition that it is an appearance and nothing more, the mirror image seen as it truly is, merely reflective glass, not the actual "me".

Possession of another person, object or anything originates from the process of avoiding that which is underpinning reality. This will continue until the process changes and unravels and obviates the need for this. This is the very nature of what we might call the “game of possession”.

Legality, marriage and money are all part of the same attempt to identify and make things absolute and rigid, to render things “safe”, even by insuring them, although ironically “acts of God” for the most part are deemed outside of insurable jurisdiction. So I feel the last one-tenth of “the law” is the “act of God”, or the underpinning reality beneath the nine-tenths panorama of illusion through which we are seeing, which suggests that nine-tenths of the time we are able to see only limited perspectives. We see possession, absolutes and separate-self as “true” but one-tenth of the time we do sometimes get glimpses of reality where there is a possibility of something different.

Sometimes it takes the force of nature to shock us into realization, or it can take other softer events: the realization of pregnancy, a minor cold or illness, the advent of a new person into our life or having an idea which is different from the usual - anything at all which shifts the focus away from what we have seen hitherto towards something completely different.

People have suggested that the one-tenth view is “radical”, something of an obscurity and “will never get you anywhere” when in reality this one-tenth is the voice of nature. The nine-tenths is also the voice of nature but having the idea it is separate is therefore warped into a dissonance of refraction. The one-tenth is the voice of the indigenous expression, whereas the nine-tenths is the colonial ideology and mechanistic mind-set of self-identity. The ideology of possession goes along with a kind of addition to things, an association with obsessive and compulsive patterns which are simply responses to the idea of separate “self-image”.

In Nick Rosen’s brilliant book “How to Live Off-Grid” there is a documented conversation where a land-owner is deeply upset about hippies who are squatting on his land which quotes the above phrase of the nine-tenths and in many ways this is exactly the scenario. All that is legitimate and legal and requires planning permission pertains to the nine-tenths. The one-tenth is to do with “acts of God”, which essentially means everything outside the constraints of legality, including “hippy anarchism”. The one-tenth view underpins the ideology of the nine-tenth view. Within the nine-tenth view there is a longing, or a feeling, something which knows that this view is actually very narrow, although there is an entrenched belief that it is “the real world”.

As I have explained in other articles “Anarchy” is the Greek version of what the Chinese might describe as “Wu-Wei”, which means unintended action, or natural response, action without lead control or force, without governance of a higher-authority, simply natural spontaneity.

From this perception the monotonous colours of life are very different, there is no war to fight, no battle to win, life becomes utterly simple and there is no requirement for much of what we deem to be important and require to claim as our “own”, the insanity of feeling “alone” and living cut off from people falls away. This is not to idealize community living, spiritual community or hippy-dom, which can still reek of city-mentality just as much as any inner-city business-lunch. However, in the world of legality/dualism, if we can only recognise one-tenth as being the deep truth of Oneness, then 90% of the time we are going to be part of the rat-race, whether we are high on a mountain or “high” on the stock-exchange, it is our whole process and mentality to be thus, it’s where we are at the moment as a human collective Oneness, the body of humanity of which we are all cells. These cells are reaching a ripeness now, where the senses are coming home, the nine-tenth view of driving the humanity/body to distraction is coming to an end and gradually there is a process of change taking place where we all fall “off-grid” either by natural sense or by the balancing processes of Gaia.

People have suggested that everything is “borrowed” but this too is inaccurate, the whole idea that there is a person to “borrow” from or who “owns” anything is all part of the same illusion of there being a “self”. In truth, no object or subject is separate from our actual senses, as we will realise if, instead of “thinking” about it, we simply see what is on present evidence alone. If we pick up a diamond ring in a shop do we own it? Do we own it when we pay for it and take it home? Do we still own it when it is lost? Do we own it at death?

On theft:

Tao Te Ching , Chapter 19:-

*Let go the idea of the “sage” and the “wise”
And the people will benefit a hundredfold
Let go the practice of “benevolence”, and rules of “rightness”
And the people will return to Natural relationships
Let go of intellectual ingenuity, discard profit
And there will be no more thieves and bandits.
All of these processes of “letting go” are simply the surface, they are not the Truth
People seem to need to attach themselves to something
So express what is Natural, unadorned and naked, feel the Original Nature
Here is little thought of a “self” or “desire”.*

The realization of the illusion of ownership is brilliantly illustrated by the words of a tramp: Armand Basset, from the 1973 book “Shelter” by the Lloyd Kahn production team. When what underpins duality is seen, there is always implicit acceptance of the nine-tenths, there is no contention with it:

On being asked if he wanted to be given a lift.....?
“No, don’t take rides.”

Eat?

“Roadside trash cans. You find all sorts of things. I just had some chocolate milk, that’s enough to fill my tooth. Anything I get I enjoy. Do you have any peanut butter? I really like peanut butter.”

How long have you been walking?

About 10 years. A few years ago I didn't have anything better to do and I figure it to be about six times around the world.

Where do you sleep? (Nights were about 20°F/ - 6°C)

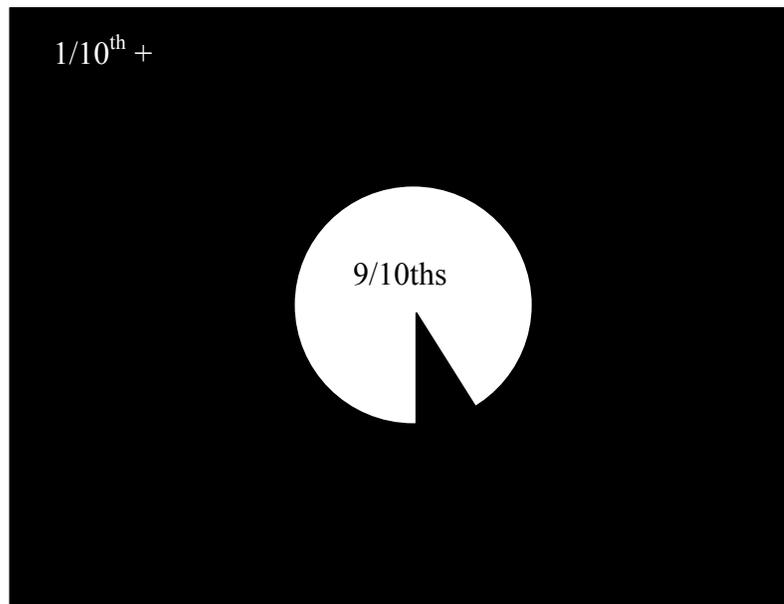
Oh, it’s pretty cold some times. Last couple nights was pretty cold. But it’s mostly ok....

Look at the difference in the way we travel – we’ve got this car, sleeping bags, food, money, you’ve got everything in that bag...

(He looked right at me):

“It’s all the same. You’re on the road, I’m on the road....

Well, thanks for the peanut butter. Today’s real nice. I’m gonna get going cause I’ve had a bad couple days and now the sun’s out and I’m going to enjoy it....”



David Nassim
23/3/2011