

## THE PATH OF ALTRUISM

### A REFLECTION ON THE NATURE OF A GIFT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

#### IN LEADING TO ENTITLEMENT OR ENHANCEMENT

As I write this reflection America is approaching Christmas 2005. All over the country, attorneys and accountants are reminding their clients that it is time to make their annual tax advantaged gifts. As these reminder letters are received the dutiful recipients sit down, write the checks, and send them off. Most of them include the most limited transmittal messages. The recipients of these checks receive them as a part of their expected rights and cannot imagine doing without them. They, in fact, have no expectation that they might be required to do so. *The recipients are fully dependent on these transfers and their senders fully complicit in rendering them so.* Clearly there are no gifts here. The donors have no heart based sense of gratitude for their blessings and are lacking a desire to enhance the lives of those with whom they seek to share their love. There is no love being exchanged. Rather, the donors are acting out of duty to be good stewards toward the reduction of taxes. The recipients are merely the means of doing so. In this tragedy of a failed relationship gifts are rendered transfers. There is a difference between a gift and a transfer. A gift enhances the human and intellectual development of another. A transfer might initiate the downhill slide of another into the state of victimhood known as entitlement. Every act we do toward another, whether individually or through our social capital as philanthropists, has these two possible outcomes. This chapter will discuss the differences between the making of a gift and the making of a transfer.

The word “entitlement” has begun to take on a life in our modern society as a description of a negative state of being. Originally, to be entitled was to be a person with a title, a member of the aristocracy; it was also to have the rights and obligations which that title conferred. This word in modern political parlance, describes programs which confer rights on citizens to receive something which the government is obliged, by law, to give them. The state of “being entitled” describes, in our government, the citizen whom these entitlement programs are obliged to benefit. In our modern world such programs have created, in many of their beneficiaries, states of being in which the persons “entitled” exhibit all of the symptoms of dependence and victimhood. These are symptoms which we normally associate with the extremely rich, dysfunctional beneficiaries of trusts. The governmentally entitled are people whose daily lives are consumed by defending their rights to things they did not create, but which were bestowed upon them by someone else. These are people who, through this view of themselves as “entitled”, live negatively and never find purpose and calling as free persons. They are people who blame others for their dependent status, rather than taking responsibility for the state in which they find themselves. Finally, they are people who live in fear of losing their “rights.” They become so attached to the things to which they are “entitled” that they live in the delusion that they could not exist without those things.

In this sense they are victims since they see themselves as dependent on the acts of others for their well-being. These are persons whose dependence renders them profoundly unfree. To be unfree is to be in some form of slavery. In my opinion, to be captured by “entitlement” is to be enslaved as a human being at some level of deep self-deception. The fascinating thing to me about the behaviors of those “entitled” is that these are behaviors normally displayed by the wealthy class. These behaviors are now exhibited in all classes of modern society whenever rights are conferred by entitlement programs. I find it interesting that many modern democratic states have elected to assign to nearly all of their citizens a status normally assigned only to aristocrats. Perhaps, paradoxically, as our society tries to become more egalitarian, it may actually be becoming less so.

It is now clear, as evidenced by the lives of many beneficiaries of entitlement programs, that any act by another, whether the state or an individual, that renders a person dependent, does not lead to increased individual or societal happiness. Throughout this chapter I will argue that any act toward another which begins as obligation, will likely lead to dependence and the reduction of the human spirit; obligation meaning sense of duty, rather than responsibility or gratitude. I will argue further that any action that creates in another a state of “being entitled” carries with it, for that person, a significant risk of becoming, in his or her own eyes, a victim with an ever deepening loss of self-awareness and personal freedom.

Society, as with any donor, had best consider, before it makes any gifts, what rights and obligations the gift confers on the recipient. Society had best begin by asking itself what harm might this gift do to its recipient before it asks itself what good it may confer upon him. Society ought to ask if this gift enhances or detracts from the life of the individual who will receive it.

Since this is a Reflection on the problem of individuals related to entitlement, I will not say more here about the larger societal issues except to ask the reader to appreciate how sadly dependent the welfare programs, of at least our American society, have rendered their beneficiaries.

Let us now turn to the question of entitlement as it affects the individual human being.

I will argue throughout this chapter that:

- *The duty and responsibility of each human being is to achieve the highest level of self-awareness and the competence and personal freedom that grows out of it that he or she is capable of in this lifetime*
- *That the best measurement of self-awareness is how free from illusion a particular human spirit is*
- *minus one on this calculus is total victimhood, with the self unaware and enslaved by self-deception*

- *zero is the point on the calculus, represented by the apprentice, someone who is not a victim but equally is not yet able to take full responsibility for his or her actions and is ready to learn;*
- *plus one is the enlightened state in which the self can, with complete humility, take full responsibility for all of its actions toward itself and toward others who acts out of gratitude to all the wise ones who have assisted it in fulfillment of its human journey to know itself completely, in so doing who has become pure compassion, and who then acts with compassion toward all others seeking to arrive at the same awareness of themselves.*

I will argue that whenever a person feels entitled there is a very significant risk of falling below zero on this scale. I will argue that the state of “being entitled” is something the self becomes through transfers it receives from another. In other words, no self is born “entitled” to anything. Through the environment in which that self matures and through the acts upon it by others through “gifts”, that that self becomes free and aware. Alternatively, it is through “transfers” from others that it becomes “entitled” and unfree and unaware. I will argue that the state of the heart and intuitional development of the person making the gift or transfer is critical to the impact on the recipient. Does the self receive benefits from the person acting on it leading toward enhanced self-awareness, competence and personal freedom or receive detriments leading to greater dependence, victimhood, and loss of freedom? Does the self ultimately fall into delusion and self-deception, in which fear and desire for someone else to “fix it”, renders this “entitled person” unfree?

