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PHILANTHROPY
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Philanthropy Australia Oration

8 September 2011

Reflections on Philanthropy: In cash or in kind? For love or for money? For now or forever?

Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott

Distinguished guests, friends one and all.

We gather this evening on the ancestral lands of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. Let us respect the elders past and present and let us respect the spirits of this land.

I wish to thank Philanthropy Australia for the invitation to speak to you this evening, and to thank the Gandel Charitable Trust for supporting this event and for the donation to a charity of my choice. I have chosen the Mirabel Foundation, a small non-government organization which assists the children of parents with drug and alcohol problems who are in the care of members of their extended family, mostly grandparents.

I am pleased to match this gift. This donation will enable a child to pursue an interest such as a sport, learn a musical instrument or a hobby. Such a pursuit can make an enormous difference in the life of a vulnerable child.

Reflections on Philanthropy: In cash or in kind? For love or for money? For now or forever? This evening I shall explore the value of giving in kind, the value of giving for love, and some ideas about the philanthropic impulse and the need to nurture this within children, in the hope that this may become a focus of philanthropic attention.

They are my personal reflections, not the views of philanthropic foundations for which I have worked or on which I now serve as a board member.

Although I am an academic who has published a little on philanthropy, I shall not be talking about philanthropy research this evening, although of course, philanthropy is now a focus of academic inquiry in at least two Australian universities. Nor shall I talk about philanthropy as an organizational or professional endeavour, although of course, there is a high level of professionalism involved in certain forms of grantmaking.

While both are important, I must confess that I am a little ambivalent about the academic and professional dimensions of philanthropy. There is a risk that they may suppress the philanthropic impulse, as literary criticism may suppress the love of literature. Philanthropy is about the head and the heart and we have heard a lot about the head in recent years. I think it time to talk about the heart again.



Why? Because our place and times confront us with enormous challenges, challenges which can only be addressed if an ethos of contributing in kind and for love can be transmitted inter-generationally.

In an increasingly secular and materialistic society, the religious traditions that once sustained the philanthropic ethos have weakened. A broad range of faith traditions have long upheld the principle of sharing. This is very strong, for example, in Jewish traditions and it is no coincidence that some of Australia's most notable philanthropists are Jewish. Christian and Islamic traditions also have an ethos of sharing or tithing, and all faith traditions extol the virtue of compassion which is at the heart of philanthropy.

However, the philanthropic impulse is not dependent upon religion. I believe that it is embedded in our humanity. We have some fine examples of secular-inspired philanthropy. Perhaps the most internationally distinctive and egalitarian Australian example is Legacy which was created by ex-servicemen after the First World War to support the widows and children of those who had died. It provided support, both in cash and in kind, and has been of enormous benefit to a very large number of families. Legacy depended on volunteers and this in turn depended on the close bonds between ex-servicemen and women, as well as the financial support of the wider community.

Compared with the social context early in the twentieth century, the context early in the twenty first century is one in which there are growing concerns about the loss of a sense of community. There is deep concern about a decline in social capital, by which I mean the trust and reciprocity that make up the social glue in a society. Robert Putnam makes the important distinction between what he calls "bonding social capital" and "bridging social capital". Bonding social capital is the cohesion which exists within "the tribe" or within a group of people of similar backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, religion, social class etc., while bridging social capital transcends these group boundaries.

Bonding social capital - volunteering in your child's school or kindergarten, your faith community, local sports club, or caring for elderly members of your extended family, is absolutely vital for family and community life. It is necessary but not sufficient for social cohesion.

Unless we also have bridging social capital, we will lack social cohesion. Some observers have identified this as one of the contributing factors to the recent riots in highly urbanized and culturally diverse large cities in England. Whatever the causes, there is little doubt that one of the effects of the riots will be diminished trust and social cohesion.

Such events can sometimes be turning points. In the wake of the events at Cronulla in Sydney some years ago, the Surf Life Saving Club successfully engaged Muslim young men and women to become life savers – an interesting example of bridging social capital.

The emergence of gated communities, both literally and metaphorically, may be a sign that social cohesion is already weakening and that trust is in decline. Many parents are too afraid to allow their children to walk to school. Many elderly people are too afraid to answer the front door. Inter-generational trust has slowly diminished. This was first brought home to me two decades ago when my son, then aged eight or nine, walked from his school to his grandmother's home in a retirement village very close by, and on several afternoons was challenged by elderly residents about what right he had to be there. How have we got to the point where a young child is seen as a threat?

