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The Request and the Gift in Religious and Humanitarian Endeavors

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The Request and the Gift in Religious and Humanitarian Endeavors

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CHAPTER 1

Asking in Time

Frederick Klaits

What does asking have to do with giving? This question provides the impetus behind Israel Zangwill's 1897 comic novel *The King of Schnorrers*, whose central character is a beggar named Manasseh who makes life miserable for the rich members of the Jewish community in London by haranguing them, often in pious language, into giving him copious amounts of their wealth. At one point, Manasseh tells a fellow *Schnorrer* (beggar, in Yiddish):

> The world could not exist without *Schnorrers*. As it is written, "And Repentance and *Prayer* and CHARITY avert the evil decree." Charity is put last – it is the climax – the greatest thing on earth. And the *Schnorrer* is the greatest man on earth; for it stands in the Talmud, "He who causes is greater than he who does." Therefore, the *Schnorrer* who causes charity is even greater than he who gives it. (Zangwill 1954, 73)

Zangwill's joke works by reversing received notions about subject positioning in gift giving. By recasting the legalistic language about the

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obligation to give, Manasseh makes the asker out to be a more important and worthy figure in his own and God's eyes than the donor. But joking aside, might it really be that the world, or at least some aspects of its moral grounding, could not exist without *Schnorrers*? In the essays assembled here, we see how ethical acts of giving involve prior or simultaneous acts of asking.

In northwest Zambia, a traditional healer asks an accused witch to accept a bowl of blood from a sacrificed goat to substitute for the life of the bewitched. Residents of a Ugandan orphan care center regard themselves as both receivers and givers of charity, helping children because they had themselves been helped in the past, and soliciting God's protection in the process. Malagasy Lutheran aid workers criticize their US counterparts' requests for reports demonstrating accountability, comparing audits unfavorably with Malagasy practices in which kin help one another without explicitly asking for assistance. Coordinators of a North American Christian child sponsorship organization aim to establish relations of trust with their donors, yet find that their requests for gifts involve them in epistemic murk about trustworthiness. Jewish students on a service learning trip to New Orleans recall the initiative they took to raise funds, thereby contesting philanthropic organizations' efforts to position them as passive recipients of aid and subjects of cultural education. Aid workers in Islamic Relief promote the dignity of their beneficiaries by thanking them for the opportunity to serve, requesting that they remember them in their prayers to God.

These essays explore how such practices of giving and asking help to bestow value on persons within humanitarian and religious frameworks. Humanitarian workers share with religious believers a profound appreciation of the moral force inherent in forms of giving, such as charity, philanthropy, and development assistance, as well as in styles of asking that include prayer, protest, fund-raising, and begging. In addition, both humanitarian and religious practitioners commonly promote and advocate rubrics for valuing the lives of persons. Yet little specific attention has been paid within anthropology to integrating the meanings of giving and asking expressed within these frameworks. Our collection meets this need by bringing together essays that consider how the moral qualities of giving and asking, expressed through words, objects, and texts, contribute to the ways in which persons are valued and devalued.

What kinds of moral force do acts of giving and asking possess? This question stands at the core of debates about the meanings and content of just

action. Within humanitarian discourses, giving to those in need is widely construed as the epitome of moral action, while asking for charity is liable to be seen as merely utilitarian. Yet in many religious discourses, prayers and requests for alms are highly valued as moral acts, obligatory for establishing relationships with the divine. Within anthropology, the foundational text on giving as a source of morality is Marcel Mauss's study, *The Gift* (1990), which argues that the source of obligation to reciprocate lies in the object given, which partakes of the spirit of the giver. Within Mauss's framework, giving represents the moral basis of legal and religious justice. Mauss writes, for instance, of almsgiving as representing "the ancient morality of the gift, which has become a principle of justice. The gods and spirits accept that the share of wealth and happiness that has been offered to them and had been hitherto destroyed in useless sacrifices should serve the poor and children" (1990, 18). By contrast, receiving and asking occupy residual positions because, ostensibly, such acts do not confer obligations in turn – even though we might regard the Maussian gift itself as a request in light of the obligation it entails to reciprocate.

Our collection interrogates this bias by pointing out that asking as well as giving may constitute grounds for just action. Asking may bring the person of the asker to the attention of the asked, in a fashion analogous to the workings of the gift. Thus, to the extent that prayers, appeals for alms, protests, and other kinds of requests are construed as activities that keep families and communities functioning (Collins 2012), asking may be a method of securing means of social reproduction. If, as Mauss argues, the gift compels attention to the ways in which "one 'owes' *oneself* – one's person and one's goods – to others" (1990, 46), the request may perform comparable work.

One reason the moral force of asking is commonly overlooked is that the status-to-contract models which dominate much liberal political discourse tend to cast only a narrow range of requests as legitimate. To elucidate this point, it is helpful to turn to Rosalind Eyben's essay (2006) on how the gift troubles international aid donors. "The gift has few friends in the world of aid," Eyben (2006, 90) reflects on the basis of her work in Bolivia as head of the UK Department for International Development during 2000–2002. During her tenure, Eyben promoted a policy of putting money directly in the Bolivian government's budget. This policy was, she recalls, in her mind a "progressive agenda" intended to dismantle "the patronage system in Bolivia by refusing to give aid directly to the citizens through NGO

projects but instead encouraging them to hold their state institutions accountable for the delivery of services to which they were entitled" (2006, 94). Motivating this agenda was aid officials' suspicion of the "clientelism" associated with gifts, which they contrasted with entitlements derived from state citizenship. The gift, Eyben notes, appears to development bureaucracies as "pre-modern, a patrimonial relic from a time when transactions were thought to be not efficiently impersonal but dependent on the quality of the relationship" (2006, 90). In a self-critical vein, Eyben notes how her own commitments to discouraging "clientelism" blinded her to the power dynamics at issue when she instructed her receptionist to turn away ordinary Bolivian citizens whose "livelihoods and welfare significantly depended on securing a good patron" (2006, 93), and when Bolivian government officials sought funds at the donors' conference table. Eyben concludes that it would be salutary for development officials to acknowledge the gift-like nature of aid. In so doing, they would recognize the importance of maintaining relationships rather than perceiving them as an "unfortunate 'transaction cost'" (2006, 97) characteristic of incomplete transitions from status to contract.

Implicitly, Eyben also shows that international aid transactions are premised upon a logic of social progress that governs asking as much as it does giving. As relationships based on status give way to those based on contract, personal requests for resources are supposed to be replaced by legal claims, and favor by accountability. A conclusion to draw from Eyben's discussion is that those with power to bestow resources would do well to reflect on the nature of the requests that they elicit, and on the capacity of requests (as well as gifts) to communicate understandings of who values or devalues whom. As James Ferguson notes in his recent book (2015) on the new politics of distribution in southern Africa and elsewhere, the rationale for direct cash transfers rests largely on the fact of the "presence" of recipients, in other words their implicit requests for assistance. While the innovative forms of distribution Ferguson describes are premised on contract-based conceptions of citizenship rights in an era of labor surplus, they derive moral force as well from practices of sharing. Sharing depends, as I discuss below, not on expectations of reciprocity but on recognition of the presence of those who lack means.

The question, then, is how to conceptualize the sorts of obligations that activities of asking may confer, and how these might be related to

the obligations attendant on giving. Useful in this regard is David Graeber's discussion of multiple economic modalities in *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2011). Like Mauss in *The Gift*, Graeber is centrally concerned with how felt obligations promote or forestall violence. Mauss highlights how the gift mediates "the unstable state between festival and war" (1990, 82), describing how warfare broke out between the followers of two Melanesian chiefs who had been friendly rivals. "We have all observed such facts," noted Mauss in 1924, "even among us" (1990, 82). The gift, he concludes hopefully, contributes to "the will to peace," enabling people to "oppose and give to one another without sacrificing themselves to one another" (1990, 82) – on the grounds, he implies, that gifts compel them to recognize how they owe themselves to others. For his part, Graeber emphasizes how the language of debt has commonly been used to justify violence and slavery, in that it enables lenders to claim that borrowers owe them their livelihoods. Graeber's project centers on identifying conceptual and political terms that might counter such violence by providing people with alternative rubrics for valuing one another's lives.

With this aim in mind, Graeber (2011, ch.5) insists that not all transactions give rise to debt. Only some do, namely *exchanges* between formal equals. A debt is an exchange that has not been brought to completion. For Graeber, exchange incorporates buying and selling as well as gifting practices in which expectations of reciprocity are unstated. He distinguishes exchange from two other economic modalities, both of which commonly coexist with exchange. One is *baseline communism* or sharing, in which services and goods are distributed on the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his means," often on the premise that there are shared tasks to be accomplished. Baseline communism is a feature of all societies. Graeber provides an example of two people working on the plumbing: if one says, "Hand me the wrench," the other is unlikely to respond, "And what do I get for it?" (2011, 95–6). A third modality consists of *hierarchy*, in which similar kinds of transactions occur repeatedly on the grounds that they have done so in the past. In the process, the transactions come to define the actors as superiors or inferiors. A parent may tell her child to take out the garbage because he has always taken out the garbage, and because she is the parent and he is the child. To these three modalities, we should add a fourth, namely the *free gift* perhaps best typified in Indic religious practices

that aim at pure generosity, whereby donors and receivers wish to feel no sense of personal obligation to one another but rather build up *karma* within an impersonal cosmic system (Bornstein 2012; Fisher 2014; Laidlaw 1995, 2000; Parry 1986). As with the Jewish secret gift or *matan beseter* (Silber 2000), the request becomes problematic in the context of such free gifts.

Within each of these modalities, people are valued in specific ways, as sharers, debtors or creditors, superiors or subordinates, and anonymous contributors or recipients. The point I wish to make is that requests play important roles in creating the temporal frameworks associated with these transactions, in some instances to a greater extent than do acts of giving. In so doing, requests provide a range of rubrics for valuing persons.

As Jane Guyer notes in a recent review, for Mauss "[i]t is this 'thingness' in the gift that inserts longevity into the indeterminacies of human life" (2012, 495). In Mauss, the indeterminate temporality associated with "the spirit of the object given," which compels the recipient to make a return at some point, counters Thomas Hobbes's (1991) view that fundamental human propensities of pursuing pleasure and fleeing pain at any given moment trigger the violence of the state of nature. The modality of exchange, then, involves temporalities of *credit and debt*, whereby persons who consider themselves formal equals are likely to be valued according to how much they owe or are owed. Graeber (2011) points out that the modality of baseline communism is characterized by a temporality of *eternity*, a presumption that people will be involved with one another on an indefinite basis, so that they must give and receive according to who possesses or lacks means. Hierarchy is associated with a temporality of *precedence*, whereby superiors and subordinates come to be identified with the tasks they perform and are valued accordingly. A "certain action, repeated, becomes customary; as a result, it comes to define the actor's essential nature" (Graeber 2011, 111). The free gift, I would add, involves *suspended time*. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's reading (1992) of the impossibility of the gift, James Laidlaw (2000, 622) shows that Jain renouncers aim to interrupt "the circulation of time, or rather . . . the way in which, through the medium of time, events and actions are related causally to each other." The emphasis renouncers place on their own anonymity as receivers of alms inhibits the creation of personal obligations between particular donors and recipients that would have to be acknowledged later.

These relationships are summarized in the following chart:

Economic Modality	*Temporality*	*Source of Obligation*	*How Asking Shapes Personal Value*	*Nature of Trust*
Baseline communism	Eternity or urgency	Demand	Demands make one's presence known	Reversible trust
Free gift	Suspended time	No obligation	Requests are disguised because they negate the gift	Trust in impersonal system
Exchange	Credit and debt	Gift, purchase, loan, or protest	Disempowering to ask rather than to assert rights	Audits, transparency
Hierarchy	Precedence	Request or gift	Value stems from acknowledging asymmetry	Expectation, interpretation, suspension of doubt

To begin with baseline communism, a rich literature on the importance of "demand sharing" within foraging societies shows that if one's rights to resources depend on one's willingness to share, the source of the obligation to share is the other's demanding presence (Widlok 2012; Willerslev 2007; Woodburn 1998). For instance, in the context of the North American fur trade, Native Americans commonly made claims on the "pity" of powerful others, whether spirit beings or European traders, in order to elicit goods and establish social and political ties (Black-Rogers 1986; White 1982). In an ethnography of Siberian Yukaghir hunters, Rane Willerslev points out that under principles of demand sharing, "People have the acknowledged right to demand that those who possess goods beyond their immediate needs give them up, and the owner of those goods must comply with the demands or risk social disapproval" (2007, 45). According to the Yukaghir, spirits as well as people participate in demand sharing. When animal master-spirits demand the right to the spirit of a hunter and his offspring by sending fatal sickness, this is not a matter of balancing out long-term credits for animals the hunter has killed, or any notion of "obligatory reciprocation, exact accounting, or compensation. Rather, the spirit deliberately manipulates the moral principle of sharing" by sending many animals to be killed

so as "to put the hunter in the position of wealthy donor, which justifies it in 'demanding' his soul" (2007, 46). In Yukaghir society, trust is "reversible" (Corsín Jiménez 2011) in the sense that what has been given or demanded in the past provides no necessary precedent for what will be provided or requested in the future.

Here the principle of justice – namely, equitable distribution – is articulated in the demand to share eternally, rather than conveyed through an expectation that what has been given in the past will be reciprocated later. According to the logic of demand sharing that motivates direct cash transfer programs to the poor, Ferguson points out, "*no one is giving anyone anything*" (2015, 178) because all resources are to be shared on principle in the first place. Asking and refusing, by contrast, assume prominent roles in marking the time associated with sharing. Thus, Marjorie Shostak recounts the frustration she experienced in eliciting a life history from a !Kung woman called Naukha. With evident enjoyment, Naukha repeatedly told stories of how "her mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, or uncle who, to the north, south, east, or west once refused to give her a certain root, berry, nut, or kind of meat. The next day, week, or month when she had some root, berry, and so on of her own, and her father, mother, and so on asked for it, it was her chance to refuse, *and she did!*" (Shostak 1983, 36). Likewise, Wenzel Geissler and Ruth Prince (2010) describe how a Luo toddler in Kenya learns to share by playing the *miya* ("give me") game with adults. They "address her when she holds something, saying: '*miya, miya*!', expecting her to give the object and returning it to her afterwards" (2010, 153). "'Give me,'" Geissler and Prince point out, "are the first words of the other, a demand that cannot be rejected as it is through others and through their words that one becomes somebody" (2010, 154). They frame the "give me" game as an instance of Emmanuel Lévinas's (1998) concept of a "passivic axiom of sociality . . . according to which it is the event of the other's request that makes me a person" (Geissler and Prince 2010, 154). In a variant, acquaintances in Botswana commonly engage in playful bantering requests, asking for things they do not expect to receive and pretending to refuse each other's demands (Durham 1995; Klaits 2011). By placing one another on a footing where refusals entail no consequences, these friends frame each other as equals who are just as entitled to deny as to ask, and to do so indefinitely.

Graeber points out that baseline communism operates as well "in the wake of great disasters. . . . Anyone who has lived through such a moment

can speak to their peculiar qualities, the way that strangers become sisters and brothers and human society itself seems to be reborn" (2011, 96). Comparable temporalities of *urgency* underlie emergency relief work and shape the distinctions between "lives saved" and "lives risked" that Didier Fassin (2007) identifies as inherent in humanitarian "politics of life." For members of Médècins sans frontières (MSF), Fassin shows, the sheer presence of suffering (and implicitly demanding) others constitutes sufficient and necessary grounds for sharing (see also Redfield 2013). Yet while MSF workers act upon imperatives to "save" the lives of those deemed disposable within what they call the "sacrificial order" of international politics, they cannot afford to "risk" their own lives unnecessarily. This incommensurability between "saving" and "risking" reflects the plural economic modalities, namely baseline communism and exchange, within which MSF must operate. MSF workers are said to "risk" their lives because they receive credit for placing themselves in dangerous situations for the good of others, whereas recipients of relief are not said to do so within this discursive frame. Credit is more than a metaphor in this instance: as Fassin points out, warring parties know that they can extract ransoms for kidnapped aid workers. Relief organizations might collapse if administrators were to ignore the disparities between, on the one hand, the credit that expatriate aid workers receive (and the financial losses that organizations would incur if they were seen as not protecting their workers), and on the other, the imperatives to share that prompt their endeavors in the first place.

In contrast to baseline communism, requests are systematically concealed in the context of the free gift. Jain renouncers in northern India collect alms from lay families as they are preparing lunch but "do not ask for food." Instead, "pausing as they go near the doorways of houses and waiting to be invited in," they engage in a process called "grazing," taking "so little that the donors will hardly notice the loss, just as a cow eats only the top of the grass, without pulling up the roots and damaging the plant" (Laidlaw 2000, 618–9). Renouncers never explicitly accept prior invitations from lay almsgivers, because doing so would involve them in relations of obligation that would compromise their quest for spiritual purification. As for donors, their gifts are supposed to be given "without desire," unpremeditated and unprompted by any reverence or compassion that might give rise to self-congratulation, which is morally dangerous in terms of this radically soteriological religion (Parry 1986). Good *karma* eventuates from the donors' action of "sowing into" the renouncers, who

are collectively understood as a "field of merit." Yet donors do not rely on renouncers' gratitude for merit but rather trust in the impersonal system of *karma* (2000, 624). Thus, the free gift involves systematic denials of reciprocity. However, Laidlaw observes that an element of the free gift is intrinsic to reciprocal gift giving: "Gifts evoke obligations and create reciprocity, but they can do this because they might not: what creates the obligation is the gesture or moment which alienates the given thing and asks for no reciprocation" (2000, 628).

By the same token, I would add, it is the moment of not asking for a gift (as distinct from not asking for a return) upon which the free gift and the denial of ongoing personal obligations hinge. Jain renouncers cannot do without some sort of requesting, but they conceal this fact through the act of "grazing," whose ideally impersonal operation bestows value upon both donors and recipients. This point becomes particularly clear in light of the potential "poison" in the free gift (Raheja 1988). Because Brahmin priests are supposed to aspire to social separation, they are likely to be considered bad recipients of alms, subject to injurious *karma*, if they argue up the level of alms they are offered. Thus, "if they are poisoned by a gift, this is because they have asked for it" (Laidlaw 2000, 631). The Jewish secret gift (*matan beseter*) is geared to forestalling the potential of a different sort of poison in the request, namely the humiliation of having to admit to need. With the secret gift, "varying ways are devised to prevent mutual encounter or even mutual knowledge of the donor and the donee" (Silber 2000, 127). The most benevolent gifts are those for which no one is heard to ask: "concern for the recipient's dignity . . . rather than the precise amount of disinterested intention on the donor's part . . . forms the backbone of any attempt at establishing a hierarchy of giving in the Jewish tradition" (2000, 127).

In his classic work on blood donations, Richard Titmuss (1971) argues that impersonal gifts typify patterns of distribution in the welfare state's "community of strangers," in that they create no personal bonds between donors and recipients and entail no expectation of return gifts. Yet the exclusion of gay men from blood donation programs (Waldby and Mitchell 2006) signals how fraught the politics of giving and receiving may be within the "community of strangers." Contemporary political debates about social welfare programs commonly revolve around notions of who counts as a legitimate recipient. In an ideological move that legitimates carceral regimes, those persons deemed not to have properly "worked" are liable to be dismissed as "takers" of state

assistance (Katz 1996; Wacquant 2009). This signals the prominence of the modality of exchange, with its attendant temporal framework of credit and debt, within neoliberal discourses. Less often mentioned is the fact that progressive political agendas are likewise premised on modalities of exchange among formal equals insofar as they advance claims that gifts must be recompensed in commensurate fashion. As Barbara Ehrenreich concludes in *Nickel and Dimed* (2001, 221), "When someone works for less pay than she can live on . . . then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health, and her life. . . . To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else." (Being a "nameless benefactor" is not a good thing.) Similarly, protesters supporting the collective bargaining rights of state employee labor unions (Collins 2012) couched their demands in terms of the claim that caring labor, whether "skilled" or "unskilled," is a form of giving that demands proper remuneration. The specificity of this political stance is thrown into sharp relief when considered in relation to right-wing Pentecostal Christian imperatives in the United States to acknowledge one's personal incapacity, a condition that believers both express and remedy by making requests of God (Klaits 2017).

The large-scale nature of private philanthropy, in which givers commonly wish to place their personal (or corporate) stamp upon donations, reveals the ongoing salience of the Maussian model of claiming credit for gifts within the contemporary welfare state (Silber 1998). The most effective fund-raising skillfully if implicitly employs the terminology of credit and debt. The statement "supporting this endeavor would be a great credit to your organization" is a request geared to convincing funders of their opportunity to give. Thus, the most effective of these requests are those that promise much in return. These creditor–debtor relationships must be acknowledged through sponsorship announcements, periodic reports, and audits, in a model of trust that Alberto Corsín Jiménez (2011) terms "dialytic" in that it perpetually evacuates its contexts of action so as to assess the significance of present arrangements. In a similar vein, China Scherz (2014, 110) argues that "the subject created through an ethics of audit is simply one who can produce a precise written record, not one who can make strong and well-considered decisions when the proper path is uncertain."

If the language of fund-raising emphasizes the credit that will accrue to the benevolent giver, it nonetheless also gives prominence to the relative moral valence (i.e., persuasiveness) of particular requests. By contrast,

Omri Elisha (2008, 2011) offers poignant accounts of how evangelical Christians in Tennessee possess moral ambitions to exercise "compassion" by assisting poor residents of Knoxville, yet have few conceptual tools that would enable them to place the requests they receive on a comparable moral footing. These suburban donors find themselves frustrated when recipients fail to recompense the gifts of the Holy Spirit by giving up bad habits and sinful lifestyles. In this instance, donors misrecognize the nature of the giving relationship, not so much in the sense that they mistake the interestedness of their giving as disinterested (Bourdieu 1990) as because "the conditions of giving are made prominent while the conditions of receiving [and, I would add, of asking] are obscured to the point where the givers . . . are often surprised or flustered to have to manage them at all" (Elisha 2008, 157). Suburban church members aspire to give with "compassion" so as to "transcend the individuating norms of a commodity-based market economy" (2008, 180) yet hold recipients to standards of "accountability" whereby, ironically, the poor are supposed to alter their habits so as to abide by those very norms. Donors devote efforts to assessing the "sincerity" and "genuineness" of potential recipients' requests out of fear of "getting burned," that is, manipulated into giving to an unworthy cause. They are particularly troubled by recipients who fail to respond with proper gratitude, since "true compassion is understood as a gift of such extraordinarily evocative power for both giver and recipient that the latter will inevitably experience it as transformative" (2008, 171).

In remarking that "salvation is free, but it comes at a price" – namely, one's immortal soul – these Christian evangelicals express a version of Graeber's logic of hierarchy. "When objects of material wealth [or other kinds of goods] pass back and forth between superiors and inferiors as gifts or payments," Graeber (2011, 112) writes, "the key principle seems to be that the sorts of things given on each side should be considered fundamentally different in quality, their relative value impossible to quantify – the result being that there is no way to even conceive of a squaring of accounts." Thus, new converts ought to feel that they have received from God a gift so great that they cannot hope to recompense it, and can offer only continual thankfulness in return. In a rather paradoxical fashion, these evangelicals speak explicitly of the "vertical accountability" that their recipients have to them. In so doing, they articulate "an imbalance not only in resources but in wisdom and foresight," an imbalance "only challenged by recipients at the risk of losing support and patronage that they are relatively powerless to reject" (Elisha 2008, 177). Donors

distinguish such "vertical accountability" from the "horizontal accountability" pertaining among themselves as people of equally privileged class standing.

