

From the Editor - Ancient universal wisdom and modern day catastrophes



Illustration: "Avaritia" (Avarice) - one of the 7 Deadly sins

Lesley Pocock
Chief Editor
Publisher and Managing Director
medi+WORLD International

Email: lesleypocock@mediworld.com.au

The greatest problem facing humanity and the entire planet at the end of year 2017 is greed and corruption.

It has manifest itself as corrupt governments, corrupt organisations and corrupt big business, and the corrupt, and often big time criminal profligates support each other in their greed by exercising the power that comes with obscene wealth. They who "have everything" don't even pay their way; they avoid paying taxes, and the working and the poor pay for everything. They don't give back to the planet either; they seem happy to see the planet and ecosystems destroyed in the name of even more wealth in their own lifetime – wealth that they have no reason or need for.

Is it that wealth and power corrupts and absolute wealth and power corrupts absolutely?

I think that is already their path. Those who are rich and powerful are the sort of people who when they see their fellow humans in distress or need, use their money and power to monopolise and gain from that situation. Those who are poor and good are destined to remain poor as in the same situation they will share their food and their wealth and their shelter with their fellows

in need. It has always been like this and certainly civilisation has always been on a downward moral path throughout history because of these profligates in our midst. It is 2018 and we are still killing each other and taking each other's countries. Why? Why are so called leaders murdering and torturing their own country men who do not take kindly to their dictatorships. Why - because some evil man is making money out of the situation.

It would seem, only those with nothing at all should be politicians and leaders. That way we get the best of people in power. Not all men seem capable of higher motivations.

It has brought the planet and global society to its knees and still people everywhere live in fear of the very end of planetary viability and humankind. Some may say we deserve it for our irresponsibility and shocking behaviour over the millennia. But the shocking behaviour is of those who desperately seek power. It is due to their rampant corruption and greed. Their very existence is repugnant to all those who try so hard to create a fair and decent world for all creatures that dwell on it.

Is the destruction of the planet itself also their fault? – well in many ways, yes it is. They have not only deemed the vast resources we once had on this planet (be they minerals or oceanic fish stocks) as their own to keep or exploit for money, they have used men, women's and children's bodies and lives without permission to create their wealth and to cater to their salaciousness. They are responsible for most misery, most death, and most environmental degradation. They have taken the food out of other people's mouths.

An estimated 100 million people were homeless worldwide in 2017. Nearly 1/2 of the world's population, more than 3 billion people, live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty, less than \$1.25 a day. 1 billion children worldwide are living in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty.

And if all this seems a little extreme and comments of the 'bleeding hearts' i.e. committed people of the planet, let us look at the Panama papers and the Paradise papers – the latter leaked toward the end of 2017 (November 2017).

The Paradise papers exposed the tax havens of the rich and powerful so they can avoid paying tax - like nearly everyone else, has to. The wealthy and corrupt still drive on the roads that the tax payers have built and use the amenities paid for by the working poor. The greedy and corrupt rich not only don't pay their share – too often they pay nothing at all.

Paradise papers

The Paradise Papers are a set of 13.4 million confidential electronic documents relating to offshore investments that were leaked to the German reporters Frederik Obermaier and Bastian Obermayer from the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The newspaper shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, and a network of more than 380 journalists. Some of the details were made public on 5 November 2017.

The documents originate from offshore magic circle member Appleby, the corporate services providers Eterra and Asiaciti Trust, and business registries in 19 tax jurisdictions. They contain the names of more than 120,000 people and companies. Among those whose financial affairs are mentioned are, separately, AIG, Prince Charles and Queen Elizabeth II, President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. This leak of confidential data is second only to the Panama Papers in 2016 as the biggest expose in history.

In 20 October 2017, an anonymous Reddit user hinted at the existence of the Paradise Papers. Later that month, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) approached the offshore law firm Appleby with allegations of wrongdoing. Appleby said that some of its data had been stolen in a cyber attack the previous year, and denied the ICIJ's allegations. After media outlets started reporting on the documents, the company said that there was "no evidence of wrongdoing"; that they "are a law firm which advises clients on legitimate and lawful ways to conduct their business"; and that they "do not tolerate illegal behaviour". Appleby stated that the firm "was not the subject of a leak but of a serious criminal act" and that "this was an illegal computer hack".