**Obligation** is one of the most profound words in the English language. Webster’s dictionary says that obligation and duty are somewhat synonymous but that obligation suggests an imminent responsibility to act, a short-term duty, while duty, in another form of obligation, suggests a long-term responsibility. Thus Webster suggests that within obligation there are contained the concepts of duty and responsibility being acted out in any given situation where obligation forms an underlying part of the action being taken. In studying the word “obligation” I have come to see that when it is applied to a gift it has three levels of awareness, not just the two Webster suggests.

### **Obligation as Duty**

Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher, in his meditation on giving, lists eight stages of giver (listed as an appendix to this paper). The lowest stage of giver is the one who gives grudgingly and less than he or she is capable of giving. I equate obligation as duty to this level of giving. Here the spirit of the giver is small and unaware. The gift comes without a sense of desire to enhance the life of the recipient but out of obligation; obligation in the most limited sense of duty being motivated by a desire not to be embarrassed societally by doing nothing. This is a sense of obligation in which the spirit of the giver is disengaged or, worse, actively hostile to the gift being made. It is my opinion that a gift of this sort, despite Maimonides, is not a gift at all. Rather it is a transfer, from a duty that carries with it no positive spirit whatsoever. It is not a transfer

designed to enhance anything, but rather an obligation required to be paid, no different than any other debt.

All spiritual traditions suggest that we should be neither a lender nor debtor. All know that the spirit of the lender or debtor is rarely toward enhancement and often is mean spirited at best. A transfer made from this form of obligation is likely to lead to the recipient being rendered dependent by it, with the loss of self and freedom that flows from that state. This is an obligation to a person the giver doesn't see at all or sees as a victim to be pitied, not as a spirit to be enhanced. Neither giver nor recipient gains a positive sense of self from the donor acting out of this sense of obligation. It is easy to see in this form of obligation how the recipient, having been rendered a victim in the eyes of the donor, comes to see him or herself as entitled to these transfers. The recipient might think, "I'm a victim of some level of injustice that put me in this state, so I'm entitled to be made whole."

This condition is exemplified by the failure of the welfare system in the United States. This system, which was developed out of obligation as duty, renders large numbers of people dependent, even though its purpose was to make them independent. In fact, it creates a huge bureaucracy to manage its programs staffed by workers who often look down on the people they are serving and see them as unfree and dependent, even as they are making them so. There is no better example one could have of giving leading to a reduction of the human condition and increasing suffering through creating dependency. This is a classic case of doing harm while attempting to do good.

There was a time in the 1970's and 1980's in America when it was fashionable to be a victim. I would ask American readers whether this was a time when they felt the spirit of American society was in a period of enhancement or depression. I'm betting most of you will say the latter. Deciding one is a victim is a slippery slope toward becoming entitled. I hasten to add that truly self-aware people have the courage and capacity to redress injustice to themselves or others, as they do not see themselves as victims even though they may be in the humblest of circumstances. Such people look upon themselves with respect and take responsibility for their conditions. They do not see themselves as entitled victims looking to someone else to fix it for them.

To take full responsibility for oneself is to be the most free, as the calculus I have suggested shows. To be profoundly "entitled" is to be on the wrong end of the calculus. All too often these sad measurements begin with the transfer from another that comes from obligation as duty but without spirit. Such transfers, which are not gifts since NO LOVE is transferred, are truly dangerous to both the givers' and the recipients' spirits. I believe that it is this form of transfer, as duty, that, in the wealthy classes has led to the creation of trusts of all forms, which have gone on to create dependence or *remittance addiction* in their beneficiaries; the same way the state welfare programs have led to dependence in their recipients.

Let us all, from this day forward attempt in all of our giving to recognize that acting toward another from the state of obligation as duty is not only extremely dangerous to the spirits of the recipients, but also dangerous to our own spirits as well.

### **Obligation as Responsibility**

In this form of obligation the individual making a gift question asks will my gift do harm before it does good. In this case of obligation we see responsibility as overtaking duty to others. Here we can feel a caring for others entering the donor's heart and intuition. The donor here is acting as steward. In Maimonides view such a donor would be about at the fourth/fifth levels of giving. Here the donor knows and cares about the wellbeing of the recipient but remains somewhat disconnected from the outcome of the gift. Such a donor has a beginner's mind, in seeking to make gifts that help and enhance, but is not yet giving out of a deep sense of self-awareness. Giving responsibly requires of the donor active caring about whether the gift will harm another. One of the greatest harms is the rendering of another as a dependant, with the concomitant risk of that spirit feeling itself a victim and then becoming "entitled" to be a victim. Here, obligation as responsibility leads the donor to ask whether this gift will do harm before asking if this gift will do good. Let me assure the reader that asking this question does not hold the donor back from giving; rather it enables him or her to "Hasten Slowly." For me, this simple aphorism represents responsibility to others at its highest level. Action is needed if we are to enhance our own and others states of being, but prudence, as Aristotle taught us, is one of the great virtues in living life and acting within it.<sup>1</sup> In addition, I would suggest that obligation as responsibility, represented in responsible giving, carries within it the notion of prudence, balanced with the courage and justice tempered with mercy that is needed to give responsibly.<sup>2</sup> To give is an act of courage, because of the risks to the human spirit a gift as duty, a transfer, not a gift, can carry as we discussed above. A gift, responsibly given, reflects justice as mercy, since it calls on the donor to rebalance some part of the human equation. I believe that obligation as responsibility is acted out best when these three virtues, prudence, courage, and justice tempered with mercy are guiding it. An example of this form of giving is social venturing. In this form of philanthropy the donor understands the risk that his or her gift can do harm. These donors understand modern psychology, sociology, anthropology and modern business, social, and organization dynamics. They act toward others based on the wisdom learned from these disciplines. They understand that any effort to change human behavior is fraught with the risk that it will make things worse and increase human suffering. Thus, they begin gingerly, walking on eggshells, and seek slow individual change rather than immediate results. Programs like those which adopt whole classes of school children and follow them all the way to college are excellent examples of the best of this type of philanthropy. Head Start Programs and the Peace Corp would be others.