There is also a loss of trust in social institutions which were once respected. For example, religious bodies have lost their moral authority due in part to the sexual abuse of children which was covered up, putting other children at risk. Our political leaders today are neither trusted nor respected, and there is deep concern about the trustworthiness of the media, business and most professions.



So in our place and times we are facing major social challenges, at the same time as we face major environmental and economic challenges. This is the broad context in which I wish to explore the profound importance of giving in kind and giving for love.

My main argument for giving in kind is that we cannot solve the problems facing us by cash alone. “Engagement philanthropy” as it is now called, is not new. The early people described as philanthropists were actively engaged in causes, and donating money was not necessarily a central or even an essential part of their engagement. For some their philanthropy was part and parcel of how they conducted their businesses in the spirit of what we would now call social responsibility. For example, in England, both the Cadbury and Rowntree families, in keeping with their Quaker convictions, created model villages for their factory employees, which included health, education and recreational facilities.

For others it was activism in the face of social injustice which characterized their philanthropy. People such as William Wilberforce who worked for the abolition of slavery, or Elizabeth Fry who reformed prison conditions, or Lord Shaftsbury who led the movement for schools for the poor and for factory reform, were known as philanthropists for their deeds, not their donations. They were deeply and passionately committed to their causes. They lived in turbulent times and felt called to action. We too live in turbulent times. Do we have contemporary examples in philanthropy of Australians being called to action? It is hard to see one’s own times in perspective but I think we might.

One example is Graeme Wood, founder of the online travel company Wotif.com, whose foundation focuses on education, the arts, youth and the environment. His purchase, in partnership with Jan Cameron, of the Triabunna Native Forest Woodchip Export Mill for \$10m, reflects a form of activist philanthropy which may be emerging.

Another interesting example of giving in kind aimed at social change is that of the Sydney documentary film maker Ian Darling and the work of the Caledonia Foundation. The powerful documentaries they have produced on issues relating to very disadvantaged children and young Australians, demonstrate how a philanthropist’s talents can be harnessed to support a vision of social change.

Most philanthropic giving in kind is not activism philanthropy but it also involves contributing knowledge and labour. From the expertise encompassed in not for profit boards of management to the efforts of the environmental volunteers who plant trees on a large scale, the contribution in kind is huge.

Philanthropic foundations themselves can also make a significant contribution in kind, as a recent study undertaken at the Myer Foundation by intern Lesley Harris, has illustrated. Based on surveying 10 foundations, Lesley identified the broad range of non-grantmaking contribution they made, from trustees using their influence to be advocates for grant recipient organisations, to serving on advisory councils and bringing together different organisations to pursue a common goal. Sometimes it goes much further than this. The work of the R.E.Ross Trust with Aboriginal communities along the Murray, drawing on Rebekah Lautman’s social work and community development skills, is an excellent example of the added value which a philanthropic trust can provide. In some areas of grantmaking, it is not a matter of in cash or in kind. Without the in kind support, the cash will not suffice. “Can we do deeds as well as donations?” could be a useful question to build into all grantmaking practice.

Perhaps the most well- known form of in kind philanthropy is not that of expertise but of material objects, especially works of art. The generosity of the late Margaret Olley to the Art Gallery of New South Wales is a prime example of this. While her gift of 130 works of art has been estimated at the time of donation to have been \$7 million, the value of her gifts cannot be measured in monetary terms alone. Such gifts have a deeper symbolic value and enhance the esteem of the organization which receives the gift.

The gift of property with high conservation values, increasingly common in Australian philanthropy, also has high non-monetary value. How can you put a price on wilderness and the survival of endangered



flora and fauna? Such a gift is motivated by a love for nature and the hope that future generations will be able to experience a similar love for the land.

We know little about the impact on the community of the powerful symbolism of such in kind gifts - not the impact of *what is given* but the impact of *the fact that it not bought but given*, and that individuals are seen to be generous to others, including to those not yet born.