The documents were acquired by the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which had also obtained the Panama Papers in 2016. According to the BBC, the name "Paradise Papers" reflects "the idyllic profiles of many of the offshore jurisdictions whose workings are unveiled", so-called tax havens, or "tax paradises". The BBC also notes that the name is similar to the French term for a tax haven—*paradis fiscal*. The data comprises some 13.4 million documents from two offshore service providers, Appleby and Asiaciti Trust, and from the company registers of 19 tax havens. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* journalists contacted the ICIJ, which had been investigating the documents with 100 media partners. The consortium made the data available to the media partners using Neo4j, a graph-database platform made for connected data, and Linkurious, graph-visualization software. This allowed journalists across the globe to undertake collaborative investigative work.

The documents were released by the consortium on 5 November 2017.

According to the papers, Facebook, Twitter, Apple, Disney, Uber, Nike, Walmart, Allianz, Siemens, McDonald's, Allergen and Yahoo! are among the corporations that own offshore companies. According to *The Express Tribune*, "Apple, Nike, and Facebook avoided billions of dollars in tax using offshore companies."

Among the Indian companies listed in the papers are Apollo Tyres, the Essel Group, D S Construction, Emaar MGF, GMR Group, Irgaells, Hinduja Group, the Hiranandani Group, Jindal Steel, the Sun Group and Videocon.

The Panama papers

Earlier and prior to that, the Panama papers were published in 2015. They constituted 11.5 million leaked documents that detail financial and attorney-client information for more than 214,488 offshore entities. The documents, some dating back to the 1970s, were created by, and taken from, Panamanian law firm and corporate service provider Mossack Fonseca, and were leaked in 2015 by an anonymous source.

The documents contain personal financial information about wealthy individuals and public officials that had previously been kept private. While offshore business entities are legal, reporters found that some of the Mossack Fonseca shell corporations were used for illegal purposes, including fraud, tax evasion, and evading international sanctions.

The 'whistleblower' who leaked the documents to German journalist Bastian Obermayer from the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), remains anonymous, even to the journalists who worked on the investigation. In a May 6 statement, he or she cited income inequality as the reason for his action, and said he leaked the documents "simply because I understood enough about their contents to realise the scale of the injustices they described. He or she added that they had never worked for any government or intelligence agency and expressed willingness to help prosecutors if granted immunity from prosecution. After it was verified that the statement did in fact come from the source for the Panama Papers, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) posted the full document on its website.

So what is the outcome for ordinary people, small business and decent large businesses and humanity generally?

It is not a 'philosophical saying' that "if you take more than you give in your lifetime you have depleted the planet". It is a simple and obvious truth.

There are of course the NGOs, those groups of decent people, such as the United Nations, AVAAZ, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, and others in large groups, or by individual efforts fighting this, what many see as the 'final battle', and they are not just having to fight the corrupt and their law suits and their threats and their physical violence, they are having to fight (so called) democratically elected governments that are too readily corrupted. Too often these days it seems politics is a career path to obscene wealth and corruption - if we are to observe the current world closely. Political leaders are too often dictators robbing their own countries- and the bigger the country, the more corrupt their leader seems to be. It is a simple mathematical equation.

Those 6 profligates, the "men" that "own" "half the world's wealth" (Oxfam and many other sources) certainly deserve nothing at all but life prison sentences. Those 200 that own 90% of the World's wealth deserve the same..

It must be pointed out that it is not 'business' that is bad innately. Business provides all of our earthly needs; it just also provides a conduit for evil people to be unconscionably greedy and corrupt.

Is this all new? History tells us it is not. There is just more of us now and more at stake. Destruction is an ongoing process and we are close to the end. It is almost unbelievable a handful of misanthropes can destroy an entire planet and the lives of all other creatures on it – but such are the current days of planet earth. Ancient universal wisdom has said the same, as humans have always been exploited and robbed by such misanthropes. Early history warned of the "7 deadly sins" (pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony). These sins are often thought to be abuses or excessive versions of one's natural faculties or passions (for example, gluttony abuses one's desire to eat). No doubt greed and slovenliness/sloth – two of the ancient "7 deadly sins" have been with us for time in memoriam. In those days however there really still were "plenty of fish in the sea" and lands to discover, and treasures to be dug up and exploited.

