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Conversations on Philanthropy • New Paradigms • Volume II • DonorsTrust 2005

An Interdisciplinary Series of Reflections and Research

CONVERSATIONS

ON PHILANTHROPY

Volume II
New Paradigms

2005

CONVERSATIONS ON PHILANTHROPY

Conversations on Philanthropy is an occasional publication of the Project for New Philanthropy Studies at DonorsTrust. *Conversations* will typically feature essays or academic papers by scholars, philanthropists, social critics and activists, along with critiques by one or more invited commentators.

The mission of the Project for New Philanthropy Studies is to define a “new” philanthropy appropriate to the radically altered circumstances of the present cybernetic age. We are not seeking to build a consensus, but to elaborate an alternative approach to the philanthropic enterprise, describe the opportunities open to it, and suggest what tools social investors will need as they make responsible choices and assess results in an unfamiliar atmosphere.

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SERIES EDITOR

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Volume II, New Paradigms

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INTRODUCTION

To those of you reading *Conversations on Philanthropy* for the first time, welcome! And welcome back to readers of our inaugural volume, issued in the Fall of 2004. In Volume I we sought to revisit the conceptual foundations of contemporary philanthropy by reexamining the frameworks of modern economic and political thought in which philanthropic institutions of the twentieth century were situated. We sought not to discard the philanthropic institutions of the last century but to look at them more critically as a way of loosening their hold over the choices gift-givers might make in the future.

The lack of clarity about the proper role of philanthropy in a free society was represented in Volume I by the cover image of a flame. This image evoked the early philanthropic venture attributed by Aeschylus to Prometheus, who out of love for mankind impiously stole fire from the gods. (It is worth noting that Prometheus makes his second appearance in *Conversations on Philanthropy* in this issue, coming into the conversation here in Amy A. Kass's comment on Richard Gunderman's essay.)

In the present volume, we continue our effort to look at the familiar more closely, but as our cover art indicates, our authors in Volume II are reexamining philanthropy from a more organic perspective, casting an eye forward to how new philanthropic possibilities may be unfolding and how the best of these possibilities might be cultivated to provide new paradigms for philanthropic participation.

In "Creating a Culture of Gift," Frederick Turner asks how philanthropy might best be understood and celebrated as a distinct and yet integral component of a complex, evolving social organism. From Turner's vantage point, modern philanthropy takes its place at the evolutionary front of the human practice of gift-giving. From this position, however, we can see at least two possible futures. Philanthropy might now proceed either trapped by an ethos of duty in a culture of imposed redistribution, or it might be unleashed to foster the expansion of human freedom by an ethos of gratitude embedded in a culture where it coexists in mutual benefit with other dimensions of a robust, humane economy.

Turner is a polymath, and his breadth shines through as concepts as seemingly divergent as the intergenerational transfer of wealth, complexity theory, potlatch, technological revolution, and "strange attractors" make

appearances in his essay. Where Turner unites these themes is in his poetic contribution to the effort to create a culture of gift entitled, “Brine: An Erythraean Journal.” Here the poet speaks of moving from the world of ideas networked and mediated by silicon-based technology into the “bloodred living stream” of life in modern-day Eritrea, where scientists, philanthropists, historians, soldiers, engineers, World Bankers, poor African children, and poets converge to harness carbon from the air and transform it into an abundant Eden of life-giving flora and fauna.

Turner paints in words a philanthropic vision that calls us to “open our eyes” to see not only the poverty of those who might become the recipients of our philanthropy but also to understand their history, to lean heavily upon their local knowledge, and to partake of their culture as we help them recreate it.

Opening our eyes to see not only the needs of philanthropy’s recipients but also to expand the mind’s eye to a longer horizon is also a theme of Richard Gunderman’s essay, “Giving and Human Excellence.” Gunderman proposes a new paradigm of liberal philanthropy that will transcend older, less complete frameworks for giving. These older frameworks include “charitable philanthropy,” rooted in the longstanding tradition of alms-giving to alleviate immediate needs, and “scientific philanthropy,” the model that emerged a century ago as progressive social reformers sought to address the “root causes” of systemic social problems as a way of leveraging philanthropic resources for more long-term solutions.

Gunderman’s paradigm of liberal philanthropy investigates the possibility of finding a sort of synthesis of the older models. “If philanthropy is to succeed on the grandest and most important scale,” Gunderman writes, “it must aim not to put itself out of business by eliminating need, but to enhance awareness of the importance of sharing by highlighting the capacity to give.”

The business of liberal philanthropy, then, is to “transform receivers into givers.” Only by liberating the human aspiration to be generous—hence the name liberal for Gunderman’s paradigm—can philanthropy truly elevate people out of the shame of unfortunate conditions and restore to them their essential dignity as human beings capable of attaining the excellence of liberality.

As Turner’s Eritrean entrepreneurs surely discover with their sleeves rolled up while drilling a new well, Gunderman observes that “real communities are nurtured not when people receive gifts from a common donor, but when people unite together to pursue some objective beyond self-enrichment.”

We have taken the liberty in this volume, as we did in the first, of inviting several commentators to engage with our feature essays and help launch our readers into the first steps of a conversation about the ideas presented.

Tyler Cowen, Herbert London, and Richard Gabriel seem equally intrigued by and yet in disagreement with one another about the implications of Turner's effort to think about the role of the arts in cultivating a broader role for philanthropy in our culture. Cowen celebrates the economics of the arts in America and interprets the size and scope of cultural philanthropy as a function of our embrace of competitive market processes. London, to the contrary, denies that the application of market forces to culture will necessarily produce salutary results. Although he doesn't use the terms, London's theme harkens back to older distinctions between "high" and "low" culture, and he urges us to remember that freedom in giving does not always translate into programs that truly enhance human freedom and dignity.

London thus awaits the arrival of more poets like Turner, who have not succumbed to postmodernist relativism and are willing to embrace artistic, cultural, and moral standards. Gabriel, however, cautions that the imposition of extraneous demands on art, even ones imposed by artists themselves, undermines art, for real art "is not entirely within the conscious control of the artist," as Gabriel puts it. Hence, to call for artists to forsake the leadership of the muses to participate in a contrived celebration of the culture of gift would be to distort the artistic process. For Gabriel, such a call would also deprive the philanthropist of the true gift the artist can provide—a model of one who practices his art solely because he can do no other and who creates art that has a future life only if its future recipients grant it authority. Like true artists, the truest philanthropists may be those who give "the gift of the fruits of their talents even though to do so makes no rational or economic sense." Just as the artist works under a form of compulsion, Gabriel says, the philanthropist who would make of giving an art may likewise find in giving a "strangeness and othermindedness" that fosters a positive compulsion toward benevolence.

Steven Grosby, Amy A. Kass, and Jennifer Roback Morse pick up the theme provided by Gunderman and invite us to consider its implications deeply. Grosby applauds Gunderman's effort to bring an anthropological approach to philanthropy by considering what it means to be human and then using this to identify the proper ends of philanthropy. Grosby urges caution, however, in equating the ends of liberal democracy—including the fostering

of habits of individual initiative, civic engagement, and personal responsibility—with the broader, perhaps Platonic, idea of human excellence. Grosby proposes that Gunderman’s paradigm is most useful in thinking pragmatically, perhaps in Aristotelian fashion, about the means and ends of philanthropy in the context of that same liberal democracy.

Amy A. Kass suggests that while we take a closer look at the possibility that each of us can be a giver, we must not lose focus on the implication that a world of givers requires a world of recipients. For Kass, gratitude is the other side of the coin of generosity; in other words, the correlative of giving is not sharing but the capacity to receive. This is a timely reminder for those of us living in a society where we celebrate and aspire to be counted among the rich and famous but have lost the abilities to acknowledge our own dependence and neediness and to receive others’ gifts with a gracious attitude. Kass tells a delightful story of Odysseus and Nausikaa, who mutually honor one another as giver and receiver, modeling a philanthropic exchange in which both parties depart having grown in their dignity as human beings.

Jennifer Roback Morse takes us deeper into this theme of mutuality and the need we have as a community to come to better terms with the inescapable condition that we will always have the needy with us. Morse’s anthropology reinstates the family at the center of human culture and explains this centrality by the fact that humans are born utterly dependent, requiring an institution of natural volunteerism to ensure their survival and thriving. Morse laments the accomplishment of the modern women’s movement in persuading women in the name of autonomy that their roles in the household economy are less valuable than paid labor in the workforce. The movement en masse of women out of the workplace of the home and into the commercial workplace not only distorted our view of the oldest human institution but also transformed the American practice of philanthropy, which until late last century was heavily oriented around the volunteer labor of women in and for their families and communities.

Like Gabriel, Morse champions a culture in which there is a role for literal amateurs, those who work for love. Such a culture must be cultivated, of course, and as Michael Oakeshott has reminded us, such cultivation requires continual re-creation.

“The work of protection,” writes Oakeshott in his 1939 essay “The Claims of Politics,” “is never of primary importance; and when, in times of political

crisis, it appears to be so, that is merely because in the absence or poverty of creative activity, protection has usurped the place of recreation.”

Taken together, the conversations begun in this volume call us to think about philanthropy as an institution of cultural creation and re-creation. Deepening our understanding requires us to explore more carefully the relationships between love and duty, between philanthropy and commerce, between gratitude and generosity, between giver and receiver, and ultimately to think anew about the very meaning of freedom and what it means to be a free society. We hope that you will find ways to introduce and continue these discussions in your own communities. Please let us hear where the conversations take you!

— Lenore T. Ealy
Series Editor

CONVERSATION 3

Giving and Human Excellence

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WITH COMMENTS BY

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Conversations on Philanthropy Volume II: New Paradigms

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GIVING AND HUMAN EXCELLENCE

THE PARADIGM OF LIBERAL PHILANTHROPY

Richard B. Gunderman

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Acts of the Apostles 20:35

Many of us are operating with an incomplete paradigm of philanthropy. The prevailing view today neglects what is ultimately philanthropy's most important mission: enabling as many people as possible to participate in philanthropic activity. It places unnecessary limits on what both donors and recipients are able to derive from philanthropic activity, and it undermines the achievement of philanthropy's full potential. To remedy this situation and develop a more complete philanthropic paradigm, we must examine our most deeply held convictions concerning what philanthropy is and what it aims to accomplish.

In the incomplete paradigms with which many of us are operating, philanthropy's ultimate mission is to do away with the need for philanthropy. In the more complete paradigm to be developed here, by contrast, philanthropy's ultimate mission is to expand philanthropic activity, which it does by enhancing the ordinary person's sense of philanthropic efficacy. In this more complete view, philanthropists should aim not to put themselves out of business, but to replicate themselves. The ideal community is not one where enlightened social policies have eliminated the need for philanthropy, but one in which as many people as possible are philanthropically engaged.

This argument for a more complete paradigm of philanthropy has two parts. The first part examines two incomplete paradigms. The first of these, charitable philanthropy, manifests great strengths, but it is not without important weaknesses. A more recent paradigm, scientific philanthropy, has addressed some of these weaknesses, but it manifests others of its own. Each of these paradigms provides important objectives for philanthropic activity and has produced laudable results. Yet each fails to encompass philanthropy's highest aspirations. The second part of the argument outlines

a more complete paradigm of philanthropy, called liberal philanthropy. This paradigm builds on the strengths of the other paradigms while adding additional strengths of its own.

Incomplete Paradigms

One of the oldest paradigms of philanthropy, charitable philanthropy, focuses on meeting immediate human needs. If someone comes to you in extreme hunger, you provide them food. If they need protection from the elements, you provide them shelter. If they are sick, you provide them care. If they are ignorant, you provide them advice and education. One of the great strengths of the paradigm of charitable philanthropy is its accessibility. Most people have the means to help another person in need, because doing so does not require vast wealth, special expertise, or a complex organization. When people see need, they can take steps to meet it here and now.

One of the greatest weaknesses of the paradigm of charitable philanthropy, however, is its tendency to foster dependency. When people realize that they have need but request aid to receive it, they may come to depend on handouts, rather than attempting to provide for themselves. For example, a beggar used to bring his coins to a local shop in order to exchange them for paper currency. When employees of the shop began to track his receipts, they discovered that his income exceeded \$100 per day. This enterprising person had become so prosperous soliciting donations that he no longer gave any thought to obtaining gainful employment. The problem illustrated here is that philanthropy, by fostering dependency, undermines the realization of human potential.

Another weakness of the paradigm of charitable philanthropy is its tendency to undermine the self-respect of recipients. Although some needy individuals have no qualms about receiving aid, others may resent the fact that their subsistence depends on the goodwill of others. Some people are ashamed of their inability to provide for themselves. Others feel indignant toward the welfare system they depend upon. The very acceptance of aid seems to some a painful admission of inadequacy. Of course, no one is truly independent or self-sufficient, and it is vital that we recognize our mutual interdependence. On the other hand, philanthropic activities that unnecessarily promote dependency are liable to damage the psyches of the very people they are intended to help.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the paradigm of charitable philanthropy was partially supplanted by another. This more

recent paradigm of scientific philanthropy is encapsulated in a well-known saying of Lao-Tse: "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." The paradigm of scientific philanthropy aims to move beyond treating the symptoms of need and to focus instead on the root causes.

With this approach, no longer would philanthropy aim merely to feed the hungry, shelter the naked, and heal the sick. Instead, it would systematically attack the etiologies of human deprivation. Instead of merely treating malaria, it would also eradicate the breeding grounds of mosquitoes. Instead of merely providing handouts to the poor, it would develop job training and day care programs, which would enable the poor to begin to provide for themselves.

The paradigm of scientific philanthropy addresses both weaknesses of the charity paradigm. First, it focuses on reducing dependency by enabling the needy to start meeting their own needs. Instead of encouraging aid-seeking behavior and thus perpetuating a cycle of need and dependency, it aims to enable the needy to stand on their own feet. It also addresses the problems of resentment and anger toward philanthropy. Philanthropy would no longer be represented by images of street beggars and soup kitchens, but instead by images of formerly dependent people showing off their newfound self-sufficiency. Eventually, if the scientific paradigm succeeded on all fronts, neediness itself might be purged, and philanthropy might put itself out of business.

The paradigm of scientific philanthropy contrasts starkly with the older charitable paradigm. In the scientific age, private philanthropy came to be associated with the very rich, men such as Andrew Carnegie and John Rockefeller, who possessed the means to bankroll huge projects working toward eliminating the root causes of war and eradicating infectious diseases. This paradigm also led to the rise of a class of philanthropic experts: men and women who understood the science necessary to pursue grand objectives, and whose administrative expertise made their achievement a practical possibility. The model of successful philanthropy was thus transformed from a matter of personal generosity to one of vast social programs designed to affect whole communities, nations, and even the entire globe.

