

**Unveiling the Essence of Human Fulfillment: Journeying from Short-Term Gratifications
to a Sustainable and Purposeful Existence**

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In 2023, despite the risks of extermination and death, conflicts continue to fuel human behavior. 'The Precipice' by Toby Ord sheds light on these existential risks that confront humanity, and argues that we should prioritize the survival of the human race to ensure we can prosper in the long future ahead of us. However, Ord appears to make a vast assumption about the human race. He paints human beings as Gods, a group of entities who exist just to exist; a species that has exceeded its primitive past. However, I would argue that we are no less primitive than our ape ancestors. We are natural beings, and as natural beings we possess an innate longing for a more primal, challenging, and authentic way of life, rather than succumbing to complacency and idleness in a world of comfort. We are, without a doubt, in an era of precipice. But to truly understand what motivates the human race to engage in such undesirable behaviors that led up to this situation in the first place, and what could drive them to overcome such circumstances, we need to delve into the core motivations of human beings.

Human Beings as Machines:

To unravel the functioning of human beings, it is imperative to envision them as intricate machines with inputs and outputs. Just as food provides the energy needed for physical growth, the human mind requires inputs to sustain mental well-being. This paper highlights the role of meaningful input in our lives, which serve as vital determinants of our will to continue living. It also acknowledges the presence of built-in regulators such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, which signal the absence of a purposeful existence. When individuals lack something to live for, these regulators shape their output, resulting in a diminished desire to continue existing.

The Components of a Purposeful Life:

What constitutes something to live for? What imbues our lives with purpose? This paper

proposes that a meaningful existence arises from a harmonious interplay between three essential elements: meaningful relationships, meaningful work, and a meaningful environment. These components intertwine to provide a sense of fulfillment and authenticity in our lives.

Meaningful Relationships:

Meaningful relationships form the cornerstone of a fulfilling life. Such connections thrive on regular, face-to-face interactions and extend beyond superficial acquaintanceships. Whether with family, friends, or romantic partners, meaningful relationships require the ability to read expressions, observe communication nuances, and actively listen. Sharing ideas, bonding over shared interests or physical activities, and contributing to each other's lives in non-materialistic ways foster a deep sense of connection.

Meaningful Work:

Meaningful work plays a pivotal role in shaping a purposeful existence. It transcends self-centered achievements and focuses on actively and immediately improving the community. Physical labor, in particular, becomes a conduit for personal growth and tangible contributions to the well-being of others.

A Meaningful Environment:

Creating a meaningful environment is essential to cultivating both meaningful relationships and meaningful work. It entails constructing spaces that facilitate a harmonious blend of home, work, and social life. An ideal environment nurtures the development of robust interpersonal connections, provides platforms for fulfilling work, and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose.

Short Term Fulfillments

Woefully, the average person in the modern world lacks these three fulfilling factors. They have been led astray, filling these gaps with short-term gratifications that do not qualify as meaningful relationships, meaningful work, or a meaningful environment. For example, many substitute social media for genuine human contact.

Short-term work fulfillments include seeking widespread recognition for one's work or desiring recognition for the ability to perform certain tasks. Short-term environmental fulfillments are evident in the American suburb-city model, where individuals buy houses hoping to feel a sense of belonging. They then find work in the city, enduring long commutes. Failing to find spaces to relax outside of their home and workplace, they often resort to media entertainment or recreational drug use before repeating the same cycle.

The substitution of short-term fulfillments for long-term ones may temporarily alleviate the impact of natural regulators such as depression and anxiety. However, it is evident that even individuals who possess well-paying jobs, stable home lives, and social relationships still often grapple with an existential and depressive crisis marked by a sense of dissatisfaction. This phenomenon sheds light on a broader issue prevalent in modern society, namely the misguided belief that an infinite supply of short-term fulfillments can lead to lasting fulfillment. For example, even if an individual attains the financial success of one million dollars, the pursuit of another million dollars becomes the next objective, temporarily satiating their thirst for fulfillment until the initial short-term satisfaction diminishes yet again. Consequently, a relentless quest ensues, as the individual strives to chase short-term fulfillments indefinitely, only to eventually realize their inherent inability to provide lasting contentment. In response, alternative avenues are pursued.

This phenomenon is found within everybody's lives, but regrettably, this phenomenon also permeates the spheres of politics and positions of power. Having exhausted the potential fulfillment derived from conventional avenues, particularly financial pursuits, individuals embark on an alternative course characterized by relentless power struggles, driven by the hope of obtaining a semblance of gratification. Yet, as this pursuit also proves futile in engendering lasting satisfaction, individuals resort to conflict as a means of seeking fulfillment.

Building a Better Society

In order to prevent these issues from occurring, a society must construct an environment that fosters the formation of enduring fulfillment. Meaningful relationships and meaningful work must leave no space for shortcuts or compromises, as even the smallest gap can set an individual or entity on an exponential trajectory, mistaking an unlimited supply of short-term fulfillments for long lasting sources of fulfillment in the long run. Thus, meticulous attention must be paid to creating a framework that upholds the integrity of these crucial elements, preventing their erosion or dilution over time.

In order to prevent the perpetual cycle of substituting short-term fulfillments for long-term ones, it becomes crucial to consider a paradigm shift towards a more primitive and authentic way of life. This entails de-industrializing our society and reimagining our roles and contributions to the community. By reintegrating more primitive activities such as farming or hunting into our daily lives, we can foster a deeper connection with nature and fulfill the innate longing for purposeful and meaningful work.

One of the key benefits of engaging in activities like farming or hunting is their inherent ability to benefit the community directly. Unlike many conventional office jobs that

may seem disconnected from tangible contributions, these primal occupations offer a clear and immediate impact on the well-being of the community. By cultivating the land or providing sustenance through hunting, individuals can witness the fruits of their labor and experience a sense of fulfillment derived from nourishing their fellow human beings.

Moreover, a shift towards a more primitive lifestyle promotes a closer connection with the environment. By relying on the land for sustenance and living in harmony with nature, individuals can develop a profound appreciation for the Earth's resources and strive to preserve them for future generations. This shift can help address the pressing environmental challenges that threaten our very existence, creating a sustainable and resilient society that respects and protects our planet.