At this stage of obligation, there is still a risk that a gift will create in the spirit of the recipient a feeling of entitlement. Certainly the risk of that occurring is greatly

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by J.A.K. Thomson, revised by Hugh Tredennick, London, Penguin Books, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

reduced, from that of a gift made from a state of mind of obligation as duty. To meet one's responsibilities mindfully and to take full responsibility for them are the actions of a self-aware person. To carry this through to one's gifts to others is the personification of self-awareness. Being especially mindful, in giving to another of the risk of creating a state of entitlement in the spirit of another, is to carry to its highest level the definition of obligation as responsibility to another.

### **Obligation as Gratitude Expressed to Others through and as Compassion.**

Many of us know the injunction "to whom much is given, from whom much is expected."<sup>3</sup> Equally, many of us feel burdened rather than enlightened by it. The statement feels like a "should." I will suggest that the obligation this statement defines is the obligation to be grateful and to be compassionate not "to do our duty." Normally, this statement is understood to describe being given *things* and then being obliged to share them. I would suggest that this is not its meaning. I have come to see that the statement "to whom much is given" actually defines the spiritual gifts we originally receive when we are born. Gifts which enable us to grow our human and intellectual capacities. Human and intellectual capital in abundance are the true gifts of great spirit. *These are the "things" we are given.* When we are blessed to be given them in large measure, it is these gifts that we are admonished to share. It is this that is "much expected" of us. A few of us will "choose our parents well," as a joking member of a financially wealthy family said, and be given at birth the blessing of financial capital far beyond our needs. When the conjunction of great financial wealth and great human and intellect capital occur in one individual it creates a larger theater in which such individuals can act with true compassion toward others in expressing gratitude for his or her gifts.<sup>4</sup> While few of us are given monumental capital, each of us is given the blessings of human and intellectual capital. It is these capital gifts that I believe are the ones relevant to this injunction that can apply to every human being.

Obligation as gratitude, expressed to others as compassion, is a concept that flows to us from all of the great spiritual traditions. Gratitude as compassion is not a matter of the mind as intellect, but of the spirit as intuition. To learn to be grateful, and to express that virtue, as compassion to others not so blessed as we, is to attain self-awareness at its

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:48.

<sup>4</sup> Here I would like to bring to the reader's attention the work of Paul Schervish on the wealthy and philanthropy. Schervish, in his writings, defines individuals who have significant financial capital as "Hyper-Agents" in their relationships with all the individuals with whom they are connected and with society in general. He explains that great financial wealth creates in its owner a kind of powerful energy that radiates out for good and ill and significantly enhances the impact on others of its owner; acts well beyond what similar acts by someone without such capital might normally do. My experience is that Schervish is absolutely right. I have seen much good and much bad done by such individuals and, following Schervish's enlightened idea that the affects of such individuals frequently are much greater because of their financial capital to enhance other lives positively or negatively, I have come to see that their actions do often have very heightened effects. I feel that all of us who serve individuals and families with significant financial capital would do well to read Schervish's works on the concept of the wealthy as "Hyper-Agents", so we can better understand and advise our clients about the likely heightened impacts of their actions. Thank you, Paul, for this most important insight and for giving us a way of defining it so we can act on it. Most of Schervish's work can be found on his website [www.bc.edu/SWRI](http://www.bc.edu/SWRI).

highest level. The Christ, the Buddha, the Hindu sages, the Judaic Sages, and Mohammed, all expressed this truth. Interestingly all held that gratitude expressed as compassion is a matter of the heart as mind or, if you will, of feeling, of intuition, as heart-based living and learning. To be truly grateful is to be *joyfully loving without limit*; to be fully compassionate. To do this, one must know oneself fully and be made free by that knowledge. I believe that obligation manifested through gratitude as compassion leads to the enhancement of one's own spirit and to the enhancement of the spirits of others which it touches. It is the practice of love for one's fellow man. It is the essence of *philos anthropos* and thus of philanthropy.