However, the paradigm of scientific philanthropy has weaknesses of its own. It tends to deepen the social distinction between givers and recipients, expanding the ranks of the latter. Ordinary individuals could not hope to carry out the kinds of philanthropic projects characteristic of Carnegies and

Rockefellers. Likewise, they could not hope to develop the sophisticated level of expertise and organization that characterizes scientific philanthropy. The sheer scale of the programs lies beyond the means of ordinary individuals to organize or fund. Because they could not dream so big, they came to resemble recipients more than donors.

Thus the paradigm of scientific philanthropy threatens to replace the old dependency with a new one whose results may be no less pernicious. Comparing themselves to huge national and international philanthropic programs, communities begin to feel less competent to solve problems on their own. They come to rely increasingly on infusions of capital, expertise, and organization from outside their boundaries. Dependency of individuals is replaced by dependency of communities, who look increasingly to national and international philanthropic organizations for solutions to their problems.

The paradigm of scientific philanthropy heightens the distinction between the haves and the have-nots, but in a new way. The most exemplary philanthropists become those individuals who transfer the largest sums of wealth to philanthropic causes. The most important philanthropic organizations become the ones that boast the largest budgets. As philanthropy becomes scientific, it becomes quantitative, and the new professional class of philanthropic experts and managers develops a growing appetite for quantifiable measures of philanthropic activity.

A point that requires amplification is the effect of scientific philanthropy on the ordinary person's sense of philanthropic efficacy. When most people hear about the large sums of money being given to philanthropic organizations by wealthy individuals, they may ask themselves, "Compared to that, what difference would my contribution really make?" As a result, they may decide not to give. Likewise, when most people encounter the resources and sophistication of the best-known philanthropic organizations, they may think, "How could I possibly compete with that?" People may question whether their lack of expertise and relatively modest resources render them philanthropically irrelevant.

Thus the paradigms of charitable and scientific philanthropy are inherently limited. Even if they achieve all of their objectives, they cannot reach philanthropy's full potential. Conversely, even if their greatest dreams are never achieved, philanthropy itself can still realize its greatest mission. To understand why, it is necessary to explore a new paradigm of philanthropy.

A More Complete Paradigm

The most complete paradigm of philanthropy, liberal philanthropy, posits a different philanthropic objective. As noted earlier, the paradigm of charitable philanthropy aimed to meet immediate needs. The paradigm of scientific philanthropy criticized the charity paradigm for treating only symptoms, and instead focused on the root causes of need. The new liberal paradigm need not supplant either of these two philanthropic objectives. It remains appropriate to respond to immediate needs, as well as to help needy people become self-sufficient. However, the ultimate goal of philanthropy is not merely, or even primarily, to reduce, prevent, or eliminate need. The ultimate goal of philanthropy is to promote sharing.

The paradigm of liberal philanthropy aims above all to transform receivers into givers. When using this model, we can no longer rely on an initial needs assessment to tell us what sort of philanthropic activity a community most needs. Likewise, we cannot gauge the success of philanthropic programs by returning and conducting another needs assessment once they are completed. Merely assessing needs is not enough. If philanthropy is to succeed on the grandest and most important scale, it must aim not to put itself out of business by eliminating need, but to enhance awareness of the importance of sharing by highlighting the capacity to give. Philanthropic activity should aim to replicate itself, to transform receivers into givers, and to promote sharing throughout the community.

If the philanthropic sector focuses all of its attention on the needs of recipients, it takes away from its vital role in the lives of givers. If it aims to make itself bigger and stronger by accumulating more resources and increasing the scope of its programs, it diminishes the possibilities for individuals and communities to participate in philanthropic activities, and thereby damages the very people it means to serve. In a sense, it ends up behaving selfishly by arrogating to itself the philanthropic prerogative. The very notion of a philanthropic sector is essentially self-defeating, if it aims to remove opportunities for giving from ordinary people and place them in the hands of a class of well-funded experts. In the final analysis, people need less to receive than to give.

The essential excellence of philanthropy is not the objectivity and precision of its scientific methods, the rationality and efficiency of its social organization, or even the ever-increasing amounts of money it can accumulate. Programs intended to harm people, such as military campaigns

and tyrannies, may manifest these very same excellences. Instead, the essential excellence of philanthropy is liberality. Liberality comes from a Latin root, *liber*, meaning “free.” The goal of a liberal program is not primarily to give people what they need, but to free them, to release them, to liberate them to lead fuller and richer lives. The essential excellence of philanthropy lies not in filling empty stomachs or healing broken bodies, but in liberating the human aspiration to give.

Another term for liberality is generosity. A generous human being is someone who gives freely, and who takes pleasure in doing so. Generous people are the opposite of selfish people, who are inclined to take, and to take more than they should. The root of generous, the Latin *generare*, means “to beget” or “to produce.” The generous person, the liberal person, is not only attuned to the needs of other people, and thus able to give the appropriate thing in the appropriate way to the appropriate person at the appropriate time and for the appropriate reason, but is also characterized by a certain ampleness, richness, or fertility of spirit. To act generously is to act in the way of a full or complete person, someone who possesses a superabundance that invites sharing with others.

To appreciate the full significance of the paradigm of liberal philanthropy, it is necessary to think anthropologically. If we do not thoroughly understand human nature and the possibilities inherent in it, we have little hope of promoting its fullness. Human beings have many aspirations, which can be arranged in a somewhat hierarchical fashion from basic physical needs for food and shelter to higher needs involving full activation of character and the intellect. A philanthropy that ignores the most basic human needs may undermine all other pursuits, because people may be left too hungry or too sick to do anything else. On the other hand, a philanthropy that attends only to bodily needs neglects some of the most important things about what it means to be human.

One of liberal philanthropy’s highest objectives is to enable human beings to develop their full human potential. Lives not marred by hunger, disease, poverty, violence, and ignorance are certainly worthy objectives, but these conditions do not go far enough. For by focusing solely on the most basic human needs, philanthropy may unintentionally stunt the development of higher human powers. Merely throwing food or medicine at people is not the ideal. Philanthropy must also care about the development of character—

the character of individuals, families, and communities. In some ways, hunger and disease are not the worst fates in human life. The corruption of character involved in selfishness, duplicity, or cruelty wreaks far greater harm on the distinctively human part of a person.

Consider, for example, the condition of selfishness. Greedy people are not free, but enslaved. Where material goods are concerned, they are enslaved to money and the things money can buy. They believe that the route to the security, power, pleasure, and honor they desire is through personal acquisition of money, and so they devote themselves to amassing more and more of it, hoarding as much as they can to themselves. If they give, they do so from a vantage point of self-interest, as a means of deflecting criticism, building good will, or achieving some other material advantage that can be exploited for further gain. They think that by expanding their buying power, they are freeing themselves from the constraints of want, but what they are in fact doing is allowing themselves to become ever more deeply ensnared in a web of avarice.

Generous people, by contrast, are liberated from the trap of selfishness. Each egoist thinks that he or she is the most important thing in the universe, that his or her own satisfaction is the ultimate moral standard by which to guide his or her conduct. Liberal people, however, recognize that there are ends in human life greater than they, to which they rejoice in devoting their lives. Hence, if philanthropy is to achieve its highest mission, it must aim to reduce egoism and enhance liberality, thereby enabling people to lead richer and more complete lives, freed from the tyranny of selfishness. To do so, however, it must structure giving in a way that promotes not only receiving, but more giving. Thus the aim of philanthropic activity should be to transform people in need into people who believe they have something important to share, and who want to share it.

Liberal philanthropy should be distinguished from serial reciprocity, or “paying it forward.” The idea in paying it forward is that people discharge their sense of indebtedness through vicarious repayment. Instead of children repaying their parents for all the resources they invested in them, they repay the debt by making similar investments in their own children. Liberal philanthropy, by contrast, is not about the repayment of debts. Nor is it about keeping philanthropic capital in motion. Instead, liberal philanthropy is about enabling people, individually and collectively, to achieve the excellence

of liberality, and thereby to align their lives with the highest goods human beings are capable of pursuing.

Thus the paradigm of liberal philanthropy creates a new perspective on the problem of desert. The Victorians criticized the older, alms-giving model of charitable philanthropy for failing to distinguish between deserving and undeserving recipients of aid. They argued that people who make no effort to improve their condition, or even willfully refuse to cooperate with efforts to help them, should not enjoy the same philanthropic priority as people who make an effort to improve. Likewise, Victorian critics of their society's philanthropic efforts argued that people whose need was grounded in vice were not as deserving as victims of accidental misfortune, or people who suffered as a result of efforts to do good. Such criticisms provided some of the foundation for the development of scientific philanthropy. In liberal philanthropy, however, desert can be defined not only retrospectively but also prospectively, in terms of the recipient's desire to begin giving.

If sharing in joy is one of the highest human aims, then human beings need to discover the joy of sharing. In terms of the rational choice model that frequently dominates the social sciences, giving and sharing are difficult to fathom, and expecting people to get involved in such activities seems irrational. From the standpoint of human excellence, however, giving makes great sense, because it enables givers to create connections with other human beings and to pursue a good that is larger and higher than themselves. Real communities are nurtured not when people receive gifts from a common donor, but when people unite together to pursue some objective beyond self-enrichment. Enriching the lives of others is one of the most thoroughly engaging and joyful activities open to human beings. It is for this reason that sages regard giving as greater than receiving.

In the liberal vision of philanthropy, self-esteem need not be damaged by receiving. Everyone is in need at one time or another, and it is inevitable that some people's needs will be greater than others' needs. Seen in this light, self-esteem is damaged not by receiving, but by failing to give. Consider the cousin of a friend of mine, a woman who has been paralyzed and confined to a mechanical ventilator for over fifty years as a result of a bout of polio she suffered as a young woman. She finds herself in an extremely dependent position, much more so than most of us can imagine. Yet she is not consumed by self-pity or tortured by feelings of shame. Instead, she looks for

opportunities to enrich the lives of everyone with whom she comes into contact. Many visitors leave her room with a renewed appreciation for their blessings in life and a resolve to enrich the lives of others.

From the liberal point of view, the highest aim of philanthropy is a transformational or inspirational one. The point is to inspire people to become better than they are by devoting their lives to sharing with others. Once such inspiration takes root, people begin to realize that they have much greater philanthropic resources at their disposal than they supposed. They realize that wealth and philanthropic potential are not closely correlated, that a person does not need an advanced degree to be generous, and that daily life is replete with opportunities to act liberally. They realize that some of the most important philanthropic efforts cannot be measured in dollars, or even quantified in any meaningful way. Finally, they realize that small groups of people, and even one person, can make a great difference in the lives of others, sometimes surpassing even the difference that gargantuan philanthropic organizations with mammoth budgets are able to make.

Give a person a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a person to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime. Share with a person the joy of helping others learn to fish, and you enable him to participate in a goodness that transcends any particular lifetime. Do that for people, and you help them to glimpse the philanthropic possibilities in being human. This remains the highest aim of the arts: philosophy, literature, drama, painting, music, and so on. In this sense, Socrates may have done more to benefit humanity through his inquiries into goodness, beauty, justice, and love than he could have ever accomplished by healing sick bodies or working to improve the working conditions of Athenian slaves.

Conclusion

The paradigm of liberal philanthropy aims at more than satisfying the immediate needs of the needy. It aims at more than making the needy self-sufficient and thereby ending their reliance on philanthropy. Above all, it aims, in the course of meeting and preventing needs, to turn recipients into givers, people who concern themselves more with what they can share with others than with what others can give to them. This paradigm moves philanthropy from a primary concern with social control to a primary concern with cultivation of character. It ceases to equate philanthropy with transfers

of wealth. And it avoids the pitfall of supposing that only the wealthy, intellectuals, and professional managers can be truly philanthropic. In essence, the paradigm of liberal philanthropy cultivates and celebrates the philanthropic potential of every human being.

COMMENT ON GUNDERMAN

Steven Grosby

In “Giving and Human Excellence: The Paradigm of Liberal Philanthropy,” Dr. Richard Gunderman urges us to develop a more complete understanding of philanthropy. For the purpose of these brief comments, philanthropy is to be understood as voluntary gift-making and other activities intended to serve a public benefit that cannot be tied to the pursuit of either commercial advantage for its own sake or to a specific, politically partisan goal.

A call for clear thinking is always welcome. A call for a proper understanding of philanthropy is especially timely, given: (1) the marked increase in the size of the “independent sector” during the last twenty-five years, specifically, the growth of tax-exempt organizations (including religious institutions), the revenues of which now surpass 6 percent of U.S. national income; and (2) the currently “messy” condition of categories in the nonprofit sector, where different perspectives or, in Gunderman’s formulation, paradigms have emerged. These include “charity” of the sort long manifested in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church; the “scientific philanthropy” that arose out of the tradition of progressivism with its increasing encroachment upon—or crowding out of—autonomous associations by the state; and the recent emergence of “venture philanthropy” which views its activities as a social investment with the attendant expectation of evaluating that investment through some kind of calculation of its return. In addition, there has increasingly taken place a blurring of the distinction between philanthropic activities and the pursuit of profit within the nonprofit sector, albeit the commercial activity is ostensibly subordinated to, and thereby in the service of, the mission of the nonprofit association.

These and other such developments have understandably given rise to confusion over and discontent with the role of philanthropic activity today. The proper scope and boundaries of the nonprofit sector are no longer clear; for example, universities hold patents and formulate policies that call into question their purpose as institutions for the discovery and propagation of truth, as when they place restrictions on the publication of scientific research

because of commercial relationships formed with businesses that may have funded the research. Government programs, designed to address what are rightly or wrongly viewed to be social problems that are, as such, assumed to be solvable, have failed (with the possible exception of Head Start, which has at times shown marginal benefits). Indeed, government programs have often not only failed but also have made what is sometimes ineluctable human misfortune worse; for example, the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill has in turn contributed to the problem of homelessness.

In light of the many manifest failures of nonprofits to deliver expected services for public benefit, and the confusion over what should be the fundamental aim of philanthropy, donors are no longer content with the assertion that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Donors have come to expect that their philanthropic donations will be put to uses that they do not approve of, and they have come to expect that their contributions will be squandered. In response, donors increasingly do not simply seek to spread blessings (however understood) rather, they want accountability of a kind that is difficult to obtain from large, anonymous, and bureaucratic nonprofit organizations. It is certainly difficult to obtain, in any satisfactory way, accountability from the state. Donors also increasingly want clear, measurable results, which is likewise sometimes unrealistic.

