

A Good Conscience - my Curriculum Vitae

Kristiina Hyryläinen

The question of my life

Are you evil? Am I evil? Are human beings evil from day one?

This question has been the most important question of my life. Why? Because the moment I realised that we are not evil, not fundamentally flawed, but instead that we are good, was when I decided that I want to live a very simple life, modest life, live a life doing good.

Introduction

My name is Kristiina Hyryläinen. I am a 76-year-old housewife from Finland. I live in a little village inhabited by relatives, in a house built by my late husband.

I feel grateful and honored that I may participate in this congress.

The reason I'm speaking to you today is that I think my life is a very good example of what this congress is about: basic income in reality. I have had the fortune to live my life as if me and my late husband Matti had received basic income. In a way our life was like a 40 year private basic income pilot.

How and why we had the possibility to live our lives the way we did? I'll tell you that in a while, but first, I want to tell you why as a child I always pondered the question I started with. Are human beings good or evil?

Childhood

As a child, I lived in a religious atmosphere. My grandfather, who lived in the same house as my family, was very religious. In his religion, Christian Lutheran, there is a strong belief that humans are evil and sinful when they are born. I was taught this too. This made me anxious, also because I was also told that God sees me all the time, and even reads my thoughts. Later on, when going deeper into the foundations of religion, I came to think differently, I realised that it is only a belief, it is not true, that human

beings are fundamentally flawed and evil. What a burden was lifted off my shoulders! It is easy; doing good makes one good. We all are good! I am good!

But now, back to the story of our life and how it started.

Matti

The most important single event of my life was when I met my husband Matti. I met him at the Finnish Patent Office, where we both worked, some 50 years ago. He was a research engineer and I was the secretary of the CEO. He was a warmhearted, intelligent and creative man. I was particularly impressed that he had been a single parent for his nine years old son for years, which was quite exceptional in Finland those days. He was handy: he had renovated his flat, made a canoe for his son and was building a camera to take old-fashioned photos. He also had an old French car, Renault 4, which I loved. Later on it served well also to carry building materials and animals.

Matti had a purpose for his life: to write a theory for a democratic economy, and I wanted to support him, to do my share of our project. We soon understood that we could not live our lives as we wanted if we stayed in Helsinki. So we gave up our rather well-paying jobs and moved to the countryside, to a little village, where I had lived as a child with my relatives.

Everyday life with "basic income"

So what was our life like? As I told you we lived our life as if we received basic income, so our life was very simple.

We lived in a small house where we had to pump our water from our well with a hand pump. We had to carry drinking water from our nearest neighbour's house. No warm water, heating with wood, no TV for five years. We used to joke that the fireplace was our colour-TV.

We had goats, ducks, bees and an ecological garden. We picked berries and mushrooms, and went fishing.

Matti wrote two books about democratic economy. Basic income is an integral part of that theory. He got the idea of basic income as early as the 1970ies. He published his

first book in 1987. Everyone knows now what basic income is, but only a few people talked about it in those days.

His other important object of interest was building. From scratch, he built and renovated a place where to live: a small house, which was extended later on, a stable for goats and ducks, a greenhouse, a cellar, and a sauna.

For decades, I looked after our children and my other nearest: my old parents, Matti's mother, and grandchildren. There was a three-year period when four generations of us lived in our house. I supported my husband's writing.

Taking care of our animals and gardening was my responsibility, too. In my spare time, I could do some writing and painting. The walls in our house got covered with paintings as years went by. There are 19 paintings in my small bedroom.

We were partially self-sufficient. We recycled and used second-hand shops. Downshifting was rare in those days and was sometimes considered shameful and even mocked. We were simplifying our life when all the rest lived a materialistic life.

But simple life and downshifting sure wasn't boring: Our village has been an active one. In addition to everyone helping each other in all possible ways we have had campfires, outings, hay-making, dancing lessons, building a floating sauna and bathing in it, a two week festival, acting, and lots of parties for all sorts of reasons. For example every year we celebrate the birthday of our cellar.

How was this possible?

How was this kind of life possible? We financed our life by selling Matti's flat in Helsinki, which gave us money for two years to build living conditions for our family. We received small inheritances and had short temporary, part-time jobs. We didn't have full-time jobs. We lived forty years with very little money. At times even below poverty line. We once even had to explain our income to the taxation authorities, as they could not believe we could get by with so little money. Later we received small pensions, which, surprise, surprise, equalled the basic income as planned today.

Why is this important?

Why is it important that we lived our life as we did? It seems to me that there are two ways of thinking of how to make the world a better place. Some people think that the world can be made better by making people good. I don't believe that. I believe that we are good enough, but that we have to change the conditions in which we live. It is easier to lead a good life in favorable conditions than in bad and insecure conditions. I believe that every human being on this planet can do good if it is made possible for them to do so. And one way of allowing them to do so is to give them a basic income.

We were lucky to be able to do what we thought, and still think, is the most important in life: to take care of one's family, to be together, close to your loved ones. As our daughter once said, "The best thing about my childhood was that there was love and never any haste".

It has been especially precious to have time to give love and care to our 47 years old son, because he has schizophrenia. He has been ill for thirty years now. With our support he can now live independently in his flat nearby.

How rewarding it has been to fulfill one's nature of "being good" and never have to say no to cries for help. To give time when it has been needed.

As we have done so much ourselves, we have also saved much of society's money. We have cared for our children and old parents. There has been no need for institutional care like daycare or old people's home. Our son has however been to several rehabilitation homes during his life. And we are forever grateful for the excellent care he has received to help him recover.

From the point of view of nature and climate, our life has also been good. All the most significant aspects of our life are not related to a materialistic way of living but to a spiritual way of living: the relation to your nearest when living a simple and modest life. There are no limits to spiritual things in the world. They are not a burden to nature.

Some people might think this kind of simple and modest life is not very fulfilling, but I think differently. I have the feeling as if I've been able to reach all the levels of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Today

Today I still live in the same house in the same little village. My daughter lives 70 meters from me in a house built by her husband and her father. I'm old but I can still

help. I can look after my daughter's goats and chickens in the mornings. I can still help my son to cope with his illness by seeing him as often as he wants. My day often starts in the stable with animals and continues having coffee with my son in a cafe near his flat. Making puzzles together once a week is our favourite hobby. And at the moment I'm thinking that our black currants should be picked. I wonder if my daughter's two sons will help me with that.

Closing

I have been living my life with a good conscience, with the help of a basic income.

Thank you so much for listening to the story of my life.