The likelihood of unresponsiveness inherent within this particular hierarchical dynamic of giving and asking seems if anything overdetermined by the emphasis on "accountability," with its inflections of credit and debt. Yet requests may play important roles in interpersonal negotiations over the terms of equality and hierarchy. This is a principal point of Esther Goody's (1977) interactionist account of questions in Gonja (northern Ghana). She distinguishes between four modes of questioning – information-seeking questions, rhetorical questions, control questions, and deference questions – and shows how speakers express and negotiate status differences by framing them. Not all questions are requests, of course. Goody's insight is that relations between questioning and status account for the ways in which people acquire secret knowledge in Gonja – for instance, the fact that youths studying weaving do not feel free to request information from their teachers. There is no presumption that any given questioner and responder are on equal footings of mutual "accountability." Instead, in Gonja, the "securing of information becomes secondary to considerations of status relations – whether the questioning is being used to defer to a superior, to challenge an equal, or to fix responsibility on a subordinate" (1977, 40). In this context, the "pure information question," like the free gift, "hasn't got a chance!" (1977, 40).

Questions and responses in Gonja, we might say, are ways of establishing, maintaining, and occasionally over time recasting specific forms of what Graeber (2011) terms precedence, whereby participants express and reaffirm their relative status. Within such hierarchical frameworks, subordinates may obligate superiors by engaging in a range of implicit requests. For example, Harri Englund describes how for villagers in Malawi, "claims addressing the wealthy and the powerful could be effective precisely when they left difference and hierarchy intact" (2011, 224). Such claims can "be only properly heard if they are subtle, expressed in muted voices and an allusive language" (2011, 195), for instance, ominous silences and coded remarks about "disappointing" behavior. The political salience of such requests, which circulate nationally on Chichewa-language radio, calls into question "unexamined liberal and illiberal predilections guiding debate on human rights, poverty, and inequality" (2011, 53). Englund points out that such rights discourses, carried out in European language idioms, simply fail to engage with local concepts of civility and virtue.

Likewise commonly dismissed within much liberal discourse is the "sacrificial economy" (Coleman 2011) whereby many adherents of Christian charismatic movements offer monetary donations to churches in hopes of receiving blessings from God and of becoming capable of extending blessings to others in turn. While these "charismatic gifts" are vehicles for extending the self into the world (Coleman 2004, 2006; Lindhardt 2009; Premawardhana 2012), they also constitute requests that enhance believers' value as persons by sustaining their sense of the asymmetries between the innumerable blessings God bestows and the finite amounts they give and exchange (Bialecki 2008; Harding 2000). The forceful demands that some pastors make for offerings may be means of reinforcing hierarchical relations between those who claim to bless and those who receive (Klaits and McLean 2015), or of tapping into divine power so as to counteract the dangers inherent in shared bodily substance (van Wyk 2014). In all these instances, believers aim to perpetuate modalities of precedence between themselves and the divine over the long term through intertwined acts of asking and giving. Within these sacrificial economies, trust takes on pronounced qualities of expectation, interpretation, and suspension of doubt (Möllering 2001), as believers evaluate the unfolding of events in light of relations of precedence.

In his early work on prayer, Mauss (2003) suggests that a supplicant may "change" a divine benefactor by making a request: "Prayer . . . is above all a means of acting upon sacred beings; it is they who are influenced by prayer; they who are changed" (2003, 56). Mauss does not explore in depth why prayer has the capacity to change "sacred beings," yet the theme of how personhood is remade through felt obligations runs through his contemporaneous work on sacrifice, as well as his later treatment of the gift. In her foreword to *The Gift*, Mary Douglas (1990, ix–x) points out that Hubert and Mauss's book on sacrifice (1964) "took for its central theme a Vedic principle that sacrifice is a gift that compels the deity to make a return: *Do ut des*; I give so that you may give. . . . It strikes me as likely that Mauss did get the idea of a morally sanctioned gift cycle upholding the social cycle from the Vedic literature that he studied in that first major research. I am inclined to think that he harboured and developed the great idea all those years." Yet a sacrifice is a request as much as a gift. Thus, in a foundational statement on the moral grounds of hierarchy, Jesus speaks of the obligation of superiors to give as contingent upon the prior obligation of subordinates to make requests (note the reversal of roles from the Luo "give me" game, which inculcates sharing): "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for

bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt.7: 9–11). All the more reason, then, to enrich the gift, the anthropological *locus classicus* of social obligation, by fully taking into account what requests elicit.

The Chapters

If Graeber's (2011) project is to identify conceptual languages that will forestall violence, the religious and humanitarian practitioners described in this volume are in many cases making efforts to prevent violence practically. Sónia Silva's chapter on witchcraft accusations in northwest Zambia shows how forms of asking and giving can be deployed to suspend suspicion about the motives of others, even as they possess the potential to kill. Silva's account centers on the routine baseline communist transactions in which women ask for relish from neighbors to flavor food for their households. Such acts ideally express solidarity but are also fraught with danger, since witches pervert the terms of sharing by demanding equal exchange. When a good-hearted woman asks a witch for a pinch of salt, the witch will feign kindness and generosity but invade the woman's dreams the following night, reminding her of the gift and demanding recompense by forcing her to join the coven. In becoming a witch, a woman must kill one of her relatives, whose flesh will be consumed by the cowitch. The cowitch, in turn, becomes heavily indebted to her and must provide more human flesh. This cycle may be broken only through an act of intertwined asking and giving during a ritual performed on behalf of a sick person, in which a healer offers a bowl of blood from a sacrificed goat to the accused witch in exchange for the victim's life. Silva frames this ritual in terms of Peter Geschiere's (2013) treatment of intimacy and trust in witchcraft discourses, showing that requests and gifts may constitute leaps of faith that are dangerous but also necessary to undertake – a theme likewise highlighted by Omri Elisha in his graceful Afterword.

Following Silva's treatment of the potential of asking and giving to restore trust as well as to erode it, China Scherz's essay about Mercy House, a compound in Uganda where Catholic sisters care for orphans and disabled children and adults, interrogates the anthropological

predilection to expose the "wounds of the gift," that is, the potential of charity to inflict humiliation and exert power over those unable to make returns (Bourdieu 1977; Douglas 1990). Indeed, as Derrida's (1992) treatment of the gift's impossibility suggests, proponents of the view that gifts necessarily cause wounds would likely regard the impersonal, free gift as the epitome of moral action (see, from a Protestant theological standpoint, Milbank 1995). By contrast, Scherz shows that requesting the patronage of powerful protectors has long been a means of ascending social and economic hierarchies in Uganda through what Ferguson (2013) calls "declarations of dependence." Local donors to Mercy House regard themselves as carrying out gifting relationships primarily with God, regardless of whatever loyalty or gratitude their recipients may express. As a result, as Scherz puts it, "the forms and effects of 'gift debt' created through charity are radically underdetermined." In concentrating on the "present moment" in which requests for care must not be denied, the Catholic sisters operating the orphanage emphasize their status as "proud beggars" (analogous to Zangwill's *Schnorrer*) in relation to potential international donors, refusing to make decisions about care in terms of the midrange future of development time. Instead, the temporal framework in which they operate may be construed as one of perpetual precedence, whereby the sisters' focus on the "simple intention" behind each charitable act continually reminds them of God's prior commands and ultimate providence (Scherz 2014).

The subsequent two chapters, by Britt Halvorson and Hillary Kaell, explore how the propriety of various kinds of requests shapes the politics of accountability. Halvorson shows that in a Lutheran medical aid program linking donors in Minnesota to clinicians in Madagascar, aid workers made efforts to combine bureaucratic notions of accountability with a baseline communist ideal of "accompanying" fellow Christians elsewhere, as Jesus accompanied the disciples on the walk to Emmaus. Requests play constitutive roles in both registers. Aid workers make efforts to be accountable to God by discerning which medical supplies to send to Madagascar. Remarking "junk for Jesus is still junk," they implicitly frame God's will in this regard as a set of divine requests that they select the proper equipment. In turn, they request that Malagasy clinicians and administrators render them "outcome-based stories" signifying accountability. In effect, donors put their partners in a debt that cannot be cleared until they render a report, a dynamic made clear by a Malagasy clinician who complained

that his colleagues have the right to determine the best use for medical discards. Recipients compare these exercises of accountability unfavorably with the Malagasy practice of *fihavanana*, whereby kin help one another out at times of need without being asked to do so. In effect, they complain that the Americans' requests for acknowledgments (in the form of reports documenting "accountability") reveal that their donations are really exchanges rather than communist transactions.

Hillary Kaell focuses on how the success of US-based Christian child sponsorship organizations' requests for donations depends on their ability to convey particular moral qualities, in particular trust, which overlaps but is not commensurate with accountability. Kaell explores how donors and administrators work with two models of trust, namely secular audit culture and Christian mentoring and stewardship. ChildFund's administrators present their requests to donors as opportunities for them to bestow material gifts on a poor child, with whom they exchange photos and letters, as well as to mentor them in Christ (see Bornstein 2003; O'Neill 2013). The combined effect of audit practices and Christian mentoring imperatives would appear to overdetermine the importance of asserting trust in the motivations of donors, administrators, and recipients. Yet Kaell recalls Corsín Jiménez's (2011) point that in societies where trust is not based solely on informational flows, the interplays between trust and distrust may be explicitly recognized as devices for "coping with the freedom of others" (Gambetta 1988). Likewise, one of the premises of the requests Christian donors make of administrators about the consequences of their gifts is that humans are intrinsically sinful and therefore not necessarily trustworthy. Thus, Kaell differs to some extent from Scherz in concluding that "the distinction between (infallible, informational) audit and (fallible, personal) relationality" is not fixed but mediated by the kinds of requests donors make for knowledge about how events unfold from their giving.

The essays by Moshe Kornfeld and Rhea Rahman focus more specifically on how asking and giving frame tensions between universalism and particularism in religious philanthropy. Kornfeld describes the large-scale efforts of US-based Jewish philanthropic organizations to inculcate commitments in student volunteers to universal service as well as to Jewish identity and social reproduction. He concentrates on how students who raised funds to embark on "service learning" trips in post-Katrina New Orleans tended to question the terms of these imperatives. Since students needed to raise funds for their travel to New Orleans, they were aid

receivers as much as they were aid givers. Kornfeld documents tensions between service coordinators who aimed to educate students about the contexts of social inequality in New Orleans and volunteers who considered these coordinators' attitudes condescending in light of the initiative they had taken to raise funds and the monetary outlays they had made. In linking "service learning" to Jewish social reproduction, donors and leaders of Jewish philanthropic organizations appear to draw on presumptions current in the United States that citizens must engage, for lack of better alternatives, in "the affect economy" (Adams 2013; Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009) in order to create social commitments to strangers as well as to acquire political power. In this context, some student volunteers wished to carve out spaces where they could give purely beneficent gifts – as one put it, because they "cared and wanted to help people" – free of obligations to conform to the moral visions of organizers who claimed to have made their service possible. In effect, they asserted that the initiative they had taken to ask for funds had obviated such obligations. I would add that these students' aspirations to give free gifts were likely also predicated on the fact that they had little direct contact with their beneficiaries among the poor, to whom they consequently entered into no obligations.

Rhea Rahman focuses on how staff of the UK-based Islamic Relief negotiate universalist imperatives to uphold the "dignity" of their beneficiaries in Mali and South Africa and more particularist visions of the relative value of Muslim and non-Muslim recipients' gratitude. Organizers of Islamic Relief insist that they ask nothing from their recipients, while workers thank recipients for having given them the opportunity to serve. On the other hand, they do ask Muslim recipients for prayers on their behalf. Rahman documents the hierarchical vision of *zakat* underlying Islamic Relief's endeavors, whereby the poor have a claim on the rich but there is no imperative to eliminate wealth differences (Benthall 1999). By asking for prayers from the poor in return for material help, donors feel they may discharge the debts they have incurred with God for the wealth they have accumulated. Such requests for prayers represent reversals of evangelical Christian practices in which donors hold recipients responsible for reciprocating the gift through reformed behavior (Elisha 2011), as well as of received anthropological wisdom that the giver necessarily dominates the recipient. Yet Islamic Relief staff must also distribute aid in nondiscriminatory fashion, and therefore adopt strategies either to conceal from donors how funds are being spent or to convince them of the legitimacy of a universalist vision of aid.

In his Afterword, Omri Elisha highlights how asking and giving are apt to trigger moral doubts, anxieties, and uncertainties, not in spite but by virtue of the ways that compassion prompts people to become involved in the lived circumstances of others. Recalling Silva's discussion of life-giving but also potentially deadly requests, Elisha points out that both requests and gifts are liable to entangle participants – including ethnographers – in domains of sociality of whose nature they can never be entirely certain.

* * *

Wenzel Geissler and Ruth Prince (2010, 153) relate how they learned about the moral salience of Luo requests to "Give me!" (*Miya*!):

> Abel, the old village jester, taught us how important this "play" is when, over a drink on our veranda, he half-jokingly demanded Wenzel's shoes: "*Miya*!" Wenzel defended his property, explaining that they had been expensive and that they had been a gift from his mother, but Abel's argument that he could glimpse a second pair of shoes behind the door while he himself had bare feet, eventually persuaded Wenzel to give him the shoes. Abel took them as they had been given, with both hands like a gift. Then he spat a blessing over them, laughed, and gave them back, praising even a white man's ability to learn.

Even if we do not conclude, to take a leaf from Mauss (1990, 71), that we ought to ask "freely and obligatorily," we should heed the lesson that *Schnorrers* like Abel are trying to teach. Most of us cannot live without asking, even if we frame our requests as opportunities for others to give worthily. As Graeber points out, the only way we can imagine ourselves as maximizing individuals – who do not ask for things, but only exchange advantageously – is to say that we "own ourselves, therefore outsiders have no right to trespass on us" (2011, 206–7). In so doing, we "cast ourselves as both master and slave simultaneously" (2011, 207) on the model of the ancient Roman household, in which freedom was equated with the power of the master "to do whatever one wishes that is not prevented by force or law," in the phrasing of the *Digest* (quoted in Graeber 2011, 204). Thus, in order to imagine ourselves isolated from social commitments, we envision our minds as masters possessing dominion over our bodies: "'We' are both owners (exerting absolute power over our property), and yet somehow, at the same time, the things being owned (being the object of absolute power).... In other words, the king and slave are mirror images, in that unlike normal human beings who are defined by their commitments to others, they are defined *only* by relations of power" (2011, 207, 209).

Surely, it is no coincidence that kings must not ask but only issue commands and that slaves have no right to make effective requests but may only receive commands. For both, the temporalities of obligation – what Guyer calls "the existential sense of being in mutuality across the arc of life" (2012, 500) – are drastically narrowed. For what asking may accomplish at least as well as giving is to open spaces for forgiveness (Arendt 1998; Whyte et al. 2015), which makes it possible to recognize simultaneously the binding qualities of obligations and the open-endedness of mutuality. If we wish to imagine a world without masters and slaves, we need to consider carefully the moral rightness of asking.

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CHAPTER 2

Witchcraft and the Gift: Killing and Healing in Northwest Zambia

Sónia Silva

In 1953, the British colonial officer in charge of Balovale District, in what is now the country of Zambia, wrote in his annual report:

> Towards the end of the year, two women were sent to me by the Native Court with a request that I should investigate their "case." The two old women sat on the floor of my office and this is what one of them said:
>
> I am a witch. I was made a witch against my will in Angola years ago in the following manner. I asked a certain woman in my village if I could take some relish from her garden. She agreed, and I took it. Then later she came to me and said that, as she had done something for me, I must now do something for her in return. I asked what she wanted and she told me that she was a witch and that I must also become initiated into the rites of witchcraft. At that time, I had a sickly child a few days old. It was a girl-child. The woman told me that I must kill the child and that we should eat the flesh, and this we did. Afterwards, I was initiated into the rites of witchcraft, and I acquired a familiar spirit. My familiar spirit is a mole . . . The mole can go into the earth and bring me the bodies of dead people when we want to eat them. The mole can also bewitch people by biting them.

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> Sometime after this I came to live in Northern Rhodesia [now Zambia]. All the time I practiced witchcraft. In Northern Rhodesia I initiated this other woman who is with me now. In order to initiate her, I killed the small daughter of my own daughter. I killed her by using my familiar spirit, and then afterwards I strangled her. This woman ate part of the flesh, and I initiated her into witchcraft. But she did not practice as a witch, and when I wanted her to kill her own granddaughter for our ceremonies, she refused. And so I too have decided to give up witchcraft, because the profession is not what it was, and the Europeans are against it. But in that case I want compensation for the child I killed and for the flesh I gave to her.[1]

A similar case was reported in 1952, a year earlier, in the Annual Report for North-Western Province. The colonial officer in charge, more frugal with his words, recounted:

> An unusual case occurred at Balovale when an old woman sued her colleague for the return of a pound of human meat which had been lent to her. The matter was referred by the Native Court to the Police who found, to quote the District Commissioner, "no evidence sufficient even to support a witch on a broomstick."[2]

We do not know how common such cases were during the British rule in Northern Rhodesia (according to the colonial officer writing in 1953, such cases were unusual), and neither do we know what thoughts rushed through the minds of the British colonial officers who found themselves in the position of handling witchcraft cases. Nevertheless, such brief and biased reports are revealing of the disparate views of the report writers and the supposed witches. On one side, sitting on the floor, the self-proclaimed witches seek compensation for breaches of contract incurred in the realm of witchcraft, through the legal apparatus of British rule. They clearly see life in the villages and life in the coven as continuous realms. On the other side, sitting behind their desks, across from the witches, the British officers embody the power invested in them by colonialism and the ingrained distinction between reality and belief inherited from rationalism. From their perspective, stories of witches exchanging human meat and employing familiar spirits such as moles to dig out corpses and bewitch their relatives rightly belong in the realm of belief and imagination. Entirely dismissing the witches' accounts as pagan mambo jumbo, the district commissioners and police officers focus on the supposed "human meat." Has someone being

killed? Is there any legal evidence to incriminate the women who confess to having committed murder? Hence the scoffing tone of the second colonial officer, according to whom the police found "no evidence sufficient even to support a witch on a broomstick."

This was a grave mistake. By refusing to take those women seriously, the colonial officers missed the opportunity not only to learn more about those women but also to recognize the power of asking, giving, and receiving to create sociality and effect change. Inspired by the witches, and drawing on two years of fieldwork in the same region of northwest Zambia,[3] I hope to show that today, as in the 1950s, asking, giving, and receiving continue to create and sustain sociality in different realms of existence, both forcing people into the realm of witchcraft and freeing them from it.

It is helpful to see the distinction between these realms as the two sides of the same reality, and then define the two reversed sides as "spheres of exchange" (Bohannan 1955). On the obverse side, women exchange food items such as salt and cassava leaves in the name of life; on the reverse side, they exchange human flesh in the name of death. This said, it is equally critical to bear in mind that the distinction between the reversed realms is never absolute. Nor is it impermeable. As Marcel Mauss put it, "everything passes to and fro as if there were a constant exchange of spiritual matter, including things and men" (Mauss 1990, 14). The power of asking, giving, and receiving is wondrous; not only does it create sociality in different realms of existence, obverse and reverse, but it also moves people into the realm of death and returns them to the realm of life. Gifting may kill you, but it may also save you.

I am struck by the power of asking, giving, and receiving to both kill and heal. I am equally struck by the commitment of northwest Zambians to continue relying on these most simple of gestures to both sustain ongoing relationships in good times and mend severed relationships in the darkest hours. Day in and day out, to enrich and flavor their dishes, women continue to both give and exchange food items, even though they know that asking and giving are fraught with danger. As the Angolan woman in the first colonial report soon discovered, by requesting and receiving food you may become trapped in the web of witchcraft. Similarly, Kanenga doctors continue revealing to all of us the redeeming power of asking and giving. Misleadingly referred to in English as witch doctors, Kanenga doctors continue to negotiate with the witches during Kanenga rituals, hoping to release the bewitched from the snarl of

witchcraft. "Take this cup of goat blood and let the victim live," they tell the witches. In such life-or-death situations, asking and giving may be the only hope.

In *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust* (2013), Peter Geschiere asks: what is the relation between witchcraft, intimacy, and trust? How do we sow trust in a field poisoned by suspicion? The answer to this difficult question may well lie in the simple gestures of asking, giving, and receiving. However modestly and transiently, these gestures call for the suspension of doubt and the cultivation of trust and hope. Are these gestures not a leap of faith?

Thinking with Mauss

In his study of the relation between witchcraft, intimacy, and trust, Geschiere dismisses the concept of the gift. He rightly critiques the pervasive tendency to view gift giving and reciprocity as a haven of solidarity. In his words, "The implicitness with which many anthropologists continue to equate closeness with reciprocity and trust makes the notion and its assumptions a hindrance for arriving at a more nuanced view of sociality" (2013, 31). Not only do I espouse Geschiere's perspective, but I would also point out that Mauss himself fathered the association of gift giving with solidarity. In *The Gift*, Mauss shows signs of nostalgia for the "archaic" societies based on gift giving, stating that the ancient peoples, in addition to being "less sad, less serious, [and] less miserly," "were or are more generous, more liable to give than we are" (1990, 81). Few scholars today would engage in this kind of evolutionist reasoning, placing gift giving at the origins of the modern legal and economic contract, and seeing the pockets of gift giving in market-driven societies as traces of older and more primitive institutions. This said, the ingrained tendency to oppose gift giving to market exchange, and to frame this opposition in moral terms, is as alive today as it was in the 1920s, when *The Gift* was first published in the French language. The widespread description of gift giving as a "moral economy," a concept popularized in economic anthropology by James Scott (1976), speaks to this accepted truth.

Outside academe, the tendency to define gift giving in opposition to market exchange is at least as strong. In the United States and elsewhere, the spirit of gift giving is perhaps more intensely experienced during the Christmas season and Valentine's Day. Close relatives, lovers, and friends create and nurture their mutual relationships through reciprocal acts of gift giving. Moreover, the spirit of gift giving is often as strong among strangers.

Consider Burning Man, the famed weeklong art and community event that takes place every year in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada. Participants are encouraged to create and rely on a gift economy, and gifting is indeed one of the event's ten guiding principles; another guiding principle is decommodification.[4] As stated in the documentary film *Gifting It: A Burning Embrace of the Gift Economy* (2002), directed by Renea Roberts, everyone in Burning Man is "seeking experiences beyond the commonplace and the commodified." Everyone is giving and receiving as a means to connect. Yet, access to Burning Man is never free or even affordable. In 2017, a ticket cost as much as 1,200 USD. The warmer spirit of gift giving is never far removed from the colder spirit of market exchange.

Morality and market exchange are similarly entwined in international religious organizations, as several of the contributions to this volume attest (see Hillary Kaell on Christian child sponsorship, specifically ChildFund, and see Britt Halvorson on the Christian medical relief relationship between Minnesota and Madagascar). In the field of religion, Prosperity Christianity provides the perfect example of the seamless union between spirituality and economics. In Simon Coleman's words, any critical engagement with Prosperity Christianity leads to consider "not only the economics *of* religion, but also economics *as* religious practice" (2011, 26).

This said, in his book, Mauss goes beyond the portrayal of gift giving as a moral economy in opposition to market exchange. Mauss asks his readers: What drives one to give, receive, and reciprocate? What are the consequences of gift exchange for donors and recipients? Mauss argues that the act of gift giving binds people together in the mesh we call society, a golden contribution to anthropological theory. In his words, "to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself" (1990, 12). "By giving, one is giving oneself, and if one gives oneself, it is because one 'owes' oneself—one's person and one's goods—to others" (1990, 46). The gifts given by the donors and received by the recipients are therefore the material tokens of their interfusion through indebtedness. In this volume, Frederick Klaits rightly notes that Mauss does not include the power of asking in his triangular model of giving, receiving, and reciprocating, even though asking is as binding as giving and equally destructive and redeeming (see also Klaits 2011). Nevertheless, Mauss's explanation of gift giving through the logic of indebtedness is invaluable.