To help us navigate through this confusion and discontent, Gunderman poses the problem of ascertaining what, fundamentally, philanthropy should aim to accomplish. He does so by asking us to think anthropologically, by which we are to understand that we should consider what it means to be human. He argues that a philanthropy that focuses exclusively on the attempt to ameliorate perceived social problems such as hunger, illness, or ignorance is, however well-intended, terribly misguided. Such an understanding of philanthropy is terribly misguided because to focus on ameliorating the problem of meeting bodily needs is to “sell human beings far too short.” Philanthropy fulfills its proper purpose, according to Gunderman, when its point of departure is the “development of character.”

Herein lies Gunderman’s objection to philanthropy understood as either charity or as a more “scientific” enterprise seeking to “systematically attack the etiologies of human deprivation.” These two paradigms of philanthropic activity, however well-intended, actually stunt the development of individual character. They do so by fostering dependency, both in the individual who relies on “handouts” and on

the aggregate level, where localities have come to see themselves as being helpless to address any number of problems, relying upon large nonprofit institutions and the state to address them. Clearly, Gunderman is right.

From the perspective of a philosophical anthropology that recognizes human initiative and social engagement (one that combines contribution with responsibility) as crucial for the character of the individual, both in principle and for a vibrant liberal democracy, these two philanthropic traditions not only stunt but also actually distort the character of both the recipient of the philanthropic initiative and the donor. Nothing need be added to the good things that Gunderman has written here about what this dependency means for the recipient. As far as the donor is concerned, the desire for accountability and measurable results is a good development, even if occasionally unrealistic. This desire should not be viewed merely as a corollary of either scientific philanthropy or “venture philanthropy,” with their sometimes spurious measurement of outcomes. This desire is in fact a consequence of accepting responsibility for one’s own affairs (in this case, one’s philanthropic contributions or, as Gunderman formulates it, sharing), specifically, taking one’s social engagement more seriously.

Gunderman has opened up for our consideration an important perspective in stating that if philanthropy is not to be self-defeating, it must move away from its current primary focus on social control or social problems and instead have as its central concern the “cultivation of the character” of both the recipient and the donor. The cultivation of character is to be understood as fostering the habits of individual initiative, civic engagement, and responsibility for one’s actions. The cultivation of these traits ought not to be equated with the conceptually vague idea of human excellence, however, for to do so will invite controversies that can only distract from a proper understanding of philanthropy in a liberal democracy, with the latter’s emphasis on the freedom of the individual and the freedom of association, both responsibly exercised.

Irrespective of its anthropological implications (of which I have not the slightest doubt), philanthropy is a practical activity. Moreover, it is an activity that faces the same restraints as do a number of other activities, not least of which is the mundane framework of the tax code. As such, one wants to know the concrete, programmatic consequences of the relation between giving and the cultivation of character. Gunderman’s paper offers little about what might be the concrete consequences of his argument. Clearly his effort was to

redirect and broaden our thinking about the aim of philanthropy, and he has succeeded in doing so. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw a few programmatic conclusions from his new paradigm, liberal philanthropy.

First, to give proper attention to the self-image of the recipient of philanthropic activity, aid recipients should be expected to contribute to the meeting of their own needs. This expectation should, whenever possible, be part of the program of the nonprofit organization. For example, families receiving homes from Habitat for Humanity are required to pay mortgages on those homes. This expectation satisfies two of Gunderman's concerns: (1) by decreasing an enervating dependency through fostering of self-reliance and responsibility, and (2) by having recipients contribute directly or indirectly to the acquiring or building of other homes, recipients participate in acts of sharing and giving, and, one hopes, develop them as habits.

Second, wherever possible, nonprofit organizations should engage in profitable activities to the extent that, in so doing, their mission is not compromised. This is, of course, a programmatic point fraught with numerous complications, ranging from potential violations of the mission of the nonprofit organization to problems with the flexibility, or lack thereof, of the tax code. As is well-known, various nonprofit institutions have been engaged in commercial activity for a long time; for example, the "resale shops" of Goodwill or the stores found in many museums. The wall between philanthropy and commerce should be made more permeable to allow for greater self-sufficiency of the nonprofit organization.

Third, it is likely that a more decentralized structure of philanthropy would promote greater civic engagement and accountability among the public. That it would likely do so has long been recognized, for reasons which need not be repeated here.

Finally, it is probable that these three programmatic characteristics of a new philanthropic paradigm would overlap and reinforce one another.

What philanthropy is or should be must be considered at this more concrete level. However, to do so properly requires an understanding of the fundamental aim of philanthropy that the numerous programmatic proposals for concrete activities should serve. It seems to me that Gunderman's paper has provided a significant step forward in contributing to our understanding of what that proper aim should be.

COMMENT ON GUNDERMAN

Jennifer Morse

Dr. Gunderman has given us an excellent introduction to the issues involved in developing a new and more humane paradigm of philanthropy. I want to suggest that his vision is both more radical and less novel than he seems to suppose. We have an entire sector already at hand to implement his vision. Yet harnessing this sector will require an even more radical shift in vision than that of merely giving up the charity view and the scientific view. I would like to call his view (and mine) an organic view of giving.

The sector that is already at hand is women, or more particularly, mothers. The reason Gunderman's vision is not so novel as he supposes is that women have a long and dignified history of precisely the kind of giving Gunderman endorses. In the last generation, however, women have been persuaded to abandon this activity in favor of work in the paid labor market. This is why the organic vision of giving is so radical: we need to reimagine the role of women in society in a much more profound way than we have been willing to do until now.

Within the last generation, women have been convinced that their dignity depends in important ways on their earning power, their job titles, and their personal independence. Women have defined their dignity in terms of equality with men in the competitive and commercial arenas of life. A more radical and yet organic view of the role of women, however, sees interdependence as a good thing; it sees market activity as derivative, not central, to the main business of a life well lived; and it sees the parental vocation to love as far more dignified than even the most exalted profession.

Necessarily Dependent

Gunderman identifies two major paradigms of philanthropy as the charity view and the scientific view. He correctly diagnoses several weaknesses of these approaches. I would like to add to his critique. Gunderman observes, "If the scientific paradigm succeeded on all fronts, neediness itself might be purged, and philanthropy might put itself out of business."

The problem with this view is that some people are necessarily dependent. We might even describe them as legitimately dependent. Every child, for example, is born dependent. And although individual parents aspire to “put themselves out of business” in the sense that they want their children to grow up, society as a whole can not harbor any such aspiration. The young, and other dependents, will always need sustained attention. The chronically ill, the mentally ill, the elderly, the seriously disabled—all these people are legitimately dependent, and will remain so, no matter how successfully the philanthropic sector is organized. Dependency is simply a fact of the human condition.

The autonomy we so value is the normal condition only for some people, and only for part of their lives. We are all born as helpless infants, completely dependent on others for our care. We may be lucky enough to live so long that we will again be dependent on others for assistance of many kinds. In addition, anyone could get a bump on the head that would render him radically dependent upon others. Any of us could become incapacitated by a mental or physical illness. Our ability to take care of ourselves, the independence we cherish so much, is not a necessary condition but rather a contingent fact, one that could be other than it is.

It is unreasonable to attack dependency as if it were necessarily a problem in itself. Gunderman’s critique of what he calls the charity view of philanthropy suffers from the same problem. He correctly observes that meeting immediate human needs is a good thing unless it fosters further dependency. I would amend his analysis, however, by observing that some people are necessarily dependent on others. For those people, the charity view is undoubtedly the superior model. The chronically ill, the mentally ill, the infant—these are people whose dependency is not likely to respond to incentives. They are, as a matter of fact, simply unable to care for themselves. As a result, the charity model works best for them; it encourages personal methods of providing care, and these methods are far more humane means of assisting the legitimately dependent. Both donor and recipient can benefit from such encounters. As Mother Teresa used to say, “The rich save the poor, and the poor save the rich.” The interaction with the poor, or the dependent, helps the able-bodied, or the rich, to see that his autonomy is itself a gift from God.

Natural Volunteers

It is our failure to see the naturalness of dependence—indeed, our fear of seeing this—that has been behind much of the modern impulse driving women out of the home and into the market economy. The fear of dependence deludes us into believing that independence is the normal condition for a decent human being. A person who is as radically dependent as a child is a creature to be avoided, both because he is entitled to make unreciprocated demands upon us and because he reminds us of how greatly our own independence is really contingent. We have also developed a cultural norm, which sees something suspect about a person who spends their time taking care of others. Such a person is herself dependent upon the material support of other, presumably independent, people. This way of looking at things is at the heart of the careerism that has dominated much of the modern women's movement.

But once we see that this view is mistaken in important ways, then the need to go to work to find fulfillment diminishes dramatically. A self-respecting woman can very well stay home, knowing that her intellect is not atrophying and her gifts are not wasted. On the contrary, she can wholeheartedly place her gifts at the service of her family and the larger community, rather than at the service of her employer and her own ego.

This understanding opens up great possibilities for Gunderman's new paradigm of giving. It is the mother who typically takes personal care of her own children. In the process, she helps them to become people who can give to the best of their abilities rather than take as much as they can get away with. She is the one who joins with other mothers to build up the community around her child. Baseball leagues, dance schools, scout troops, and church groups can benefit her children, and it is thus in her interest to contribute her time and talent to these groups, for her own children's sake. Thus this private interest of hers becomes a community or social interest. No child can play baseball by himself. The success of the group is exactly what is of value to the mother and her children. In this way, each mother is necessarily drawn out of her potential self-absorption and into a concern for the good of other people's children.

For these groups to work, somebody has to have the time to organize them and run them. No one cares about the success of these little groups the way mothers do. The mothers, in turn, recruit the fathers, the grandparents, and friends to participate in these little platoons. This participation helps connect these people, who may be full-time participants in the paid work force, to

something outside their jobs and commercial interests.

This used to be the way large segments of the philanthropic sector were organized. Women contributed their time and talents to the community. Their husbands, in effect, contributed to the community by providing their wives with the necessary time. But much of this activity fell by the wayside in the past half-century, a victim of both the women's movement and the professionalization of philanthropy. Many of those who used to do this work felt patronized by the feminist movement, which denigrated their volunteer activities. The feminists told them, "You don't value yourself. If you did, you would insist on getting paid." I have lost track of the number of times I have heard this account from women of my mother's generation.

Many of these women abandoned their philanthropic work with regret and a little bitterness. That work is now done by paid professionals. Instead of being done by amateurs—literally, those who work for love—the work is done by people who are paid for it. Surely the loss of these highly committed, highly motivated, and well-educated volunteers is a great loss to the community.

Dr. Gunderman has given us much to ponder. I only hope that he will have the courage to take his own ideas seriously enough to bring them to their logical conclusion. A society that tells women to suppress their desire to care for their own children is in danger of becoming no society at all but instead a mere collection of individuals. Insisting that every able-bodied adult be a full-time participant in the paid labor market is a big mistake. In this day and age, it takes courage to say so.

COMMENT ON GUNDERMAN

Amy A. Kass

Everyone engaged in philanthropy today—whether as a donor, trustee, foundation leader, or program officer—is concerned about philanthropy’s status and future. Where is it headed? How effective is it? To whom and for what should philanthropists be accountable? Recent revelations of abuses in philanthropic foundations have eroded public confidence. Renewed congressional scrutiny has put philanthropic leaders on notice. Few seem to realize, however, that the answers to such questions ultimately depend on more basic matters, such as “Why give?” “To what ends?” “In what spirit?” Richard Gunderman is to be praised for taking us back to such basics. By developing a new paradigm for philanthropy—“liberal philanthropy”—which he claims is more complete than the two extant alternatives—“charitable philanthropy” and “scientific philanthropy”—Gunderman invites us to think afresh about what philanthropy is and what it aims to accomplish.

In offering his new portrait, however, Gunderman uses a brush that moves too quickly, and he makes strokes that paint too broadly. By aiming to transform needy receivers into generous givers, he obscures the respect in which givers and receivers both need one another and are equally worthy. To be sure, blessed are the givers, as Gunderman emphasizes. But blessed, too, are the receivers—arguably, even more so.

Gunderman readily acknowledges the importance of the venerable paradigm of “charitable philanthropy,” which aims at relieving the immediate needs of suffering humanity. He also appreciates the more recent “scientific philanthropy” which moves past the relief of immediate symptoms to focus instead on getting at “root causes” and aiming at full self-sufficiency. But, Gunderman argues, however well-intentioned and even necessary they are as paradigms for philanthropy, both approaches come up short. Because each paradigm takes its bearings from need, he argues, each necessarily breeds dependency (in individuals in the first case, in whole communities in the second), divisiveness (between haves and have-nots based on wealth and, in the case of scientific philanthropy, based also on know-how or expertise), and

lingering resentment, fueled by a sense of inadequacy or ineptitude. And, perhaps worse, in the long run, should their mission be fulfilled and the need to which they respond thus be eliminated, each would render itself irrelevant. Neither paradigm, in short, can engage everyone in the philanthropic enterprise, sustain its activity over time, or fulfill “philanthropy’s highest aspiration.”

Gunderman’s paradigm of “liberal philanthropy,” by contrast, promises to be more enabling and more ennobling—“more complete,” he says. Predicated (albeit tacitly) on the assumption that all human beings are capable of philanthropy, it takes its bearings not from human neediness but from human generosity, and it concerns itself not with transfers of wealth or other tangible gifts, but with qualities or virtues of character, both of givers and receivers. It seeks to transform all receivers into givers, or more precisely, “sharers”; that is, “to turn people in need into people who believe they have something important to share, and who want to share it.” It aspires to enable all “people, individually and collectively, to achieve the excellence of liberality [which is, according to Gunderman, the “essential excellence of philanthropy”], and thereby to align their lives with the highest goods human beings are capable of pursuing.” Gunderman emphatically distinguishes liberal philanthropy from “serial reciprocity” or “paying it forward.” It is not, he insists, about “repayment of debts. Nor is it about keeping philanthropic capital in motion,” as in, for example, children repaying their parents by investing in their own children. Indeed, he dubs his paradigm “liberal philanthropy” precisely because it liberates human beings from the tyranny of such close calculations, as well as from greed and selfishness; it frees us to lead fuller, richer, nobler lives.

The Roots of Philanthropy

By emphasizing the character and nobility of the giver, rather than the neediness of the recipient, Gunderman takes us back to ancient territory. His “new” paradigm harkens back to the roots of “philanthropy” and its first known coinage, in Aeschylus’ play, *Prometheus Bound*. Aeschylus used the term not as a noun but as an adjective—philanthropic—to describe not the wonderful gifts that Prometheus gave to needy human beings but instead the attitude, disposition, or character that informed the giver. Prometheus is said to have a *philanthropos tropos*, literally, to have a human-loving disposition or character, that is, the disposition to promote the happiness and well-being of human beings. Attaining such a philanthropic disposition in all of us,

Gunderman argues, is the true goal of philanthropy.

