

Greed

Greed is the desire for more (of whatever it is you like) Greed can apply across the board with things you like. A single individual can be greedy for more Dutch apple pie, for more wagon trips through the Cumberland Gap, for more and more of Marianne's kisses. Greed is desire that feeds on itself.

Is greed, as we speak of it today, what in the Middle Ages was considered a sin? Or is it a psychological aberration, the expression we would probably favor today?

Naturally we will be uncomfortable with the mediaeval formulation today; we are not easy with the language of sin and yet to appreciate that mediaeval formulation one needs to think inside of a Christian theology for which generosity, the loving spirit of giving, takes precedence over all self-interested human behavior. We will be opened, by that mediaeval perspective, to what we now recognize as the clearly healthful practice of giving rather than taking. From this angle we can easily recover a position from which greediness will appear to be bad health practice. Greediness will be a simple version of self-interest.

Addressing the younger generation, on such matters as greediness (or selfishness or dishonesty) is not easy without the presence of a religious or philosophic framework to which to refer. However that difficulty is the norm in a secular society in which most persons must themselves have been brought up learning morals hit and miss and by the seat of the pants. Hit and miss is after all not that bad, though it lacks the ability to go on self-reconstructing throughout the course of the individual's life. A sin is part of a transaction with a wider calculus of norms, to which one can go on relating throughout a lifetime.