But Mauss has more to say on the topic of the gift. In addition to cementing relationships, he argues, gift exchange poses risks of its own. As poetic and compelling as the language of love, care, and indebtedness in a religious sermon or marital relationship may be, the indebted do not always feel grateful toward their debtors. Sometimes, to owe oneself to another is to feel the brunt of subservience with particular intensity, and risk losing face, name, and life. In the Luvale language spoken in northwest Zambia, this somber side of indebtedness, which binds one to the giver until the debt is paid, is conveyed by the concept of *mukuli*. The debtors work day in, day out to pay off their debts, and they may be obliged to provide food to their creditors for days, months, and years. Prior to colonialism, if debtors failed to pay off their debts, they had no choice but to pawn one of their relatives, if not themselves, to their creditors. A *mukuli* is always experienced as a heavy burden. In some cases, a *mukuli* leads to bewitching. Gift giving is as likely to foster love and recognition as to foster hate and domination. The spirit of the gift is a political spirit. Sometimes, the gift is poisoned.

This pearl of wisdom—never take a gift at face value—explains why Mauss, in *The Gift*, does not focus on the relatively disinterested expressions of care and affection between kin, lovers, friends, or even strangers. Instead, Mauss carefully selects a series of ethnographic and historical case studies that he locates along a typological continuum of express rivalry, antagonism, and violence. The most extreme of such systems of exchange is potlatch, as it was still practiced in the early twentieth century by the Kwakiutl, Tlingit, and Haida in the American northwest. During potlatch, rival chiefs and their associates engaged in a relentless war of property. They burned piles of sumptuary skin blankets and threw valuable copper objects into the water, driving their rivals to lose face and prestige. Some chiefs fought and killed (1990, 6). Mauss reminds his readers of "the so to speak voluntary character of these total services, apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and self-interested." He continues, "Almost always such services have taken the form of the gift, the present generously given even when, in the gesture accompanying the transaction, there is only a polite fiction, formalism, and social deceit, and when really there is obligation and economic self-interest" (1990, 3). The act of gift giving fosters community and mutual trust; it is also a means to humiliate and destroy.

Mauss's insights on rivalry and violence are invaluable to the study of witchcraft. Witchcraft accounts in northwest Zambia, and elsewhere in

Africa, suggest that witchcraft may well consist of the most agonistic of all realms, a realm in which asking, giving, and receiving create and sustain a purely predatory regime devoid of political ambitions and the faintest sense of morality. The witches supposedly kill their relatives without blinking an eye and offer their prey to the other witches. They also enjoy feasting on humans, particularly infants.

Interestingly, being social creatures, witches honor the cannibalism equivalent of the incest taboo: they do not eat their own relatives. They must therefore depend on the gifts of other witches, a rule that generates an endless cycle of indebtedness and reciprocity. To be given human meat is to be asked to reciprocate by killing a close relative. Witches also eat together, as villagers do. If reciprocity and commensality are quintessential markers of human sociality, as Lévi-Strauss once said, then witches are fully social. Not surprisingly, then, Mary Douglas' concluding remarks in her foreword to the 1990 English edition of *The Gift* hold equally true for the domain of witchcraft in northwest Zambia. Referring to cases of obverse reciprocity, Douglas writes: "the whole society can be described by the catalogue of transfers that map all the obligations between its members. The cycling gift system is the society" (1990, ix).

In *The Gift*, Mauss does not address the topic of witchcraft at length (but see his references to witchcraft on pages 75 and 128). He does briefly mention, however, the gifts offered to the gods (1990, 14–18), a theme that more recently developed into an interesting debate about the possibility of "pure gifts"—truly disinterested offerings that invite no reciprocation.[5] Mauss also elevated vernacular religious concepts to the status of scientific concepts in symmetrical fashion. Mauss writes, "Souls are mixed with things; things with souls. Lives are mingled together, and this is how, among persons and things so intermingled, each emerges from their own sphere and mixes together. This is precisely what contract and exchange are" (1990, 20). He draws on the Maori concept of *hau*, the spirit of the gift, to explain the impetus to reciprocate (1990, 11), a faux pas that earned him a torrent of harsh criticisms. Giants of anthropology such as Sahlins (1972) and Lévi-Strauss (1997) disapproved of his raising *hau* to the status of a theoretical concept. They clearly lamented the fact that Mauss, otherwise a rational thinker, would allow himself to be mystified by his Maori sources.[6] But what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander. Today, many an anthropologist would praise Mauss for his symmetrical engagement with Maori ethnography. Not only did Mauss seriously

consider Maori concepts such as *hau*, but he also studied the phenomenon of gift giving with Maori eyes.

Based on his symmetrical engagement with the Maori ethnography, as well as his intellectual imagination, I trust that Mauss would be intrigued by the idea of studying witchcraft in northwest Zambia through the lens of his concept of the gift, and taking the "gift" beyond his original focus on the public domain of law and morality (Mauss 1990, 12, 79). Similarly to *hau*, the Luvale *undumba*, meaning witchcraft, has much to contribute to our understanding of the power of the gift. Witchcraft urges researchers to extend the concept of the gift, as well as that of the request, to the realm of amoral economies—ultimately replacing any fixed opposition between morality and amorality with the broader, double-edged concept of "human economies" (Graeber 2011). David Graeber explains: Being "primarily concerned not with the accumulation of wealth, but with the creation, destruction, and rearranging of human beings" (2011, 130), the concept of human economies is nevertheless double-edged. "These are, after all, *economies*: that is, systems of exchange in which qualities are reduced to quantities, allowing calculations of gain and loss" (2011, 159).

Recent contributions to gift theory are equally committed to broadening the focus of the gift. Mark Osteen argues, "the only way to gain a fuller understanding of the gift is to expand, rather than narrow our focus" (2002, 35). Ilana Silber urges us to pay "attention to flows and transformations" and to consider entire "repertoires of giving" in particular historical contexts (2013, 214). Based on a detailed analysis of the extensive exchange networks found in the Auschwitz concentration camp in Nazi Germany, Susana Narotzky and Paz Moreno propose the inclusion of negative reciprocity in what they call the reciprocity complex (2002, 288). "It is essential that both the positive and negative aspects of reciprocity be dealt with simultaneously," they maintain (2002, 301). Witchcraft accounts are a valuable contribution to this growing scholarship on the gift. Witchcraft challenges researchers to consider the entire spectrum of gifting from moral to amoral economies, seeing these different economies as constitutive dimensions of the same human economy. Asking and giving engender sociality in different realms of existence. Not only do asking and giving create and sustain social realms based on exchange, but they also serve as the means through which the givers and receivers move between those realms. Mauss was right to a degree he never foresaw. In the form of our gifts and countergifts, we may kill and be killed, and save and be saved.

A Bridge Between Spheres

Many northwest Zambians are eager to stress what, to their eyes, are obvious and irrefutable differences between persons and witches: persons distinguish right from wrong whereas witches are amoral; persons are carnivores whereas witches are cannibals; persons live within the physical limits imposed by their human bodies whereas witches fly in whirlwinds and shape-shift into witchcraft familiars, such as lions, cats, moles, and hares; persons are likely to become venerated ancestors in the afterlife whereas witches are better forgotten, being condemned to join the anonymous mass of the worthless, good for nothing ancestors, the *tukundundu*.

Equally notorious, however, are the similarities between life in the villages and life in the coven. Many northwest Zambians do not fail to notice that, in both cases, social life is generated through acts of asking and giving, even though what is asked and given is different in each case. Nor are they oblivious to the perturbing fact that witches are human beings. Witches may be endowed with suprahuman abilities such as shape shifting and flying, but they belong to the human species. Far worse than being attacked by starving spotted hyenas equipped with strong jaws and forequarters is being attacked by a were-hyena. Unlike the wild creatures of the genus Crocuta, were-hyenas are witchcraft familiars. They are also your relatives. The witch who attacks you is always your relative, and often your mother.

These are frightening matters that defy understanding. Once an individual "turns" into a witch, he or she becomes a person and a witch at the same time.[7] These predators live with their relatives in the same neighborhood, village, and home, they share meals with their closest kin, and they participate in the daily tasks expected from adult members in the community. Yet, under the cover of darkness, they turn into malicious witches who prey on their kin and busy themselves with their treacherous dealings and ruthless doings.

This double nature is particularly jarring in the case of childless elderly women, the population group more often accused of practicing witchcraft (Silva 2009). I was told that these old ladies prey on their younger relatives because they resent their indifference, and envy their youth, health, happiness, and wealth. But this theory of emotions is not always fully satisfying. Those ill feelings may have a reason. Maybe the elderly women join the society of witches because their own younger relatives deny them help in

the form of food, water, shelter, and company. Excluded from the obverse sphere of exchange and sociality, the childless elderly women cross over to the other side.

Some elderly ladies opt to search for alternative spheres of exchange and sociality in the obverse realm. The more resourceful among them reach out for help to the Plymouth Brethren missionaries affiliated with the Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML). Instead of begging or voicing despair, asking for help, these women weave beautiful baskets, food covers, and pot bases, which they exchange for used clothing and foodstuff with the missionaries; on occasion, they may receive or request Zambian kwacha bills. The missionaries see their countergifts as a compensation for the women's work. They believe that charity creates dependence, so they see their countergifts as a way to promote an egalitarian relationship that fosters industriousness and independence. The old women, however, think differently. Their craftwork creates and sustains a mutual relationship defined by an ethics of patronage (as China Scherz describes the relationship between the East African Catholic nuns and the care receivers at Mercy House in Uganda, in this volume). Whereas barter or market exchange would create no relationship between the old ladies and the missionaries, an ethics of patronage generates a long-term relationship that simultaneously places the old ladies in a situation of dependence and inferiority and binds the missionaries to the continuous obligation to receive and reciprocate.

Sadly, only as childless elderly women who must fend for themselves do these women seem powerless. As basket makers who present their beautifully woven baskets to the CMML missionaries, the childless elderly women exert some power over the receivers, compelling them to reciprocate. As witches, they have the strength and viciousness of hyenas; they ruthlessly kill their own relatives, even the infants; and they offer their kill to the coven. Amoral though the realm of witchcraft may be, I cannot avoid noticing a perplexing fact: unlike their relatives, witches do not exclude the old ladies from the webs of gift giving that generate sociality, belonging, and a full belly.

The concept of double nature (stating that an individual is both a person and a witch) as well as turning (stating that persons turn into witches) suggest that the world of witchcraft is not perceived as a separate territorial realm. There is no witch-land in northwest Zambia. Some people have seen witches draped in white cloth crossing the villages in the cover of darkness, others have heard the giggling sound of witches,

happily feasting on human meat at the local cemeteries, and others met witches in their dreams while they slept in their bedrooms. These and other signs of nocturnal witch activity suggest that persons and witches inhabit the same space. The continuity between life in the villages and life in the coven is greater than one might think.

This sense of continuity between opposed realms is predicated on their similar constitution as spheres of exchange. Differences notwithstanding (after all, as a Zambian friend jokingly put it, a cemetery would make a sordid dining hall, and who in his or her right mind would eat human meat?), the continuity between spheres of exchange enables movement in both directions. Differences may be surmounted, and boundaries crossed. In addition to serving as the glue that binds people together in a tight mesh, creating and sustaining sociality, gift giving serves as the means through which people and objects pass between exchange spheres.

At this juncture, it is apposite to briefly return to the work of Paul Bohannan on spheres of exchange. Based on fieldwork conducted in the 1950s among the Tiv of northern Nigeria, Bohannan argues that, at the time of fieldwork, the Tiv recognized three distinct spheres of exchangeable items: the lowest ranking sphere of subsistence items, which included foodstuff, household utensils, and raw materials; the prestige sphere of slaves, cattle, metal bars, and *lugudu* cloth; and the highest ranking sphere, reserved for dependent persons other than slaves, particularly women (1955, 62). The Tiv were able to move from one sphere of exchange to another by engaging in morally charged conversions. In order to move upward from the subsistence sphere to the prestige sphere, for instance, the Tiv would convert food to brass rods, an exchange deemed positive. Not coincidentally, I think, in order to climb up the prestige ladder, the most enterprising and charismatic of Tiv men crossed over to the world of witchcraft where human flesh was traded and consumed (Graeber 2011, 147). Similar to the Luvale and others in Zambia, some Tiv men moved between the spheres of moral economy and amoral economy through exchange.

Let us start with the movement from village to coven. In northwest Zambia, any movement in this direction typically takes place through interpersonal exchanges gone awry. In accounts dealing with the insidious tactics that witches employ to recruit new members into the coven, asking, giving, and receiving are described as traps. In order to recruit new members and ensure a steady supply of human meat, witches employ the following

method: they wait for a close or distant relative to approach them, asking for food, typically salt or cassava leaves. Instead of waiting, they may also decide to take the initiative and approach their victims with a request: "Do you have a bit of salt to spare?" Some people say that it is best to never refuse a request of food, or else the witch will enter your dreams and remind you of your greediness. The general agreement, however, is that the end result is always the same regardless of what you say or do. From the perspective of both the witches and their victims, it hardly matters that you utter a request or hand out a gift; asking and giving perform the same function and achieve the same outcome. You have been trapped, and you will die unless you join the coven. Whereas in ordinary, obverse reciprocity you may win or lose, at least in theory, in reverse reciprocity you don't stand a chance.

Here is how my friend Sapasa described these encounters between witch and victim (Silva 2015): when a good-hearted woman comes to her kitchen and asks for a teaspoon of salt to flavor her stew, the witch agrees and rushes to her salt container, feigning kindness. That night, the malicious witch will invade her victim in her sleep, causing her to dream (*kulotesa*), and, in that dream, asking her to give back her salt. "I gave you my salt to flavor your stew, didn't I; now, give it back to me!" The victim responds that she cannot return the salt because she used it in her stew. She apologizes profusely, but the witch feels no compassion. "That salt that you ate belonged to my fellow witches, who now want their salt back." Amid tears and pleas, the poor woman admits that she has no salt left, but the witch feels no compassion: "In that case, woman, you must reciprocate by becoming one of us." The poor woman knows exactly what the witch means. If she refuses to reciprocate by killing a close relative, often a baby, she will soon fall sick and die. As mentioned, it matters very little whether you fall in the witch's trap through an act of giving in response to the witch's request or through the witch's giving in response to your request. Either way, you must join the coven by killing a close relative. To ensure that you will kill your relative and present your offer of human meat (*fuka* in the language of witchcraft), you are asked to utter the name of your relative while you tie a knot in a string. The expression "to be tied up" (*kukasa muthu kuli mukandumba*) refers to this tying of a knot in a string and, more generally, to death caused by witchcraft.

But the cycle of killing and eating does not stop here. Once the novice witch has killed her relative and offered her promised gift of human meat to her cowitch, the latter becomes indebted to her. The burden of indebtedness is a heavy one. In potlatch, treasure after treasure, some men of high standing

drove other men to penury and social death, if not literal death (Mauss 1990, 6). In the covens of northwest Zambia, witches are said to force their cowitches to kill their relatives and offer them as meat to be eaten raw.

These accounts of witchcraft are never seen as mere stories, legends, and fables. Consider the following episode from 1996: while Rose, my neighbor, and I were chatting in the evening while her dinner cooked in the kitchen, an elderly woman named Flai approached Rose and kindly asked her for a bit of salt to season her stew. After a moment of hesitation, Rose walked into her kitchen and returned with a small portion of salt in the fold of her right hand, which she gingerly poured into Flai's hand. Flai thanked Rose profusely and walked away. As soon as she disappeared from sight, though, Rose asked, nervously, "Why did that elderly woman come to me?" She seemed agitated. Flai lived in a small house at the CMML mission. The late missionary Paul Logan had rescued her from the hands of her relatives who were mercilessly beating her after a basket diviner confirmed her identity as a witch. Why had Flai approached Rose when other women lived closer to the mission? Faced with Flai's suspicious behavior, Rose decided to please her by giving her a bit of salt. She knew, however, that witches are never pleased and that they use gift giving to trap their victims in a cycle of flesh debts. For many women in northwest Zambia, requests and gifts of food—particularly requests and gifts of food from elderly women who act suspiciously—are not simply ambiguous in the semiotic sense; they are a risky business. Interpersonal relations are necessarily ambivalent; and asking and giving is often more than meets the eye.

Again, it would be senseless to downplay the differences between food transactions in the obverse and reverse spheres. In the villages, women form a sphere of exchange in which they often ask, give, and receive small food items, such as salt, a spoon of oil, and cassava leaves. In this way, not only do they help one another in lean times, but they also develop relationships of reciprocal indebtedness that ensure future gifts of food and condiments. They thus fulfill one of their key roles as women. Witchcraft is a complete reversal of this realm. As wives and mothers, women exchange and cook food in the name of life; as witches, they give out their relatives in the name of death. As wives and mothers, they cook meals to feed their children, husbands, and relatives, always caring to complement the staple thick porridge (*shima*) with a nutritious accompaniment and a flavorful gravy (*ifwo*); as witches, they kill their relatives and offer their bodies as raw meat to the other witches. While families eat cooked food in the

moral space of their villages, witches eat raw human flesh in the amoral space of the cemetery.

Nevertheless, these absolute differences between reversed realms do not efface their similar constitution as spheres of exchange in the same human economy. In both spheres, exchange is centered on the value of human life, or the denial of it, "food" assuming the status of a true valuable.[8] Equally notorious is the fact that women pass from one sphere to the other through the very same acts of asking, giving, and receiving on which they depend to cement relationships with their neighbors and secure help in times of shortage. The requesting and giving of food always engenders sociality, although one can never tell for certain what kind of sociality.

Another common crossing from village to coven is *mukuli* or the indebtedness caused by the inability to reciprocate. As any individual in northwest Zambia will tell you, the burden of a *mukuli* is not simply tied to the hierarchical and exploitative relationship between creditors and debtors, a relationship in which the debtor feels that he or she is at the creditor's mercy. In the past, as mentioned, debtors unable to pay off their debts would be forced to pawn one of their relatives if not themselves to their creditors. A prolonged *mukuli* may lead to hate, envy, and rancor, ill feelings that grow and canker overtime, opening the way to bewitchment. Debts lead to bewitching, bewitching leads to new debts in the realm of witchcraft, and debts in the realm of witchcraft may lead, as took place in Northern Rhodesia in the 1950s, to the witches' attempt to settle those debts in the obverse realm. In attempting to settle flesh debts through the legal system of Northern Rhodesia, those resourceful witches showed that it is possible to move between exchange realms without experiencing a sense of misfit and discontinuity.

Thus far, we have considered instances of forced movement from the villages to the coven through acts of asking and giving gone awry: requests and gifts of food among women and unpaid debts. But such poisoned exchanges do not only move individuals into the realm of witchcraft, "ripping" them from their communities and webs of relations, as Graeber describes the violence often unleashed through acts of exchange (2011: 159); they also bring back the bewitched to the realm of life. Kanenga doctors in northwest Zambia rely on the power of asking and giving to release the bewitched from the snare of witchcraft. In the face of death and extreme suffering, asking and giving become the last hope.

Kanenga is a nightlong ritual performed to release the bewitched from the chains of witchcraft after a basket diviner confirms a witchcraft suspicion (Silva 2011). By this time, the tension between the victim's family and the supposed witch identified by the basket diviner has escalated to the point of public verbal accusations, if not physical blows. It is the magic of Kanenga to bring both sides to talk with one another, sharing their grievances and viewpoints. In this seemingly impossible conversation, Kanenga doctors bring the witch and the bewitched to momentarily recognize their common humanity. For the ritual to work, however, it does not suffice to talk, exchange viewpoints, and recognize a common plight as sufferers. Toward the end of Kanenga, the dewitcher disappears through the wall of darkness surrounding the ritual's bonfire. In his hand he carries a small bowl containing blood from a sacrificed he-goat, which he offers to the witch in exchange for the life of the bewitched. "Take this bowl of blood and let that person live," he says. The life of the bewitched depends on this last act of asking and giving, an act that attempts to reverse the promise made by the witch to another witch that the victim, now moribund, would be killed and sacrificed. The reversal of fortune depends on this last opportunity to ask and give.

While the acts of asking, giving, and receiving create reversed sociality in the realm of witchcraft, they also serve as the means to escape from the coven. This is good news for both the witch and the bewitched, for it may save them from possible death. Elsewhere in Zambia and southern Africa, the violence of witchcraft has been addressed with more violence in the form of witch-hunts. These cleansing movements vary widely from the simple ingestion of emetics by the accused witches to gruesome killings delivered with a degree of cruelty and expediency that closely matches the evil crimes for which the supposed witches are being punished. Kanenga has enabled northwest Zambians to address cases of bewitching in a less gruesome and traumatic fashion, saving lives and restoring the possibility of coexistence. As perfectly captured in a Duala proverb from the Cameroonian coast, "You have to learn to live with your witch" (Geschiere 2013: 29).

Sometimes, though, Kanenga fails and the bewitched dies. The relatives of the deceased proceed to organize a wake at their village and then bury the corpse in the cemetery. If someone mentions the name of the supposed culprit during the wake, igniting arguments and quarrels, the devout Christians in attendance may strive to muffle their words with their Bible readings and fervent singing. In the remote regions west of the Zambezi River and across the international border in Angola, the sudden death of a

relative may reportedly lead to witch killings. Beatings and killings are infrequent in the areas closer to the townships of northwest Zambia.

Dewitchers know that Kanenga rituals do not always work. They also know that oftentimes they do work (as the late dewitcher Kazuzu liked to point out), saving the victim from certain death and the perpetrator from constant shunning or possibly a mob killing. The purpose of Kanenga, however, is not to eradicate witchcraft or assert the validity of universal human rights. Kanenga provides a healing space where i) the victim and his or her relatives may engage in dialogue with the perpetrator and ii) the dewitcher may engage in a gift exchange with the same perpetrator, hoping to undo the dreaded knot of bewitching. Together, these gifts of words and sacrificial blood achieve the desired outcome. So much becomes possible through simple acts of asking, giving, and receiving: women help one another in lean times, women fall in the trap of witchcraft, witches seal their deadly killings, and Kanenga doctors persuade the witches to release their prey. Gifting leads to killing, but it may also save lives.

A Risk Worth Taking

Had the British colonial officers in Northern Rhodesia not dismissed what the witches told them in the 1950s as a matter of principle and a laughing matter, they perhaps would have seized the valuable opportunity that presented itself to them. Similar to the Kanenga doctor who approaches the supposed witch with an exchange deal, asking the witch to take the plate of goat blood instead of the victim, the British officers could have welcomed the witches who approached them, and taken their words very seriously. One witch explained to the colonial officer writing in 1953: "In Northern Rhodesia I initiated this other woman who is with me now. In order to initiate her, I killed the small daughter of my own daughter. I killed her by using my familiar spirit, and then afterwards I strangled her. This woman ate part of the flesh, and I initiated her into witchcraft. But she did not practice as a witch, and when I wanted her to kill her own granddaughter for our ceremonies, she refused. And so I too have decided to give up witchcraft, because the profession is not what it was, and the Europeans are against it. But in that case I want compensation for the child I killed and for the flesh I gave to her." Had the colonial officer compensated the witch for her exchange debit incurred in the realm of witchcraft, maybe the witch would have freed her debtor from her

obligation to reciprocate, returning two witches to the realm of life and preventing further violence. This would have been a wise decision: to offer a gift in the name of life to promote reconciliation.

These encounters between colonial officers and local witches in Northern Rhodesia are amenable to other interpretations. In many ways, they epitomize the unequal relation between the European colonial officers and the African population, including, as we intuited from the annual reports written in Northern Rhodesia, such telling signs as the officers' confidence in their own superiority. Likewise, the specific content of the conversations described in the annual reports—the exchange of human meat among witches—may be read as a metaphor for the ills of colonialism, capitalism and neoliberalism. In the last two decades, a number of anthropologists have taken this interpretive route, arguing that accounts of witchcraft in contemporary Africa offer a chilling commentary on the excesses of neoliberalism.[9] In a system in which everything is for sale, even human flesh, morality is in jeopardy. In a thought-provoking article entitled "Save Your Skins," Todd Sanders states, "'The occult'—by which I mean unseen powers, positive or negative—provides a compelling local lexicon for re-moralizing sterile World Bank/IMF stories about structural adjustment and social change" (2001: 162). Sanders does not cite Mauss; nevertheless, the older tendency to critique market exchange on moral grounds informs his argument.