No one can deny the inspiration that Gunderman's paradigm could provide for leaders of philanthropic enterprises. Nor could anyone object to the goals it promulgates. But one must wonder whether, as articulated, his salutary vision is either feasible or sustainable. If philanthropy as philanthropy seeks to educate the human soul, and especially, as Gunderman would have it, to inculcate the virtue of liberality or generosity, is it sufficient to transform receivers into givers? Can philanthropy afford to set aside its roots in the recognition of human neediness? Can there be givers if there are none who are ready to receive their gifts? Can philanthropy do without gratitude, the sentiment behind practices like "serial reciprocity" and "paying it forward"? I think not.

For all his concern about achieving philanthropy's highest ends, Gunderman seems to forget that the practice of philanthropy—*philanthropia*, literally, the love or care for human beings—necessarily involves a relation between givers and receivers. The correlative of giving is not, as Gunderman would have it, sharing. The disposition to give requires, as its corollary, the capacity to receive. Gunderman seems to overlook the fact that receivers, by receiving, may in fact be bestowing gifts as important as those they receive. He seems, in short, to overlook the "neediness" of givers.

Gunderman rightly recognizes that generous individuals are capable of giving the "appropriate thing in the appropriate way to the appropriate person at the appropriate time and for the appropriate reason." But he seems to forget that their ability to do what is appropriate requires more than "ampleness, richness, or fertility of spirit." Even more important, he seems to forget that it is those that have intimately known necessity—be it poverty, hunger, disease, or oppression—that may know best what is appropriate and even be more inclined to give, precisely because their lives were not always noble and free but sometimes needy and burdened. Suffering through harsh necessity is oftentimes the best teacher of philanthropy, disposing us to give better and more, especially because suffering makes us mindful of how blessed it is to receive. Receiving evokes gratitude, and with gratitude comes the grace of feeling graciousness toward others.

An episode recounted in Homer's *Odyssey* provides a luminous example. It takes place in Phaiakia, the last stop Odysseus is compelled to make on his long and terrible journey home. It focuses on the meeting of Odysseus and Nausikaa, the daughter of Phaiakia's King Alkinoos, a young maiden on the

brink of womanhood and marriage, a “virgin unwedded” (Homer, 1977, p. 105).

Odysseus swims ashore after battling monsters of the deep for twenty days. Utterly alone and absolutely exhausted, he falls into a deep sleep, only to be awakened by the cries of young maidens at play. Though he feels despair, his “belly is urgent upon him” (Homer, 1977, p. 105), so he rallies himself to go and face the young women, the first human beings he will have encountered in seven years. Looking monstrous, “like some hill-kept lion” (Homer, 1977, p. 105), all crusted over with dry sea spray, he approaches the girls carefully and cautiously. All but one flee. Young, stout-hearted Nausikaa stands her ground and faces him.

Keeping a respectful distance, Odysseus begins his supplication with words of blandishment: “I am at your knees, O queen. But are you mortal or goddess? If indeed you are one of the gods who hold wide heaven, then I must find in you the nearest likeness to Artemis. . . . I have never with these eyes seen anything like you, neither man nor woman” (Homer, 1977, p. 106). But suddenly, Odysseus stops himself. Gazing at beautiful, young Nausikaa, he recalls a time, long ago, when he visited Delos and beheld a “young palm shooting up.” Just as he admired the fresh sapling back then, “so now, lady” he says, “I admire you and wonder” (Homer, 1977, p. 106).

But then, just as suddenly, Odysseus’ tone shifts once more, and he beseeches young Nausikaa to take pity on him and to help him. Yet, even as he appears to become more self-regarding, he now clearly sees, as well, what is uppermost in the young maiden’s mind. With tact and grace, he addresses her need, by offering a most valued gift—a blessing: “[M]ay the gods give you everything that your heart longs for; may they grant you a husband and a house and sweet agreement in all things, for nothing is better than this, more steadfast than when two people, a man and his wife, keep a harmonious household; a thing that brings much distress to the people who hate them and pleasure to their well-wishers, and for them the best reputation” (Homer, 1977, p. 107).

Clearly, Odysseus has hit the mark. Speaking now for the first time, Nausikaa addresses the monstrous-looking man as “my friend,” and remarks, “you seem not like a thoughtless man, nor a mean one” (Homer, 1977, p. 107). Evidently smitten, she commands her handmaidens to feed, bathe, and clothe the weary traveler, after which she guides him to the palace of her parents, those best suited to ensure his passage home.

Several days and much hospitality later, shortly before Odysseus takes his leave, he meets Nausikaa a second and last time. From Homer's report of their brief exchange on this occasion, we learn the precise nature of the gift Nausikaa had earlier bestowed: "Then Nausikaa, with the gods' loveliness on her, stood beside the pillar . . . and gazed upon Odysseus with all her eyes and admired him, and spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words, saying: 'Goodbye, stranger, and think of me sometimes when you are back at home, how I was the first you owed your life (*zoë*) to.' . . . Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 'Nausikaa, daughter of great-hearted Alkinoos, even so may Zeus, high-thundering husband of Hera, grant me to reach my house and see my day of homecoming. So even when I am there I will pray to you, as to a goddess, all the days of my life. For, maiden, my life (*bios*) was your gift" (Homer, 1977, p. 133; emphasis added). Nausikaa asks to be remembered for giving Odysseus the stuff of life (in Greek, *zoë*)— food, clothing, shelter. Odysseus, however, says he will remember her for giving him back his human life (in Greek, *bios*), literally, for en-humaning him. What is responsible for this?

The Blessedness of Receiving

Two things strike me as central: first is Odysseus' responsiveness to Nausikaa. Beholding Nausikaa's invincible sweetness and innocence reminds Odysseus of sweet and innocent possibilities seen long ago but now almost forgotten as a result of years of violence, loneliness, and despair. Odysseus becomes aware again that his heart was once capable, and can be so again, of responding to the appearance of lovely and innocent things. Aware of his own responsiveness, Odysseus gratefully realizes that his spirit has not been crushed. He is still human.

But, second, and arguably even more important, is Nausikaa's response to Odysseus' responsiveness. Nausikaa's acceptance of Odysseus' gift shows the weary traveler that he still has something to give, something that can and will be received by another person. Yes, Nausikaa has enacted liberal philanthropy's highest hopes: she transforms the needy suppliant—the receiver—into a generous giver. But Odysseus responds in kind: he transforms the generous giver into a ready recipient. And it is especially his discovery that he too can still give what is fitting, I suspect, that fills his heart—now and forever—with prayerful gratitude, awakening not only his desire to give but also his confidence that he can be effective in his giving.

Gunderman’s “liberal philanthropy” would rightly focus on the characters of givers and receivers. But only by remembering the innumerable ways in which we are all, and always, needy receivers, can the desire to give be sustained over the long haul. It may be better to give than to receive, but the disposition to give and to give well requires the reciprocal virtues of receivers and reception that allow givers to do so.

Stories of greed and corruption in philanthropic foundations or elsewhere should come as no surprise. Human beings are not now and never will be without self-interest. We are not angels. But philanthropic giving can certainly shore up our better nature; it can put us in touch with what is better, richer, and nobler; it can help us live better lives. To do so, however, may well require us to experience the grace implicit in gratitude, which is part and parcel of the blessedness of receiving.

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CONVERSATION 4

Creating a Culture of Gift

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WITH COMMENTS BY

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CREATING A CULTURE OF GIFT

Frederick Turner

The Cultural Challenge of Philanthropy

In an important sense, human beings exist as actors in a drama or characters in a story. That play or story is generated in part by the cultural leaders and founders of their society, and in part by their own and others' constructions of their actions and motives in the context of the existing social scenario or in protest against it. As Shakespeare put it so much more simply and eloquently, "All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players."

We learn how to be good members of a lawful polity by means of detective stories, police dramas, and courtroom fiction, among other things. As members of a nation, we are shown the path of duty by war epics, heroic statuary, martial music, and the like. As property owners, businesspeople, and participants in markets, we are offered rather less inspiring models these days, because of the fading yet still charismatic afterglow of socialist idealism, with its distaste for the top-hatted rich. But the world of commerce still gives us uplifting dramas of imaginative and creative managers, successful artists, clever experts, canny buyers of antiques, technological entrepreneurs, and the like; and commercial advertising places us in imagined worlds of glamour, excitement, or prosperous serenity. As members of a natural ecological community we now have available a range of roles and models—the environmental crusader, the wise and frugal householder, the scientifically informed backpacker, the wise and gentle aborigine—and a grand tradition of nature poetry, landscape painting, and landscape architecture. As human souls we are offered the splendor and richness of the world's great religions in myth, ritual, hagiography, parable, mystical poetry, and sacred art and music.

Yet philanthropy seems to lack a representative cultural voice in the arts today. In the past, great donors might be depicted together with the Savior and his mother and the saints in altarpieces, and they would be credited explicitly in statuary, inscriptions, and the like. Charity galas and honorary

degrees still celebrate munificent givers in a modest sort of way. But the cultural range and drama of the life of charitable giving has always been narrow in comparison with that of martial heroism, law enforcement, sainthood, environmental virtue, and even industrial entrepreneurship; and today there is very little in the public culture that might lay out for a donor a narrative or pilgrimage or theatrical revelation or grand myth to guide his endeavors or reward her generosity. As for why this is so, I suspect some combination of the resentful economic envy that also limits the range of both highbrow and populist celebrations of business energy, with the unease we feel about being morally in debt to others, the discomfort at being victims of the potlatch. (Potlatch is the practice in many traditional societies in which the rich and powerful “big men,” by means of lavish and wasteful gift-giving ceremonies, confirm and extend their influence, morally dominate their less wealthy neighbors, and compete with other big men.) Even if the generosity of the rich has no intent to oppress and dominate, the temper of our times discourages us from humble thanks: one legacy of the socialist enthusiasm of the last 150 years, and its concomitant sense of entitlement, has been the near-elimination in intellectual circles of gratitude as a major virtue, and with it any motivation for celebrating the benefactor.

But to celebrate and guide the charitable sector we must first understand what it is, what it isn't, how it stands in relation to other aspects of the world we live in, and how it interacts with the various systems of government, marketplace, natural environment, and religion by which it is surrounded. This paper will first identify the critical juncture in philanthropy at which we presently find ourselves, drawing historical parallels to illustrate the dangers and opportunities that will be offered to us in the next few years. The paper will locate philanthropy in a typology of economies and draw conclusions about the need for balance among them and the special mandate of the philanthropic or voluntary gift economy. And it will suggest ways in which the artistic and literary culture can begin to celebrate and offer guidance to the philanthropic enterprise.

The Historical Moment

Estimates of the amount of wealth that will be inherited or given away in trusts and the like in the next few years range from 10 to 20 trillion dollars, riches that will be provided as gifts, riches not earned, not acquired by conquest, nor legislatively appropriated. The amount over the next 55 years is estimated to be between 41 and 136 trillion dollars. This is an almost inconceivable sum—around 17 thousand dollars for every man, woman, and child on the planet—and it will surely alter the world's economy profoundly, loosening the tie between effortful production and personal wealth that has been so important a feature of free-market capitalism.

Other periods of history testify to the benefits and also the great dangers of such large wealth transfers. In the last years of the Roman republic, for example, gigantic untaxed fortunes, gifts, and bequests to the Roman people and its army by the great magnates—such as Sulla, Marius, Lucullus, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Octavius, and Antony—were a crucial instrument of policy. The publication of a will before or after the donor's death could and often did alter the course of world history. The result was enormous wars, a flowering of cultural production, and an epochal change from republic to empire.

The Black Death in Europe, combined with a ripening of technological development and a warming of the climate, created another huge wealth transfer, ushering in the Renaissance, the Reformation, and more large-scale wars. More modestly, but perhaps in the long run just as momentously, the vast generational wealth transfers that occurred in Europe through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided almost every novel, opera, and drama of the period with the mainspring of its plot—the will or entail that frustrates or liberates the lovers. The accumulated capital of the Industrial Revolution fell into the hands of a section of society that had tired of the process of money-making, while being kept from the aspiring classes that would have been happy to put it to use. This wealth transfer was widely resented, to such an extent that the revolutions of the time were largely revolutions against the power of inheritance and the will of the bequeathers, and the result was the capture of most of that huge wealth by the nation-state through confiscatory inheritance taxes. Once it came under the control of the most ambitious, ruthless, or popular politicians, that vast pool of resources was then available to wage war—and was of course so used, with apocalyptic results. But much of that wealth also found its way into scientific and

technological investment, which, in combination with the low birthrate in the developed countries, has given us the gigantic windfall we now anticipate.

We might learn from history some valuable lessons about the risks of large wealth transfers. From the Romans we might find that giving it to the mob as bread and circuses results in civil strife, despotism, and decline. The Renaissance shows us that such transfers can corrupt religion and lead to savage religious wars. From the early modern period we discover that class resentment and the confiscation of gifts and bequests can have the paradoxical effect of empowering coercive government, which may decide that instead of improving the economic health of the people, it prefers to embark on industrialized slaughter and environmental destruction. Yet all three periods I have cited were also moments of grand human achievement and the birthplaces of major benefits for the human race. Wealth can disrupt in poorly understood ways the delicate balances in our political, religious, environmental, and spiritual systems; or it can be spread around so as to help all the parts of a society to flourish.

Economic Orders

Hence it is of crucial importance that we understand the various kinds of economic order we inhabit and that we discover the proper place of the gift economy, as I shall call it, among them. I shall use the term economy in its old, broad sense of “oeconomy,” a spelling that draws attention to its etymological connection to the Greek *oikos*, or household. An economy is a rule of house management, “house rules.” I distinguish five main economies in which we are involved as human beings (see table on pages 32 and 33): the political economy, the market economy, the gift economy, the environmental economy (usually called the ecology or ecosystem), and the divine economy or providential order. We shall focus upon the gift economy, but it is necessary to look briefly at the others in order to provide a proper context for it.

