

Gratitude in an Unfree World

Everyone who knows me knows that I loathe government as it now exists everywhere. For fifty years, my professional activity has pertained in large part to awful actions that governments at every level have taken. Because governments have been such a pervasive part of social and economic life in the past century or more, bringing into being the welfare/warfare/surveillance/therapeutic/police state under which most people in the world now live, specializing as I have is bound to leave one with a jaundiced view not only of the state but of much of society as well. And such an outlook does not make for personal happiness.

But yesterday, as I set out to walk Fly Boy down the road through the jungle as usual, I was struck by what a beautiful day it was, and I determined to count my blessings. They are too many to enumerate here, but let me simply mention some of the greatest.

Above all, I am grateful for the people who have loved me and whom I have loved in return. My old friends have been loyal, my newer ones appreciative and kind. Very seldom have I been betrayed or abandoned. I have enjoyed relatively good physical health, with no major diseases or injuries in my life since infancy. I have had opportunities to travel widely and to see things I never imagined seeing when I was growing up, from the cultural treasures of London and Paris to the amazing Maya pyramids at Tikal and the natural wonders of the Kenyan game reserves. I have never been imprisoned or hospitalized (except once overnight when I was in the Coast Guard and really didn't need to stay in the hospital that night). I have had a measure of success in my profession and contributed a bit to what is called the stock of knowledge in economic history—again far exceeding my expectations when I began my work.

Like everyone else, I have had some setbacks, but none of them destroyed me or left me bereft of friends willing to assist me. I have never had to beg, so my dignity has been left afloat at least to this degree. I live in a beautiful house with a beautiful wife. For all these things, I am truly grateful. As my wife always tells me, a man can be happy even in the gulag. I thank God that I have not had to find out for myself, but I do get her point.