So fast forward on to the modern day where there is hardly a square inch of soil or cubic meter of sea that has not been robbed of value or fouled with dumped waste – our combined inheritance is about to disappear – forever. 80,000 scientists came out in November 2017 and rightly, honestly and undisputedly say we are heading for catastrophe due to total ignorance of all the signs, and common sense and straightforward observation, (i.e. seeing things with our own eyes, seeing that temperatures on thermometers are showing much higher, that glaciers and ice sheets are melting/much smaller, that crops are failing, that sea levels are rising, that cyclones and tornados have stronger and more destructive wind forces).

Those disputing these facts have a personal interest in grabbing a bit more for themselves while they can and they manage to fool the ignorant and uneducated that it is all about looking after them, not themselves.

South Pacific island nations are literally disappearing as sea levels rise.

In the Marshall islands a huge dump of plutonium, from US nuclear tests, (plutonium takes billions of years to become harmless) is just about to be washed into the Pacific ocean – yes, you guessed it, global warming. So it is not just the single events caused by stupid, short-sighted, slovenly and greedy acts – they are starting to happen together and the problem compounds and multiplies and becomes more complex.

Now political prisoners are being robbed of their very organs; and the poor are selling their organs (another form of robbery) all to keep the rich alive so they can get a few more years of self indulgence.

The Bible and the Quran discuss greed.

What does the Bible say about money and greed?

Proverbs 1:19 So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain. ... Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 1 Corinthians 6:10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. Sep 10, 2017

Quran and Hadiths on Greed

#1. On the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying, "If a son of Adam had a valley full of gold, he would desire to have

two. Nothing can fill his mouth except the dust (of his grave). [al-Bukhari (6437) and Muslim (1049)]

#2. "By Allah I do not fear poverty and starvation overtaking you, but I fear that you will have abundant wealth at your disposal as it had been at the disposal of the nations before you. You will then become extremely greedy in accumulating this wealth just as the previous nations had done. This (greed) will be the cause of your ruin and destruction just as it destroyed the people before you." [al-Bukhari (3158) and Muslim (2961)]

#4. Ibn 'Abbas told Ibn az-Zubayr, "I heard the Prophet (SAW), say, 'A man is not a believer who fills his stomach while his neighbour is hungry.'" [Al-Adab al-Mufrad Al-Bukhari, #112]

Defining Greed

The English word "greed" usually is defined as attempting to possess more than one needs or deserves, especially at the expense of others. We're taught from childhood that we shouldn't be greedy.

From a Buddhist perspective, however, the distinction between greed and desire is artificial: To want passionately is a hindrance and a poison, whether one "deserves" the thing wanted or not.

The 'Doomsday clock' that scientists use to predict disasters warns we're scarily close to catastrophe. In 2017 more than 15,000 of the world's leading climate scientists have issued a stark warning — time is running out to prevent a global environmental collapse.

It's believed to be the largest number of scientists to ever put their names to a study which predicts catastrophic problems that could come from climate change.

It predicts temperature rises and unpredictable weather patterns will cause widespread misery. But it says it's not too late for governments to do something about the problem.

Gratefully we had all countries (but one – one of the three greatest polluters of our planet) for a while honouring the Paris Climate agreement until the greatest capitalist society, with a government that currently worships greed, pulled out – giving the rest a chance or opportunity to do the same.

It may be business and technology that comes to save us once we clear the decks of the cancer on humanity. A pristine planet fuelled by high technology is the answer and we all have the capacity generally to create that. It is an aspect of 'human nature' that is the great problem, not our tools, devices, and machines. It is the psychopathy of human nature. Even now some are working cleverly and intelligently to make better things happen. Cannot the future be put into their hands and immediately taken from the hands that hold it?

We need to drop greed, vanity, envy, anger, slovenliness, gluttony, pride, sloth, - they are the tools of the rich and corrupt – who have fed us their foods packed with sugar and trans fats to make us inept gluttons, they have used their technological devices (the apps of mental illness and ineptitude) to make us slothful, and proud, and envious and vain, and they stir up anger to fire their wars where others are sent to die so they can gain money from sales of arms.

We need to find and follow our seven, or more, great attributes: integrity, valour, commitment, courage, defiance, intelligence, resistance, honesty, respect and decency.

Let us make 2018 the year we turned it all around. Wishing you all a safe, happy, peaceful and prosperous 2018.