

## The Contentment of Sufficiency

*'Money can't buy you love!'* The Beatles<sup>1</sup> and a host of others  
*'You can be rich in spirit, kindness, love ... and all those things that you  
 can't put a dollar sign on.'* – Dolly Parton,<sup>2</sup> music icon and philanthropist  
*'Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me.'*

Steve Jobs.<sup>3</sup> Apple CEO

And yet, the culture of ... many upbringings, most advertising and media hype ... is about making money, having lots of possessions and living a grandiose lifestyle.

*Win Lotto? Who wants to be a Millionaire? Win an Art Union multi-million-dollar home! Scratch-it winners! Win overseas holidays, cruises ...* **The saturation indoctrination of temptation and ideology is everywhere.**

**Wow!!** Or perhaps you should have been born a prince or princess or into inherited fortunes? Winning the birth lottery of life! **Surely, their wealthy lifestyles would have no problems** and be luxurious beyond any normal imagination? Servants at your *beck and call*, living in the best resorts, lack of money is never a concern, buy what you like, only the best of everything for you!

**But ... are those lifestyles really problem free? Perhaps that 'bliss' is more of a mirage, an illusion – a faint hope ... to keep you aspiring?**

Robert Kiyosaki <sup>4</sup>(author of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*) says that having wealth is about having options. *'Money is not the goal. Money has no value. The value comes from the dreams money helps achieve.'*

Billy Graham,<sup>5</sup> the evangelist, had a slightly different take on priorities: *'When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost. When character is lost, all is lost.'*

Or have such quotations been said by people who have perhaps never been **really poor or very hungry or homeless or refugees ... or without hope?**

The **thesis of this essay** is that, while the comforts of having ample resources are very pleasant, **they are not the priorities for much of the**

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Can%27t\\_Buy\\_Me\\_Love](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Can%27t_Buy_Me_Love)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/930920>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/445606-being-the-richest-man-in-the-cemetery-doesn-t-matter-to>

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Kiyosaki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Kiyosaki)

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy\\_Graham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Graham)

planet's population.<sup>6</sup> Having **sufficient for survival** is **Priority 1**. Then a **contented comfort, caring for others and actually being happily in harmony with the environment around** might well be the most desirable, manageable and affordable goals, if allowed to have those aspirations. *'I don't live to work. I work to live.'* Noel Gallagher,<sup>7</sup> Oasis frontman. It is about surviving in life ... and work/life balance (happiness).

Mothers' wisdom: *Make your work your pleasure and you will always be happy!*

*'Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.'* Epictetus, Greek Stoic philosopher<sup>8</sup>

**In terms of the sufficiency described above,** the apparent lifestyles of a privileged minority of the world's people **may not be prioritised by most, ahead** of deep friendships or health or of being valued for genuine caring. **There are indeed significant stresses for those who have much more than ample means.** These people might face different pressures of competition and collecting ... or worries about loss of the accumulated indicators of wealth, or of loss of self-esteem measured by those jewels of possession.

**And yet,** are the two sets of priorities mutually exclusive? **Not at all!**

A generous personality can also be very compassionate and empathetic – while still being the possessor of considerable wealth. The wealthy person may be an employer of many, a business strategist ... a philanthropist, a benefactor for society.

**It is about how the wealth is acquired and how it is used ...** and how much a personality would be different if the wealth or power was not present. *'The real measure of your wealth is how much you'd be worth if you lost all your money.'* Bernard Meltzer<sup>9</sup>.

John Lennon,<sup>10</sup> singer, composer, Beatle, wrote: *When I was five years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went*

<sup>6</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/september-2025-global-poverty-update-from-the-world-bank--new-da>

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noel\\_Gallagher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noel_Gallagher)

<sup>8</sup> [Epictetus - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard\\_Meltzer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Meltzer)

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Lennon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lennon)

*to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down "happy". They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life.*

### **Some main points**

Our world's **economic models** are based on **continuous growth**. David Attenborough <sup>11</sup>: *'We have a finite environment—the planet. Anyone who thinks that you can have infinite growth in a finite environment is either a madman or an economist.'*

Machines now do many of the routine tasks of industry, agriculture and business ... and the population continues to age ... leaving a smaller working tax base to fund community services, such as care for the retired. **Service roles** (aged care, child care, baristas, entertainment, hospitality ...) become more prevalent than manufacturing or agricultural jobs.