Some years ago I was informed on this subject in a speech by Robert Lehman. The theme of this speech was how to be a great giver in the capacity of philanthropist. Mr. Lehman explained that no gift is meaningful and may do harm to the recipient, if it is not made by a giver who has first gone deep inside herself or himself to discern who she or he is, and then gives to others from that self-knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Here is the essence of great giving. To know oneself completely must lead to gratitude for this life and its blessings and to the gift in this lifetime of that knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Such knowledge, expressed in gifts to others, must reflect our compassion for our own failings. This leads to true caring for others through our self-knowledge. We will express to others our gratitude for the compassionate state we are blessed to be in, by the self-awareness we experience and the humility it creates. To know oneself fully is to be enlightened to one's own state of being and to the state of being of others. How then could our gifts do harm when we will care so much, and be so compassionate toward the complexity of the human condition and to its suffering? Of course, being human we will still make mistakes since "to err is human" but the likelihood of them doing harm will be highly reduced.

Gratitude as love, the humility it spawns, and the compassion that grows out of it leads to a profound desire that no human being fall into the diminished state of self, of being "entitled," and the delusion of victimhood and suffering that grows from it. So the person to whom much is given is obliged by the fact that from her or him much is expected. Obligation in this sense is not duty or responsibility; it is obligation expressed as compassion in one's acts toward others, out of gratitude for one's own gifts, founded on one's own deep self-awareness and freedom. As Lehman said, going deep inside oneself and then expressing what we have learned about ourselves in our dealings with others and particularly in our gifts to others, reflects the knowledge we have gained of ourselves.

Maimonides, in his seventh/eighth levels of giving, expresses these same thoughts. In the seventh level he admonishes the giver to give anonymously without

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<sup>5</sup> *The Heart of Philanthropy* by Rob Lehman, delivered at the Council on Foundations' 12th Family Conference, February 23, 1998. I am attaching Mr. Lehman's entire speech as an appendix to this chapter as I believe it to be a statement of how family philanthropy can achieve its highest level of positive effect on those upon whom it acts. I strongly recommend that each reader read it and share it with his or her family.

<sup>6</sup> One might argue that one could discover that one is evil. I disagree as I believe evil to be total unconsciousness as discussed and described by M. Scott Peck in his extraordinary exegesis of evil in his book, *People of the Lie*.

knowing where the gift will come to rest and without the person receiving it knowing the giver. Here the giver acts purely out of gratitude for his own human condition and joyfully and with pure compassion toward another, whom he will never know. A beautiful example of this form of giving was the outpouring of compassion from people all over the world for the suffering of others and the gifts that flowed from that sympathy in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001 and of the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004.

In the eighth level of giving, we find embedded the concept of helping a human being face a problem so that he will be able to fully take care of his own needs. This level of giving is encapsulated in the Chinese proverb that to help a man learn to fish enables him to eat for a lifetime while giving him a fish only enables him to eat for a day. Thus, the giver seeks a means to enhance the human condition of another for an entire lifetime. Maimonides suggests positive action to carry out the Talmudic Judaic commandment that to save one human life is as if you were saving the whole world. Maimonides helps us in our daily lives to see that helping a man “to fish” is preferred to waiting until he is starving to “save” him. This is action out of gratitude expressed as compassion that meets every human being’s task of saving life and thereby reducing suffering. It is a gift that lifts a human being up to independence rather than a transfer that creates dependence. I fully appreciate that very few of us, *and certainly not I*, will attain a level of self-awareness in this life that will enable us to fully express and to be gratitude as compassion. This state of being is for the Buddha, the Christ, the Jewish Sages, Mohammed and for a few enlightened human beings like Maimonides, Confucius and Lao Tzu. Not to recognize and attempt to reach this level of obligation would, however, set our sights on what we are “obliged” to do much too low. We can and must, for our own self-development, seek out the possibilities that gratitude and the humility it spawns offer for the expression by each of us of compassion, as love, as we interact with others. To help reduce our suffering, by becoming as self-aware and free as possible, will not only enhance our own lives but help us reduce compassionately the suffering of others.

A wonderful example of human beings acting toward others with gifts of compassion that offer freedom to their recipients is the women’s micro-lending program begun in Bangladesh by Mohamed Yunus through the Grameen Bank. These are programs in which those to whom much is given share their bounty with women all over the world who are among the poorest of the poor. All over the world these programs share the bounty with true compassion and understanding for what helps another human being become independent. Loans are made to such women so they can create micro-enterprises. Some of these programs, such as Friendship Bridge,<sup>7</sup> even help educate the children of their female borrowers. Given the now millions of micro-loans that have been made and the huge increases in human happiness experienced by these women as measured by the increased independence and the joy it brings to them we see compassion, acting out of deep self-awareness of the human condition, at work.\*

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<sup>7</sup> Friendship Bridge, 3560 Highway 74, Suite B2, Evergreen CO 80439.

\* These programs outcomes offer hope for these women and their families to eventually fully participate in civil society and thereby as Amartya Sen in his extraordinary book “Development as Freedom” taught us become free!

So, yes, we are obliged but not as obligation as duty. Obligation as responsibility for others is a state which all of us can and must attain if our dealings with others are to avoid doing harm and hopefully do some good. Obligation as gratitude is the highest form of the word obligation and while it is a tool of self-awareness that few of us will attain, it stands as a beacon of light to help alleviate suffering and toward which we should strive. Obligation as gratitude expressed toward others as compassion particularly helps avoid in the giver the risk, through his or her gift, of trapping another human being in the delusion that he or she is a victim and is thus “entitled” to something.