Some of the authors who gave birth to the witchcraft modernity paradigm are now explicitly recognizing that witchcraft in contemporary Africa is never coterminous with the social, political, and economic conditions developed under neoliberal regimes, even though it is necessarily embedded in those conditions. Sanders remarks, "African witchcraft may well be part *of* modernity, but by no means needs to be *about* modernity" (2003: 338). This is all for the better. A closer engagement with Mauss, however, would enable a broader reflection on the experience of danger. Unsettling witchcraft accounts speak to the real dangers of gift giving at least as much as they do to the real dangers of capitalism.

A closer engagement with Mauss would also raise the following question: Might we benefit from considering neoliberal exchange networks and relationships through the lens of the "gift"? Rosalind Eyben (2006), a social anthropologist with a career in international development, including two years as the head of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) country office in Bolivia, thinks that the concept of the gift brings

into focus what the current models of international development often conceal. Whereas these models promote a view of international aid as either an economic contract or an entitlement based on international human rights, the gift model, Eyben argues, exposes the violence and power dynamics that shape and shake international aid relationships.

Interestingly, aid workers and sponsors of faith-based humanitarian organizations would probably disagree with Eyben. For them, the ultimate purpose of their aid work is to foster an ethics of giving informed by spiritual and moral concerns (see Hillary Kaell and Britt Halvorson, this volume). Similarly to Mauss in *The Gift*, aid workers understand aid in two different ways: while some among them wish to protect the gift economies of philanthropy from the imperatives of the commercial economy, the others understand gifting as political work. In both cases, however, it might be helpful to reconsider aid work through the lens of the concept of the gift as well as that of the request.

Other global spheres broadly defined as givers and receivers come to mind: colonizers/colonized and missionaries/missionized, for example. Given the extreme inequalities underlying the global political economy, it would not be preposterous to see the givers as witches who practice an agonistic form of gift exchange. Nevertheless, I would like to believe that the lesson to be drawn from these fraught encounters and exchanges is not always and necessarily a negative one. The donors dressed up as helpers do not always turn out to be witches in disguise. The consequences of asking, giving, and receiving remain indeterminate. Gift giving may kill you, but it may also save you.

The Kanenga doctors of northwest Zambia stand tall as a source of inspiration to all givers and receivers. In order to save lives and tolerance, negotiating with the other side may be the best alternative. When the gift turns out to be poisoned, the solution is not to stop asking, giving, and receiving. It is rather to creatively reconsider the types of questions asked and the gifts exchanged, explore the possibility of substitution and compromise, and bring the donors and recipients to converse and negotiate.

Geschiere asks: what is the relation between witchcraft, intimacy and trust? How do we sow trust where there is only hate and suspicion? The answer to these questions, insurmountable as they might seem, may reside in the simple gestures of asking, giving, and receiving. Measures against witchcraft such as those described by Geschiere (2013, 32, 205)—ostracizing or killing the witch, moving to the city, shielding oneself with protective medicine, and redistributing wealth among relatives to prevent

envy—constitute acts of distancing and disengagement. In sharp contrast to these measures, asking, giving, and receiving are forms of engagement of the most precious kind, for they reveal the unique combination of knowledge and faith that Simmel distinguishes in his thoughts on trust (1950, 318–320; 1990, 179). Risk awareness does not stop women from requesting, giving, and receiving food in the villages, or the Kanenga doctors from engaging with the witches during Kanenga rituals, asking the witches to accept their gifts of goat blood in exchange for the life of the bewitched. A leap of faith this is—negotiating with the killer face to face. These women and men show great courage. They also show their firm commitment to continue depending on one another and working out a living together.

Gift theorists should not worry that the concept of the gift, stretched beyond boundaries, may lose its heuristic power. Elasticity, ambiguity, and indeterminacy are its defining qualities as a social practice and theoretical concept. Through gift giving as well as asking, not only do we create and reproduce different social worlds, but we also move between those worlds. Such is the power of the gift; a risky endeavor, but a risk worth taking.

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Notes

1. "Annual Report, North-Western Province, Balovale District, 1953, available at the National Archives of Zambia.
2. "Annual Report, North-Western Province, for the year 1951 (African Affairs, Solwezi, February 13, 1952)," available at the National Archives of Zambia.
3. I conducted fieldwork in the Chavuma district of Zambia, an area included in Balovale District during British colonialism.
4. See Burning Man's webpage, http://burningman.org/
5. Multiple examples of pure gifts are described in Caner 2013, Laidlaw 2002, and Parry 1989.
6. For a discussion of these criticisms of Marcel Mauss, see, for example, Parry (1986) and Osteen (2002).
7. In *Kupilikula* (2005), Harry West captures the movement of "turning" between realms very well.

8. I owe this insight to Frederick Klaits.
9. See, for example, Moore and Sanders (2001), Ciekawy and Geschiere (1998), as well as the remaining essays published in the same special issue of *African Studies Review*. See also Comaroff and Comaroff (1993).

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CHAPTER 3

Seeking the Wounds of the Gift: Recipient Agency in Catholic Charity and Kiganda Patronage

China Scherz

Critiques of the "compassion industry" have become increasingly common in recent years. Robert Lupton's bestseller *Toxic Charity* encapsulates many of these arguments in its critiques of the self-serving nature of charitable giving and the forms of dependency, helplessness, and humiliation that he sees emerging from the practice of religiously based charity in the United States (Lupton 2011). Lupton, himself a veteran employee of faith-based NGOs, argues that nonprofits should move away from charity and toward programs that will encourage former recipients of charity to become more self-sufficient by avoiding one-way giving and focusing instead on training, coaching, lending, and investing.

Anthropologists and other social theorists will likely recognize these proposals as neatly aligning neoliberal forms of governmentality which seek to produce responsible self-governing subjects (Muehlebach 2012; Rose 1999; Li 2007; Zigon 2011). What we might be less quick to note is the ways that anthropological writings on the role of

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power in gift exchanges serve to shore up the position that there is a poison hidden within charitable gifts. We often write, and teach, that to receive a gift that cannot be reciprocated is to make oneself vulnerable a subtle act of violence. Such positions are based on readings of Marcel Mauss's 1923 essay *The Gift* which see Mauss as arguing for an agonistic theory of exchange in which social actors are primarily interested in securing power and prestige through their generosity, thus inflicting humiliation and exerting power over recipients who find themselves unable to make a return (Mauss 1990, 65). Drawing on such a reading Mary Douglas and Pierre Bourdieu have framed their readings of *The Gift* in relation to the problems they believed were caused by charity in their own societies (Douglas 1990; Bourdieu 1977). Yet, such analyses of *The Gift* focus on the self-interested nature of calculated reciprocal gift exchanges, ignoring Mauss's fundamental insight that the division between self-interest and altruism is a product of history (Parry 1986), not a timeless truth.

This chapter follows Jonathan Parry in contributing to an emerging body of anthropological work on religiously motivated charity and philanthropy (Bornstein 2009; Elisha 2008; Parry 1986; O'Neill 2013; Zigon 2011; Halvorson this volume; Rahman this volume), which has transformed the question of charity and its wounds from a universal "moral conclusion" into a matter for situated empirical inquiry. By focusing the role particular sociohistorical conjunctures play in shaping the ways in which givers and receivers understand acts of charitable giving, I explore the role of recipient agency in Catholic charitable practices in Uganda. By examining how prospective beneficiaries sought to attach themselves to a community of East African Catholic nuns in efforts to secure future support for themselves and their children, I illuminate important instances of beneficiary agency which mirror the forms of client agency central to the ethics of patronage in Uganda. These instances of asking, giving, and receiving in both charitable and patronage relationships complicate arguments about charity and humanitarianism which see the charitable gift as a necessarily dangerous imposition which cannot avoid harming the standing of the person who receives it. In making this argument, I join Deborah Durham (1995) and Frederick Klaits (2011) in their focus the forms of agency involved in various forms of asking and attachment seeking and what these moments of agency might tell us about the forms of self-making that are excluded from forms of development that attempt to exclude gifts and dependency.

Idle Beggars

Arguments concerning the necessary violence of charity are but the latest version of four centuries of argument concerning the dangers of charity and dependency, which have only become amplified under contemporary neoliberal regimes. Since the introduction of the Elizabethan Poor Law in 1601, there have been periodic movements that have sought to replace religious charity with more secular forms of poor relief. Many of these measures have been based on the idea that the rich ought to engage with the poor in a manner that will discourage idleness while providing assistance to morally upright people who were unable to care for themselves and their families. In the eighteenth century, French proponents of the Enlightenment advocated the elimination of Catholic charity in favor of state-driven programs oriented toward *bienfaisance*, a form of rational, methodical, state-driven poor relief that aimed to eliminate both unjustified idleness and poverty. The failures of the Revolutionary Government led to a hasty reinstatement of prior forms of charity (Jones 1982, 317), but the Enlightenment logics of *bienfaisance* continued to play a major role as states gradually took biopolitical control of their populations.

The mutual aid societies central to social life in nineteenth-century Britain and France provide another example of the ways in which people increasingly sought to protect the well-being of working-class people against the possibility of becoming dependent. These societies that provided a form of social insurance to their healthy, working, dues paying, members in the event of illness, accident, or death explicitly excluded the sick, the unemployed, and the elderly from their ranks (Mitchell 1991), as the purpose of such societies had little to do with assisting the presently vulnerable, but rather focused their attention on the "potential poor" (Jones 1982).

At the start of the nineteenth century, the figure of the idle unruly beggar appeared again in debates in the United States. Local governments charged with the task of ministering to an increasingly large number of people receiving outdoor relief complained that the immigration of large numbers of Europe's poor, the excessive use of alcohol, and poor-relief itself had led to an overwhelming increase in the numbers of people requesting outdoor relief. As historian Michael Katz writes, many Americans of that time posited that

> [i]ndiscriminate charity and outdoor relief eroded more than the will to work. They also destroyed character. When the poor started to think of relief

> "as a right," they began to count on it "as an income." All "stimulus to industry and economy" was "annihilated, or weakened" while "temptations to extravagance and dissipation . . . increased." As a consequence, "The just pride of independence, so honorable to a man, in every condition" was "corrupted by the certainty of public provision" (Katz 1986, 18).

In contrast to French *bienfaisance,* which sought to end poverty for good, those in opposition to outdoor relief had more limited aims. They sought only "to keep the genuinely needy from starving" while avoiding "breeding a class of paupers who chose to live off public and private bounty rather than to work" (Katz 1986, 18). Efforts to discriminate between the worthy poor and their unworthy brethren resulted in the creation of the poorhouses which were purposely designed to discourage their use.

Fears of the unworthy dependent continued into the twentieth century, taking the form of the "welfare queen" drawn from Ronald Regan's 1976 campaign speeches and serving as the root of neoliberal welfare-to-work programs such as the United States' 1996 *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* that sought to transform dependent welfare recipients into independent employees.

In international development discourse, this steady liberal drum beat of individualism and independence finds an unexpected resonance with arguments which speak to the damage done by trade policies and aid programs. Over the past fifty years, scholars and practitioners have argued that poverty results from processes, which cast certain countries in dependent relationships with the metropole (Frank 1967), that humanitarian assistance furthers this dependency by devastating local markets (Schultz 1960), and that development aid undermines governments' accountability to their citizens (Moyo 2009). Such concerns with dependency have given form to the ideas and practices of sustainable development, which have shifted aid away from macrolevel project-based planning and direct forms of material charity toward the propagation of participatory self-supporting microinstitutions. This understanding of sustainability, which is distinct from the environmental use of the term, rose to prominence during the last decade of the twentieth century. As development experts sought to fill the gaps left by the dismantling of state services under structural adjustment and World Bank president James Wolfenson pushed for broad participation, the creation of community-based microinstitutions became an increasingly important element in the fight against global poverty (Mallaby 2004).

Under this logic of sustainability, the primary goal of many NGOs is to create community institutions that can assume "ownership" of a project after an organization and its resources leave the community. This pre-planned exit strategy, and its opposition to any action that might create dependency on external institutions, has led to programming decisions which favor capacity building and nonmaterial interventions. Where material resources are provided, they are generally given in the form of one-time capital-intensive building projects or in the form of high-interest microcredit loans.

Elsewhere, I have demonstrated that communities in Uganda have experienced these attempts to avoid the poison of the gift and the forms of long-term interdependence which may accompany some forms of charitable giving not as acts of empowerment but as evidence of corruption and a lack of care. By contrast, many rural Ugandans see more traditional forms of redistributive charity as deeply intertwined with their own ethics of care and exchange (Scherz 2014).

The Children Who Have Been Left Behind

This preoccupation with avoiding dependency is especially striking when one finds it in organizations working with orphans, as this is one of the few populations often thought to be appropriately dependent. Many organizations working with orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda have thoughtfully sought to work with existing relatives, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa the extended family is the primary body through which orphan care is negotiated and provided (Dahl 2009; Madhavan 2004; Ntozi 1997; Ntozi et al. 1999). This care is an extension of other forms of voluntary and crisis fosterage (Aspaas 1999; Goody 1982; Southwold 1965). Voluntary fosterage has long been used to serve many purposes including the use of children in domestic and agricultural labor and as temporary gifts to maintain and reinforce relationships (Southwold 1965; Bledsoe 1989; Bledsoe 1990; Goody 1982), which may in some cases obligate voluntary foster parents to foster these same children in a crisis (Goody 1982). Voluntary fosterage can also be used to give children access to education, both in terms of formal schooling and in terms of the forms of personal discipline and reliance thought to be created through hardship (Bledsoe 1990).

Yet, given the numbers of orphans in need of care, by 2005, 14% of children in Uganda had lost one or both of their parents (UNICEF

2006), and the demands of schooling and urbanization, many families have been pressed to their limit and relatives have become increasingly selective about who they will take in and what they will do for them. In Buganda, orphan care has traditionally been the responsibility of the child's paternal grandparents as the child properly belonged to them and their clan, given Buganda's patrilineal tradition. If the paternal grandparents were not available, the maternal grandparents might be called upon to care for the child, or this responsibility might be shared between the two sets of grandparents. Yet, the present state of kin fosterage in Buganda, and throughout much of Uganda, in which these old rules of obligation are broken as often as they are followed, reveals the inadequacy of the language of obligation which shape so much of the classic writing on kinship (Rivers 1968; Lévi-Strauss 1969; Evans-Pritchard 1940), demanding instead a set of idioms capable of describing how people actively participate in the negotiation and practice of kin relations (Strathern 1988; Carsten 2004; Trawick 1990; Povinelli 2006; Borneman 1997; Weston 1997). This understanding of kinship moves away from legalistic obligation and opens up new possibilities for analyzing and imagining the ways in which children and other dependents might be cared for. We are called to attend to the important role of friendship, and to the multiplicity of caring relationships one might be involved in. Much of the existing writing on voluntary and crisis fosterage of orphans and other children in Uganda and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa follows this trend, focusing on the microdynamics of reciprocity in a way which brings attention to the ways in which exchange creates relationships (Whyte and Whyte 2004). The importance of exchange and selectively realized bonds has only become more important as the numbers of orphans and childcare costs have increased.

Mercy House

Some children who have been unable to find support elsewhere arrive at institutions like Mercy House,[1] a Catholic charity home for more than 150 orphans, children and young adults with disabilities, and the elderly, run by a Franciscan order of East African nuns. Given the demands for sustainability and critiques of dependency and institutional care, such organizations are few and far between, but a few remain in operation despite limited funds.

Mother Mary Patrick, an Irish Franciscan nun, established Mercy House in 1923 as a place where people who had been discharged from the Catholic missionary hospital but who were still in need of nursing could live. In 1928, Mother Mary Patrick established of new order for African nuns and Mercy House was moved from its original site near the hospital to its present location near the novitiate in Namayumba where young women seeking to join the order receive their most intensive training as part of a nine-year formation process. The relocation of Mercy House was initiated so that the novices and the newly professed sisters could practice the form of charity that is central to their beliefs, commitments, and mission of their order. Charity, in this case, is thus not only about serving the poor but is also an end in itself. Here charity is conceptualized of as a way to enact one's love and devotion to God and neighbor and is also part of a highly intentional process of ethical formation through which the sisters hope to form themselves and each other as Christian subjects.

Patronage and Client Agency

A deep understanding of divine providence as a guiding force informed their acceptance of the many children and adults who sought their care, some of them having literally been left at the gate without any prior association. Yet, in other cases, the sisters were caring for children in a way that more closely resembled indigenous patron–client relationships. In Buganda, ethics of hierarchical interdependence occupy an important place in local understandings of moral personhood. These ethics of interdependence mean that people with resources stand to gain from their relationships with those who have less; that they have a moral obligation to take on clients; and that people with limited resources must actively try to attach themselves to others as dependents. Within this system, one increases one's standing and sense of being a full person by attaching oneself to others and by acquiring clients, not by becoming "independent." To be dependent on another is not a sign of destitution; as Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz write, "The truly destitute are those without patrons" (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 42).

The multiplicity of patrons actively competing for clients, and the clients' freedom to move from one patron to another should the first fail to meet their needs, builds a critical flexibility into these relations. Thus, as James Ferguson notes, "The freedom that existed in such a social world

(and it was not inconsiderable) came not from independence, but from a plurality of opportunities for dependence" (Ferguson 2013, 226). By acquiring a wide range of patrons, clients are assured of "having people" who can assist them in a variety of ways (Smith 2004), and they also gain a measure of insurance against the fickle fortunes, and hearts, of their patrons.

Historian Holly Hanson has argued that since early in the second millennium, Baganda chiefs, including territorial chiefs (*bakungu*) and officers (*batongole*) appointed by the king of Buganda, clan leaders (*bataka*), and hereditary princes (*balangira*), sought to increase their group of dependent followers (*bakopi*) as a way of acquiring prestige and signaling the legitimacy of their authority (Hanson 2003). Having dependents provided chiefs with labor required for wars of expansion and for the maintenance of their compounds and roads and they also benefited from tribute (*busulu*) paid in kind in the form of bark cloth and home-brewed banana beer. In turn, followers stood to gain in the form of war spoils, feasts, and land upon which their wives could engage in subsistence agriculture (Fallers 1964; Hanson 2003).

While there is no single word that encompasses the concept of patronage in Luganda, the verbs that animate relationships between chiefs and their followers, *okusenga*, to join a chief, and *okusenguka*, to leave a chief, are significant in that they indicate actions taken by followers. This linguistic emphasis on client agency also highlights the dynamic tension between dependence and social mobility in Kiganda patron–client relationships. Many Baganda men received large tracts of land from the king in recognition of their success in battle, thus giving them the capacity to acquire dependents of their own. Peasant boys sent by their father's chiefs to serve as pages in the king's court also had the opportunity to distinguish themselves through service, and many of the chiefs began their political careers in this way.

Despite the continuing importance of patronage, this elaborate network of heterarchical ties has been subjected to events that have profoundly destabilized it since the eighteenth century. As the kingdom expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the king appointed an increasing number of officers, many of whom were given control over slaves. The rise in slavery gradually made patrons less dependent on their clients for labor and other services, and physical force came to replace reciprocal obligation as the primary means of control (Hanson 2003). In addition, the rapid expansion of the kingdom and the slave trade created

opportunities for chiefs to acquire slaves through other means, eventually decreasing the chiefs' dependence on the kabaka, resulting in a crisis of royal legitimacy (Hanson 2003).

While many Baganda saw the establishment of the British protectorate as the successful recruitment of a powerful patron capable of assisting them in their ongoing conflicts with neighboring kingdoms, the arrival of colonialism also brought with it another series of changes that gradually made clients less necessary, patrons more demanding, and social advancement more difficult. These interventions included the allotment of private land titles to nearly four thousand chiefs, cash cropping, the emergence of a commodity-based elite culture, the introduction of formal schooling, the increasing stability of positions of political power, colonial demands on labor and resources made through indigenous authorities, and limits placed on people's ability to move.

Yet, despite these changes, creating asymmetric bonds of mutual obligation remains an important strategy for achieving social mobility in contemporary Uganda and in many cases finding school fees, jobs, contracts, and positions on NGO participant rosters depended on an individual's ability to secure some form of patronage.

In line with this, in many cases, the sisters were caring for children whose parents had purposely built labor-based relationships with them before they became unable to care for their children themselves. It is in this way that children like Paul Kasirye whose father had worked as the sisters' driver, and Nalungu Margaret whose mother had been one of the cooks, had come under the care of the sisters. Both of their parents had worked for the sisters and when they passed away, the sisters felt obliged to care for the children they left behind.

In other cases, future obligations were established through longer more tenuous exchanges of gifts and requests. One afternoon, Sr. Jane described the way in which one child's mother established such a relationship with the sisters: "When I was a novice in the formation house [Tamusanga's] mother used to come with her children. She had rashes all over, they had not yet started with those ARVs, and she would come to beg food every lunch.... She would bring us leaves [for steaming bananas]. [When] she died... Tamusanga and [his] sister were brought to this home." In coming to the novitiate each day Tamusanga's mother was not only looking for food. Rather, through her gifts and daily requests, she was working to establish a bond with the sisters that obliged them to care for her and her family.

Holly Hanson has described how British colonists and missionaries failed to understand that similar requests were themselves signs of love, that gifts did not always result in counter gifts but might instead obligate the giver to future gifts. In one passage Hanson describes how a young Muganda man was disappointed by the Protestant missionary C. W. Hattersley's refusal to give him money to pay bridewealth after he had worked in the man's household for nine years. According to Hanson, the young man protested:

> "When I came to join your establishment I gave myself entirely to you. Since that time you are my father; I have no other. Were I to apply to my father, he would only refer me to you. . . . [Y]ou altogether fail to understand the customs of the Baganda. Do you not know that the more requests we make the more we show our love for you? Were it not that I greatly love you, I would never ask for a single thing" (quoted in Hanson 2003, 7).

From the perspective of Maussian reciprocal obligation, the young man's first claim is fairly easy to comprehend. In exchange for the gift of service, Hattersley ought to have recognized the extracontractual relationship that had been formed and reciprocated by helping the young man pay bridewealth. The second claim, that "the more requests we make the more we show our love for you," is more difficult to understand but is essential for comprehending how Tamusanga's mother arranged long-term care for her son. In this second claim we hear the ways making and fulfilling requests create an obligation for the giver to give again. These gifts may be answered or prompted by reciprocal gifts, but normally it is the prior giving, not the prior receiving, that creates a precedent and an obligation for future gifts (Graeber 2011, 110). Further, in contrast to Marcel Mauss's framework ([1925] 1990), which focuses on the agency of the giver and the potential shame of being a recipient, within this ethically viable framework asking and receiving constitute an agentive act that asserts one's love for the prospective giver and positions both giver and receiver as equally agentive (Durham 1995). As Fred Klaits has noted, through both asking and praying one can establish a particular form of intersubjectivity by communicating aspects of one's personhood to others (Klaits 2010, 2011, this volume).

In addition to the role children's parents played in seeking support and sponsorship, some of Mercy House's residents had themselves been actively involved seeking the sisters' patronage in an effort to pursue

their own plans. Sister Caroline first met Namika Rebecca, a young woman with Spina Bifida, near the Martyr's Shrine just outside Kampala on Martyrs' Day some years earlier. Namika, now in university, was then in primary five. During an interview in June 2010 Namika told me how she had met the sisters:

> The sisters were so beautiful, dressed all in white and smiling. I was immediately drawn to them. They asked me where I lived and I pointed to a house nearby. They asked me if I had my Dad; I said that he had died. They asked me if I had my Mom, and I said yes. [They saw the condition I was in crawling on the ground and] said that they wanted to take me to Mercy House to go to school. I was very excited about this idea and went home and told my mother. My mother refused and kept me at home. When I was nearing the end of [primary seven] I went to my mother and asked her what her plans were for me. She said she was planning to put me in tailoring. I said that I didn't want to do tailoring, that I wanted to [do] academics and that I was leaving to go to the sisters so that they would send me to school. I traveled here and started school across the way at Saint Anthony's.