**Discretionary income is less available to feed the consumables market ...** and 'belt-tightening' due to rising living costs is felt as **a change in a standard of living ... of lifestyle. But that is the economic model!**

Meanwhile, **the population of the planet continues to expand exponentially** due to a range of natural and cultural priorities <sup>12</sup> that place personal rights and entitlements above larger concerns for the planet. Or, indeed, just the ignoring of **parental responsibility** for the number of children to be reared successfully to lead fulfilling lives ... when the processes exist to manage the extent of conception.

David Attenborough (see footnote 11) *'Wherever women are literate and have political power, birth rates fall. That means those of us in developed countries should make sure those who don't have those things get them. That is the one way population growth will slow in a serious way.'*

Medical advances are able to ensure that people will generally live longer, beyond the normal course of nature.<sup>13</sup> Moralistic/religious social rules <sup>14</sup> entrench laws that **socialise populations to extend life as the major**

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.mongabay.com/2013/10/david-attenborough-someone-who-believes-in-infinite-growth-is-either-a-madman-or-an-economist/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy>

<sup>13</sup> <https://elclinics.com/news/science/how-scientific-advances-and-longevity-industry-help-us-live-longer-and-better-lives/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.muls.org/the-brief-online/4wcvab62q41ctkr1xp19jmqhmq7cg1>

**priority** ... irrespective of a person's wish not to be kept alive **medically**, to have the dignified right to die. Suicide is still legal<sup>15</sup> ... as is palliative care.

So, with respect to this essay's thesis, **contentment with sufficiency will mean different things to different people** and each is valid for their context. Yet, **sufficiency is most probably a key to happiness**.

In 2024, Oxfam reported that the wealthiest 1% of the people in the world owned as much wealth as 95% of the rest of the world.<sup>16</sup> And their wealth was mainly in globalised technology, communications and logistics.

That **wealth disparity** is not assisting the contentment with sufficiency, for most of the world's population. **The public media rhetoric reinforces a status quo ideology.**

However, Thomas Gray<sup>17</sup>, the esteemed English poet, wrote:

*Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.*

*The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.*

*The paths of glory lead but to the grave.*  
*from Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

If the goal is to accumulate wealth, how do you know when you have enough ... enough money, houses, cars, boats, planes, businesses – **enough power?**

**Needing to control, to own** can be a destructive addiction. It may well challenge the ability to actually be happy. Despite the 'don't-argue' *siren-call* of the wealthy lifestyle, life still brings all actors to **the same final curtain** – rich or poor.

The Scottish aphorism is *You don't 'leave' wealth. You are taken away from it when you die.*

<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide\\_legislation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_legislation)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-top-1-own-more-wealth-95-humanity-shadow-global-oligarchy-hangs-over-un>

<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Gray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Gray)

*'Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.'* – Albert Einstein

A start to the contentment process might be advocating **work/life balance** – using technology to work from home for all or part of the week. Then, **enjoying** social company, the Arts, sport, friendship ... **Sufficiency is being content with what we have**, or what is within our capacity.

Another perspective might be to **wish for things to be as they once were** ... viewed through rose-coloured glasses ... at the past.

**But, sadly**, the expansion across the world (*see Main Points above*) renders that hope as unrealistic as the lotto win. **We need to adapt to survive** ... at a personal level and at the macro level ... to protect ecosystems, to shine the critical light on the narrative of greedy exploitation.

*'Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.'* James Baldwin<sup>18</sup>

**So ... today ... a step at a time, each person and each attitude ... how we influence the next generations and how we address the present.**

*'Each problem that I solved became a rule which served afterwards to solve other problems.'* Rene Descartes<sup>19</sup>(1596 – 1650) in "*Discours de la Methode*".

Descartes's process has been around for a long time and it works to use **small wins ... to save the world, in time.**

*To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.* Winston Churchill<sup>20</sup>

**We need to change ... towards being content with sufficiency ...**

<sup>18</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Baldwin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Baldwin)

<sup>19</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9\\_Descartes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Descartes)

<sup>20</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston\\_Churchill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston_Churchill)