To this classification into five forms of economy it might be objected that the divine economy has been artificially separated from the gift economy. Philanthropy is regularly taken to include religious giving, and religious ethics in our society makes much of gift-giving. Indeed, in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism almsgiving is a very important feature. But alms in each of these religions evolved out of an earlier kind of economic

exchange, that of sacrifice. The only valid way we could communicate with the divine would be through sacrifice—ideally of one’s own life or that of one’s firstborn. These, after all, were our main debts to God or the gods. But the divine takes pity on us and commutes our debt to milder forms—animal sacrifice, circumcision, candle-burning, bread and wine, or the like; and then it further commutes those debts to internal self-discipline, service to others, and alms. In religion, alms are a means to a higher end—though in recent Christian theology the means themselves are elevated by the incarnation of Christ and the doctrine of the mystical body into an annex of the end. But the religious norm is that we are to give to others as a substitute for giving (back) to God. Many religions around the world do not greatly feature almsgiving, and they see the gift relationship as more between the Divine and ourselves than between ourselves and each other.

Thus religious gift-giving and service have a different source and spirit from the secular gift-giving of aristocratic largesse, artistic patronage, potlatch, Christmas presents, bequests, etc. It is not a way of winning solidarity, posterity and friendship, but a medium of communication with God. Modern secular donors give as a way of enlightening and educating themselves, of extending their goodwill beyond the personal sphere, of developing and expressing their own character, as a sort of work of art—as an expansion of the self into higher, less-selfish realms—rather than as an abnegation of self before the supreme generosity of God’s grace. Consequently, the benefits and dangers of such forms of giving are somewhat different.

Free and Coercive Economies

A cross-cutting distinction is also of great importance if we are to appreciate fully the appropriate contribution and possible danger of the gift economy. This is the distinction between imposed, forced, atomistic, one-way, bottom-up, deterministic forms of order, and emergent, self-organizing, global, systemic, top-down, free kinds of order. I am aware that many will find my use of the terms “top-down” and “bottom-up” counterintuitive here. If we put it in political terms, the point will become clear. Authoritarian or totalitarian regimes are thought to govern “top-down,” while democratic, free-market systems are described as working from the “grassroots,” bottom-up. What I would argue is that the institutions of civil society are in fact the “top” forms of order—and that they emerge spontaneously out of the

Table 1: TYPES OF ECONOMIES	EMERGENT, SELF-ORGANIZING
POLITICAL ECONOMY (GOVERNED BY CONSTITUTIONAL AND CRIMINAL LAW) (INSTRUMENT: FORCE)	Democratic institutions, voting, freedom of speech, Bill of Rights, etc. Goal: CIVIL FREEDOM Dangers: BUREAUCRACY, ENTITLEMENTS, LITIGIOUSNESS, RENT SEEKING, MORAL LICENSE, SPECIAL INTEREST LOBBIES, POLITICAL CORRECTNESS
MARKET ECONOMY (GOVERNED BY CONTRACT LAW) (INSTRUMENT: MONEY)	Free markets Goals: SOCIAL WELFARE THROUGH COMPETITION, INNOVATION, INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, REAL PRICING, WEALTH CREATION Danger: DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL
GIFT ECONOMY (GOVERNED BY UNCODIFIED LAWS OF HUMAN RECIPROCITY; HAPHAZARD REGULATION BY TAX LAW) (INSTRUMENT: GIFTS)	Philanthropy, voluntary sector Goal: PROMOTION OF GOODNESS, TRUTH, AND BEAUTY Dangers: CORRUPTION OF PRIVATE RELATIONSHIPS, DISRUPTION OF PROFIT MOTIVE, POSSIBLE POLITICAL CHAOS
ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMY (ECOLOGY) (GOVERNED BY LAWS OF NATURE) (INSTRUMENT: REPRODUCTIVE SURVIVAL)	Natural ecosystems and biomes, including simple human horticulture Goal: PLANETARY BIODIVERSITY Danger: CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL STAGNATION
DIVINE ECONOMY (GOVERNED BY MORAL LAW) (INSTRUMENT: CONSCIENCE)	Free religion Goals: SALVATION OF SOULS, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC MORALITY, RELIGIOUS VITALITY THROUGH COMPETITION Dangers: RELIGIOUS DISSENT, MORAL ANARCHY, CRANK CULTS, ETC.

IMPOSED, COERCED

Sovereignty, legislature, military, emergency powers, command economy, etc.

Goals: NATIONAL FREEDOM, SURVIVAL OF THE STATE, SOCIAL WELFARE THROUGH WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION, SOCIAL EQUALITY, SAFETY NET

Dangers: TOTALITARIANISM, WELFARE STATE PEONAGE, WAR

Management, internal capital markets, trade unions, business planning

Goal: CONFLICT AVOIDANCE THROUGH PREDICTABILITY, STABILITY, SOLIDARITY, STANDARDIZATION

Dangers: CORPORATION OR UNION APPROXIMATES COERCIVE STATE; RENT SEEKING, MONOPOLY, CARTELS, ECONOMIC STAGNATION

Potlatch; religious and customary rights, duties & entitlements conferred by generosity and inheritance

Goal: UNANIMITY THROUGH MORAL INDEBTEDNESS

Dangers: POWER-BUYING, CHARITY PEONAGE, BRIBERY, NEPOTISM, RESENTMENT OF PHILANTHROPIC AND LEGATOR MOTIVES

Industrial farming, landscape design, mining, civil engineering, fisheries, etc

Goal: CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND EXPANSION OF HUMAN ECONOMY

Danger: ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Theocracy, state religion

Goals: MOBILIZATION OF COLLECTIVE ENTHUSIASM, SUPPRESSION OF INTERNAL RELIGIOUS STRIFE

Dangers: INQUISITION, POGROMS, HUMAN SACRIFICE, JIHAD, SUICIDE BOMBERS, ETC.

cooperating and competing wills of free individuals (they are indeed “bottom-up” in this sense, but a free individual is a rather remarkably sophisticated achievement of nature, a relatively “top” phenomenon already). Totalitarian or authoritarian regimes are actually usurpations of the “top” role of individuals and civil institutions by the “bottom” agencies of force and coercion, usurpations that treat humans as animals or worse, as cells in a superorganism or molecules in a gas, and that either demolish or treat as mere tools the voluntary associations of church, market, civil association, and philanthropy. The kind of causal power that can effect such revolutions can only be exercised by reducing the complex, interdependent, voluntary, and mutually sensitive orders of civil society and the human psyche (the “top”) to interchangeable units in a mass (the “bottom”). Only recently have we developed understandings of the physical world that might make such distinctions intuitively clear; when the only available scientific vocabulary for talking about human beings came from the languages of classical mechanics, hydraulics, gas dynamics, thermodynamics, and the like, it was little wonder that we came up with such ideas as the Rousseauvian Popular Will, Millian utility, Freudian unconscious drives, Marxian masses, and the Nazi sense of race.

It is becoming evident that classical science from the Renaissance until a few decades ago, while increasingly excellent at discovering and explaining the coercive, “bottom-up” class of events in the universe, neglected or dismissed the free, “top-down” class, which was of equal or greater importance in understanding the universe. Science had developed methods for measuring and relating all the kinds of events that involved linear, causal relationships and explanations of wholes by means of the nature of the parts. That is, its method was reductive. But before the other class of events, science was relatively helpless.

To say this is not a criticism in itself. Science will and should always prefer reductive, bottom-up explanations, since this is part of the method that distinguishes it as science. We cannot be sure something has a higher-level cause until we have eliminated possible lower-level ones, and it is easier and more reliable to establish or disprove lower-level ones than higher-level ones. But the method should not dictate the findings of the method. The very fact that science divides itself into disciplines such as physics, chemistry, and biology, whose focus is on different levels of complexity, is eloquent testimony that higher-level systems cannot be adequately described in terms

of lower-level ones, and thus that systems, as well as the components of systems, can be causes. If physics, which deals with more fundamental entities than chemistry or biology, could do the work of chemistry and biology, there would be no need for those other two sciences. Science's glory is to establish top-down causality by assuming that all causality is bottom-up, and by signaling honestly when the assumption turns out to be invalid.

Historically, it was not until recent years that science has been able to exhaust enough of the bottom-up causes in the world that it could begin to look at systemic and top-down ones. But now scientific disciplines such as cosmological physics, global climatology, plate tectonics, evolutionary ecology, cognitive science, chaos and complexity theory, fetal development genetics, rational-expectation economics, neurochemistry, and the like are routinely investigating large global and systemic causes. And a new form of science is coming into shape.

A few definitions of key concepts in the new science may be useful.

Chaos theory is a body of understanding devoted to the tracing of hidden order within apparent disorder, and the discerning of disorder within apparent order. It includes such concepts as fractals, iteration, attractors, dynamical systems, nonlinearity, the emergence of new structures through feedback, the butterfly effect, self-organization, etc. Complexity theory is a body of understanding devoted to complex systems with many elements and/or nonlinear relations. Such concepts as emergence, dynamical systems, self-organization, etc, link it closely with chaos theory.

A dynamical system is one described by dynamics, the physical science of movement. Dynamics comes in two flavors: classical, dealing with the movements of matter in space, and thermodynamics, dealing with the differences that are made by factors such as heat, entropy, enthalpy, internal energy, phase states, and the statistical properties of pressure and temperature. The new science pays special attention to damped, driven, dynamical systems whose elements all affect one another without a clear priority or single causal source—systems that are everywhere in nature and seem to be responsible for most complex, interdependent systems and behaviors. Such concepts are now increasingly useful in fields such as sociology, economics, and political science (for example, in market behavior, voting, patterns of voluntary association, traffic flow, and so on).

A key concept in chaos theory, and in modern systems theory in general,

is iteration: the repeating of an operation or process, using the result of the previous repetition as its new input. Iteration need not produce a dull uniformity of product; it can generate unexpected new forms of order. Iterative—often called “nonlinear”—systems tend to have “strange attractors.”

The “attractor” of any dynamical system is the form that its various behaviors trace out in its “phase space”—an imaginary graphical space where the dimensional axes represent the various degrees of freedom of the system, such as its temperature, momentum, spatial extent, temporal limits, and speed. For instance, a swinging pendulum, gradually slowing through friction, traces out a simple spiral when its speed and location are singled out as the axes of its phase space. Obviously a phase space often requires more dimensions than the familiar three of regular space, making the whole hard to visualize; and thus phase spaces are usually carefully edited to show only the variables of interest to the observer, or those which make a significant difference to the object's behavior. One characteristic of such dynamical systems is the butterfly effect, the popular phrase denoting the possibility that, because of the sensitive dependence of complex, nonlinear systems on their initial conditions, the beating of a butterfly's wing in Brazil could trigger larger turbulences which would in turn escalate into a hurricane. Complex dynamical feedback systems in which all the elements are interacting demonstrate irregular behaviors that are often called chaotic. The phase space tracings of such chaotic behaviors can be beautiful, fractal forms, called “strange” attractors.

A fractal is an irregular geometrical shape that continues to reveal significant detail at any scale of magnification and cannot be represented by classical geometry. Fractals are said to be “self-similar”—that is, like coastlines, branching trees, river-tributary systems, or clouds, they show similar shapes at different scales, whether close up or far away. This property is also called “scaling symmetry” or “internal symmetry,” since this is a symmetry denoting invariance under changes of scale, rather than invariance under changes of rotation angle. Since such forms can have the odd property of filling up the space available to them with more and more detail—for example, a line densely kinking to fill up a plane, or a surface densely folding to fill up a three-dimensional space—they seem to defy the conventional absolute distinctions between one-dimensionality and two-dimensionality, two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality, and so on. Mathematicians have thus been able to classify fractals in terms of how densely they fill the

next dimension up, thus generating the concept of a fractal dimension. In addition to one-dimensional lines, two-dimensional sheets, and three-dimensional volumes, for instance, there might be forms like electrical discharges, cloudscares, corals, or bronchi that would have a fractal dimension of 1.85 or 2.37. In the words of Benoit Mandelbrot, their discoverer, such forms are: “. . . grainy, hydralike, in between, pimply, pocky, ramified, sea-weedy, strange, tangled, tortuous, wiggly, wispy, wrinkled.”

“Emergence” is the core concept of emergentism, the position that argues that new forms of being, such as life and mind, can come into existence by self-organizing natural processes which, crossing certain thresholds of size, complexity, etc, must dispose themselves into different kinds of entities displaying new “emergent” properties. As a simple example, the dry gas oxygen, when combined in sufficient quantities with the dry gas hydrogen, produces water, which displays the emergent property of wetness, with its specific characteristics of forming drops and a meniscus, clinging to surfaces, etc. One molecule of water is not wet; yet when enough are added together, wetness emerges. The emergentist position does not necessarily imply the conclusion that a creator is unnecessary. Rather, however, the creativity is immanent in the process of emergence itself; from a theological point of view, the exquisitely adapted forms of the world are best seen not so much as the products of an external designer, but instead as the lineaments of a divine metabolism.

The nineteenth-century concept of entropy has been reevaluated by the new science. Traditionally, entropy was seen as thermodynamic disorder, and it increased with time. In classical thermodynamics, the Second Law dictates that in a closed system work can be done only at the expense of generating waste heat, some of which cannot itself be used to do work. Thus a thermodynamic world with a finite endowment of free energy to do work is one which is running down or decaying toward an eventual heat-death. The increase of entropy takes place over time, and thus time and entropy provide definitions for each other, time's direction being set by the increase of entropy, and entropy being a phenomenon that increases over time. Information theory also contains a version of the concept of entropy, in which the generation of information must pay the cost of increasing informational disorder elsewhere; the two uses of the idea nicely coincide in the heating of a computer when it is doing calculations. However, contemporary information theorists are now pursuing concepts of computation in which

vanishingly small amounts of entropy are produced; and various researchers have pointed out that all such theory applies only to closed systems. Ilya Prigogine, for instance, has argued that in open systems, chance variations produced by nonlinear dynamical systems can reach far-from-equilibrium states that can reset the conditions of available work energy, precipitating emergent forms of self-organizing order.

Rational expectations, for instance, can turn a linear system into a nonlinear one by making the behavior of each participant in a system dependent upon its predictions of the state of the others. In such fields as animal group behavior, economics, sociology, law theory, and road traffic control, the expectations and predictive efforts of intelligent participants in a process such as a flock, a market, a society, a legal system, or a highway can confuse or frustrate any attempt to regulate or control it, or can generate new structures of general practice not given in the initial conditions. As a result, the proper role of an actor in such a system is not to try to control the system or join a majority coalition or achieve consensus, but to exercise one's own individual judgment, assess the needs of others, consult one's own values, look for opportunities, guess where sources of creativity and invention might lie, and humbly decide on what to do. The dynamics of free interaction will bring about the desired emergent solution—and if it does not, no other method will be any better. This injunction applies especially to philanthropic donors, who often abdicate their own better judgment in favor of being in solidarity with an imagined collective good.