At a time when a few of us are blessed to live in abundance and so many are deprived, it is the obligation of those of us blessed with abundance can do to assist those less fortunate to become more free. I believe we can do this best if our gifts are given courageously, justly, and most importantly, compassionately and with the intention that they should be given in ways that combat the forces that create the victim state of entitlement. I believe that each of us has an obligation to so act. To inadvertently enable another through our acts to assume the garb of the entitled is the antitheses of the admonition to us to save human lives. All too often, our own acts, attempting to improve, do harm by reducing another’s freedom rather than enhancing it. Creating or enabling a state in which another comes to feel “entitled” is to increase human suffering. Entitlement is a condition dangerous to the human spirit. To work against it is to work for freedom, self-awareness, and human flourishing; this is the depth of the expression of gratitude as compassion.

It is my hope that every reader of this paper will deeply consider:

- in what ways she or he feels entitled, and to what extent he or she feels that he or she is a victim
- in what ways she or he has added to or reduced the sense of victimhood in another especially as expressed as entitlement;
- in what ways she or he has contributed to the increase of personal freedom and self-awareness in another and thus reduced how the other sees herself or himself as a victim
- in what ways he or she defines obligation, especially in giving to others
- in what ways she or he expresses to others gratitude as compassion

The increase of human dignity that comes from greater freedom and self-awareness is the direction on the calculus to which all human beings strive. To become entitled as victim is to move negatively on the calculus.

May each of us in our lives, and in our interactions with others, be obliged to act only toward the positive end of the calculus; toward our own and others greater freedom and self-awareness and the individual happiness and flourishing it represents.

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## PART II

### IMPORTANT VOICES TO ASSIST FAMILIES IN THE DOMAIN OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

As a family considers its gifts to others, from the highest levels of Maimonides grid, whose work might it find helpful, to achieve its highest impact.

**Peter Karoff**, my mentor, friend, and the founder of The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI), in Boston Massachusetts has written extensively on the issues families face in seeking to make their philanthropy strategic. He has also been a voice in explaining the nature of social venturing. You can find many of Karoff's writings at [www.TPI.org](http://www.TPI.org).

**Virginia Esposito** of the National Center for Family Philanthropy, in Washington, DC, has a wonderful book on starting a family philanthropy called, *"Splendid Legacy, the Guide to Creating Your Family Foundation."*

**Charles Collier**, Senior Philanthropic Adviser at Harvard College, my friend and colleague, has helped many families discover and enunciate their values as a way of helping them do their philanthropy better. His book *"Wealth in Families,"* is a very helpful guide to this subject.

**Deanne Stone** has written a wonderful story of a family's philanthropy and of its construction in a pamphlet by called, *Building Family Unity through Giving, the Store of the Nameste Foundation.* The pamphlet can be obtained at the Whitman Institute, San Francisco, California.

**Christine W. Letts, William P. Ryan and Allen Grossman** offer a book called *"High Performance Non Profit Organizations."* It is a very useful text for managing non-profits.

**Tracy Gary**, one of the great philanthropists of our time, and her colleague **Melissa Kohner**, have given us a marvelous workbook called, *"Inspired Philanthropy, Creating a Giving Plan."*

**Susan Kenny Steven**, a book called *"Non-Profit Lifecycles: Stage Based Wisdom for Non-profit Capacity."* A terrific measurement device for families to use in their philanthropies to answer the questions like "How are we doing?" and "What stage of evolution as an organization are we in?"

**Kathryn Fulton and Andrew Blau** have co-authored a book called, *"Looking Out For the Future: An Orientation for Twenty-first Century Philanthropists."* It offers a deep look at the state of philanthropy today in America and its challenges in the new century.

**Paul Schervish** and his colleague, **John J. Havens**, prepared a paper in 1999 called, "*The Millionaires and the Millennium: New Estimates for the coming Wealth Transfer and the Prospects for the Golden Age of Philanthropy.*" In this paper Schervish and Havens offer fascinating numbers about the trillions of dollars that will be transferred within families in the next 50 years and the likely amounts of those transfers that will come to rest in philanthropy.

## APPENDIX A

### MAIMONIDES EIGHT LEVELS OF PHILANTHROPY

To assist the recipient to become self-supporting by means of a gift or a loan or by helping in finding employment

To give without knowing to whom one gives, with the recipient not knowing the identify of the donor

To give without making one's identity known

To give without knowing to whom one gives, although the recipient may know the identify of the donor

To give before one is asked

To give what one should, but only after being asked

To give less than one should, but graciously

To give grudgingly or with regret

## APPENDIX “B”

*The Heart of Philanthropy* by Rob Lehman  
Delivered at the Council on Foundations’  
12th Family Foundations Conference  
February 23, 1998

### I. A Yearning of the Heart

It is truly a pleasure to be with you this afternoon. I’d like to begin with a brief meditation in the form of a poem by the thirteenth century Persian poet, Rumi, as translated by Coleman Barks. Following the poem, I invite us to enter a moment of silent reflection before we continue.

The title of the poem is –

#### The Real Work

There is one thing in this world that you must never forget to do. If you forget everything else and not this, there’s nothing to worry about; but if you remember everything else and forget this, then you will have done nothing in your life.

It’s as if a king has sent you on a journey to do a task, and you perform a hundred other services, but not the one he sent you to do. So human beings come into this world to do particular work. That work is the purpose, and each is specific to the person.

You say, “But I spend my energies on lofty enterprises. I study jurisprudence and philosophy ... and medicine and all the rest.” But consider why you do those things. They are all branches of yourself... Remember the deep root of your being.

This afternoon I would like to share some thoughts that come from my personal experience of this journey: the journey to “remember the deep root of our being.” I’m only one person. I’m not an expert. I can only offer what I believe I’m learning from my experience, my inner struggle with philanthropy over the last 25 years.

