

The Morality of Wealth

Position One: The Pursuit of Wealth Is Good

Ivan Boesky said, "A little greed is good for you." He was right. Capitalism is based on the assumption that individuals should act in their own best interest and that doing so results in the most wealth for everybody. Individuals' action to increase their own wealth has resulted in the prosperity that makes life worth living, from the variety of products in the grocery store to the creature comforts in private homes. It has provided decent incomes for more people than ever before in history.

Rewards for self-interest and the pursuit of wealth have led to medical advances that save lives, improvements in nutrition, and reductions in the dangers that used to make life more difficult. Without the rewards, these advances in civilization would not have occurred.

When people are materially well off, they have time to think about higher values. Poverty and scarcity lead only to desperation.

Defend your position.

Position Two: The Pursuit of Wealth Is Wrong

The endless pursuit of wealth leads to spiritual and moral poverty. It does not lead to consideration of higher values, since the accumulation of more money leads only to the desire to get more.

The accumulation of possessions leads to a kind of slavery, since more and more time has to be spent maintaining and taking care of them, instead of focusing on more important things.

The pursuit of material wealth produces tunnel vision, allowing the individual to ignore the needs of other people and the ecological disasters that the pursuit of wealth causes. It also leads to lower moral standards, since the pursuit of wealth becomes the highest standard and everyone else is judged by whether or not they contribute to this pursuit.

Consumerism also leads to shallow values, since people become judged by whether they possess the "right" things. Owning things becomes more important than being the right kind of person or helping others.

Defend your position.