Namika saw the presence of Mercy House and the sisters' offer of an education as allowing her to make own choices about her life plans and to pursue her academic goals. While the sisters did hold the children in their care to strict moral standards, especially in regards to sexuality, Namika's primary experience of their charity was not one of shame and the burden of an unrepayable debt but rather focused on the success of having effectively recruited a powerful and generous patron.

When God Makes You His Messenger

The parallel logics of Catholic charity and indigenous forms of patronage are doubled in the ways Catholic charitable givers understand their relationship with God. Kizito Nakatana was a devout charismatic Catholic who owned a successful restaurant in one of the villages where I lived and who regularly gave some of the money he had made through his entrepreneurial successes to the frail elderly in nearby villages. He articulated this double linkage between charity and patronage to me as follows: "When I started reading the scriptures, [I realized] every time God makes you his messenger . . . you are greatly protected. [Like] the way

you see [President] Museveni with his ministers . . . If you provide for an elderly person who has no one to help, God thanks you for helping this person."

Kizito's reflections on his charitable giving draw on the figures of master and servant, figures that are essential to the precolonial ethics of patronage. Kizito believes that the people whom God chooses as his messengers are protected, in much the same way that President Museveni protects his ministers, an image which he here associates not with corruption, but with the proper state of relations between patrons and clients. Speaking of his own experience, and pointing to a painting of the Virgin Mary hung on the wall of his restaurant, Kizito attributed the successes that had allowed him to save enough to purchase a blender and to add a shaded veranda to the front of his restaurant to her patronage. While most people in Uganda occupy a position in a hierarchy that makes them patrons to some and clients to others, the charitable exchange complicates this, as through the charitable gift one is simultaneously an earthly patron and a heavenly client.

Hopes for God's patronage and a desire to respond to the gifts they had received from others also inflected the actions of those typically written off as unable to repay the debt of charitable gifts. Owing to the shortage of sisters and paid staff, the children and other residents of Mercy House largely looked after themselves and each other. During a return visit to Mercy House in 2010, I slept in a guest room attached to the boys' dormitory. Early each morning I was awakened by the sounds of the boys mopping the floors of their dorm and directing one another, as they got ready for the day. Some boys with mobility impairments had trouble in carrying water, so other boys helped them, and they in turn helped others with their washing and made sure that the smaller boys were ready in time. Fred Lukomwa, a young man who still uses hand crutches after having been treated for a bone infection and who had been elected as the head boy of the dorm, told me:

> I give [other children] help like, tell[ing] them to bathe, washing [their] clothes, taking care [to see] whether they have got[ten] food . . . In the hospital [a lot of] people [gave] me care. Because my brother was young, he could not manage to take care of me. But different people helped me. And, in addition to that, doctors who worked on me were from different countries. Bas[ed] on that, I see that really I have to help as a reward to those who helped me. I will never be able to help those people and so I help

> [the boys] instead. [I don't expect anything from them] [Only] from God, you never know the blessings. Perhaps I may die [tomorrow] but according to what I do, maybe God [extends] my days for being a good person.

Fred did not expect to benefit directly from those he was helping, nor did he feel obliged to directly repay those who had helped him in the past. Rather, he helped the other children in the dorm to reward those who had helped him when he was in the hospital and to secure future blessings from God. These ways of conceptualizing possible opportunities for reciprocity and the expected rewards of giving challenge more simplistic understandings of charitable gift debt and also reveal the ways that people experience themselves as both givers and receivers of charity.

Charity's Wounds?

The idea that charitable gifts are actually exchanges with God and the prospect that while recipients may be unable to repay one giver they might go on to give to someone else are among several points that raise questions about Pierre Bourdieu's extension of earlier writings on the gift and his arguments on the symbolic violence of charity. For Bourdieu, charity was the primary example of the symbolic violence he spent his career writing about. For him gifts nothing more than the "endless reconversion of economic capital into social capital." Since "wealth . . . can exert power, and exert it durably, only in the form of symbolic capital," gifts become one of the primary ways the wealthy retain their dominance. Charitable gifts thus function as "ideological machines [which perpetuate the] unequal balance of power." Bourdieu argues that this is all made possible by a collective misrecognition in which both giver and receiver see gifts as "exaltation of gratuitous, unrequited generosity" (Bourdieu 1977, 192). Bourdieu claimed this misrecognition is facilitated by the obligatory time lapse between gift and counter gift (1977, 192–97).

Yet, when we suspend our reliance on misrecognition and look more closely at the experiences of givers and receivers of charity in context, we find that Bourdieu's argument concerning the necessary violence of charity is questionable. By opening ourselves to the moral contingency of the gift, we can attend to the specificities of particular gifts, rather than assuming universal motivations and outcomes. While not denying that giving to charity may have increased the social capital of Mercy House's donors, we must also

attend to the ways the ethics of inequality work in Buganda. Bourdieu's problematization of inequality is in many ways foreign to Uganda, for in Uganda it is not dependency and inequality which are themselves considered problematic, but rather, it is what one does from one's position within a given hierarchy that is the focus of most moral anxiety. In addition, while Bourdieu's argument concerning the ways in which misrecognition allows for the perpetuation power does important work in many cases, this sort of argument allows only the anthropologist the privilege of seeing the truth behind the mask. This view minimizes the experiences of the recipients in Uganda, who may find gifts made through logics of patronage or charity to be an effective means of climbing the social and economic hierarchies. Bourdieu's characterization of charity also reduces God's role as the recipient and presumed reciprocator of Catholic charity to a superimposed *illusio* that hides the self-interested nature of charitable gifts. Yet when we resist a hermeneutics of suspicion, Kizito's claim that he gives to the elderly in his village as a way to give to God, both as a gesture of gratitude for the unrepayable gift of salvation and as a way of soliciting God's protection—a claim echoed by Fred Lukowma, the sisters, and their donors—we arrive at a set questions about the effects of this belief. For Kizito, God is his primary exchange partner, so his return gifts from others, even intangible ones like loyalty, gratitude, or respect, are at most secondary to this spiritual motivation. If we follow the anthropologist Jonathan Parry in his critique of interpretations of Mauss that overemphasize the importance of earthly reciprocity (Parry 1986) and open the question of spiritual modes of exchange, we find that the forms and effects of "gift debt" created through charity are radically underdetermined.

In his attempts to separate "self-interested gifts" from "true gifts" Bourdieu also ignores Mauss's primary point that before the creation of the market there was no distinction between interest and disinterest. The separation between self-interest and altruism found in some interpretations of Mauss, which focus on the strategic actions of self-interested actors, blinds modern readers to the inseparability of these categories both in Kiganda ethics of patronage, in which the patron has a moral obligation to take on additional clients if he is able and personally benefits from doing so, and in Catholic ethics of charity, in which the giver has a moral obligation to give to God by giving to the poor and may expect divinely granted benefits from doing so.

Finally, while Bourdieu's claim that charitable gifts fail to overturn structures of inequality seems consistent with my data, certain forms of

charity and patronage do seem to result in significant socio-economic mobility. In Uganda where only 4.5% of adults have completed secondary school (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2002), the charitable scholarships like the one the sisters provided for Namika constitute a critical point of access to higher education. In addition, a national study exploring factors that contributed to social mobility similarly found that having strong religious, personal, or familial networks was among the most important predictors of social mobility in Uganda. While I would not argue for a return to charity as a universal model for interrelationship, I hope that through this examination of recipient agency and this exploration of the interactions between charity and indigenous ethics of interdependence we might unsettle some of the assumptions of charity's critics and what are often assumed to be foregone conclusions about the ethics and effects of dependency in the postcolonial world.

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Note

1. Mercy House and all of the names given to the people and places associated with it are pseudonyms. I conducted fieldwork at Mercy House from November 2007 through April 2008 and in May 2010 as part of a larger study on orphans support NGOs in Uganda (Scherz 2014). During this period, I traveled to Mercy House on a regular basis generally staying for a week at a time in the sisters' guesthouse or in a room attached to the boys dormitory. At Mercy House, I spent my days observing activities and talking with the sisters, the residents, and the steady stream of volunteers who came to donate their time through an array of self-defined projects. I have stayed in regular contact with the sisters and residents of the home since that time and have also conducted interviews with many of Mercy House's donors.

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CHAPTER 4

When God Is a Moral Accountant: Requests and Dilemmas of Accountability in US Medical Relief in Madagascar

Britt Halvorson

Introduction

Accountability in humanitarian aid is often taken to be synonymous with bureaucratic documents like budgets, reports, and case studies that seek to make "transparent" the use of donor resources and illustrate the specific "outcomes" of those resource flows, ideally performing credibility and building trust with a particular audience in the process (Barnett and Finnemore 2005; Barnett and Duvall 2005; Ebrahim and Weisband 2007). But we can also view accountability as a more basic and vital matter of relationships, something that in fact often emerges through a far more widespread array of social practices than those "about" accountability in bureaucratic terms. This broader notion of what it means to be accountable to others is of course the stuff of intimate social ties, as people make requests of and give gifts to each other and the divine in keeping with prevailing values of mutuality, exchange, and reciprocity (Graeber 2011). In this chapter, drawing from ethnographic

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research on a 30-year-old medical aid program between Lutheran Christians in the United States and Madagascar, I combine these two meanings of accountability to argue for a deeper understanding that "accounts for" the interanimation of intimate and bureaucratic methods of moral accounting in humanitarian work. Accountability in aid entails certain bureaucratic documents and moral subjectivity but also operates as a request for the aid recipient and aid provider to acknowledge the underlying terms of aid as an exchange.[1] Since it draws overt attention to these terms, accountability work is an especially revealing cultural space in which to investigate how power and authority are negotiated through small, even mundane transactions in religiously motivated aid partnerships. It is thus tied to fundamental questions about sharedness and difference, past and present, and mutuality and separation in the global communion.

In the medical aid program that I study, aid workers interestingly bring together both bureaucratic accountability's emphasis on transparency in the use of aid resources and a biblically based ideology that being accountable means invisibly accompanying fellow Christians elsewhere, as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13–35. It is this selective hybridization of neoliberal and religious measures of effectiveness, conceptualized in terms of both accountability work and God's will, which makes their work particularly unique, as well as poorly understood when compared with secular agencies. As I describe below, while American Lutherans predominantly view their own immobility as the most ethical position, sending medical relief objects and not people or missionaries to Madagascar, accountability requirements certainly travel and have been increasingly woven into each donation of medical relief, financial support, or equipment. I therefore seek to chart the specific points of fusion and contestation when religious and bureaucratic–neoliberal rationales overlap, combining moral force in an emerging, religiously informed medical audit culture. My aim here is not to characterize the "religious" as a discrete or necessarily identifiable area of social life as such (see Asad 1993; Saler 1993) but rather enable us to see how bureaucratic requirements are selectively socialized to or through preexisting cultural logics, opening up a field of cultural possibility wider than that commonly analyzed in studies of humanitarian accountability. In what ways are religious and bureaucratic–neoliberal reasoning on moral accountability combined or reconfigured, and with what effects? What implications

does this have for transnational faith-based aid as both a form of humanitarianism and a site of religious engagement?

In what follows, I consider these questions and examine how American and Malagasy aid workers who have participated in the Lutheran medical relief program differently experience and construct what it means to be accountable. Following João Biehl's (2010, 154) assertion that ethnographers should "bring into view the immanent fields – leaking out on all sides – that people invent to live in and by," I seek to render visible how "accountability" is defined and performed in the United States and Madagascar through different activities and their moral entailments, including the sorting of medical relief and the writing and submission of budget reports. In the first section, I briefly examine the history of the medical aid relationship between Madagascar and Minnesota, focusing on the biblical model through which religious actors attempt to enact a relationship of companionship or "accompanying" between the two national Lutheran churches. I explore how, in the two Minneapolis-based medical aid nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) where I conducted fieldwork, American aid workers put into practice this ethical model, attempting to mitigate uncertainties common to aid provision by affirming their accountability to God through specific labor activities. My focus then turns to Malagasy practices of accountability in Antananarivo, where aid workers must increasingly produce bureaucratic documents that attest to the uses and outcomes of medical aid. Following the work of other humanitarian scholars, I argue that these bureaucratic requirements not only document knowledge but transform social relations and subjectivities (Feldman 2007a; James 2010; Nguyen 2010; Bornstein and Redfield 2010; Scherz 2014), rendering visible in this case a small group of Merina and Betsileo Malagasy clinician-aid brokers and administrators with privileged access to aid resources. Audit procedures lay bare a vexing set of questions for both Malagasy and Americans: What does it ultimately mean to be accountable, and does accountability work between fellow believers contradict basic contemporary principles of global religious communion, evoking shadow histories of colonial evangelism? What emerges from this multi-sited approach is a portrait of accountability work as a "mobile" or traveling form of "humanitarian governance" (Pandolfi 2010), understood and enacted in culturally distinct ways, but also a dynamic site that raises moral dilemmas specific to religious aid partnerships built on the promise of solidarity across great distances.

Accompanying as a Biblical Model of Accountability

My ethnographic research focuses on two American Lutheran NGOs, which I call Malagasy Partnership and International Health Mission (IHM), that supply an array of discarded and recovered medical materials – ranging from hospital gowns to surgical scissors to x-ray machines – to the centralized Malagasy Lutheran health care system or SALFA (*Sampan'asa Loterana Momba Ny Fahasalamana*), established in 1979. As an arm of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (*Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy*), which today counts three million members as one of the country's four largest Protestant churches, SALFA oversees Lutheran medical services in nine hospitals and thirty-eight dispensaries across the island. Both NGOs began as part of the same initiative in the early to mid 1980s. Following the devaluation of the Malagasy currency (*ariary*) required by structural adjustment reforms in 1980, Malagasy Lutheran clinics could not afford to purchase medical items from multinational suppliers and struggled to provide a basic standard of care. Former American Lutheran Church missionaries to Madagascar, Malagasy doctors, and their supporters pooled their resources to start a medical aid organization in Minneapolis that would procure "recovered" biomedical materials from US hospitals and channel them to the SALFA distribution center in Antananarivo. Today, the NGOs continue to implement a strong ideological commitment to "accompany" Malagasy Lutherans from afar by sending medical relief to SALFA. These aid agencies not only participate in biomedical waste economies but also strikingly enact values of global Christianity, balancing globalizing Christian identity claims with the sovereignty of national churches.

In the United States, the agencies emerged from American Lutheran evangelical missions to Madagascar, which began in 1888 and continued well into the 1980s. With decolonization in Madagascar and waning support for foreign mission work from mainline Protestants in the United States, members of the American Lutheran Church (after 1988, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or ELCA) began to overtly reject long-term mission work between 1970 and 1990 as a morally corrupt "colonial" practice, imbalanced by Euro-American claims to religious and cultural authority. Institutionally, liberal Lutherans turned to humanitarian relief, short-term missions, nationally run evangelism, and microdevelopment schemes as more ethical examples of the singular term "global mission." Through multisited fieldwork in 2004–2006, 2008, and 2014, I have worked as a volunteer laborer in both Minneapolis agencies

and examined how SALFA employees process and perceive the aid in Antananarivo, Madagascar, besides participating in worship services and family gatherings with Lutherans in both locations. After 1980, Malagasy Partnership became a small NGO run voluntarily by three multigenerational Euro-American families, as well as occasional volunteers from their ELCA congregation and several Minneapolis-based Malagasy émigré families. By contrast, IHM employs four full-time office staff and features a large, 250-person volunteer elderly workforce. The agency now ships up to twenty-eight annual containers of medical aid to churches in Cameroon, Liberia, Madagascar, and Tanzania, continually adding new locations to its shipping roster.

While Malagasy Partnership has been closely aligned with one ELCA congregation, in which most volunteers are members, IHM is an independent Lutheran organization that has no formal affiliation with the ELCA. It draws employees and volunteers from across several Lutheran denominations that vary widely on a number of important theological and social issues, including the charismatic Lutheran Renewal movement, the conservative Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, and the mainline Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Such schisms within Lutheranism parallel a broader liberal/conservative Protestant divide in North America about which many scholars have written (Wuthnow 1989; Miller 1997; Harding 2000; Klassen 2011), but within the organization these differences seemed to matter less than its shared denominational affiliation and purpose. In promotional materials, the monthly newsletter and volunteer meetings, IHM leaders consistently pitched the agency's mission in a way that strategically evoked both the biblical basis of its work, found in the healing ministry of Jesus, and a widely used ELCA discourse of helping national churches elsewhere to effectively operate their church-run institutions ("Helping the Hands that Heal"). In both cases, IHM promotional language underscored the spiritual qualities of medicine, thereby positioning health care as a meeting point between Lutheran factions variously committed to global medicine as a platform for evangelism and global medicine as a platform for social justice.

Both Minneapolis agencies frame their work as that of "assisting," "walking with" or "accompanying" brethren overseas and, with different degrees of explicitness among various agency leaders and volunteers, strive to distinguish themselves from morally discredited "colonial missionaries," a locally elaborated social category. By describing their work as that of "accompanying" foreign brethren through shipped medical relief,

both agencies position medical things as more culturally neutral and less politically intrusive than some Christian missionaries. They draw this language of accompanying from the biblical model of Luke 24: 13–35. In this biblical passage, Jesus secretly accompanies the disciple Cleopas and a friend as they walk on the road to Emmaus. He disguises himself as someone else, a stranger, thus remaining in certain respects unseen but still present to his companions. When they arrive at an Emmaus home, Jesus finally reveals himself to his companions when they break bread together but disappears immediately thereafter. For Americans involved in the two NGOs, this passage provides an evocative image of what it means to be a globally engaged Christian. That is, American Lutherans running the aid organizations wish to be visible as moral actors, serving the needs of foreign brethren as in the passage's pivotal act of commensality (breaking bread). However, they also aim to be like Jesus by appearing not to interfere in Malagasy affairs or being unobtrusively present as Jesus was on the road to Emmaus. In what follows, I analyze how US volunteers put the biblical model of Luke 24:13–35 into practice through their "ethical labor" (Feldman 2007b) with medical materials, which in certain respects accounts for the colonial legacy of missionary imperialism and seeks to build a new kind of religious partnership with Malagasy brethren.

Becoming Accountable Subjects through Discerning God's Will

As I observed during my eighteen months as a laborer in both Minneapolis agencies, regular volunteers enlisted and evoked God in a number of ways, but perhaps none more prominent than in their concerns over the medical supplies' usefulness. Both agencies form part of a 100-member network of US Christian aid organizations called Technical Exchange for Christian Healthcare or TECH, which promotes aid usefulness as a Christian ethic. Member agencies, of which IHM was a founding organization in 1990, must adhere to both a statement of faith and a nine-point list of ethical principles for assuring technical appropriateness in donations. As a result, each Lutheran agency requests a "needs list," classifying materials by biomedical procedure type, and other "needs assessments" from partner hospitals prior to each shipment to carefully ascertain useful materials. However, as I worked in the aid warehouses, it became clear that concerns remained among the regular volunteers about the future use relations and

usefulness of the *particular* supplies before them. I maintain this stems not only from the heterogeneous medical donations themselves but also the foundational moral dilemma attached to the agencies' work: How do American aid workers affirm their moral relationship with their foreign brethren through material things deemed institutional discards, ultimately cast off because of their nonusefulness or obsolescence in the US hospital setting? As mentioned earlier, both agencies collect donations of unused but "recovered" medical supplies, such as catheters, IV needles, respiratory tubing, and blood pressure pumps, which have been discarded by US hospitals due to planned obsolescence or insurance regulations (specifically, patient/clinician "risk"). Through the embodied labor of handling, sorting, and classifying the medical materials, I observed volunteers simultaneously engaging in work to refine the materials' moral qualities, attempting to align them with the agencies' ethical standards, while emptying them of their relations to the US hospital system and, specifically, its "waste" classification.

For volunteer laborers, securing the discards' future use value sometimes involved asking for divine blessing for the materials themselves, thereby positioning the circulation of medical relief in a broader moral economy. The best example of this occurred during special container-packing sessions when the final preparations were made to ship materials overseas. At both agencies, just before the tall doors of the transatlantic sea containers were shut, volunteers formed a prayer circle that faced the open doors of the container, where the cardboard cartons of the shipment were still visible. The placement and timing of the prayer is significant because it indicates how the prayer text suffuses the container with requested blessings just before it leaves the physical presence of the volunteers. The container doors were shut only after the prayer had ended. For example, in one special packing session at Malagasy Partnership, a middle-aged engineer and regular volunteer, Theo, prayed that the Lord would "bless each item in the container" and asked that the items would "be a blessing for and through You, Lord." This language of blessing placed the warehouse operation in a divinely orchestrated moral economy, working to secure future use relations through the asking of prayer while enabling possible divine returns (blessings) for volunteers' moral obedience. Similarly, at Malagasy Partnership, the founder Gene, a former medical missionary technician in Madagascar in 1978–79 and current IT supervisor at a local hospital, stipulated on several occasions in prayer that the medical supplies packaged within the warehouse had been "called" by God and were not merely "sent" by a hospital, a

pivotal moral distinction. Gene frequently provided detailed accounts of individual supplies' commodity chains, tracing their unusual paths to the agency as evidence of a divine hand.

Individual volunteers sometimes also discerned divine messages in unlikely material windfalls. On one afternoon, Alisha, Mark, Dagmar, and several others assisted a Baptist missionary couple who stopped at IHM to pick up two duffle bags' worth of supplies for an orphanage they run in the Philippines. Initially, some regular volunteers privately expressed doubts over whether IHM should give medical donations at all to the Baptist missionaries. However, since the couple was already present and had limited time to gather materials, these sectarian concerns receded from focus. Shortly after the couple left with bulging bags, Alisha opened a recently received donation box and started to unpack and sort the medical items inside. She walked into the sorting room where I worked holding several plastic-wrapped IV sets. "You can never outgive the Lord," she said to me, holding the IV sets above her head. "I just gave those people all the IV sets we had. But I opened a box and *there* were more [gesturing with her hand below her]!" Alisha implied that she took the IV sets as a sign that the IHM staff had done the right thing in donating all the IV sets to the Baptist missionary couple. She suggested that she saw God as signaling support for generosity in the form of assuring a continued stream of needed supplies and, though these material windfalls, confirming that the volunteers were attentive to God and doing God's work. In this case, the material form and qualities of the IV sets were not incidental to the "message" communicated by God; their form was essential, in fact, for Alisha in deciphering this as a clear sign of Godly approval and a "response" to the previous interaction with the Baptist missionaries.

However, even as some discerned these as signs that the agencies were doing God's work, aid workers frequently referred to nonuseful medical supplies as "junk" forms that vacated medical supply processing of the potential for receiving blessings. By looking at things deemed "junk" medical supplies, we can see how, with certain objects, their waste classification became more fixed and less socially malleable, in fact limiting the NGOs' ability to infuse new value into discarded things. Richard, a retired engineer and regular IHM volunteer who repaired equipment and arranged pallets for shipment, once told me the storage of junk in the warehouse was something that "kept one from receiving blessing." In other words, junk was a detrimental force, not merely a series of stationary, nonuseful commodity forms, but a social and communicative act that

erected a kind of boundary between people working in the organization and God. Unlike "called" medical aid, "junk" was precisely not asked for by God. [2] Frequently labeled "junk" materials included spare parts for medical equipment, undesirable items and machines without appropriate technical support or electrical wiring. Interestingly, in Richard's estimation, the medical supplies that remained at the warehouse, without a certain purpose or destination, were already junk because of their non-usefulness. Richard's language drew from a broader TECH discourse on the morally dubious qualities, and specifically sin, evident in junk medical supplies. In the IHM warehouse, a handwritten sign had been hung on the wall near the sorting room that stated plainly, "Junk for Jesus is still junk." The language of the sign is noteworthy: it advises the volunteers that sending "junk" items overseas, even with the aim that they be used to do the healing work of Jesus, does not obviate the fact that these items are "still junk." The human sinfulness of junk medical supplies is an "absent presence" that forms a crucial part of the two operations (Heatherington 2004, 163). By representing the possibility of human sin within each and every medical aid transaction, junk amplifies the need to continually reassess supplies' usefulness, asking for divine blessings for them and scrutinizing the material surround for signs of God's will.