I believe the essence of what I’m observing is an emerging leadership role for philanthropy as we enter the twenty-first century; a leadership role that is being born through the work of family foundations and family philanthropy. I am persuaded that a deeper understanding of the purpose of philanthropy is arising. This purpose is

essentially the spiritual challenge of bringing into conscious relationship the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of action and service.

With the very survival of people and the planet at risk, we are being called to consciously integrate spirit into all aspects of our lives. This is the work of the inner life of our culture. This is the heart of philanthropy.

It is said that for Gandhi public life was not secular, it was sacred. The challenge for philanthropy, what I want to call our common work, is to reunite the sacred with the secular, the inner world of spirit with the outer world of service. Like Gandhi we must recover a deep reverence and awareness of how the inner dimension of human existence (our shared values, meaning, and purpose) relates to our public action.

Yet how can we speak of the relationship between spirituality and public life in a society that has rightfully built a constitutional wall between religion and the state? In his fascinating new study of Thomas Jefferson, *America Sphinx- The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, Joseph Ellis points out that the author of the doctrine of the separation of church and state, in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence wrote:

“We hold these truths to be ‘sacred’, that all [people] are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, the among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...”

Benjamin Franklin prevailed upon Jefferson to change the word “sacred” to “self-evident.” I wonder what it would mean to our culture if “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” were indeed considered sacred – perhaps human sacraments—“outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace”, if we began to ask what is the relationship between our inner life and our outer life; between our inner freedom and our outer freedom; between our inner happiness and our other happiness?

Indeed, these are the questions that seem to arise more and more in our foundation work. We are witnessing a yearning for the sacred in almost every domain: in law and medicine, in business and social action; in elementary-secondary schools and even in universities. Some call it “spirituality,” others call it “the inner life” but regardless of its title, this yearning has a relationship to the urgent needs of society. Family foundations have been the torchbearers of this spiritual movement. There is a general feeling that at the end of this century, we may be experiencing a reorientation of our culture toward the sacred.

During the last five years alone, sales of spiritually oriented books have increased by 800 percent. A recent survey sponsored by the Fetzer Institute and the Institute of Noetic Sciences shows that 44 million Americans are part of a growing constellation of people who link their own spiritual growth with their life in service and social action.

Dan Yankelovich reports that the percentage of the public who see spiritual growth as a critical value in their lives has grown from fifty-three percent to seventy-eight percent in

just the last three years. And only 6 percent of this group consider themselves New Age. This is a mainstream movement.

In a special issue of the Sunday New York Times Magazine last December, the editors made the point that “there is a striking change in the nature of faith and worship [in America]”, that a new breed of worshiper is looking beyond the religious institutions, and integrating spirituality into ordinary, everyday life. The way the Sunday Times puts it, “God is being decentralized.”

What kind of spirituality is this that seems to extend beyond the doors of our churches synagogues, and temples?

Perhaps, it is what His Holiness, The Dalai Lama was describing recently when he said:

I believe deeply that we must find, all of us together, a new spirituality. We need a new concept, a lay spirituality. This new concept ought to be elaborated alongside the religions, in such a way that all people of good will could adhere to it... (he concludes with emphasis) I believe in it deeply, and I think we need it so the world can have a better future.

The language of this spiritual awakening is just emerging. As we all know, it is difficult to speak about spiritual matters. Diane Sawyer tells the story of a six-year-old child in first grade. The art teacher asked the children to draw anything they wanted. The little girl was deeply immersed in her drawing and didn't hear the teacher say it was time to stop. The teacher walked to her desk and gently asked, “What are you drawing?” I'm drawing a picture of God,” she said. The teacher then said, “But no one knows what God looks like.” The little girl responded with a smile, “They will when I finish.”

Of course, the teacher was right, we don't know what God looks like. (Perhaps we need to have the eyes and the vision of a six-year old...) We don't have a good modern language for spirituality. Yet our awkwardness must not stop us from trying to understand the spiritual and the sacred. The stakes are too high. We must be bold enough to search between the surfaces for a deeper reality where the roots of our problems can be addressed.

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February 23, 1998

## **II. The Case for the Common Work**

When we ask, as foundations, how we can improve the conditions of the world, our minds usually turn to such questions as: How can we enlist more people, more nations, in the work of doing good? How can we mobilize science and technology for the good of civilization? How will market economies bring prosperity to the world?

I feel certain that historians will see the twentieth century a period in which we, as human beings, tried in an organized way to heal the ills of our world. Yet, the problems at the end of this century continue to grow at increasing rates. With trillions of dollars being spent (U.S. foundations alone spent an estimated \$15 billion in 1997), the reality is that modern approaches, programs, and projects are having only limited impact. In some ways, especially through science and technology, we've advanced beyond our wildest dreams: yet all these modern innovations, while important and necessary, are not sufficient.

Perhaps, as we reflect back on this century, we will come to realize that it is not enough to convince our nations to do good. We must learn a great deal more about how good is done. We must learn a great deal more about the wisdom of doing good.

Thomas Merton put it this way:

If we attempt to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening our own self-understanding, our own freedom, integrity and capacity to love, we will not have anything to give to others. We will communicate nothing but the contagion of our own obsessions, our aggressiveness, our own ego-centered ambitions.