In the classic book entitled *The Gift Relationship*, the late Richard Titmuss explored the social meaning of a very special type of gift – the gift of blood to strangers. Three percent of Australians donate blood but in many parts of the world blood is not given as a gift. Titmuss argued that such a gift relationship sustains social cohesion and the values of compassion. We are now witnessing increasing challenges in securing sufficient blood donors. We should not take blood donors for granted. Perhaps they are the canaries in the coalmine of compassion.

In a field with which I am familiar, that of child welfare, we are also seeing a rapid decline in the number of foster families. Foster families offer something which money cannot buy. They are not providing child care or a bed for a boarder, both of which can be purchased, but something which can never be bought - a place in their home and in their heart for a child who is not of their flesh. In some cultures it is quite alien to care for an unrelated child and institutional care remains all that is available. We should not take foster families for granted. Perhaps they too are the canaries in the coalmine of compassion.

In thinking about foster families I am reminded of a philanthropically minded middle aged couple who wished to support foster children and their foster families, and came to see me when I was at The Ian Potter Foundation. John and Barbara Heine subsequently provided scholarships to young people who had been or were still in State care to enable them to undertake tertiary education.

Despite the unexpected death of her husband, Barbara Heine continued with their shared vision, and she used to meet the young people. She was warm and affirming and meeting her was a powerful experience for them. That the financial support came from an individual they did not know but who was taking a deep interest in them and their aspirations, meant a great deal to these young people who came from very painful and sometimes abusive family backgrounds. Barbara Heine has now sadly passed away too but her daughters continue to be committed to their parents' vision and are working with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, the peak child welfare organization in Victoria, to enlarge the scholarship program during this organisation's forthcoming centenary year. I hope the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare will be well supported in this by the Victorian philanthropic community.

I once mentored a young man who had a Smith Family tertiary scholarship to do social work at RMIT. He had been in foster care and had experienced many struggles before achieving some stability in his life. Watching him graduate made me feel as proud as any parent, but what most moved me about this young man is how he volunteered to be a mentor for a young boy in State care who was at very high risk of entering the juvenile justice system. He stuck with that boy through thick and thin.

Perhaps the most important dimension about giving in kind in this way is that it does not require wealth. And being asked to contribute when you see yourself, and others often see you, as having little to give, can be transformative. Some of the most innovative programs I know for marginalised people are those which enable people to make the shift from being a client to being a contributor.

The New South Wales child and family welfare agency, Burnside, has pioneered the NEWPIN program in Australia and perhaps the most inspiring aspect of this program for very vulnerable parents and their pre-school aged children is how the parents are supported to become mentors to others. To be needed and to be valued by the community is a precious experience for such parents. There is nothing which can enhance their self-esteem as much as this.



The generosity of the most marginalised is the most humbling. Some years ago I heard on the radio a businessman speaking about his experience in trying to make a contribution to the problem of homelessness. To understand the issues better, he chose to live on the street for several days and described how a homeless man had come up to him in a park and offered him his blanket, saying “here mate, you could probably do with this more than I could”. I could hear the businessman begin to cry as he described this incident. He was deeply moved by the compassion offered to him by a stranger who was in so much greater need. I think the homeless man who offered his blanket had the essence of what might be best described as the philanthropic impulse.

Something which has interested me for some time is the source of the philanthropic impulse. At the Philanthropy Australia dinner in May this year, Carillo Gantner spoke about what he called the adventure of personal philanthropy, and briefly mentioned his grandfather, Sidney Myer, one of Australia’s greatest philanthropists.

History guides us and one important thing I have learnt is that life’s real experiences will inform your philanthropy. Sidney Myer knew real hunger and hardship as a young man. I believe it was this personal experience that guided his extensive philanthropy in his later life.

The place of personal experience in an individual’s philanthropic journey is profound. Some years ago, when I was at The Ian Potter Foundation, I had the great privilege of working closely with two little known philanthropists, George Alexander and Alec Sewell. Both men were childless and in their nineties, and have since passed away. Both wanted to leave a legacy but were unsure how best this might be done. I helped them to focus on the things which had been most significant in their lives. They had very different backgrounds but had in common a deep desire to make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged children and young people.

This desire had been forged in very different contexts. George Alexander was born into very poor circumstances, and at the age of 13 left school to work in a bicycle shop. At sixteen he came to Australia as part of the Big Brother Movement. It was the late 1920s and he was assigned to work on a struggling soldier settlement farm. I recall him telling me how hungry he used to be and how he stole freshly laid eggs from the chooks and buried them so he could later eat them, raw, when no-one was looking. He had a great gift for making things and solving practical problems.