The Minneapolis aid agencies interestingly use more well-established forms of Christian moral discipline, especially the specter of human sinfulness, to regulate and reform medical relief as a distinctly Christian endeavor. I suggest these acts of labor and prayer lend shape to a moral norm of accountable subjectivity in the Minneapolis NGOs. Becoming an accountable subject here is a practice of worship in which individual volunteers affirm their relationship with God through fine-grained decisions, prayer, and labor practices distinguishing "junk aid" from "useful aid." Aid work is a complex exchange not only with Christian health-care workers overseas but, even more significantly, a form of tribute to God. Selecting useful aid is ultimately a sign of one's commitment to God, a small acknowledgment among many of the debt of gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice for human sinfulness (cf. Graeber 2011). I was often struck by the highly deliberate, intellectual character of aid labor in the two warehouses, in which laborers denounced merely sending aid and strove for a more thoughtful pursuit, something the IHM executive director once called "giving intelligently." This term echoes a widespread evangelical discourse that advocates "intelligent prayer" as a results-oriented strategy that entails careful preparation, coordination of one's and others' needs, and clarity of purpose to achieve answers and communion with God.[3]

As in "praying intelligently," it is possible to see how this kind of aid labor socially enables a self-disposed, autonomous Christian subject as one who is accountable for one's actions, a subjectivity some argue has been foundational to colonial missionary encounters and their multifaceted legacies (Keane 2007; Nguyen 2010, Chapter 3). Being accountable here is thus both a quality of individual commitment to God, known through one's aid labor, and, as the biblical passage of Luke 24 implies, an ethical and moral project effected through the collective endeavor of supplying aid to foreign brethren.

While volunteer workers morally accounted for aid through their labor and prayer activities, accountability took on additional meanings according to agency leaders' knowledge of and involvement with audit work. Among this smaller group of individuals, Malagasy aid partners, as well as physicians working elsewhere that IHM sends aid, took a more prominent position as those to whom agency leaders were morally responsible and, hence, accountable through specific bureaucratic documents. As mentioned earlier, agency leaders like Gene corresponded regularly with SALFA officials and asked them to complete needs assessments; they then attempted through the NGOs' donor contacts to supply what equipment or technologies those working in foreign clinics had requested. However, for regular volunteers rather than NGO leaders or former missionaries, it was often unclear exactly how the supplies that they handled would be used in the foreign clinics where they were sent. The geopolitical distance between the Minneapolis NGOs and clinics in Madagascar mystified the use relations of the medical materials but simultaneously contributed to the overall awareness among volunteers that the NGOs were linked to broader unseen landscapes of divine activity. Religious reasoning thus superseded bureaucratic forms of accountability among regular volunteers, as God was understood to already be an orchestrator of the largely unseen work of transnational medical aid.

If we return to the basic premise of Luke 24:13–35, we can better appreciate that, from one American interpretation of this ethical paradigm, the medical materials themselves bear a substantial burden of disclosing Americans' moral and ethical accountability to foreign brethren. Following Luke 24, aid workers want their actions to speak for themselves, materializing their ethical and moral subjectivity. Vanishing themselves from the face-to-face missionary encounter, but maintaining traces of their ethical labor through carefully procured medical goods, is thought to better accomplish this goal. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the medical

donations themselves – as medical discards – place clear limits on the degree to which they can be understood as signs of Americans' moral and ethical practice. After the supplies arrive in Antananarivo, SALFA employees assign them a service fee in Malagasy *ariary*, revaluing them monetarily, and this small "fee" paid for the supplies by each SALFA medical clinic in effect maintains the centralized distribution network. It also creates a fixed, subsidiary market for SALFA member clinics so they can acquire medical supplies otherwise unaffordable on the international market.

Although they were well aware of financial need as a general issue motivating the aid relationship, most Minnesotan volunteers do not realize the materials are economically revalued in Antananarivo, something that became clear to me as I followed the relief aid between Minnesota and Madagascar. Since medical discard donations are highly heterogeneous, including almost everything used in the clinical encounter, SALFA administrators consistently told me that some of the shipped medical items from the United States were predictably useful for their clinics, such as gloves, syringes and especially medical equipment. However, other items became clinical back stock or had uses that could not be immediately ascertained. These items were placed in a SALFA storage facility composed of decommissioned shipping containers on the outskirts of Antananarivo, awaiting future use. Several points of disjuncture thus exist between the American elaboration of the individual medical materials as moral mediators of their relationship with brethren in Madagascar and the predominant Malagasy view of the individual medical discards as potentially, though not always, valuable clinical and economic forms. In the next section, I examine how a notion of accountable subjectivity was being configured in Madagascar through US accountability requirements that increasingly asked for Malagasy aid partners to document the uses and "outcomes" of the medical donations. This growing American emphasis on the uniqueness and individual itineraries of certain donations came into conflict with these diverse Malagasy valuations of the medical materials.

Subjectivities and Tensions of Medical Aid Accountability

If Americans construct an accountable subject as one who scrupulously distinguishes useful from junk aid and continuously discerns God's will – materializing this ethical position through procured goods while vanishing oneself from the aid encounter – a different kind of Malagasy accountable

subject has taken shape through the aid relationship. A small group of primarily male, ethnically Merina and Betsileo physicians, working mainly in and around the capital Antananarivo, as well as select SALFA administrators, have rendered themselves, and been crafted by Americans, as culturally elaborated "Malagasy partners." Certain physicians are known by name and prayed for by American volunteers; correspond regularly with the NGOs; and visit the United States as special guests for Christian global health conferences in Minneapolis/St. Paul. That is, unlike Americans' efforts to invisibly accompany Malagasy brethren, a kind of selective hypervisibility characterizes these Merina and Betsileo physicians and administrators among regular volunteers. The IHM motto encourages this vision by ambiguously suggesting that individual laborers' hands fold together with those of the Christian doctor and, ultimately, Jesus in administering care and "helping the hands that heal." Likewise, SALFA advocates a comparable position through the words emblazoned on the walls of all its clinics: "*Izahay mitsabo; Jesosy manasitrana*" (Malagasy, We treat [medically]; Jesus heals).

The forty-eight SALFA clinics across Madagascar treat patients regardless of their religious affiliation but only employ Christian doctors and nurses. My Malagasy and American informants consistently characterized Christian physicians as key figures in the SALFA system who ideally provided a moral example of Christian behavior and delivered spiritual counsel to their patients at opportune moments, leaving open the door for direct or indirect witnessing in the clinic. Merina and Betsileo physicians and administrators thus occupy a particularly significant role in the medical aid partnership because they are viewed as keepers of the Christian quality of the medical endeavor.[4] When I asked the former SALFA director Mr. Rajoanary, an administrator often critical of how SALFA is currently run, what he thought needed to be done to secure SALFA's future, he answered without hesitation that SALFA needed a strong class of young Christian doctors as many current physicians were close to retirement or "*espèces en voie de disparation*" (endangered species), he joked, using a conservation discourse particularly well-worn in Madagascar. Reframing the issue, Mr. Rajoanary, himself a consecrated Lutheran lay preacher (Malagasy, *mpiandry,* or shepherd) in the transdenominational *fifohazana* (Malagasy, awakening) movement, emphasized that SALFA should market its uniqueness in providing holistic Christian care that tends to spiritual and bodily needs and distinguish itself in the process from secular, government-run clinics. Across months of individual conversations with the

Malagasy Partnership founder Gene, it likewise became evident to me that a central concern for him was that Malagasy Partnership supported a Christian health-care program through the combined medical and spiritual guidance of SALFA doctors. Without this, his and others' work would be "just activity," as he once put it in a group prayer, or a kind of wasted, unsanctified effort.

Shifting Accountability Requirements, Renegotiating the Terms of Exchange

If physicians and administrators were positioned as already accountable for the most significant aspects of the Christian medical partnership, it seemed fitting to American agency leaders that some of these same individuals would absorb additional accountability paperwork as both agencies began to professionalize their operations during my fieldwork in 2005–2006 (see Kaell this volume on professionalization). IHM had long derived some 80 percent of its operating budget from small individual donations (e.g., those of US$5 and $10). [5] However, with its expanding aid program and a predominantly elderly US support base, it applied for in the fiscal year 2004–2005 and received from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) $36,000 in ocean freight reimbursement for ten shipments, which brought with it new accountability paperwork. Malagasy Partnership had also started actively applying for grants and embarking on partnerships with other, larger medical aid organizations, such as Pittsburgh-based Global Links. After Global Links donated a total of 7,000 surgical sutures to SALFA via Malagasy Partnership in 2005, it required substantial documentation on the uses and effectiveness of the suture donation, triggering an unprecedented chain of accountability between SALFA, Malagasy Partnership and Global Links. In Summer 2005, SALFA became the featured story on the Global Links national newsletter, which prominently displayed SALFA physician-written medical case studies and photographs on the sutures' use. Reflecting on the positive press SALFA gained through the newsletter, Gene called the Global Links donation a "success story." He told me he hoped it would alert SALFA personnel to how prompt and thorough accountability work could yield substantial future donations.

The sheer volume, time constraints, mandatory quality and genre specificity of this accountability work, however, distinguished it from most prior and ongoing correspondence sent by SALFA personnel to American organization leaders. Such communications, often written in the style of a

letter between believers, had long served to verify the Christian basis of the work as a shared endeavor while less prominently acknowledging the receipt of materials or funding. For example, at the close of 2005, the SALFA financial officer Clement, well known to American volunteers from a Minneapolis visit a few years earlier, wrote a letter to Malagasy Partnership board members and volunteers in which he relayed news from the recent Madagascar visit of a Seattle-based couple who also sit on the agency's board. Clement wrote that his family, the visiting Seattle-based board members, and a SALFA physician and his family from Antsirabe spent the day after Christmas together, during which they prayed "for the continuation of the work. We put the whole work at [Malagasy Partnership] and in Madagascar in the hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Reporting on the previous year, Clement pointedly thanked each American volunteer by name and concluded: "Thank you for bringing love and life to the patients whom you do not always see but whom God gives to you to [take] care of." In January 2006, the Manambaro Hospital administrators, a husband and wife team, used a new Malagasy Partnership-donated digital camera and sent US supporters a series of 17 photographs of the hospital grounds in southeast Madagascar, including images of a recently refurbished linoleum floor in the in-patient recovery room, with a New Year's greeting written in English. "Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ," the message was addressed, "Thanks to God and thanks for all of you for your ongoing supportive help and prayers!" It was signed, "God bless you all now and always, Manambaro Hospital's Staff."

Though Malagasy administrators and physicians had long sent communications such as these on a voluntary basis, specific documents were becoming required components of individual donations and it was this shift – in which Malagasy sometimes felt they were being restricted in how they could acknowledge or handle donations – that began to subtly create friction in the aid relationship. While Malagasy and Americans had built social solidarity through a religious discourse that emphasized their shared footing in relation to God, in which neither party can ever "repay" the greatest gift of Jesus' self-sacrifice except to acknowledge it, audit work subtly destabilized this claim to mutuality. In effect, through audit work, Americans asked Malagasy for specific kinds of acknowledgment of sent aid, making the aid exchange carry overt qualities of market exchange. Rather than be in a position of mutuality where there could be no squaring of accounts in relation to Jesus' self-sacrifice, audit made more explicit the hierarchical qualities of aid and periodically and openly placed Malagasy in

a position of temporary indebtedness to their American brethren (Graeber 2011). It could be argued that Americans and Malagasy long held such views of what it meant to receive aid but, on the whole, they were socially submerged and did not seriously affect Malagasy practices until accountability work aligned receiving with a position in which equality could only temporarily be restored by supplying a required report.

Two examples will illustrate how a specific kind of accountable subjectivity was being socialized among Malagasy clinicians and SALFA administrators perhaps as much through conflicts of accountability as through donation success stories. One SALFA physician, whom I call Remy, well-known for his adept management of a large hospital in Antsirabe and a previous special guest of Malagasy Partnership in the United States, once came under a kind of negative scrutiny by Gene when he did not supply on-time reports. Malagasy Partnership had secured an external grant for Remy to build a new surgical recovery room, making an arrangement to funnel the money to him in a series of installments. However, the funding was contingent on the submission of regular progress reports. When Remy did not send the first required report, Gene halted the money transfer. A few weeks later, as I heard from Gene, Remy submitted the first progress report and continued to promptly send each monthly report, notifying Gene if it would be even a day late. Gene told me he had reluctantly "forced a record-keeping" on the part of Remy yet "[felt] guilty" for doing so. As Omri Elisha (2008, 157) observes, one dominant exchange ideology among evangelical American Protestants emphasizes the social value of giving yet obscures the conditions of receiving, "to the point where givers . . . [. . .] . . . are often surprised or flustered to have to manage [the conditions of receiving] at all." While Gene implied that Remy had violated certain cultural and moral expectations for receiving aid, he also expressed moral ambivalence with his newfound ability to enact a form of power such as stopping payment. By needing to ask for the required paperwork and get Remy to acknowledge the request, Gene had to make explicit the underlying terms of the exchange, which made transparent its divergence from a partnership based solely on mutuality.

In another case, during my fieldwork in 2005–2006, rumors regularly reached the American NGOs, circulated through letter and e-mail by SALFA clinicians in southern Madagascar to retired American missionaries, that certain supplies designated for hospitals in southern Madagascar, such as the Manambaro Lutheran Hospital, had not reached

them. Although it was hard for me to gauge the veracity of these claims nor necessarily my aim to do so, what is clear is that some clinicians stationed outside the capital and central highlands, many of whom were themselves Merina, held the perception that Merina Lutherans and other SALFA workers in Antananarivo were disproportionately and unfairly accumulating aid resources. This perception echoes long-standing discourses of ethno-regional inequality in Madagascar that have pitted highland peoples such as Merina and Betsileo against *côtiers* (coastal peoples).[6] Rumors like these can be understood as a commentary on the unseen workings of power. They make visible long-standing forms of economic and political inequality that operate in Madagascar, which are complexly woven into and tear at the very seams of the centralized SALFA operation. Bureaucratic procedures in this view attest to unseen channels and sources of power perhaps more than their ostensible claim to enact transparency and efficiency, paralleling Erica James's (2010) arguments regarding "bureaucraft" among aid workers in Haiti (see also Strathern 2000; West and Sanders 2003).

At one Malagasy Partnership business meeting that I attended in August 2005, I witnessed Gene and the other board members grapple extensively with how to hold SALFA employees in Antananarivo responsible for their distribution of the US medical aid donations. The meeting conversation revealed that for the American board members, it was not only a kind of bureaucratic accountability that was at stake but also a specific notion of Christian moral propriety. Sitting across from me at Gene's kitchen table, one board member, Rick, suggested that each clinic receiving supplies from a Malagasy Partnership container or suitcase should know what is being sent to them and receive an e-mail to that effect. Then, if the supplies do not arrive, they can follow up with the SALFA headquarters, serving as a "check" on the distribution system. At Gene's request, another board member who was on the phone, Steve, "weighed in" on the subject: People are "beneficiaries of good will from [Malagasy Partnership]. [Malagasy Partnership] has a practical role in making them accountable," Steve, who held a managerial position at the corporate headquarters of a large pharmaceutical company, said. "Also, there's a moral, Christian responsibility to hold brothers and sisters accountable for their actions." What was interesting was how Steve wove several kinds of responsibility together in his response, perhaps bringing to light what others were considering as well. Accountability was not only a business or fiscal responsibility but also a moral responsibility of SALFA

employees as Christians. The conversation, however, framed this as a general Christian duty, presumably involving all Christians, American and Malagasy, rather than a process imbalanced by the aid relationship. Placed in these terms, American board members appeared in fact to be doing what they should do as Christians, rather than establishing a hierarchical exchange that unsettled the mutuality of their partnership. This universalizing Christian moral discourse naturalizes accountability as a matter of individual moral propriety and thus dovetails with neoliberal accountability logic, as Elisha (2008) has found among megachurch members in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Malagasy Deployments of the "Pure Gift" as Critique

In Antananarivo, the increasing audit requirements of the American organizations took a position amid SALFA's much broader web of donor accountability work. Like many medical systems in sub-Saharan Africa, SALFA has since its founding in 1979 built a dense web of foreign partnerships so that, should a grant end or funding priorities change, SALFA's forty-eight medical centers will not be left without technical or financial support. Though the American aid organizations were among its first foreign partners, at the time of my writing in 2014, SALFA works in some capacity with no less than thirty-three technical and financial donors, including Médecin du Monde, Global Fund, United Nations Population Fund, Norwegian Mission Society, European Development Fund, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and USAID. Needless to say, a donor web this vast and varied is extremely difficult to maintain. Inching through Antananarivo's gridlock traffic for two hours from his home twelve kilometers away, the SALFA financial officer Clement, a tall Merina man in his 50s, arrives at the SALFA office at 6 every morning and does not leave until 6:30 in the evening because of all his donor correspondence, plus his other job responsibilities. Clement has been a SALFA employee for 27 years, gradually working his way through the office hierarchy from his initial role as a stockroom manager. Over his years with the organization, he estimates that he has unpacked some 100 shipping containers of medical relief from the United States. Today, though, his work and energy center largely on, as he puts it, establishing donor confidence in SALFA and sustaining relationships with its financial and technical partners.

One afternoon while we sat in Clement's basement office in the Andohalo neighborhood of Antananarivo, he explained, with a slightly conspiratorial smile, that he often compares his donor accounting work with the Malagasy practice of *fihavanana* (Malagasy, kinship). Drawing an analogy, Clement implied that one must be morally obligated to donors and respectful of the aid structure in ways similar to *fihavanana*. Yet when I asked him whether he viewed aid relations as like kinship relations, he quickly replied that he did not. To him, *fihavanana* espouses the same principle of being morally accountable to others but, and this is the key, without necessarily being asked. At its core, *fihavanana* is a Malagasy system of advantageous social ties that are spontaneously offered during a time of need: people are both givers and receivers, rather than one or the other. Clement gave the example of, in a small village, if someone has suddenly died, the closest kin will be consumed by sadness and by all the work that has to be done. Community members would ideally sweep in, without being asked, to bring rice, clothes, and money. Clement emphasized that asking for help is not *fihavanana*, but rather offering has to be done spontaneously and through an implicit sense of moral obligation.

Scholars of Madagascar have described funerary rituals like these as those that do not necessarily exclude tensions of accountability and moral surveillance but, importantly, weave them into a broader system of social solidarity. For instance, Janice Harper (2002, 156) relates how, during a funeral in a Tanala community in southeast Madagascar, the eldest maternal uncle recited in *kabary*, an oral speech genre introduced in the nineteenth century by Merina for recording (Bloch 1986; Larson 1992), each kinsperson's gift to the deceased's family. This tracked each monetary amount or number of *lamba* (Malagasy, cloth) and served as a possible "public disgrace" for those who did not give a gift or a suitably adequate one (Harper 2002, 156). Harper notes, "By making a generous offer, one aligned oneself with the family of the dead, thereby establishing a claim for reciprocity" (Ibid). Jennifer Cole (2009, 113, 118) makes a related observation when she points out that, among rural dwellers surrounding Tamatave, "love" (Malagasy, *fitiavina*) and material support are often "fused," yet many early twentieth-century missionaries "drove a conceptual wedge between love and exchange." This has had an enduring influence, Cole (2009) argues, in the ways contemporary Tamatavans seek to distinguish the purity of love in intimate relationships from market exchange. Although Clement emphasized the "communistic principles" (Graeber 2011) of mutual aid in our conversation by suggesting that

fihavanana does not operate on the basis of keeping track of gifts given nor involve being accountable to an individual kinsperson, what emerges in his comparison is that mutual ties are ideally built through *fihavanana* whereas, in audit practices, a transaction occurs that forecloses social solidarity based on theoretically equal footing.

In bringing up *fihavanana*, Clement did not necessarily imply that he understood being accountable as only a collective matter, nor something disconnected from his faith. He once described to me a funding decision he regretted as a "sin" (Malagasy, *ota*), suggesting that he did view himself as individually accountable before God for certain workplace decisions. This was not necessarily unusual language at the SALFA offices, as many of Clement's 20 coworkers are evangelical Lutherans in their late 50s and 60s who have held special lay positions in the *fifohazana* (awakening) movement, a transdenominational, Pentecostalist revival dating to 1894 that is now a recognized part of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (Rich 2008; Halvorson 2010). Several of my informants even personally knew and sought spiritual counsel from the revival's famous twentieth-century prophetess, Nenilava (Malagasy, tall mother), an Antaimoro woman who Lutherans often claimed as their own prophet (Sharp 1999). Nenilava, who was born in 1922 and died in 1998, helped some of SALFA's now-senior staff secure their positions as SALFA was formed in 1979; this auspicious beginning heightens their conviction that SALFA is a prophesied workplace with a special role to play in national Christian leadership.

Although on many occasions Clement certainly emphasized the common spiritual basis of SALFA's work with Americans, found in a shared love of Jesus, unlike his American counterparts he did not appear to characterize his required accountability work primarily as part of an individual Christian's accountability to God. When we talked about Americans' concerns over the SALFA distribution system, Clement expressed uncertainty as to why certain American NGO leaders had thought SALFA workers were hiding something, or redirecting supplies in a dishonest or inappropriate way. Clement implied that the problem from his point of view lay not in the actual redistribution of the materials nor importantly in his coworkers' sinfulness, but rather in cultural miscommunications in accountability work. Using the example of *fihavanana* to draw a sharp cultural contrast, Clement said that the frank and direct "American" style of accounting for materials – saying "thank you" – was at odds with a more indirect, observational "Malagasy" sensibility of reciprocation in kind for things given rather than direct, stated acknowledgment of them. We can observe that, within

this distinction, lies what Graeber (2011) identifies as the key difference between mutuality based on moral obligation and a more hierarchical exchange that requires gratefulness. That is, giving thanks can imply that the "giver" has a choice to give or not and, in particular, the request for stated acknowledgment makes explicit the exchange's hierarchical dimensions, however slight.

For other SALFA employees, accountability requirements, in which Americans requested acknowledgment of certain donations or placed restrictions on how they were used, signified a particular kind of transaction that conflicted with the American agencies' discourse of the aid as a gift. Mr. Rajoanary, the former SALFA director, told me that Americans have sometimes expressed concern that SALFA may be profiting from the medical supply donations, something I also heard occasionally in American NGO meetings. This fundamentally relates to the moral anxieties over the SALFA distribution system: when specially procured donations did not arrive at a SALFA hospital or clinic that was to receive them, one possibility was that SALFA workers had resold or "profited from" them. Rather than address this particular concern, however, Mr. Rajoanary took issue with the idea that American donations are "free" gifts that exist outside of medical commerce. They say the donations are free, he said one morning as we sat in his third-floor office in Antananarivo. Mr. Rajoanary laughed and paused with a dramatic flair, "Nothing is free," he said pointedly in English, before explaining further. SALFA absorbs many in-country expenses for distributing the donated supplies, including transportation costs from Antananarivo to SALFA clinics, the storage of unused items, customs fees, and the labor costs of handling the supplies from the shipping container in the Tamatave port to Antananarivo. Additionally, perhaps referring to the 7,000-suture donation that Malagasy Partnership orchestrated in 2005–2006, Mr. Rajoanary pointed to the problem of being accountable for specific American-donated medical materials, which otherwise end up in the general clinical stock. When the clinic writes up a bill for a surgery, he said, how do they manage or value the Malagasy Partnership-donated suture versus one they received through another means? The two sutures look the same on the surgery bill, which includes things like equipment, supplies, and the surgeon's time. Mr. Rajoanary's comments dispute the notion that profiting from the donations should be a concern on the part of American donors, as SALFA is always situated in a for-fee medical system in which donated supplies have economic value. Free supplies, he implied, do not entirely exist: they are a fiction created through the aid system, in which materials always bear exchange value or exist in a capitalist context where the labor to use and

transport them is commodified. Part of what Mr. Rajoanary also suggests here is that the American-donated medical discards are not necessarily unique *on their own* – subtly countering the American construction of the discards as special gift-things that communicate with Malagasy brethren – but accrue value in the broader SALFA clinical system, itself part of global medical commerce.