Self-organization—the dynamics of free interaction—is the process in which a relatively stable system emerges through the interaction of all its elements with each other and with themselves. Such processes are common in the physical universe. The rolling boil of a pot of heated water is a good example of such a process; another is the Great Red Spot of Jupiter, a storm that has raged in the same form and at the same latitude for hundreds of years at least; a third is a living embryo, whose gestating cells specialize themselves through their mutual interaction to produce a functioning plant or animal. Societies and natural languages coalesce in similar fashion. There is evidence that the brain establishes coherent and retrievable memories in the same general way.

In short, science now recognizes certain circumstances in which there can, in fact, be a free lunch; but to get it we must abandon our expectations

of predictability and control. F. A. Hayek's brilliant description of pricing in a free economy is an example: the free lunch of a precise measure of need and utility is achieved only if control is relaxed and predictability partly abandoned. Michael Polanyi's theory of polycentricity is an elegant expression of the same idea in more general terms. Of course, things can still be forced to happen, at the cost of entropic decay; but now we have a better theory of how things can grow to be as we wish them without force and without loss. To go to war or to burn something for its energy is to force something to happen, at the expense of reducing some parts of the universe to smoke and ash. Sometimes those actions are necessary. But we will be better off in the long run by figuring out how to bring about our purposes through understanding and tinkering non-coercively with the creative processes in the universe.

Thus our table of economies distinguishes between the forced or coerced version and the free and self-organizing version of each one; and the reader will see that the results can be very different. In general, the free and self-organizing species of the political, market, gift, environmental, and divine economies are preferable. We have, as a society, renounced state religion altogether, and we have severely limited the coercive powers of the political economy. We have sought ways to combat business monopolies (such as Standard Oil and AT&T) and expose corporations (as in the Enron and Andersen affairs) to the free communication and scrutiny that characterize open markets. The problem is that those ways of regulation often involve the increase of state coercive power; our efforts at fine-tuning our system are always bedeviled by the likelihood that in opening up freedom in one economy, we are shutting it down in another. The environmental economy is a case in point. We value the natural, free interdependence of species in an ecosystem, but our efforts at protecting it can lead us to arrogations of power in the political sphere and impositions of coercion on the market. In turn, perhaps, we then run the danger of damaging our future political and financial abilities to nurture the environment and afford wise practices of husbandry. The imposed or coercive economy is always an evil, but it may be a necessary one; the Law is our system for mitigating the evil and effecting what is necessary by the minimum means. When our nation's very survival is threatened, we readily accept the need for otherwise evil, coercive measures such as war, intelligence secrecy, preventive detention, or quarantine.

The Role of the Gift Economy

Understanding the characteristic abuses of freedom in each of these economies can, perhaps, help us to correct them voluntarily before coercion is required to check them. This voluntary correction is an important aspect of culture. If we do not voluntarily correct our behavior, we may end up turning it over to distorting, coercive controls. For instance, the abuses of political freedom common in the 1960s counterculture arguably led to the abandonment of civility, etiquette, and the ideals of ladylike and gentlemanly behavior. The new frankness and discourtesy led to wounded feelings among women and minorities in business and education, which in turn led to the coercive attempt to curb bad behavior, which we know as Political Correctness—an attempt that has clearly limited our political freedom and imposed distorting restrictions upon the market and its ability to create the wealth that sustains us all. Likewise, we are still struggling with the medical and social effects of the abuses of sexual freedom in the same era, and are binding ourselves with legal restraints in the areas of family law and medical insurance that are harmful to our freedom. If we had better understood the dark side of political freedom, we might have avoided those problems; and it was and is the responsibility of our artists, storytellers, and wise thinkers to shed light on those dark areas and anticipate such abuses.

The distinction between the free and coercive versions of each economy is also crucial to our free cultural efforts to fine-tune our system. For instance, over the last two centuries or so there has been a chorus of dire cultural warnings about the corruptions and abuses of the market economy—amounting to cultural pressures that overthrew governments, created planned economies, and ended up killing over a hundred million human beings. If we had distinguished between the free market economy and the coercive market economy, many mistakes might have been avoided. We might have been able to see the Great Depression, for example, not as an argument against the market economy but as an argument against coercive, forced, imposed solutions in both politics and the market. Cultural leaders might have been able to warn business magnates about the dangers to their own interests posed by stock manipulation and monopoly, and to warn government of the risks that materialized in the Smoot-Hawley Act and other macroeconomic measures that turned a market drop into a world economic catastrophe. Instead, cultural leaders inveighed against business in general

and praised the planned economy of the Soviet Union. Present-day communitarians who mourn the loss of voluntary community may likewise be blaming the wrong flavor of our economies—wanting a sort of Weberian *Gemeinschaft* organized through WPA state fiat, when the kind of spontaneous gathering that is happening at Walmart or Starbucks may be the true “village pump” of our time. Advertising is a great villain among contemporary leftist cultural critics; however, perhaps the real solution is not coercive limitations of it but instead the marketization of freedom from advertising, or the free cultivation of sales resistance.

Most important of all, the analysis of our various economies and their unique systemic features can help us, paradoxically, understand their interdependence, the extent to which they are all sectors of a grand economy. If we are expert in one kind of economy, our professional perspective may make us blind to the claims of others, such that we become fanatical free marketeers or unrealistic religious crusaders or charity megalomaniacs or political junkies or Earth Firsters. Our sensitive appreciation of the systemic beauty and interdependence within one economy may cause us to bracket the others as easily manipulable, one-way causes, and thus make us lose sight of the even greater beauty of the intersystemic whole. Market economists, for example, often insufficiently appreciate the exquisite machinery of the U.S. Constitution that renders our nation’s politics nonlinear and creative; politicians who are well aware of the subtle feedbacks designed into our political system often think of the vast organism of the market as a simple domestic animal to be milked; environmentalists, so sensitive to ecological subtleties, often see both politics and the market as bad children who must be forced to take their medicine; theologians who are sophisticated about the delicate moral nuances of grace and redemption can be hopelessly naïve about political consent and market contracts.

In this contest of ignorances, the gift economy is uniquely disadvantaged: not only are all the other economies wretchedly oblivious of its intricate workings, it has no coherent body of theory (equivalent to Austrian economics, constitutional law, moral theology, or ecological science), and only a very small cultural footprint, as I have already pointed out, within which its details can be identified, explained, and put to creative work. The work of our present symposium is clearly to expand that footprint; and I believe one good place to start is to examine the gift economy’s ideal place in

an ecology of economies: What is its proper role with respect to the market, government, religion, and the ecosystem?

Here one small advantage accrues to the gift sector: its inhabitants are generally much better informed about the other economies than experts of other economies are of it. Great donors and philanthropic experts often have wide backgrounds in business, government, law, religion, and even natural science. Another significant advantage is that the gift sector at its best is doubly free: it can be emergent and self-organizing, as are our best models of business, government, horticulture, and religion; but it is also by definition based upon the free act of giving, rather than the constrained and constraining acts of contract-making or law enforcement (or the limits and sanctions of ecological diversity and habitat, or the justice of a judging God). Thus by virtue of its uncommittedness, the gift economy has the promise of being the most agile mediator and balancer of the other economies, of being the place where voluntariness can most freely intervene in their disputes or internal struggles, of constituting a sort of lubricant of grace and mercy to oil their narrower tolerances. But these roles have not been celebrated much in song and story—and they should be.

Another important initiative our symposium might take would be to distinguish coercive from non-coercive forms of giving. It might seem odd to speak of coercive giving, but societies such as New Guinea Melanesian horticulturalist and Northwest Native American fishing communities have shown us how generosity in the form of the potlatch can become a kind of tyranny and even degenerate into seemingly wanton destruction. Coerced giving, as with the U.S. welfare system before its 1990s reform, ended up creating a political peonage which was forced to follow its tribunes in government to keep the meager but addictive supply of free money coming in. Churches and mosques have at various times found their control of alms to be a source of power and a weapon in pursuing objectives that might otherwise have met with dissent. I have sometimes wondered, when contemplating the curious combination of magnificent public endowments with socioeconomic squalor in such cities as St. Louis and Cleveland—and even Washington!—whether those cities might not have been better off and freer for their people in the long run if the money that built the museums and symphonies had continued to circulate in the marketplace, seeding new industries and technologies. For many years the National Endowment for the Arts, as I have argued, helped to freeze the high culture of our country in a contrarian and outdated modernist paradigm under

the guise of promoting postmodernist experimentation; and it was abetted in this endeavor by private foundations such as the Ford, the Guggenheim, and the Rockefeller. Artists who wanted to explore other directions, such as classical form in poetry, drawing, fiction, drama, and music, were effectively stifled and censored in the name of “diversity” and “experiment.” Such reflections might lead us at least to closer study of how effectively liberating our gifts might be.

Even non-coercive giving might have subtle dangers. Artists and heirs, for example, have long complained about the burdens of patronage or inheritance. If the huge wealth transfers that are predicted for the coming decades should materialize, they may create equally huge systemic effects that we do not even imagine. Might the profit motive suffer? How could a society of rich heirs be persuaded to work? On the other hand, a theory of productive giving, together with instruments to effectuate it (such as philanthropic mutual funds or Morningstar-like rating systems or an equivalent of pricing) might produce massive undreamed-of benefits.

But unless there is a cultural excitement in the pursuit of such knowledge and such action, philanthropy will not attract bright minds and enthusiastic efforts. Philanthropy should be fueled by delight, pride, curiosity, and adventure, not by guilt, loneliness, fear of death, and duty. Here the work of our cultural producers, our storytellers and painters and historians and singers, is all-important.

The Contribution of Culture-Makers

What might be the major themes of an artistic and cultural movement devoted to the life of philanthropy? One theme might be the history of the evolution of gift-giving, and its relationship to our religious and spiritual history. Consider how Shakespeare’s searching analysis of the deep themes of English history endowed his country with a great mission, a direction, a wisdom about the possible, the dangerous, and the productive in national action.

An equivalent exploration of philanthropy might trace the origin of gifts in the generosity of both animals and humans to their offspring, celebrating the self-sacrifice of mammals for their young and citing the promises of Jehovah to Abraham and Jacob that they would become the fathers of a great people. The ethic of birthright that results, even if it involves such unsavory tricks as Jacob’s cheating of his elder brother Esau, constitutes a language that is rooted in our real biological drive to survive and reproduce. Without a primal language of such a kind, higher-order kinds of gifts could not be

described or explained, and might be meaningless. The emergence of a second language, one of justice and reciprocity, explained and rewarded in terms of the first language, now makes possible the revelation of a third ethical language, one of compassion and love, as we find in the Prophets and the New Testament. In modern times a fourth ethical language has begun to organize itself, one that recognizes the dangers to the recipient of unearned and unrequited gifts, the imposed passivity and disbarment from the human community of exchange that can result, and the moral danger to the predatory giver whose potlatch gives him huge moral power over the victims of his unrepayable generosity. The new, emergent ethical language is one of providing the recipient with the ability to reciprocate, valuing what the other has to trade, a love that grants dignity instead of demanding obligation.

Artist-historians might trace similar developments in other cultures, such as the Hindu and Buddhist, affording exotic locales for the narrative or depiction. Such art might explore the distinction between gift-giving among human beings, which needs to be a two-way process, and gift-giving between the Divine and human, which cannot but be one-sided and which is as much more mysterious than human giving as human giving is than commercial trade. Likewise, the gifts of nature in the form of landscapes and beautiful species, and our reciprocal activity of environmental restoration or wise landscape architecture and city design, might receive artistic attention as analogous to or subtly different from charitable giving. The moral heroes of this epic story, who help catalyze each fresh leap forward in our moral vocabulary, might begin to be recognized as generously as our military, scientific, entrepreneurial, or religious heroes, and thus serve as models for a new philanthropic class. And the evolution of gift in history might be paralleled by an analogous evolution in the psyche of a developing youth, in a bildungsroman or coming-of-age story like that of Hans Castorp in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*.

Another kind of story might focus on the opportunities and tragic dangers inherent in large-scale gift-giving. How might the marvelous mechanisms of pricing and profit that—as Hayek and other economists have shown—so exactly indicate the best paths of efficiency and need, be adopted into philanthropy? Are there scientific or technological discoveries that can help the market work in harmony with the gift? Could there be the equivalent of detective stories, in which an incorruptible investigator from the philanthropic equivalent of Morningstar, the equities rating agency, would unearth the mystery of some

failed or corrupted attempt to improve the lives of others? Could there be great fictions or artistic biographies of brilliant philanthropic entrepreneurs who have discovered or created some ingenious way of doing well by doing good? The artist-patron bond might be explored through searching and beautiful tragic or comic dramas, celebrating the nurturing power of the great collector as well as the creative power of the artist. Philanthropic victims of the State's brutal, coercive attempt to remove all rivals to its power might emerge as exemplars of behavior parallel to such religious martyrs as Thomas á Becket. Hubristic and tragic givers, such as Timon of Athens, might be given insightful depiction as warnings against the corruptions of generosity.

The Law itself, when it is effective in freeing people, can become the beneficiary of philanthropic intervention; and such intervention affords enormous opportunities for heroic narrative and poetic adventure. Consider the remarkable work of Hernando de Soto, who with the help of charitable contributions has organized an international team of lawyers to certify and entitle the legal rights of poor, Third World people to their own property, thus liberating its value as capital to support business enterprises, technological progress, responsible land husbandry, and the political franchise. Such work cries out for artistic celebration that would encourage a new generation of legal emancipators, freedom riders of productive market capitalism. And when the Law is inadequate for or harmful to poor people, philanthropic donors have stepped up to remedy the defect, as in American urban public education, where privately funded school voucher initiatives have sprung up around the country to defend the public from rent-seeking teachers' unions. Imagine movies that might bring to life the work of such crusaders, and do for them what Erin Brockovich did for the efforts of environmental idealists!

Gratitude might be revived in the new century as one of the chief virtues, its deep relationship with grace—not just an etymological one—being noted in poetry and narrative art. The derivation of the word mercy from the name of the god Mercury, who also gives his name to the market, merchants, and commerce, might spark an investigation of the deep links between money and gifts, the play between obligation and unconditional love. The “forgiveness” theme in Mozart, hinted at in *La Clemenza di Tito* and repeated in *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così Fan Tutti*, and *The Magic Flute*, might find a twenty-first century reply. How might artists cope with the challenge of rehabilitating the unfashionable rituals of thanks and humble praise? How might the hated

feeling of shame be given its proper place as the defense of honor and the portal to the sweet paradise of humility? These are huge challenges for the artist—but artists enjoy huge challenges. And they all come out of the ancient practice of gift-giving.

