
CONVERSATION 3

Giving and Human Excellence

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Conversations on Philanthropy Volume II: New Paradigms

DonorsTrust
2005

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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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