It is worth pointing out that Mr. Rajoanary's views were not necessarily typical of other SALFA employees and, as a successful businessman who went on to run a large Malagasy medical nonprofit called Salama (Malagasy, well), his take on the aid partnership in our conversations often carried a strong market-based perspective. As noted earlier, many SALFA personnel indicated that, to some degree, they did generally view American donations as based on a shared partnership of faith, even if they debated the worth of particular individual supplies and placed greater emphasis on the partnership itself. Mr. Rajoanary, however, suggests that the donated materials have all along been a commercial transaction in disguise as a charitable gift. Part of his basis for this claim is that, by requiring acknowledgment of the aid in the form of accountability documents, Americans evoke an exchange that resembles a market transaction, placing Malagasy in a relation of temporary debt that can only be squared by submitting the paperwork much as one might pay for a commodity in a store (cf. Graeber 2011). Besides the clear market worth of the aid, which Mr. Rajoanary describes, audit work proves the aid to not be a "free gift" that builds mutuality with no strings attached, an oxymoron that Mauss (1990) and especially Douglas (1990) argued cannot ever fully exist.[7] Drawing from his 25 years of experience as a SALFA administrator, Mr. Rajoanary suggests that, if the aid were truly recognized as a market exchange without the trappings of gift discourse, SALFA might be able to put the aid to whatever use the clinic has, whether this means revaluing the aid as part of a for-fee medical procedure or even reselling the medical donations if they are not clinically useful. Mr. Rajoanary's views, which were considered somewhat radical in the SALFA context, can be interpreted as a claim to Malagasy autonomy and decision-making in what Erica James (2010, 184) has described as an increasingly "results-oriented" audit culture. Mr. Rajoanary draws out what we could call, following David Graeber (2011), the violence embedded in a relation of debt when he characterizes donation as an increasingly audit-driven commercial exchange (compare Scherz this volume); Mr. Rajoanary's point is that these implicit yet required terms impinge on SALFA's clinical and administrative autonomy.

Conclusions

While scholars of humanitarianism have cast attention mostly on the subjectivities and disjunctures of bureaucratic accountability work among aid recipients, I have focused in this chapter on both aid recipients and aid providers to illuminate how bureaucratic practices of humanitarianism are transforming global religious communities from within, even as geographically dispersed religious adherents apprehend and contest these accounting measures through diverse cultural and moral logics. In the medical aid program between Christians in the United States and Madagascar, audit work brings forward contradictions between the discourse of partnership, based on Christian mutuality and solidarity before God, and a hierarchical exchange in which one party is at least temporarily indebted to another. These hierarchical dimensions of the aid relationship have been present all along but audit work makes them explicit by literally requesting Malagasy to acknowledge the terms of the exchange. For both Americans and Malagasy, this creates deep moral unease, for it contravenes claims to communistic principles of mutual aid based on spiritual kinship and equal footing before the Lord. As I have described here, one way Americans attempt to restore this balance is by describing God as the ultimate accountant to which both Americans and Malagasy are responsible. But audit work continually destabilizes these claims; this necessitates work on the part of both Malagasy and Americans to affirm solidarity through a religious discourse that identifies a shared love for Jesus as the common basis of the work. Since the aid relationship is built on a fundamental inequality between Americans and Malagasy, though, this work is never complete and forms an ongoing source of tension in the aid program.

Accountability emerges, then, as an ongoing series of microtransactions in aid programs, of requests of acknowledgment for exchanged goods and for the performance of accountable moral selves befitting aid programs and their specific cultural histories. Through these interactions, the terms of aid as an exchange are sometimes made explicit, disputed, reworked, and submerged. Looking more closely at these activities reveals how accountability is not an insignificant issue in aid partnerships such as the one on which I focus, but actually constitutes an area in which the deep moral basis of partnership – and mutuality in global religious communities – is perpetually thrown into doubt. Accountability is thus not merely the fulfilling of bureaucratic reports

but a more urgent and precarious moral terrain in which aid participants constantly work to put back on top the mutuality of the endeavor, aiming to have that win out over the obvious economic inequality upon which it is based. In microcosm, each of these interactions prompts reflection on the moral hazards of sliding into – or making fully explicit that – inequality, and thus instantiates a broader historical transformation in which Americans and Malagasy try to remake the colonial missionary past into a more equitable humanitarian present. In a sense, then, Americans are also indebted to Malagasy in a more ambiguously defined moral endeavor that works to, through the aid program, tip the scales from the abstracted, inequitable past to a more even contemporary position. As David Graeber (2011, 120) points out, though, moral debt is of course much more hard to rectify than other forms of debt due to the inability to "calculate" what it takes to square the balance sheet or identify when it has been forgiven.

Interestingly, the professionalization of aid in the two Minneapolis organizations, and with it the adoption of neoliberal audit procedures, has actually resulted in more sustained, in some cases irresolvable, moral concerns. Malagasy Partnership quietly closed down a few years ago, during the height of the political coup in Madagascar that unfolded between 2009 and 2013. Gene has said that it was largely due to serious difficulties the agency faced at that time in getting shipping containers into Madagascar. Malagasy customs officers were charging especially high fees to refill government coffers emptied by the halt of foreign aid from the United States, European Union, and United Nations as international organizations imposed sanctions on the coup government of Andry Rajoelina. Malagasy Partnership and SALFA struggled to come up with the customs tariffs, which at one time exceeded US$7,000 per container, and containers often sat in the Tamatave port for months, full of unused medical supplies. But what also lingers in my conversations with SALFA officials – and in e-mail and past exchanges with Gene – is that Gene struggled deeply with the emerging terrain of accountability, both in enforcing audit and in his concerns over the SALFA distribution system. For Gene, who was always deeply attuned to the importance of an equitable partnership, these imbalances sparked by accountability work may have ultimately proven too much for the kind of agency he wished to run. IHM, on the other hand, has worked closely with SALFA officials since 2011 to help SALFA establish its own system of "good governance." IHM leaders guided SALFA in creating a new board in 2011 with members drawn not only from the Malagasy Lutheran Church but also

local businesspeople and officials from the Ministry of Health, all in an effort to seed and domesticate a kind of neoliberal oversight within SALFA's work. Though I am inclined to see this mostly as a sign of the expansive reach of neoliberal audit, Clement views it differently. He tells me this is a good thing in his eyes, as now he has been assured by his American colleagues that accountability is not an individual responsibility per se but ultimately a collective, shared endeavor.

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Notes

1. I thank Fred Klaits for his comments on this subject.
2. I am grateful to Fred Klaits for this point.
3. I thank Hillary Kaell for bringing my attention to this connection.
4. This subject position shares certain qualities with what Nancy Hunt (1999) has called "middle figures" or those Congolese doctors who translated the principles of colonial medicine into a local therapeutic landscape. While there are important differences to draw, which I explore in forthcoming writing, contemporary Merina and Betsileo physicians often similarly appear as mediators who translate the transnational Christian medical program to Malagasy patients.
5. The IHM executive director provided this figure in an August 2005 recorded interview that I conducted with him.
6. Prior to French colonial occupation, Merina Protestant elites of the central highland region of Imerina controlled part of the island as a nascent state (1817–1895); during the colonial period, it was often Merina elites who

served as national bureaucrats in the colonial government, with some parlaying these positions into prominent roles in the independent Malagasy state after 1960. The long-standing distinction in Madagascar between highland and coastal peoples (*côtiers*) – what Randrianja and Ellis (2009, 159) call a "crude bifurcation" – was enshrined and promoted in colonial policy by the first French governor-general Joseph-Simon Gallieni (1896–1905). Thus, while it is important not to overdetermine this simplified and colonially shaped ethnic division, ethno-regional differentiation has occupied and still plays a significant role in pervasive forms of inequality in Malagasy society.

7. Mauss (1990, 10) famously argued that every gift is theoretically a relation that carries forward an obligation to reciprocate, sometimes compelling the recipient through what Maori called "hau" or the "spirit of the thing given." In addition to disputing the notion of a free gift on the grounds that the gift is an exchange, Mauss made a distinction between alms, or what in Jewish and Muslim traditions amounts to a form of obligatory "justice" (in Hebrew, *tzedakah*), and other sorts of gifts that are, in theory, voluntarily given out of compassion or love (see also Bornstein and Redfield 2010 on this point). In her foreword to Mauss' *The Gift*, Mary Douglas (1990, vii) writes of charitable gifts, "the whole idea of a free gift is based on a misunderstanding . . . [. . .] . . . What is wrong with the so-called free gift is the donor's intention to be exempt from return gifts coming from the recipient." A fundamental tension, then, is a charitable giver's attempt to forestall the exchange cycle and mutuality associated with giving and to characterize the gift as "free." Mr. Rajoanary challenges this on the grounds that the medical aid requires specific kinds of reciprocation (audit paperwork). But he also makes an ideological division between "gifts" and "market" that other scholars have argued is a purification borne of capitalism itself (Parry 1986, Scherz this volume).

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CHAPTER 5

How Asking and Giving Beget Distrust in Christian Child Sponsorship

Hillary Kaell

Sharon is perched casually on an unoccupied cubicle desk at ChildFund's headquarters in Richmond, Virginia. In the mid-twentieth century, ChildFund was the largest Christian sponsorship organization in the United States, and even in the world. Like all sponsorship programs, it asks people in the West to give a set monthly sum for the well-being of a particular child abroad, whose photos and letters are then transmitted to the donor. Today, ChildFund retains about 450,000 US sponsors, which though impressive is fewer than its newer, nondenominational evangelical competitors, especially World Vision and Compassion International, each with about twice that amount. Sharon and I are comparing these numbers and mulling over a subject that came up repeatedly during my time at the organization's offices: the name change from Christian Children's Fund (CCF) to ChildFund in 2009. Sharon, who works in the marketing development office, takes the company line and defends the move. She points out that the organization had changed names before; it was established in 1938 as China's Children Fund and became CCF in 1950. Further, and more importantly from the organization's perspective, the word "Christian" obfuscated the fact that CCF had stopped proselytizing

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in the 1980s and had always supported children of many religions.[1] "It's more transparent and accountable now," Sharon says.

Then she paused, dropping the corporate speak: "We tried to be *honest* with people. It was the *right* thing to do!" It was a gamble, at least in the short term. Angry callers accused ChildFund of cutting Jesus out of public life and disobeying the gospel injunction to let one's "light" shine (Matt 5:15). They variously blamed rampant political correctness, Barack Obama, or pressure from Muslims in the global south. While these voices represent a comparatively small percentage of the total sponsorship base, it is still painful for ChildFund employees that thousands of sponsors dropped their sponsorships and thousands more said they will not renew when "their" child finishes the program. "We're still the same now as we were then," Sharon says, "... But they say, 'You're no longer Christian, we can't trust you.' Look, I'm a Christian like most of us here actually and ... we tell them, we still do what Jesus wanted for others, [for] the least of these. You could even say we're *more* moral on the marketing side since it's more honest than before."

As Sharon intuits, the name change posed a problem that went much deeper than merely the loss of brand recognition. In the American sponsorship market, asking for donations is predicated on an organization's ability to instantiate certain moral qualities, such as honesty and trust. This expansive view of the "moral life" of Christian companies dovetails with a number of recent studies on capitalism and religion that move beyond Weber's famous thesis of a Protestant ethic to explore how religion and capitalism are entangled in people's lives (Maurer 2005, Muehlebach 2013; on US Protestantism, e.g., Moreton 2010; Lofton 2014; Valeri 2010). Building on this theme, I examine the key role of dis/trust in the sometimes tense relationship between Christian child sponsorship organizations and their supporters. The stakes are especially high in charitable endeavors like child sponsorship that ask Christians *here* to support people *there*, since the fruit of their donations is never concretely manifested in places where givers can easily evaluate it for themselves.

The conclusions I present are the result of ongoing research on child sponsorship since 2012, including archival work and three months of fieldwork in 2014 at the ChildFund and Compassion International headquarters in Richmond and Colorado Springs. My contention is that such organizations' ability to ask for donations is reproduced through a dialogical model of alternating forms of transparency, namely, audit culture and Christian relationality. This model of trust creation begins with human informational systems, upon which it superimposes trust in God's authority, thus creating (as much as possible) a sense of ontological security for

Christian donors. The chapter begins with two sections that clarify how child sponsorship fits into anthropological theories of economy and charity, and how the global nature of these exchanges affects economies of trust. The third section elaborates my central point regarding transparency, where I explore the relationship between secular audit culture and Christian concepts of mentorship and stewardship. I conclude by revisiting some responses to the CCF name change.

Child Sponsorship and Economies of Giving

Anthropologists have long recognized that giving mobilizes a "moral category of person" (Bornstein and Redfield 2010, 8; Mauss 1990; Dumont 1985) and that charity in the West derives from a distinctly Christian worldview (Douglas 1990, vii). Child sponsorship is emblematic. Although the first such programs are often traced to Save the Children, a British humanitarian organization created in the wake of World War I, this system of giving actually has deep roots in Protestant foreign missions. British and American women, in particular, used forms of child sponsorship to raise money for their burgeoning missionary societies since the mid-nineteenth century. Nor were humanitarian organizations, such as Save the Children, necessarily "secular" in the sense of omitting religion, although they were decidedly nonsectarian. In its US incarnation, Save the Children Fund was run mainly by clergy, including a young Presbyterian pastor named J. Calvitt Clarke. After leaving in the 1930s, he formed China's Children Fund, which became CCF in 1950 (and ChildFund in 2009). CCF grew quickly in the 1950s and 1960s, along with other nondenominational Christian sponsorship programs, notably World Vision and Compassion which were founded in 1950 and 1952, respectively. With millions of individual sponsors, today child sponsorship is arguably the most lucrative form of Christian giving in the United States, raising billions of dollars a year (Barrett 2014).[2]

Most studies of sponsorship have focused on the appeal of the suffering child, pointing to how such mediated spectacles produce globalized sentiment and a "politics of pity" (Stephens 1995; Boltanski 1999; Cartwright 2005; Curtis 2012; Bornstein and Redfield 2010, 4). Along these lines, a number of ethnographic studies critique this form of charity and others like it (Bornstein 2001, 2010; Malkki 2010). Others criticize the individualizing neoliberal models of success such programs produce and promote (O'Neill 2013). While the spectacle of

suffering (and successful) poor children does offer insight into sponsorship's appeal for US Protestants, it remains a broad explanation at best since similar tropes resonate with other contemporary donors too (e.g., in Rhea Rahman's chapter in this volume). Moving away from the aesthetic and affective forms of marketing in child sponsorship, then, I turn to something that Erica Bornstein notes in her ethnography of World Vision in Zimbabwe: for Christian sponsors, there is explicit spiritual significance in such economies of giving (2001, 2005).

Susan Harding (2000) and Simon Coleman (2004) have produced some of the best-known work on economies of giving in forms of evangelicalism. In her study of fundamentalist pastor Jerry Falwell, Harding argues that people give because of the pastor's charisma and his ability to link appeals to biblical types. Importantly, she remarks that Christian givers aim to "vacate the commercial economy and to enter another realm, a Christ-centered gospel, or sacrificial, economy in which material expectations are transformed" (2000, 109). Coleman's work on Sweden's Word of Life church, which is based on a US model, more closely examines how giving is embedded in broader theologies that seek to project the self outward in expansive forms of spiritual agency, which then redound to the believer as spiritual and material blessings.[3]

This work clarifies the co-constituent nature of religion and economy, thereby pushing us to recognize "economics *of* religion, but also economics *as* religious practice" (Coleman 2011, 26). However, it is not incidental that both Coleman and Harding when she analyzes fundraising (2000, 121–124) describe a particular branch of evangelicalism: prosperity theology where adherents expect material returns when they invest "seed" money. Faith giving is rooted in risk, in the sense that it encourages spending beyond one's means – for both givers and askers like Jerry Falwell – so as to rely entirely on God's blessings. Bob Pierce, who founded World Vision, subscribed to a version of this theology. He would write cheques "in faith" for projects without the requisite funds in the bank, leaving his fledgling ministry constantly in debt and his staff holding all-night prayer sessions to ask God to make ends meet (King 2013, 78).

Without discounting the importance of this theology nor the fluidity with which people adapt it – no doubt some sponsors see giving in such terms – a distinction should be drawn: contemporary Christian sponsorship organizations do not pitch their requests as seed money and, based on my initial interviews, most sponsors do not give for that reason either. For

example, one of the first times that sponsorship piqued my interest I was at a nondenominational megachurch in Vermont conducting fieldwork for an earlier project. During worship, the pastor noted the presence of flyers for a new child sponsorship program in the church foyer. "It is a blessing we have so many hearts to help," he told us, "but we don't want to fall into misguided love. Let's be careful where we invest our money." He offered to assess the organization's reputability and report back. This caution underlines a key difference from prosperity theology. As Coleman shows, in faith giving the end result (i.e., exactly how the money is spent) matters less, if at all, compared to the *fact of circulation*, through which believers "act in faith." By contrast, sponsorship assumes very clear objectives related to economic progress in the children's countries, as well as relationship building between sponsors and "their" children (Bornstein 2001, 597, 2005, 45–66). It is thus more closely aligned with older categories of charity and alms giving, wrapped up in US Protestant notions of "good stewardship" that accompanied the (often rapid) growth of denominational boards and other large institutional bodies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As such, we do well to turn to Marcel Mauss, who provided a classic anthropological distinction between alms and gifts. The former, he wrote, combined ancient ideas about the gift, fortune, and sacrifice in the Semitic tradition. Generosity became seen as an obligation under the laws of divine justice: those who have been favored with superabundance by God should rid themselves of (some of) it lest the poor or the gods be avenged. Among the Jews in the Mishnaic era, the sacrifice of property became alms for the poor, an idea adopted in Christianity. Gifts, on the other hand, required reciprocity (1990, 18). Commenting on Mauss' idea, Mary Douglas notes that recipients of charity in the modern West often resent it for precisely that reason: when charity is seen as alms – a "free gift" with no obligation of return – the giver implicitly refuses social ties with the recipient (1990, vii). Charitable gifts, in other words, at least theoretically keep giver and recipient at arm's length.

Other scholars and practitioners dispute this pessimistic vision (Scherz, this volume), at least when charity is done "well;" today evangelicals often replace the word charity with "partnership" for that reason. Yet there is an important truth to Mauss' insight: although the Christians who sponsor children do not view it as alms – that is, a divinely mandated (obligatory) form of justice like ancient Jewish *tzedakah* – by and large they do perceive it as a divinely inspired (voluntary) redistribution of the superabundance

God has given them. Sponsorship publicity materials continually remind potential donors that they are spiritually and materially privileged (Bornstein 2005, 47), making it incumbent upon them to give back. Although this message has been especially insistent since the 1970s, it dates to the early years of contemporary sponsorship organizations. In the 1940s, CCF President J. Calvitt Clarke repeatedly asked supporters "for supreme, unselfish sacrifice on the part of every American" to save Chinese children caught up in civil war.[4]

Of course, as Douglas implies, we must distinguish between theories of gifts as "free" (and corresponding distinctions between alms and gifts) and the perspectives of actual stakeholders. The parties involved – givers and recipients of charity, solicitors of donations – may have differing, even conflicting, ideas about what these transactions mean and the kinds of social action they entail. Sponsorship, for example, straddles the line between "alms" and "gifts." The programs are couched as "free" in the sense that donations are voluntary and entail no explicit reciprocity (especially since the recipient is a child). Yet they appeal in large part precisely because they are *also* understood as gifts that create affective ties between giver and recipient. By exchanging letters, presents, and photos, they produce bonds of fictive kin (cf. in Hinduism; Bornstein 2010, 127). This model has attracted Christian givers ever since sponsorship's early development in missions because it mirrors the Protestant mentor-convert ideal (e.g., Engelke 2013, 231). In this model, a convert comes to fully know Christ through the personal, spiritual encouragement of a Christian mentor. In return, the mentor's own faith is renewed and strengthened. For this reason, more explicitly evangelical organizations, such as Compassion, strongly emphasize letter writing (which they describe as "encouragement"): if sponsors merely give money, there can be no spiritual uplift for either party, giver or recipient.[5] It is a relationship that requires particular attention and care in a global enterprise.

Globalism and God

Based loosely on the Platonic idea of the "really real," anthropologists have noted that human beings perceive degrees of reality in experiences: a fleeting impression or emotion will seem less real – and therefore less trustworthy – than something with more substance or longevity (Kroner 1954, 351). To some degree, this idea impinges directly on all modern, commercial transactions, which are conducted over a period of time and

across spaces where people do not know each other personally. Contemporary capitalism is thus predicated upon a significant element of trust or, as Anthony Giddens writes, a deliberate leap of faith (Giddens in Möllering 2001, 411; Gambetta 1988, 229). The "really real" is especially problematic in forms of globalized charity like child sponsorship because the mechanism for creating a close, even kin-like, relationship is so highly attenuated. Money is transmitted to an organization to be relayed to a child whom the sponsor will never meet, in a place the sponsor has never been.

Sponsorship is a manifestly modern charitable endeavor. It was built upon nineteenth- and twentieth-century commercial networks that used money wires, cheques, telegraphs, and telephones to expand the world. Simultaneously, it mobilized other modern technologies, such as printing presses and photography, to bridge the gaps inherent in such exchanges and thereby confirm the realness of endeavors abroad. Today, sponsorship organizations are experimenting with Facebook and YouTube videos to keep sponsors and children in contact and connected to the organization. However, the primary mode of exchange remains the photograph and letter. All organizations provide sponsors with a yearly photo of their child, which they are encouraged to display in a prominent location as a mnemonic device. Sponsored children also send a number of letters or drawing per year (usually three), as specified by each organization. Letters are translated but the original is also included to give sponsors a "reality check," as one Compassion employee told me: the child is real and here is the proof.

The archives are littered with complaints that speak to the difficulties of this project to make global children really real. Not surprisingly, donors most often lose faith when the system of letter writing breaks down. In 1960, for example, a CCF sponsor wrote tersely on behalf of her women's circle about their boy in Korea. "Four letters have been written to Jung Sil including one my grandson, a boy about his age, wrote thinking perhaps a letter from another boy would prompt him to write us. The question has arisen in our group as to the authenticity of this project. Is this boy getting this support we are sending? . . . Should I not receive some definite word about him soon, I feel I cannot ask the ladies to continue his support." Unanswered letters produced serious doubt about the "authenticity" of sponsorship as a whole. Where is the money going? Does the boy even exist? CCF President Clarke understood the precariousness of sponsors' trust and took such complaints very seriously as a result. This instance

prompted him to write an excoriating letter to the Korea office, declaring that he would "not stand for such neglect and that drastic action will be taken unless there is a marked improvement." Such "lazy" and "unappreciative" men, he fumed, should not superintend CCF orphanages.[6]

When Christian sponsorship programs render global children real, they continually emphasize the role of God or Holy Spirit as an omniscient party in the relationship. In the 1950s and 1960s, Compassion sent prospective sponsors a packet of ten or so wallet-sized photographs of children's faces (Fig. 5.1).