- spiritual dimensions of our lives influence our physical health.
- The spiritual grass roots where tens of millions of people were meeting in small groups to become more aware of how their inner lives affect their actions, learning how to bring values of caring and relationship more fully into their lives, and finally,
- The liberation of the feminine, showing how culture understood reality through a deeper more relational perspective.

What I want to suggest is that 1,000 years from now historians might well point to the key role of philanthropy in responding to this movement and in nurturing this period of change. They might say that as the twentieth century ended, philanthropy, itself, began to provide conscious leadership into the life of service—into the work for peace, justice, and the environment.

Let us at least dare to ask, “What do we want historians to look back and say was our contribution at the beginning of the twenty-first century?”

To do so, I would like to focus the remainder of my talk on the essential purpose of philanthropy and how I believe we, as institutions and individuals are called to respond to that purpose.

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### **III. The Giver and the Gift: Love & Money**

Modern philanthropy brings together two seemingly irreconcilable concepts: Love and Money. These are the inevitable inner and outer aspects of our work. The word philanthropy, as we know, carries the meaning, “love of humanity.” But if we read through all the annual reports of all the foundations for the last ten years, I’d wager we would be hard-pressed to find the word “love” mentioned more than ten times. The truth is we live in a time of confusion around the word. We were taught that love is caring and acting for the good of others. What we are learning in this century is that when we remain unaware of our inner lives and their entangled motives, acting out of what we believe are good intentions may not truly serve the welfare of others. Still, love is our calling as philanthropists. When will we discover how love can become the central principle in our work?

Let me suggest that love is the only true bridge between the inner life and the outer life. Love, not money is the true currency of philanthropy. But of course, in modern society the instrument of philanthropy is money. So, a deeper question arises; is it possible for money to be a conduit of love?

My sense is that those in family philanthropy have a particular wisdom to teach to others in this work of bringing money and love into right relationship. For most of us, our family is the true school of the spirit, where we are enrolled in a course of study that can only be taught from the inside out. In a way, those in family foundations have been in preparation for the moral and spiritual challenges of philanthropy; you understand this crucible of love and money better than most.

Let me share a bit of my experience. When I first went to work for a foundation, I remember so easily slipping into the innocence of altruistic arrogance. With the financial resources available, and our large sense of purpose, I truly began to believe—while being constantly courted and treated as special—that the programs we were funding could solve the problems that are out there. But slowly, I began to see that, as well-intended “grantees” would shape themselves into the problems we wanted to solve, there was a breakdown in open, candid communication, and a loss of true mutuality. When the currency of the relationship became primarily “us and them,” “have and have-not,” I could sense the emergence of fear and distrust. As grantees and I began to treat each other as means to ends, as objects to be strategized with, I could feel myself drawn into the politics of money that I rightly feared.

Just how do we stay committed to our profession and keep our relationships authentic, while working constantly in the shadow of money? This is one of our deepest challenges.

In recent years I’ve begun to grasp, if not always hold onto, a way in which money can be an instrument for spirit, and not a barrier to human virtue. It involves putting our relationships in the center. Let me try to explain. What I’ve begun to grasp is simply this. That the effect of money depends on the nature of the relationship between the giver and the receiver, and that every time we exchange money, it is a manifestation of the quality of our relationships.

I know in my own journey, I have traveled this road from giver to receiver, many times—always by way of what Helen Luke calls “the bridge of humility.” I seem to find myself on this bridge when, in helplessness, I begin to see those “outside problems” as difficulties that have also existed within my own life. As the Tibetan saying goes, “The crack in the heart lets the mystery in.” And it is humbly here—in the cracks in my thinking, the cracks in my pride, the cracks in my heart—that I begin to discover the seeds of my humanity growing in the lives around me and, when I can accept this, well, then somehow, it turns around, and the wholeness of life found in others begins to unfold in me.

Gandhi once said that he did not understand the problems of India until he understood himself. In saying this, he reminds us that the first thing to do is to explore the world nearest to us; the world within our own hearts.

Without this inner understanding, I am persuaded that no matter how innovative our programs, no matter how much money is spent with the best of intentions, if the relationship through which the money is passed does not exist in wholeness and freedom, we will not have exchanged anything, as Thomas Merton says, but our own ego-centered ambitions, fears and illusions.

If we accept this relationship—centered definition of money, if we accept that the problems we attempt to solve exist within ourselves as well, then we can see that when we exchange money, even when intended for the highest good, the exchange of who we are is the small print that no one ever reads in the transaction.

We must acknowledge that we live in a world tied to the exchange of money. And if so, we need to be mindful of what we are expressing with each exchange. We must stay vigilant in our understanding that the authenticity of our relationships surrounding money is of more importance than maintaining the power of the giver over the receiver.

I believe the key question is how can we remove ourselves and our institutions from the center of our relationships and discover, instead, our common work?

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#### **IV. The Inner Life of Institutions and Individuals**

We learned a great deal about this last year, at the Fetzer Institute, while reevaluating our central mission. Like most organizations, the first question we asked ourselves was, “What makes us unique; what is our distinctive purpose?” I must have written five or six pieces based on many conversations with staff and trustees trying to capture what makes the Fetzer Institute different. But none of these drafts rang true.

Ironically, when it felt as though we were out of options, we found ourselves at a new beginning. As Henry Kissinger said, “We often arrive at the right choice, only after all other possibilities have been exhausted.” Now that we were exhausted, there was suddenly enough light to see ourselves more fully in others. For there comes a moment in the life of an organization, as there does in each of our own lives, when we begin to shift our primary awareness away from the question of what makes us distinctive and unique to the question of what is the larger purpose we share with others. And so, as we begin to understand ourselves as part of something larger, our true identity comes into clear relief.

