

# Envy

*The Wall Street Journal Magazine Soapbox column asked luminaries to weigh in on the topic of envy. Consider Professor Peter Singer's insightful comments:*

The classic expression of envy is in Tom Wolfe's novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, where the guy who makes a million dollars a year working on Wall Street is envious of someone who has a permanent limo driver. Once you have that attitude, you can never have enough. I'm sure there are circumstances where envy can lead to something positive, where because someone is envious of the success of others, they work harder

and are able to achieve things that may benefit everyone. But that can also happen without envy. I really believe that giving significant sums to charities helps quell envy because you get more satisfaction out of giving money away than spending it on yourself. You cease to be envious of others who have more—why do you need to buy an expensive watch or car when there are much more worthwhile things to do with your money?”

Singer is a professor of bioethics at Princeton University and the author of *One World Now: The Ethics of Globalization*, out now in an updated edition.

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