A Philanthropic Poem

What follows here is a sort of prototype of the artistic/cultural work that this paper calls for. A poet had better put his creative effort where his mouth is! “Brine” tells the story of an extraordinary entrepreneur, Carl Hodges, who is both a benefactor and a successful businessman. Hodges was the leading scientist involved in the creation of Biosphere Two, which for all its flaws is the world’s premier ecological experimental laboratory. He has created a revolutionary new concept in both ecological and agricultural science: seawater agriculture. Using specially bred strains of halophytic (saltwater-loving) plants, and shrimp and fish-farming, he has turned vast stretches of desert seacoast in Sonora, Gujarat, Saudi Arabia, and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa into green, productive oases that feed the local populations, generate needed foreign exchange, and extract greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

“Brine” is a poetic journal of my work with Hodges as a consultant with Seawater Farms Eritrea on the war-torn Red Sea coast. In the background is Eritrea’s tragic and heroic history, in which the tiny republic, outnumbered ten to one, threw off the tyrannical rule of Haile Mengistu, the “jackal” that succeeded Haile Selassie, the “Lion of Judah” who had successfully resisted Italian colonialization. “Eritrea” is the modern version of “Erythraea,” the ancient Latin name meaning “Red Sea.” The poem implicitly sets the philanthropic enterprise into its larger context, showing how Hodges’ extraordinary project fits into and might ameliorate a tragic political economy, how environmental and social philanthropy can go hand-in-hand with business enterprise and intelligent marketing—how the World Bank, for instance, can make itself useful by funding micro-investment loans—and how both business and the gift economy might help bring about a new surge in religious insight. In the symbolic background of the poem is the ancient Arthurian myth of the Holy Grail and the Fisher King, who holds the key to transforming the wasteland into a productive paradise. “Brine into bread, blood into poetry”: this is one poet’s celebration of a culture of gift.

BRINE

An Erythraean Journal

For Carl Hodges

5/7/01

So one more time I'm called on to abandon
This cyan bluescreen cybernetic dream,
This skylab of American abstraction,
And step into the bloodred living stream.

I'm going to a place that is an icon:
The Lion of Judah, that defeated Rome,
Was followed by the Torturer, the Jackal,
Who broke the hive and stole the honeycomb.

And heroes with the eyes of Theban princes
Drove out the Jackal, set the nation free,
And fought for thirty years in the desert
Against the driven slaves of tyranny.

And there's a plain where I must learn their music,
Littered with shattered tanks, the sands of God,
That was a battlefield as grim and grievous
As those of bloody Kursk and Stalingrad;

And I who was the counsel of the spacemen
Must meet the warriors on that barren shore
To turn the Red Sea green with love and poems
And help them find the peaceful form of war.

5/9/01-5/10/01

Again the limbo of the airport journey:
 The icon climbs towards, then flees the Pole.
 The wine, the airless air, the juice, the coffee,
 The spatial sign abstracted from the whole.

Like all my friends, my traveling companion
 Has turned into a strange and wise old man.
 A stranger wise old man waits at the airport—
 We're mad old monkeys in a caravan!—

A banquet in this steel hotel in Frankfurt,
 With tanks of shrimp, the poet, the scientists,
 The businessmen, the chic photographer,
 The cooks, the brilliant women, journalists.

Mounds of sweet shrimp sautéed with garlic,
 The pink fruit of the seas of Africa,
 Are carried in with rolls and chardonnay,
 Amazing the bright man from Lufthansa;

And later, like a dream, there comes the conclave
 Where the pierced King invites his paladins
 Into a service doubtfuller and purer
 Than any of the war-drenched disciplines.

5/10/01

Evening in Jeddah. Into the ancient story
 Where princes fly their falcons at the sun.
 We lose a thousand years of God and Allah
 And set down in the realms of Saladin.

So all we do must be a great translation
Between two times, between two worlds of soul:
Between the land and sea, between a nation
And its own yet-unconsecrated goal.

The lean Norwegian colonel tells us frankly
How Ethiopia could brush aside
His screen of Kenyan troops and take Asmara
But for its fear of Eritrean pride—

Another thirty years of war and chaos,
And Africa bleeding into the sea;
Unless we dream the sacred transformation:
Brine into bread, blood into poetry.

5/10/01

The airport in Asmara's like a picnic,
Everyone's hugging in the parking line;
The nation has a family resemblance,
Inward, fine-featured, dark, and aquiline.

French archeologists at Knossos marveled
To see the goddesses of Minos when
They found their tiny forms in terra-cotta:
"Mon Dieu," they said, "Elles sont parisiennes;"

Just so, these little Eritrean ladies
Have such a chic, such tailored elegance:
How in so poor a country can they manage
This studied, innocent insouciance?

And in the war they fought beside the menfolk;
One of the country's wry historians
Claims that their soldiership was rather better;
Better beware of these parisiennes.

5/11/01

Dawn in Asmara. As if born reincarnate
The world glows fresh in all its childish awe,
And you can smell again, the jacaranda
Smoke blue by fiery bougainvillea.

Forty-five years ago I wept and parted
From the bright coasts of tragic Africa;
Now the wheel turns, I am forgiven
For one more try at this incognita:

Down from the mountain to the sun-stunned plainland,
Exhausted hillocks of the old seafloor,
The hottest place on earth, earth's epidermis
Naked against the sun, an arid shore.

And this is where our white-hat Carlos Magnus,
Our Doctor Carl, has picked his paradise,
To grow in Hell a second vale of Eden,
Here in the birthplace of the human race.

5/12/01

Once I received a dream of terraforming,
Mars a new home for all our living kind:
Now the Red Sea pours through canals and channels
Into the world my heroes had designed;

First to the shrimp-ponds, turbid, dark, and yeasty,
Where a brown worker, water to his chest,
Can feel the clawed crustaceans brush his ankles
In a wild wealth of living interest.

(Spawned in the labs with crazy intricacy
By scientists from quake-torn Gujarat,
Sonora, Texas, Yale, and Eritrea,
Tweaking the sex by clock and thermostat);

Then to the lakes dimpled with pale tilapia,
Where ibises and weird flamingoes fly,
And water that would foul and glut the ocean
Becomes the food the fish are nourished by;

Then to vast fields of jadegreen salicornia,
Whose tips provide a mild asparagus,
Whose seed is pressed for oil, whose stem for fiber,
Whose roots sequester carbon, and will thus

Suck from the sea the gases of our burnings,
Ransoming us from the imprisoned sun,
And so redeem the oil-debt of Arabia,
Paying in soil for what our fires have done;

Then to the meres that stretch to the horizon,
Lakeland and marsh, seeded with mangrove trees,
Where eco-tourists soon will sail and wander
Among a myriad birds and honeybees;

Then to the aquifers, that are already
More saline than the native Red Sea brines,
Floating the fresh that flows down from the mountains
To help oases grow their green-shade shrines;

And cultured dragonflies eat the mosquitoes,
 And hives collect the honey from the bees,
 And mangrove-shoots are fed to goats and camels,
 To make a rare and much sought-after cheese;

And a cafe springs up by an acacia,
 Where farmworkers eat fiery omelettes,
 Mercury, market-god, cheerfully deigning
 To drink at Carl's seawater rivulets;

And we will draw the water to the village
 And get the World Bank to make micro-loans
 To seed a further round of breeding nature
 Into the realms of bikes and telephones,

So that these bright-eyed poorest of all peoples
 May see their children grow to join the world
 And feed the human race with their new stories,
 And the gold flower of history be unfurled.

5/13/01

We visit in the shanty-town, whose children
 Follow these strangers, grinning butterflies;
 Amateru, its name is; Carl renames it
 "Obre Ojos"—that is, "Open up your eyes."

(Two days later we find out from a Tigre
 The place had got its name during a gale;
 A captain got a glimpse of that low coastline
 And called out to the helmsman he should sail

South for the harbor where they might find shelter;
 The pilot could not see it; in surprise
 The captain chided him and in Tigrean
 Shouted "Amateru!": "Open your eyes!")

5/13/01

Meetings at the bar and in the office:
The saintly journalist and big shy Ross,
Who in their love for Africa sailed fearless
Down the blood rivers of her Erebus;

The genial governor who knows his people,
The Indian expert on the coastal birds,
The gentle landscaper, whose only language
Is maps and pictures, but who's drunk on words;

Beth the professional, the businesswoman,
Yet queenly in her bosom and her eye,
Samuel, the smiling one, and able Tesfom;
The tough Girl Friday; Allan and I:

All called together for this goodly service,
Lives offered this one chance at something grand,
As if the douze peers sat once more at table
And the sangraal promised a redeemed land.

But who's this quiet brown man whose eyes see through me,
Who makes me question all that I have done,
Who calls the airy poet back to history,
Who is this fine-boned Petros Solomon?:

He who commanded in this eastern desert
Against the Soviet tanks of Mengistu,
When in a series of flanking maneuvers
Solomon's swift battalions broke through;

And by a berm half-buried in the water
Lies a T-55, its turret blown,
That I saw yesterday, its metal rusting
To make a fertile stain where seeds are sown;

Now Petros is the minister of fisheries,
 And I the poet have become his friend,
 As if in the rich lakes of Eritrea
 The war of pen and sword comes to its end.

5/13/01

Later that night, after a long car-journey
 Through the dim fenlands cooling into dew,
 We come upon a scene of bright truck-headlights
 With many people where the pipe goes through;

It seems the pump got stuck and they have fixed it—
 It's like a party; girls and shirtsleeved boys;
 And there's a silence as they get it going
 And then the water's heavy gurgling noise

And then the rush as it renews the cycle
 And low cheers from the gathered multitude;
 One young dark giant lit up in the shadows,
 A sudden gesture, wet and semi-nude;

These are the new children of sad Africa,
 They will inherit what these times have made;
 And who are these for whom work is a pleasure,
 Labor a party, playtime, and parade?

When I was just a boy in old Rhodesia
 My greatest joy was finding a clay spring
 And digging dams and waterfalls and islands
 And setting paddle-wheels a-flickering;

And they and Carl have got the biggest playground
 That human beings ever yet have known;
 The loveliest, messiest complex of hydraulics,
 An ocean and a mud-box of their own.

5/14/01

Something is happening on this dun seabed.
The green brine pours like blood through trench and pipe.
It is the coming of the marvelous vineyard,
And the millennium is gold and ripe.

For through these Mars-canals flows endless money,
From the Red Sea and from the Indian
And the Antarctic and the Pacific oceans
And all the waters since the world began;

And it runs back through shellfish, leaf, and breastmilk
And aquifer and ancient mantle-flow,
And everywhere it goes it grows to spirit
Crystallizing into plant and embryo,

And we contain it in our marks and dollars,
Nacfas and francs, yuan, and yen, and pounds,
And it pours on through fiber-optic channels
And dendrifies and buds as it compounds,

All thickened, as the primal soup was kindled,
By the prodigious engine of the sun,
The mine of fire that burns a billion ages,
Phoibos or Ra or Christ the bleeding Son,

Or Allah the All-merciful, or Krishna,
Or Jahweh burning still in Midian,
Or the soft jewel in the Buddha's forehead,
The gift the Jaguar gives to everyone.

5/14/01

At first the law of God was: Take the birthright.
 Then in the language that the first law made,
 The second law was justice in its balance,
 In wrath, revenge; in friendship, equal trade.

Then in the terms that justice had commanded
 The prophets spoke the third law into fact:
 Alms and abundant gifts unto your neighbor
 Would better show your justice in the act;

Now in this language comes the new commandment:
 Give not the mere gift but the gift of gift:
 Never impose an unrequited present,
 The spiritual form of pinching thrift;

The generosity is in the bargain,
 My valuing of what you have to trade:
 We are the animal whose whole fulfillment
 Lies in the other's use of what we've made.

Love in its first sketch is an act of conquest,
 A taking or a predatory giving out;
 An unresearched enforcement of our feeling,
 The greedy god-eating of the devout;

Love now is woven out of intricacy,
 The circulation of a mutual grace,
 A sedulous knowledge of the other's knowing,
 An understanding of the other's face;

Where I may only know the other's wishes
 Through what the other longs to give to me;
 And she in her delighted overflowing
 Nurtures the thing in me that makes me free.

The fresh Nile gave six thousand years of plenty,
The semen of the flood that fed the kine,
Flowing throughout the ovaries of the Delta:
Now the diluvian cordial is brine.

5/15/01

Petros, at our last supper, asked of Carlos
Who would succeed him as his chosen heir,
Who had the secret knowledge of the waters
To rescue Africa from its despair;

For enterprises of great hope had foundered
Once the white man had ceased to take the lead;
And in corruptions and obscure diseases
The gardens had succumbed to waste and weed;

What expert European would succeed him,
What wise American would run the farm?
Who would take on the master's fruitful vineyard
And keep the shepherd's sheep from taint and harm?

And Carl surprised us, pointed down the table
To Samuel, who sat there silently,
The young biologist from Asmara,
The African with the advanced degree;

Petros the warrior had led the forces
That set the Samuels of his nation free;
And they first, after Europe was defeated,
Saved Africans from African tyranny;

And Carl had simply thus reminded
All of that grave and merry company
How Africa would lead the world, not follow,
And black men would plant gardens of the sea.

5/16/01

Now flying home, the turning world beneath us,
Was it a dream, was it true wakefulness?
And can there be a new law in the making,
One where the greater does not rob the less?

Kurt the good journalist had said it plainly:
ABUNDANCE was the headline written here.
Below, the ocean glitters in its blueness,
A vast blue womb, a pregnant hemisphere.

I Joseph tell this dream to you, my pharaohs,
Of this the land of Axum, Saba, Kush:
God one day will be not the only giver,
Our grace will bless Him in a sudden rush;

The ocean will become a running river,
Drive the divine economy's prayer-wheel;
The wasteland will become a flowering garden
Where the King Fisher's ancient wound will heal.

COMMENT ON TURNER

Herbert London

Frederick Turner's extraordinary essay sets the stage for an assessment of charitable gifts. Turner offers various models and forms of charitable activity that draw from science, history, and economics. On the whole, this is a truly impressive achievement. While I am generally sympathetic to his arguments, there are specific areas in which I part company. Most notably, I am not persuaded that the economic free market applied to culture leads to a salutary result. Culture—circa 2005—has been degraded by a free market unconstrained by virtue. The storytellers and thinkers Turner makes reference to have been seduced by commercial and “democratic” impulses. As a consequence, the tales of cultural revival so necessary in our age do not exist and, at the moment, are not likely to be funded by the foundation world or charitable gifts.