But organizations like individuals are highly susceptible to ego-inflation. To realize this, we have only to acknowledge our endless patterns of hustling reality to fit our own organizational goals and objectives. It becomes powerfully clear that when everything revolves solely around the purposes and missions of our institutions, then money becomes an organizational form of gravity reforming reality in our own image. All this

leads me to suggest that we need a Copernican shift in our organizational lives. For while the Earth has now been seen as the center of our universe for nearly 500 years, organizations still see themselves at the center of the worlds in which they operate.

I'm suggesting that, as long as our institutions stay in the center, our relationships surrounding money will be burdened by ego-attachments that will block any possibility of true collaboration. And the world is too complex and resources too scarce to go it alone.

We must find better ways to collaborate. True collaboration is more than bringing together financial and intellectual resources around a mutual goal. In the end collaboration that draws on the resources of mind and money, but not on the resources of grace, will only rearrange the furniture.

True collaboration requires a key transformation in how we view the core of our institutional life. The crucial change here calls for a deeper understanding of the word power. The American Heritage Dictionary points out that originally the word power meant able to be. Over time, it came to mean to be able to do. This reflects a transition of meaning from a focus on the inner life, the capacity of being, to a focus on the outer life, the capacity of doing. This shift in the meaning of power reflects an imbalance we have all suffered, an imbalance that is at the root of many of our problems. What we are beginning to understand is that this united life of spirit and service requires a recovery of the relationship between the power to be and the power to do. As an ancient Christian maxim tells, "action follows being."

Ultimately, to unite the life of spirit and service requires a new form of logic, a logic of the spirit, calling on us to bridge the inner and outer life; bringing an inner dimension to the elementary principles of institutional life. For example traditional institutional logic holds that first you define your purpose, then you structure an organization to carry out the purpose. But the logic of the spirit suggests the first question is not what is our purpose, but how shall we live together? This requires us to understand that our institutional vision includes not only what we see but, more essentially, our capacity to see; that our institutional strategies include not only what we do but, more substantially, who we are; and, that our institutional evaluation includes not only what we achieve but, more fundamentally, as Mother Teresa observed, our faithfulness.

It is through this slight shift in our perspective that we will discover our common work. Yet what is this work we hold in common? At this conference there are many foundations with varied purposes; some in education, some in justice, some in health, some in the environment, some in religion, some in the arts. In the outer life we are indeed dramatically diverse, but I am suggesting that it is in viewing our work from the inside out that we will discover our commonality. We will discover our common work as we recognize that we cannot address the large issues in the public realm without attending to our own spiritual issues in the personal realm. In order to do the work, we must be the work; the very personal work of exploring the deepest, most sacred parts of our lives.

We do our common work together right at the level where we trust that each of us is on an inner journey and where we support each other along the way. And so, it is through the that exploration of the depths of our personal well that we discover the common spring feed all the wells.

It is through the awareness of this deep inner connectedness that we become free to act with authentic love. Otherwise, we merely react, and are seduced by the rush of continual doing—what Thomas Merton called a “pervasive form of modern violence.” Listen to his insight.

The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his or her work for peace.

So, of course, the question is how? How do we resist the violence of continual doing? In the Benedictine phrase, How does our work become prayer?

It is our spiritual practices that ground us in, not separate us from, the ordinary life, the real world. Our practices of prayer, meditation, mindfulness, and silence help us see life as it really is, to avoid romanticism on the one hand and cynicism on the other. When integrated into our daily life—from waking up, eating, and working to gardening and walking—spiritual practices help us see with wisdom and act with compassion.

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## **V. The Heart of Philanthropy**

I would like to conclude by referring to a recent speech by MarianWright Edelman in which she recalled a piece Lee Atwater, former head of the Republican Party, wrote seven years ago, shortly before he died at the age of 40, of cancer. I believe Lee Atwater’s words express the truth I have tried to convey today.

“Long before I was struck with cancer, I felt something staring at American society. It was a sense among the people of the country. Republicans and Democrats alike, that something was missing from their lives something crucial. I was trying to position the Republican party to take advantage of it, but I wasn’t exactly sure what it was. My illness helped me to see what was missing in society is what was missing in me. A little heart, a lot of brotherhood. The eighties were about acquiring; acquiring wealth, power, and prestige. I know I acquired more than most, but you can acquire all you want and still feel empty. What power wouldn’t I trade for a little more time with my family? What price wouldn’t I pay for an evening with friends? It took a deadly illness to put me eye-to-eye with that truth. But it is a truth that the country caught up in its ruthless ambitions and moral decay can learn on my dying. (He concludes with an invitation). I don’t know who will lead us through the eighties and nineties, but they must be made to speak to this spiritual vacuum at the heart of American society. This tumor of the soul.”

Who will lead us? Who will accept this invitation “to speak to the spiritual vacuum in our hearts?” I believe we know our leader for the twenty-first century. Each of us sitting in this room, and all of those who follow must accept this challenge of leadership; this leadership from within that unites the inner life of spirit with the outer life of service. And when we do, we will discover what the great spiritual traditions have taught, and that is, simply, as we enhance our inner capacity for wholeness and freedom, we strengthen our outer capacity to love and serve. This is our common work. This is the call to the heart of philanthropy.

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