



# The Wisdom of Frugality: Why Less Is More - More or Less

By Emrys Westacott

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**The Wisdom of Frugality: Why Less Is More - More or Less** By Emrys Westacott

From Socrates to Thoreau, most philosophers, moralists, and religious leaders have seen frugality as a virtue and have associated simple living with wisdom, integrity, and happiness. But why? And are they right? Is a taste for luxury fundamentally misguided? If one has the means to be a spendthrift, is it foolish or reprehensible to be extravagant?

In this book, Emrys Westacott examines why, for more than two millennia, so many philosophers and people with a reputation for wisdom have been advocating frugality and simple living as the key to the good life. He also looks at why most people have ignored them, but argues that, in a world facing environmental crisis, it may finally be time to listen to the advocates of a simpler way of life.

*The Wisdom of Frugality* explores what simplicity means, why it's supposed to make us better and happier, and why, despite its benefits, it has always been such a hard sell. The book looks not only at the arguments in favor of living frugally and simply, but also at the case that can be made for luxury and extravagance, including the idea that modern economies require lots of getting and spending.

A philosophically informed reflection rather than a polemic, *The Wisdom of Frugality* ultimately argues that we will be better off?as individuals and as a society?if we move away from the materialistic individualism that currently rules.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"What I especially like about the book is the path Westacott lays out.....He's an advocate for simple living but his research explores both the pros and cons of frugality. He gets you thinking about so many important questions: What does it mean to be frugal? Is living luxuriously better than rejecting an extravagant lifestyle? Will either choice make you happier? What are the environment arguments for and against simple living? Section after section will have you examining your own life." --**Michelle Singletary, *The Washington Post***

"In his calm, measured and wise analysis of the virtues and vices of simplicity, Westacott asks why, if almost every sage in history has praised frugal simplicity, we haven't all embraced it. The short answer, hinted at in the subtitle, is that the mantra "less is more" is only more or less true." --**Julian Baggini, *The Financial Times***

"a lucid, accessible book with an immediate bearing on people's everyday lives." -- **Lawrence Klepp, *The Weekly Standard***

"*The Wisdom of Frugality* makes fine reading. US-based philosopher Emrys Westacott is erudite and quietly witty. In an age when much that passes for thinking is starved of its necessary complexity, Westacott has created a refreshingly multidimensional book. He encourages self-knowledge. This is particularly strong when he writes of frugality's shadow opposite, extravagance. He is no utilitarian. In its finest moments, frugality - simplicity and the absence of greed - undoubtedly saves lives as well as the planet. But in its most refined and creative moments - think Sistine Chapel, the Hagia Sophia, Sydney Opera House - extravagance "fuels culture"."

-- Ruth Quibble, *Sydney Morning Herald*

"a fine introduction to the topic [that] strikes an admirable balance in that it is both substantive and very accessible." -- **Brian Treanor, *Environmental Ethics***

"[A] pleasant intellectual tour that usefully blows a layer of dust off of old writings." --**Joe Pinsker, *The Atlantic***

"Westacott's philosophically informed polemic argues that if we rise above our material individualism, we will be better off, both as a society and as an individual." --**Wan Lixin, *Shanghai Daily***

"A sprightly and authoritative romp through the history of the philosophical advice on the issues." --**Martin Cohen, *Times Higher Education***

"The path to sanity is most likely to lie not in redistributionist programs of dubious merit, but in the course that Westacott models for the better part of *The Wisdom of Frugality*: a thoughtful willingness to resist the siren calls of the shopping malls and online bazaars for the sake of our mental health, and that of the world in which we live." --**James Williams, *PopMatters***

"In his calm, measured and wise analysis of the virtues and vices of simplicity, Westacott asks why, if almost

every sage in history has praised frugal simplicity, we haven't all embraced it."--**Julian Baggini, Financial Times**

"[*The Wisdom of Frugality* is] not primarily an attempt to retrieve the ancient philosophical art of living (and writing) simply. It's an attempt to evaluate that tradition, and its contemporary echoes and amendments, at a time when life has arguably never been so complicated, distracted, and encumbered. . . . [Westacott] articulates and examines every argument you can think of, and numerous others that never would have occurred to you, for a frugal, materially minimal life. And in careful counterpoint throughout this book, he sets forth just about every conceivable objection to seeking such a life."--**Lawrence Klepp, Weekly Standard**

"[*The Wisdom of Frugality*] brings a rigorous treatment of an important question within the reach of an informed reader who is not necessarily a philosopher per se."--**Choice**

"Emrys Westacott is erudite and provocative. . . . In an age when much that passes for thinking is starved of its necessary complexity, Westacott has created a refreshingly multi-dimensional book. He persuades with one convincing argument then considers its near-opposite, encouraging the reader to wonder, 'What do my assumptions reveal . . . what are they allowing and disallowing?'"--**Stephanie Dowrick, Sydney Morning Herald**

From the Back Cover

"In this book, Emrys Westacott delves into the conflict between the virtues of the simple life and the apparently irresistible economic imperative to grow. Economic growth has brought us longer, healthier, and more comfortable and varied lives. But Westacott makes the case that, given our present situation, the appeal of frugality is not mere nostalgia, but rather the route to a more meaningful way of life."--**Diane Coyle, author of *The Economics of Enough***

"This profoundly thoughtful philosophical examination of frugality provides a thorough investigation of both simple and luxurious living. Emrys Westacott gives philosophical, psychological, religious, and economic arguments for and against frugality, and he has convinced me that the case for it is more complicated and more interesting than I had thought."--**William B. Irvine, author of *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy***

About the Author

**Emrys Westacott** is professor of philosophy at Alfred University in Alfred, New York, and the author of *The Virtues of Our Vices* (Princeton). His work has been featured in the *New York Times* and has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Philosopher's Magazine*, *Philosophy Now*, and many other publications.

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