During the Second World War he managed the munitions factory in Maribyrnong, the inner western suburbs of Melbourne, and after the War he set up his own very small business in manufacturing tap fittings and later in irrigation equipment as well. It was very successful and eventually he became a wealthy man. He told me that he had come to regret his part in the damage done to the environment by irrigation dependent agriculture. In our conversation it did not take long to identify the two issues which meant the most to him - the environment and giving young people “a leg up in life”. In the last few years of his life he derived immense satisfaction from the way in which the grantmaking of The George Alexander Foundation was crafted to reflect these two concerns.

Alec Sewell came from a privileged Melbourne family and had two great loves – his property, Teamsters Hill, in the towering forests and farming land of Toolangi, which had been his family’s holiday home since he was a small boy, and to which he had retired, and the writing of poetry and prose. He lived a very simple and frugal life in retirement, surrounded by the beautiful rhododendrons he had planted with his mother over eighty years earlier. Alec Sewell was deeply gratified by the plans put in place for his estate.

He was delighted at the thought that Teamsters Hill would go to Anglicare, the Victoria child welfare agency, as a place of respite for foster families and children, and that children might enjoy this patch of paradise as he had enjoyed it as a boy. The rest of his estate was bequeathed to The Ian Potter Foundation, and the Alec Prentice Sewell Gift is now making excellent grants to support children in need.



When George Alexander and Alec Sewell were boys, the role of children included that of being a contributor in the family and the community. Today children live in a culture in which they are consumers, and are mostly deprived of the opportunity to be contributors.

In the death notices in *The Age* newspaper late last year I came across a tribute which touched on this. It was written by a man as if speaking directly to his grandfather who had died.

Pa, didn't we have some fun? As a boy you took Kari and me for rides on bulldozers, tractors and the timberjack; and you taught us so much around the farm. Working with you, stacking timber, feeding the animals, tractor work, and right up to recent times, gardening, or just polishing your cars – it was satisfying to hear you say 'beauty', knowing I did a good job for you....

It seemed as if the times described belonged to a bygone era. Did children still experience the joy of helping grandparents like that, I wondered? I was saved from lamenting the changing times by hearing in the same week Stephanie Alexander on ABC National Radio talking about her philanthropically supported school kitchen garden initiative. I was enthralled by her anecdotes of how primary school aged children were responding to the opportunity to grow vegetables in the school garden and to cook and share meals with one another. She described how they glowed with pride in the produce they had grown, and were affirmed by their families when they displayed their culinary skills at home.

There are inspiring things happening in some schools. The peer mentoring programs of the Stride Foundation are a prime example of this. But the whole issue of children as contributors needs to become a much higher priority for us at the level of the family, the local community and the nation. Does philanthropy have a key role to play in such a vision, I wonder?

In the past year or so I have witnessed in my locality in the Dandenong Ranges, local primary schools being very actively engaged in habitat regeneration for the highly endangered bird, the Helmeted Honeyeater, which is the fauna emblem of Victoria. The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater work with local schools to regenerate the bird's habitat.

On Tuesday this week my partner Alan and I were working as volunteers at Yellingbo alongside the children from Yellingbo Primary School. Alan dug the holes and children planted the trees. I spoke with the Principal who was down on his knees planting trees. "This is what it is all about" he said when I expressed appreciation of the work the students were doing. He is right. Ultimately it is all about children and the environment.

The children are sent photographs of the bush regeneration work they have done at an earlier time and photographs of new helmeted honeyeaters hatched each season to give students strong ongoing positive feedback on the outcomes of their efforts. This is important in avoiding the sense of despair which environmental problems can sometimes engender. The children really enjoy this.

It is important that they do. Professor Michael Rutter, one of the world's foremost child psychiatrists once said

... it does seem desirable that we foster personality development in such a way that our children are cooperative and prosocial in their interaction with others, not because they feel they *have* to be so, but rather because they get *pleasure* from being so (Rutter, 1983, 38).

Adam Phillips, the British psychoanalyst, and Barbara Taylor, historian, in their recent book entitled *On Kindness*, also use the word pleasure in relation to caring for others.