Let me start with Professor Turner's reference to free and coercive economics. A democratic, free-market system elicits competing wills of free individuals, thus allowing civil society to flourish—or so it is argued by Turner. Yet it would appear that the free market applied to culture often has the opposite effect.

Alas, a cultural free market seems to operate under a Gresham's Law, with the bad driving the good out of circulation. Television fare, for example, is designed for the lowest common denominator. Instead of being uplifting, it attempts to reflect what is coarse and degrading—all, I should hasten to note, in the interest of “democratization.”

While Turner recognizes “the abandonment of civility, etiquette, and the ideals of ladylike and gentlemanly behavior,” he contends that the “new frankness” engendered by the counterculture led to political correctness which limits political freedom and creates distortions in the economic market. But what might be said is that political correctness is selectively coercive. It is true that a person may not criticize certain designated “protected” groups, such as blacks, Muslims, Hispanics, Africans, etc., but attacks on Catholics, evangelicals, orthodox Jews, and other such persons remain outside the coercive orbit.

Similarly, Turner suggests that it is the responsibility of artists, storytellers, and wise thinkers to enlighten the society by dispersing the dark

clouds that hover above the culture. Yet Turner seems to ignore the obvious fact that Norman Mailer, Paul Goodman, Charles Reich, Susan Sontag, Herbert Marcuse, Norman Brown, Jean Luc Godard, and Abraham Maslow, among countless others—artists, thinkers, and storytellers—were greatly responsible for creating the countercultural conditions he openly deplors. Yes, it may be the responsibility of storytellers and thinkers to restore civility, but the powerful existentialists who remain in their midst refuse to accept the organic ties to the past which are woven into civilization.

Turner notes that the unrestrained act of giving is a desirable model for human behavior. Surely there is much to be said for it. But the freedom he points to, while “self-organizing,” often has a baneful social influence. It is instructive, for example, that David Packard started a foundation devoted to population control, notwithstanding the fact that 44 percent of the world’s population is not in a replacement mode and by the year 2050 the global population may be in decline. Having the freedom to give also translates into the freedom to make bad selections, even harmful ones.

The benefactions of the Ford Foundation in the 1960s to promote decentralized schools actually increased racial tensions between white teachers and black community organizers in the Oceanhill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn. Clearly, reasonable postulates can have devastating practical effects.

Turner reveals that he is somewhat sensitive to this issue when he makes reference to “productive giving.” However, he overlooks the contemporary charitable temptation to give for narrowly specified results. The “Morningstar rating system” he calls for already exists. As I see it, a more productive type of foundational giving—open-ended contributions to talented individuals or promising institutions—is far too rare.

Surely Turner’s soaring imagination allows him to entertain the remarkable ways in which philanthropy can be married to heroic narratives and poetic adventure. The key to these narratives, however, is verisimilitude and truth-seeking notions. When Turner uses the film *Erin Brockovich* as an example of art that brings to life the work of environmental crusaders, he is using a phony story that masquerades as truth. Alas, that brings us to the caveat required when asking marginal storytellers to develop the narrative for a cultural resurrection. Erin Brockovich was not a crusader for environmental safety, but instead a self-seeking opportunist who exploited an issue for personal aggrandizement.

In what sensible way can lies inspire? Once the false frame is excoriated, the bare truth lies starkly as a reminder of the original deception. It is far better to set the record straight from the outset. If only there were a sufficiently large number of storytellers and thinkers who could engage the populace with ideas that uphold and reinforce rational judgment!

Maimonides understood that the highest form of giving is a partnership, “a helping hand” in which the expectation exists that the giver wants a relationship with the receiver and there are mutual expectations. The giver offers all that he can, and the receiver is expected to imbibe lessons that will make him a better (read: independent) person.

Turner asks, quite appropriately, “How might the hated feeling of shame be given its proper place as the defense of honor and the portal to the sweet paradise of humility?” This is surely a challenge for the contemporary artist, who as it happens, has not found an answer. Book titles such as *Making It and Advertisements for Myself* suggest a cultural quest of self-absorption. In fact, shame has already been interred, along with humility. The difference between fame and infamy is indistinguishable in a society where being a celebrity is what really counts.

How I long for the emergence of more poets like Frederick Turner! How I wish that our contemporary philanthropists were inspired by grand dreams of civic renewal! Perhaps my thoughts are too bleak. There surely are positive examples that can inspire. And yet, by any measure, they are too few. The good, the true, and the beautiful are consigned to a tiny chamber behind a hidden door with a sign that says Do Not Enter. For the typical cultural consumer, the klieg lights are on the meretricious, the sciolistic, and the degrading.

Philanthropy should recognize the challenge frontally before it hails the poetry. Our age produces technical wonders, not poetic visions. I yearn for the moment Turner describes when “The wasteland will become a flowering garden/Where the King Fisher’s ancient wound will heal.” I wait and I wait.

COMMENT ON TURNER

Richard P. Gabriel

burn the page
wrestle like two on fire
place your bets on the field smoke
aligning like luck
and your fortunes
what I love
I give away
✦ ✦ ✦

. . . come from the artists themselves. The artist's responsibility is to art—as the poet William Stafford said, a “reckless encounter with whatever comes along”—wherever that leads, rarely part of a master plan, and even more rarely a part of the exchange economy. We read of muses and inspiration, but what these terms mean is that art is not entirely within the conscious control of the artist.

Art is voice. Art is noticing outside context. Art stands out like a thing glimpsed from the corners of our eyes. We must never confuse the subject or meaning of art with the fact of art. Art is not the story but the telling, not the picture but the brush strokes, not the thing but the choice of the thing, not the craft but the use of it. Each piece of great art sponsors its own context, creates itself through its own voice and terms; each of the parts in a piece, be it a poem or a painting, takes on heightened significance, and each part, because it is in a spotlight, becomes a bit strange. When experiencing art, the receptive mind creates a context to hold it, and everything that could be called the “meaning” of art is the construction of this context. Such a mind apprehends immediately whether art has authority, authority being the glow of heightened language or color or light or brush strokes, authority being the defining mark of art, authority being what the muse gives in exchange for the interiority of great art. The bargain is clear and unfortunate: there can be no great art on demand—any great art comes at the cost of strangeness and othermindedness, and what we take as

great art on demand is merely the result of great craft and skill but without the depth of meaning of art, without its inherent isolation. No call, no desire, no need—when they come from outside—will or can move the artist to make art; calls for artistry externally constrained by topic or time produce, in most cases, doggerel or its equivalent. It is the rare occasional poem, the rare posed portrait, the rare commissioned biography, that is remembered as great art.

What Artists Can Teach Philanthropists

How will a potential philanthropist learn why gifts are worth giving, and how will the benefactor learn how to behave and how to give with grace? These questions turn on whether philanthropy, like any other form of gift, requires conscious decision making. Consider the artist.

Every night in just about every town, city, and village across the world, someone is practicing, writing, sculpting, painting, weaving, or creating new forms of art in response to impulses too personal or too universal to fathom. Each of these artists could choose to do something else—and for many, almost anything else would be easier to do and more fun. Some seek out criticism in order to improve. Seek it out. Some pay to receive the criticism.

The impetus to create art arises from whatever comes along, and for many the talent to create art is practiced and honed with no career or recompense in mind. An artist creates because he or she “has to”; writers write to “see how it comes out.” The urge to create is like the urge to reproduce or breathe; even if it was once planned and forced, then later nurtured, the creation of art is almost involuntary. The urge to create is akin to curiosity: the need to find out what the next line in a poem in progress might be is no different from the need to find out what is over the next rise, around the next bend, or beyond the great expanse.

What a Great Gift

Most artists work without benefactors or patrons; little or less is paid for their work; the work appears in small venues, in unread magazines, on unvisited websites, or disappears into drawers and trunks to be discovered, maybe, by children or grandchildren. We become confused, in fact, when greed is grafted onto art. Musicians—it is said—would stop making music if there were no possibility of great financial rewards for it; and if that happened, some people say, music would dry up. The argument stems from Johnson’s indolent comment, “No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.” But if we

were to be deprived of every composition by professional composers and every note played by professional musicians—relying only on currently unnamed and unknown composers and players—we would enjoy a quality of music equal to what we are used to. The same goes for film, fiction, plays, art, and every other artistic endeavor. Because behind every professional producing art of any sort are hundreds or thousands or even more amateurs who are every bit as talented and skilled, and who produce art as fine as that devised by the paid professional.

In this, art enacts the true gift economy; art is a matter of giving gifts without the expectation of direct return. Often, the response to art is criticism and rejection, and the response of artists is to persist and improve. Craft may be for sale, but not art.

Each artist working alone at home with little chance of an audience is producing a gift that requires only a recipient to be fulfilled. This is the purest form of gift, and somehow we all know that the giver expects nothing in return; and we properly feel that nothing needs to be given in return for the artist's gift. We have learned that what art may cost in dollars is irrelevant to its meaning and status as art. When we read of an enormous sum paid for an Impressionist painting, we are not reading about art but instead about a market dictated by supply and demand.

The Philanthropist's Path

The philanthropist who needs to learn what it means to give and how to do it need only look to the artist. Most artists are poor except in talent and desire, and they give the gift of the fruits of their talent even though to do so makes no rational or economic sense. Artists create even when the possibility of being known is absent, because the urge to create is irresistible. It is a compulsion, and the compulsion to help should be the truest reason for philanthropy.

Instead of looking to artists to write the stories of philanthropy, philanthropists should look to artists as examples of how to live the gift culture. Instead of seeking out the highly paid composer, philanthropists should seek out the songwriter in the smoky bar; instead of seeking out royalty-rich novelists, they should seek out the story writer mortgaging her house to attend writers' workshops; instead of asking artists to fill out the cultural footprint of philanthropy, we should let the uncontrollable urge to create the art of great donors arise from among such donors or those around them—as it surely must, as it does wherever art is to be found.

COMMENT ON TURNER

Tyler Cowen

Does today's America have an appropriate mythology for The Gift? Do we offer the right stories about why gifts are so important? Frederick Turner raises some concerns in his provocative essay. As would befit my broader body of work on the arts (Cowen 1998, 2000, 2002), I am optimistic. Let us first look at some facts and then return to the mythology issue, noting of course that a mythology can be true as well as convenient.

American philanthropy brings culture and beauty into our lives. Take U.S. symphony orchestras. The details of estimates may vary, but according to one source, 33 percent of their income comes from private donations and 16 percent from endowments and related sources. Concert income generates 42 percent of their revenue, and direct government support provides only 6 percent of their income. For nonprofit arts institutions more generally, individual, corporate, and foundation donors make up about 45 percent of the budget. Twelve percent of their income comes from foundation grants, two and a half times more than what is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and state arts councils combined (see Johnson 1997, 9; and Dowie 2001, 169).

Generous Society

Americans are by far the world's most generous donors to the arts. Total charitable giving to the arts from U.S. individuals, foundations, and corporations now stands at about \$10 billion per year. These donations come from private individuals (80 percent of the total), foundations (13 percent of the total), and corporations (7 percent of the total). In contrast, individual private philanthropy to the arts is virtually nonexistent in most European nations. If we look at individual donors, Americans give almost ten times more to nonprofits, per capita, than do their French counterparts (Weil 1991, 177; Report 1997, 12, 18; and Creative America 1997, 18; on the French comparison, see Archambault 1997, 208).

In addition, Americans' donations of time—equal in scope to 390,000 full-time volunteers—are at least twice as valuable as their dollar donations. As of

the early 1990s, the average donor of time had an annual income of over \$56,000, which would place the implicit dollar contribution of these time donations at over \$20 billion, with some estimates going as high as \$25 billion (see Wyszomirski 1999, 186; Cobb 1996., 13; and Report 1997, 14).

Even some European arts institutions, especially in Great Britain, find their leading private donors in the United States. In the mid-1980s, for example, J. Paul Getty donated \$62.5 million to the National Gallery in London, the largest donation the institution has received. The Tate has raised significant American funds as well. To capture such donations, many British nonprofits now have American affiliates with tax-exempt status in the United States (Vogel 2000).

American foundations are significant in their size and scope. In 1999, American foundations gave an estimated \$1.55 billion to the arts (see Cowen 2004). Looking back through American history, the Ford, Carnegie, and Mellon foundations, among others, have been instrumental in supporting a wide variety of high-culture enterprises, especially museums, orchestras, and libraries.

America's corporations are only slightly less important arts donors than are the nation's foundations. A 1995 study found that U.S. businesses gave \$875 million to the arts in the preceding year. Forty-seven percent of all U.S. businesses surveyed gave money to the arts, and American businesses devoted an average of 19 percent of their philanthropic budgets to the arts (Grimes 1995).

Multiple Mythologies

So what is the mythology that sustains this incredible and unprecedented burst of generosity? What is the ideology that glorifies The Gift?

The American secret is that we have no overarching mythology. Instead, our legal and institutional structures allow foundations, businesses, and individual donors to construct their own mythologies. Myths and stories then compete against each other in the broader marketplace of ideas.

Consider a typical arts institution, such as a museum. The museum will appeal to its donors on a variety of bases. Sometimes the museum will play up the overall importance of the arts for a liberal education, or for the public understanding of Western history. Other times the museum will stress the economic development of the community, and the ability of the museum to draw out-of-town tourists. Yet other times, the institution will position itself as a focal point for business and social contacts in the local community. In addition, particular exhibits will receive their own unique marketing to donors,

depending on the nature of the material. No one of these ideas is the mythology for The Gift; rather they all are.

The multiplicity of mythologies does not stop here. The United States has thousands of museums, which compete against each other in a broader market for philanthropic funds. Differing museums offer varying moods, images, and mythologies in their marketing campaigns. They promote and offer values of snobbiness, accessibility, friendliness, gratefulness to donors, relative aloofness, and so on. Museums also present mythologies through differing media. The methods of mythology presentation include direct mail, donor visits, donor retreats, museum events and fundraisers, donor plaques, naming opportunities, and phone calls to donors, to name just a few. A competitive process encourages use of the more effective mythologies and weeds out the losing mythologies.

Since people are so different from one another, give for so many different reasons, and give to so many different forms of creativity, we should not expect a dominant mythology to arise. And this discussion, of course, has considered only museums. The competitive ferment also includes orchestras, poetry magazines, grants to individual artists, libraries, and many other ways of funding human creativity. All of these contribute to the broader production of our gift mythologies.

So, can we squarely identify The American Gift Mythology? No. Are American gift mythologies alive and healthy? Yes. Why do American Gift Mythologies lead the world? Because we allow those mythologies to be shaped by private, voluntary, and competitive processes, firmly embedded within a wealthy capitalist economy and the rule of law.

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