... the child needs the adult – and his wider society – to help him keep faith with his kindness, that is, to help him discover and enjoy the pleasures of caring for others. The child who is failed in this regard is robbed of one of the greatest sources of human happiness (p12).

Rarely do we hear this view – that we are depriving children of their rightful entitlement to give to others, robbing them of one of the greatest sources of human happiness.

Phillips and Taylor, drawing on evolutionary psychology, actually use the powerful and provocative word 'instinct' in relation to kindness.

Children, like the adults they will become, are complex creatures with ... an instinct for kindness and concern that is every bit as strong as their self-regarding instincts (p.9).

The opportunity to make a contribution to others is given too little attention yet it is central to our mental health. The WHO definition of mental health is "a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, *and is able to make a contribution to his or her community*". It is the latter which makes us feel that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

There is strong evidence that children who are most at risk may benefit the most from contributing. Research psychologist Emmy Werner, one of the foremost experts on resilience in children, has identified several key factors which are closely associated with positive adult outcomes among children who have been exposed to multiple risk factors such as poverty, parental mental illness, parental substance misuse, violence in the home etc.

They found that the children they identified as "resilient", those characterized by better educational and employment outcomes and the avoidance of criminal behavior and mental illness, shared certain factors in their childhood: personal temperaments that elicited positive responses from family members and others; a close bond with, and few disruptions from, their primary caregiver in the first year of life, and *an active engagement in acts of 'required helpfulness' in middle childhood and adolescence.*

Werner observed that

Self-esteem and self-efficacy also grew when youngsters took on a responsibility commensurate with their ability, whether it was part-time work, managing the household when a parent was incapacitated, or most often, caring for younger siblings. At some point in their young lives, usually in middle childhood and adolescence, the youngsters were required to carry out some socially desirable task to prevent others in their family, neighbourhood or community from experiencing distress or discomfort. Such acts of *required helpfulness* (Rachman, 1979) can also become a crucial element of intervention programs that involve high-risk youth in community service.

Sadly and surprisingly, there are few programs for high risk youth which have drawn upon this. I have seen firsthand how powerful it can be when vulnerable young people are not seen as clients but as contributors. Brenda Stubbs, an Aboriginal woman in a remote community in central Australia has tackled the dire problem of malnutrition in very young Aboriginal children by employing their adolescent mothers for a few hours a day in a very homely setting where they made meals for the elderly members of the community under a government funded program, then sat down and fed their children before eating lunch themselves and taking home meals for their family that evening. In a warm and firm grandmotherly way, Brenda Stubbs nurtured the young women and their children, and drew on the strong Pitjantjatjara cultural norm of reciprocity – "ngapartji ngapartji" ("I give you something, you give me something") in a very concrete way. The young women have gained the respect of their communities and as a result, self-respect.



It is surprising that philanthropy has paid so little attention to children and young people as contributors, despite the very significant grantmaking in the areas of child and youth welfare, mental health, volunteering and in growing philanthropy itself. Philanthropy could have an important role in nurturing an inter-generational ethos of contributing to the community, from building the knowledge in this area to supporting innovation, evaluation and dissemination of promising approaches.

Whether this might result in a large national initiative on the scale of a Legacy or Landcare, or thousands and thousands of little local initiatives, or both, I do not know. But I do know that it needs to be based on rigorous research and that such research needs to be skillfully translated into action. In relation to the knowledge building challenge, there are many questions we need to answer, such as:

1. What are the sources of motivation children have in relation to caring for people and animals and to what extent are intrinsic or extrinsic rewards significant in shaping empathy and compassion?
2. What are the different ways in which families nurture helpfulness in boys and girls, and how might this affect the way that boys and girls are best engaged with the community?
3. How does children's helping behavior vary across different cultural groups within our society and what appears to be the effect of this beyond the family?
4. How, in schools and other settings, is helping behavior best encouraged for students of all social classes who are not pro-social and whose families do not hold pro-social values?

Is there a place for philanthropy in forging a new frontier, one that goes to the very heart of who we are as human beings? I believe there is and I hope others will share this vision.

We live in an era in which the spirit of the age is one of fear and despair. In such times, children are our harbingers of hope. If our children and grandchildren are to have a future in which there are still blood donors, in which there are still foster families, in which there are still people who protect the environment because they care for those not yet born, then before it is too late, we need to nurture the philanthropic impulse to give in kind and to give for love, not just for now but forever.

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