The recipient was instructed to study each face, read the story on the back of the card, look at the face again, and pray for each child so that he or she would find a sponsor. During this process, the prospective donor was also expected to be highly attuned to God's voice in order to discern which child was meant to be hers.[7] Admittedly, the system had some kinks: the children in the photos were often no longer available by the time the sponsor had prayed over them and sent back a response (although

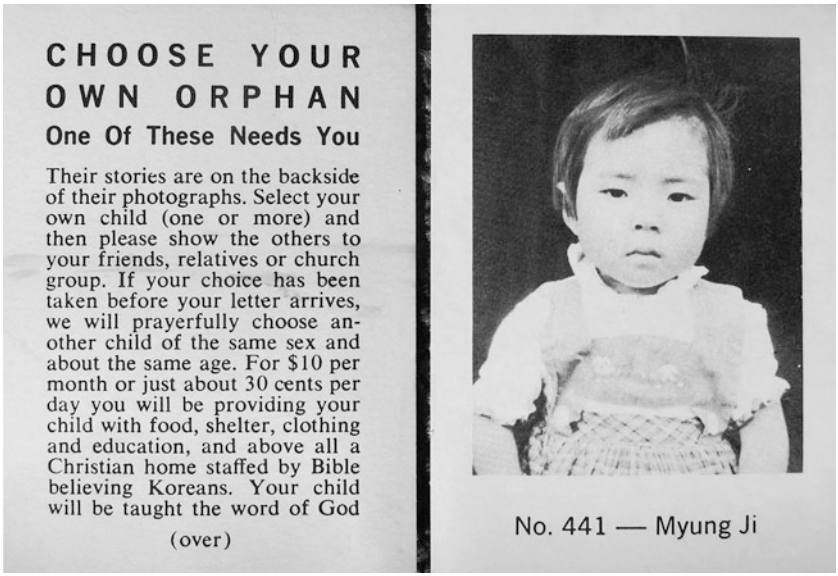

Fig. 5.1 Instructional card and photograph packet sent to Compassion sponsors, c.1965. Used by permission of Compassion International Inc. All rights reserved

the company promised to "prayerfully" pick another one). Today, new technology has remedied the problem. Each child's photo is uploaded online and, according to Compassion's marketing team, prospective sponsors still pray over the listings, which are then updated instantaneously when a child is selected. Thus begins what Compassion calls the "love relationship initiated by the sponsor's response to the Holy Spirit's prompting."[8]

As the sponsorship continues, many Americans are stymied in their letter writing or prayers ("intelligent" prayers that focus on particular needs) because they know neither the child personally nor much about his or her culture. At these times, they are again encouraged to spiritualize the relationship, relying on God's bridging power. The Compassion website notes:

> When we don't have a face-to-face relationship with our sponsored children, prayer can be an excellent tool to help build one . . . Even when we don't always know all the particulars of our sponsored children's daily lives, we can still be praying for God to be moving in their hearts and transforming them to be more like Christ. And at the same time you're praying for your sponsored child, your sponsored child is praying for you.[9]

This emphasis on mutual prayer and the guiding force of the Holy Spirit means that Christian sponsorship organizations often see themselves as "marketing relationships that will last for all eternity!"[10] God is continually mediating and regulating (potentially flawed) human relationships – before they begin, during the sponsorship, and into an eternal future.

My main argument in this chapter is that the role of God is crucial in the sponsor–organization relationship as well. While development and marketing teams at Compassion and ChildFund are careful never to *equate* sponsors' relationship to the company with the sponsor–child relationship grounded in Christian ideals of charity and witness, they nevertheless draw a parallel. By continually foregrounding God as the omniscient party animating the primary relationship (sponsor–child), it is implied that God works in similar ways in the secondary (largely unspoken) relationship between sponsor and organization.[11] In short, by inculcating a certain distrust of purely human relationships (Lebner 2012; Robbins 2014), the organizations nurture in sponsors a sense of deeper trust in God as the ultimate overseer.

Trust and Transparency in Dialogical Modes

Anthropologists of religion have explored trust in multiple ways: for example, how it operates in the performance of rituals (Astuti and Bloch 2013), or how intersubjectivity relies on trust in other people's intentions (Sahlins in Robbins 2014, 4–5). Much less work has been done regarding the more abstracted kind of trust that animates companies' appeal to consumers. Piecing together pioneering sociologist Georg Simmel's scattered writings on the topic, economist Guido Möllering (2001) notes that for Simmel trust is fundamental to the ordering of society and, more specifically, to the creation of modern capitalism in its transition from material money to credit (Simmel 1990, 179; Seligman 1997). Simmel's inquiries were driven by an apparent discrepancy between the "hard" sociological functions attributed to trust (e.g., how it induces behavior or produces cohesive societal relations) and the "soft" basis upon which it appears to rest in human reasoning; whether we trust something or not seems to have little empirical basis. These two aspects are bridged, Simmel posited, through something more than "weak inductive reasoning" (e.g., a farmer's expectation that his seeds will grow). Instead, *real* trust – the kind needed to actively sign over a cheque to ChildFund – requires a quasi-religious faith. According to Simmel, "...no matter how exactly and intellectually grounded [social forms of confidence] may appear to be, there may yet be some additional affective, even mystical, 'faith' of man in man...which [perhaps] goes back to the metaphysical sense of our relationships..." (1990, 179).

Simmel never elaborates on this metaphysical feeling, though it is central to his thought. Perhaps for this reason, notes Möllering, it largely dropped out of sociologists' and economists' subsequent work on Simmelian theories of capitalism (2001, 406, 409). Möllering calls it "suspension" and, although he reemphasizes the mystery of a "state of mind which has nothing to do with knowledge, which is both less and more than knowledge" (1990, 179), he views it in purely secular terms. Anthropologists studying other states "beyond knowledge," such as friendship or love, have noted a similar trend toward secularization in academic work (Lebner 2012). One could, however, interpret Simmel's work as including at least the possibility of metaphysical relationality. Thus loosely following his insight that trust is both empirical and metaphysical, I contend that Christian sponsorship organizations attract a clientele through a continual dialogue between these two seemingly mutually

exclusive modes of trust, which I shorthand as positivist/capitalist and metaphysical/Christian.

Each day during my stay at ChildFund as the workday wound down and the cubicles emptied out, I headed to the archives – decades of carefully preserved documents stashed away in the closets and cupboards of ChildFund's meeting rooms. As Erica Bornstein remarked regarding World Vision's annual audits and project reports for donors, one is struck by "the partiality of such documentation." Where, she wondered, was "the religion" that animated the lived experience of nongovermental organization (NGO) workers and aid recipients? (2005, 40–41). While Bornstein is right, her insight about partiality can be read differently if we consider how obscuring religion, *and then sporadically reinserting it*, may actually reveal something important about dialogical modes of trust. Consider, for example, a series of letters by CCF's second President, Rev. Verbon E. Kemp, in 1968. Writing from Seattle, Miss Vivian Moffatt (in a very typical complaint) accused the organization of wasting money on advertising and staff salaries. Barely able to contain his annoyance, Kemp begins, "It would be interesting to know the basis of your accusations about CCF." He follows with, "If you are interested in the facts, we suggest that you stury [sic] the enclosed summary financial statement taken from our most recent certified audit." In the second paragraph, however, he completely switches gears: "Many of the staff executives here and abroad are ordained ministers. To all of us this work is a Christian vocation dedicated to the extension of the Cause of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth." He ends, "cordially I am inviting your attention to consideration of the facts of the case."[12]

In Kemp's letter, trustworthiness relies on two sets of equal "facts": the secular audit and the sacred call of vocation. Based on archival letters like this one, CCF officials seem to have resorted to the sacred in particularly difficult cases to foreclose further complaints or concerns.[13] Although avowals of this kind were not therefore often necessary, when they did happen supporters would have comprehended them immediately since they relied on a preexisting structure of feeling built up through continual (often subtle) reiteration: CCF regularly used words with moral connotations familiar to Christian readers (hope, joy, and love), included in their logo a cross hovering above a child's face (Fig. 5.2), and used casual Christian sign offs in sponsor newsletters (e.g., "In His name"). Taken together, each one continually (re)injects Christian trust into capitalist interaction.

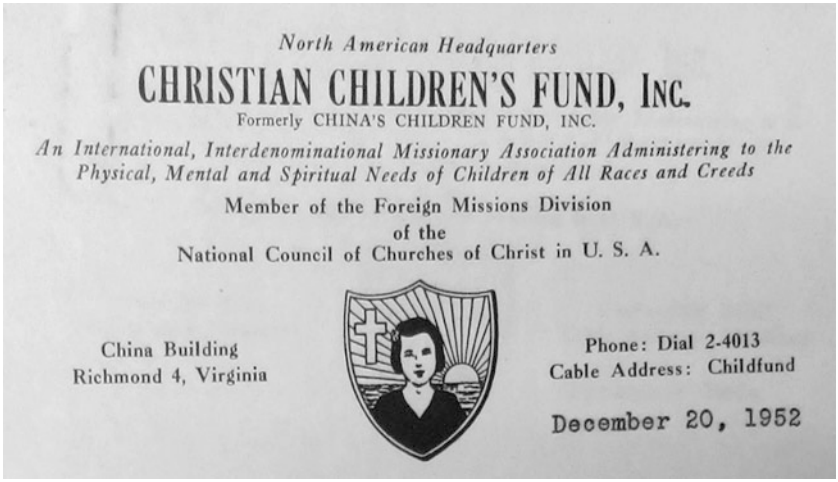

Fig. 5.2 Christian Children Fund's logo, 1952. Used by permission of Child Fund

My point is that Kemp's two-step model for inculcating trust relies on *alternating* forms of transparency – secular "audit culture" and Christian relationality. Focusing on the former for a moment, studies have argued that modern capitalism obviates the direct relationships possible in small-scale societies. Instead, it produces an audit culture that seeks to create absolute trust through transparency and immediacy of information (Strathern 2000). In child sponsorship organizations, this includes sending regular audits and financial reports to sponsors (the "partial documentation" as per Bornstein). It also invests the power of oversight in outside bodies, which require regular financial information produced by a professional (certified) accountant. Such outside bodies played no small part in sponsorship organizations' development, especially since they had to assure donors of their trustworthiness without the traditional backing of denominational mission boards.[14] Thus, although Clarke had little interest in Christian institutional bodies per se, from its earliest incarnation CCF made every effort to maintain good standing with nondenominational missionary bodies; it joined the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and then the National Council of Churches' Division of Foreign Missions after it was formed in 1950. From the 1940s on, Clarke also engaged in tense, sometimes acrimonious, relations with the National

Information Bureau (NIB) and its affiliates. He could not dismiss them entirely because across the country sponsors regularly wrote into Chambers of Commerce and the NIB about CCF "reliability" and "efficiency."[15]

In the CCF archive, one sees the slow, negotiated process of professionalization during the middle decades of the twentieth century as Christian companies and their pastor-CEOs were disciplined into secular modes of trust. The NIB repeatedly asked CCF to provide a satisfactory operating budget in the 1940s. In fact, there were *no* reports about spending from either their domestic or foreign offices. "A budget would be, more or less, an artificial thing," Clarke wrote the NIB rather blithely in 1947.[16] Religious credentials were moral currency: as a certified pastor, Clarke explained, he would spend as God led him and according to the amount of money CCF could raise. Likewise, Clarke's partners in Asia could be trusted since they were long-term missionaries.[17] Other pastors who started sponsorship organizations in this era (e.g., Bob Pierce at World Vision or Everett Swanson at Compassion) perhaps even more clearly saw themselves as emulating latter-day apostles, raising and spending money with God's guidance.[18] Their role overlaps to some degree with the Weberian idea of charismatic authority. However, it is important to note that Christian credibility in these organizations very quickly moved beyond one individual alone, even a charismatic founding pastor. Rather, it was the combined efforts of Christians at *every* level of the bureaucratic machine – from the Board of Directors down to the orphanage supervisors – that made it a truly "trustworthy" system.[19]

Such guarantees were not, of course, sufficient for the NIB, which was tasked with creating and policing what anthropologist Alberto Corsín Jiménez calls the "new culture of corporate ethics." This audit culture brooks only one version of the reality of relationships: "relationships that are real and robust because they are transparent, instantaneous and point to no context but themselves" (2011, 179). As Corsín Jiménez writes, in the capitalist ideal "morality emerges thus not as an aspect of human relationships but as a feature of the infrastructure of information" (2011, 180). We might add that audit culture also eliminates the human–God relationship as a sufficient guarantor of trustworthiness. Over the 1960s and 1970s, sponsorship organizations became increasingly inured to secular audit culture. Today, it is hard to imagine Clarke's refusal to set a budget. All major sponsorship organizations feature an "accountability"

section prominently on their home pages, displaying their credentials from a spate of institutions including Charity Navigator, the Better Business Bureau, the American Institute of Philanthropy, and the Charities Review Council.

Audit culture attempts to create an ideal of absolute trust. In order to draw attention to its illusory nature, Corsín Jiménez traces alternate modes of trust in small-scale societies, including Rane Willerslev's ethnography (2007) of the Siberian Yukaghirs. The tribe engages in what Willerslev calls a "demand sharing" economy where people are expected to demand others' possessions and acquire them even by trickery; this form of exchange characterizes human–human encounters, as well as those between humans and animals or spirits. While Willerslev's main focus relates to how mimetic empathy colors the relations between hunters and their prey (2007, 189), Corsín Jiménez uses the example to make a broader point: in other economies, the interplay between trust and distrust may be explicitly recognized. Such societies clarify how trust is produced through the exigent work of relationship building, where relationships may be embedded in a sphere Corsín Jiménez calls the "occult."[20] These settings, he notes, are familiar in ethnographic accounts (including classic studies by Evans-Pritchard and Gluckman). In short, time and again anthropological work on "others" does recognize that trust is relational, not based on informational flows alone. It is contingent, rather than absolute, and a "device for coping with the freedom of others" (Gambetta 1988, 219).

Although US Christians and Yukaghirs may at first seem worlds apart, at least with regard to Western capitalism, in fact Christians also recognize *distrust* as an operating principle in economic exchange. This brings us to the second form of transparency: Christian relationality. I have already alluded to Christians' distrust of purely human relationships but it deserves reiteration. In Protestant cosmology, humans are sinful creatures. This concept varies in intensity depending on the type of Christianity. Evangelicals regularly note that the world is "fallen" (sinful). Mainline Protestants or liberal Catholics may disagree wholeheartedly. Based on an internal survey of sponsors after ChildFund's name change, it seems that those who reacted most negatively were by and large in the former camp – conservative evangelicals and (some) Catholics.[21] As Christians, these sponsors hold in tension their relationships with other humans (whom they may indeed trust) with their inherent skepticism about human nature.

In this schema, the closest one can be to truly trustworthy – transparently "sincere" and morally good (Keane 2002) – is to be saved through Jesus Christ. Christians are not perfect, of course, but being saved is one step toward overcoming the fallenness of human nature. Because Christians continually "check in" with God in prayer, there is some guarantee of divine oversight.

The theme in Kemp's 1968 letter to Vivian Moffatt continues to pervade discourses circulating in Christian sponsorship organizations today. Organizations reproduce a disciplined secular audit culture in order to situate themselves as fully modern and therefore trustworthy while *also* recognizing the Christian ambivalence about any human-made societal construct, including capitalism. Returning to Bornstein, the people who send (and receive) these audits do, in fact, recognize their partiality. The subtext is that another kind of "audit" is also being done: the humans in charge of the organization are continually attuned to God's counsel, guiding them to morally upright business practices. The dialogical relationship between these two forms of transparency – audit and confessional – acknowledges the interrelationship between trust and distrust (or right action and sin) in a Christian ethic of capitalism.

That this system is capitalistic should not be forgotten. In Harding's study of Falwell (2000), for example, she describes gaps between trust and distrust that occur when he lies about his past. Harding argues that his congregants forgive him by taking what amount to leaps of faith, patterned after their Bible reading practices: each time something seems untrue or unprovable they bridge the gap through faith, thereby binding themselves closer to the new interpretation. Child sponsorship organizations have no equivalent to the established bond between Falwell and his followers. Nor, to view it inversely, can they blame failings on clear instances of human sin that reside in an individual, like Falwell, who can repent. It is much harder to pinpoint who is at fault in a large corporation. Not surprisingly, then, Christians treat the sponsorship market as precisely that – a market. If one organization fails them, they find another that better expresses the kind of dis/trustworthy capitalism they seek. Thus when ChildFund changed its name, thereby seeming to deny Christian modes of transparency and trust, a number of sponsors reacted by voting with their feet: transferring their support to World Vision, a more explicitly evangelical company.[22]

Name Change Revisited

As both Simmel and Mauss recognized, a certain "spirit" or "unaccountable feeling" produces the trust that keeps people involved in systems of exchange. Thus it is not surprising, perhaps, that in reviewing the fallout from ChildFund's name change, its employees often talked about a breakdown in "honesty" and "trust," without which they could no longer effectively ask sponsors for support. The goal of this chapter has been to explore the multiple interlocking ways that trust operates in these sponsorship programs. A key factor, I have argued, is the role played by *distrust* in Christian capitalism and charity, an idea I draw from earlier work on non-Christian tribal economies (Corsín Jiménez 2011) and the politics of friendship (Lebner 2012).

By distrust, I mean that Christians view human beings and human systems – including economics – as always fallible to some degree. Only God is fully trustworthy (though perhaps inscrutable too). This idea animates Christian capitalism in general; however, it is especially important in the programs under discussion here. Sponsorship organizations produce trust by expending significant resources to reify the realness of the human–human relationship between sponsor and child, which is enabled and guided by God. The primacy of this relationship is driven by two important Christian ideals: the Protestant mentor/convert and the charitable giver/recipient. As an ideal, however, it is continually hampered by sponsorship as a global project where givers are asked to support a child whom they will never meet in a place they will never go. Thus the very appeal of sponsorship – where new technologies make possible a one-to-one relationship that spans geographic boundaries – also continually reproduces distrust.

In order to make this relationship "really real" and foreground the Christian ideals above, sponsorship organizations continually downplay their own mediating role. Nevertheless, they do need to reorient at least some of the sponsor's loyalty and trust toward themselves so as to ensure that sponsors will respond to further asking, such as when their child finishes the program or after a brand change like at ChildFund. One way this happens, I argue, is by continually drawing parallels between the primary relationship (sponsor/child) and the secondary one (sponsor/company). By foregrounding God as the omniscient party in the former, they imply his active involvement in the latter too.

The second part of my argument looks more closely at how Christian modes of trust creation work hand in hand with secular audit culture.

Large sponsorship corporations successfully sustain highly intricate bureaucracies that mediate the relationships between millions of sponsors and children. They have also been able to grow in major part because of their promotion of nondenominational Christianity. Yet these characteristics have also continually led to issues of trustworthiness, precisely because of the scope of the organizations' bureaucracy and (especially in the early years) their lack of affiliation with traditional denominational boards. Further, while both sponsors and sponsorship organizations understand Christian relationships as emblematic of trust(worthiness), asking inevitably involves epistemic opacity about intentions and stewardship practices, leading to major investments in secular audit culture (Strathern, 2000; Frederick Klaits, *pers. comm.* 2 January 2015).

My overarching point, then, is that the distinction between (infallible and informational) audit and (fallible and personal) relationality is less fixed than theoretical work may suggest; in practice, these two modes of transparency interrelate and thereby reinforce each other. From sponsorship organizations' perspective, trust creation (however imperfect) relies on a dialogical interplay between the two, as evident in their publicity and mailings. Sponsors receive, for example, detailed monetary reports alongside descriptions about how Jesus works through the staff. They log on to sponsorship home pages to find lists of the secular auditing organizations alongside promises of being "Christ centered" (Fig. 5.3).

One might still ask why Christian sponsors may be upset when their money is not used as they expected. While more research is needed into sponsors' views, I suspect that part of the reason has to do, first, with how sponsorship corporations are more "faceless" than ministries run by a charismatic pastor whom givers know and therefore trust to make decisions on their behalf (e.g., in Harding's work on Falwell). Second, most sponsors are not adherents of prosperity theologies that encourage putting resources into circulation, no matter where they "land" (e.g., in Coleman's work on Word of Life). Rather, in the missionary and development models from whence sponsorship programs derive, *results* do matter. It matters whether or not children are being helped and how. Further, morality is assumed to derive from good stewardship, meaning careful, planned, sustained Christian business practices. If the evangelical pastor in the Vermont megachurch I quoted above is any indication, this complex of moral qualities is understood to be reflected in givers, as well as askers. If the sponsorship organization fails, not only does the child suffer but the sponsor has also failed to exercise careful Christian judgement.

Fig. 5.3 Screenshot of welcome page on www.compassion.com

Returning, then, to (some) sponsors' sense of outrage and confusion following ChildFund's name change. Although Sharon, like others at ChildFund, saw the change as *producing* trust through honesty, clearly those sponsors disagreed. For them, it seemed like a negation of the kind of Christian capitalism and charity upon which CCF had been built. It cut to the heart of the contention that God is an animating force in the relationships that make up child sponsorship, including between sponsor and organization. God, as an entity separate from human agency, is the ultimate overseer: Christians will act like Christians (i.e., be trustworthy within a recognized moral schema) because they are in relationship with God, even if the sponsor cannot directly oversee the dispersal of his money abroad. In short, while

ChildFund saw the name change as modeling corporate transparency because it was a more "honest" portrayal of their aims, the donors who withdrew saw it as a denial of the Christian transparency that ensures an ongoing moral "audit" of human behavior. In becoming ChildFund, then, the organization seemed to deny the tripartite relationship between itself, donors, and God. For sponsors, that was a serious breach of trust.

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Notes

1. Historically, proselytism was dependent on CCF local partners, missionaries, and "native" superintendents, and thus sporadic. In 1969, under President Verbon E. Kemp, the Religious Status article of the bylaws stated, "...all children in [CCF's] orphanage-schools shall receive Christian teachings, bearing witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior." In 1974, it was greatly softened (adding "without requirement or obligation") and subsequently eliminated (Losen, c.2002). There was also a pragmatic reason for the name change: it helped unify a single global brand since "CCF" was only used in the United States. As a result, field workers had to create separate publications for each donor country. For example, the Ethiopian team had to address three sets of donors with different organizational names in the United States, Ireland, and Australia (Louis Weeks to Thomas C. Hogan, *Letter*, September 11, 2009. Courtesy of Dr. Louis Weeks).
2. According to Forbes, four Christian organizations that rely in part (or largely) on sponsorships are among the 25 largest charities in the United States: Food for the Poor, World Vision, Compassion, and Feed the Children. Compassion and World Vision alone raise 1.5 billion from private donations, nearly all of which is sponsorship (Barrett 2014). Thousands of smaller Christian NGOs use this model too.
3. The Word of Life pastor was trained in the United States and subscribes to the "faith movement" that grew out of American Pentecostalism. In U.S. denominational terms, Christian Children's Fund would be considered more "mainline" whereas Compassion is conservative evangelical (originating in fundamentalist Baptist churches). However, such labels are messy in the context of these large organizations that explicitly pitch their appeals transdenominationally.

4. Clarke to Sponsors, *Letter,* c. 1941. Box IB21, Folder 9, JCC.
5. For more details on the spiritual impact for givers, see, for example, "Volunteer Network Handbook" (1999) 3. No Box, Folder USA1999.09.06.01, *Archival materials*, Compassion International (Colorado Springs, CO). For more on children, see "Write my Child," *Compassion International Website*, 2014. Accessed January 11, 2015. http://www.compassion.com/letter-writing/write-my-child.html
6. Charlotte de Fries to J. Calvitt Clarke, *Letter,* July 18, 1960; J. Calvitt Clarke to William H Henry Jr., *Letter,* July 26, 1960. Box IB22, Folder 2, JCC.
7. "Choose Your Own Orphan" c. 1954. Box Korea, Folder KR1954.03.03.01. Everett Swanson to Friend of Compassion, *Letter*, September 1, 1964. Box USA: Documents, Folder 1964, Publication General. *Archival materials*, Compassion International (Colorado Springs, CO).
8. "Volunteer Network Handbook" (1999) 3. USA1999.09.06.01, *Archival materials*, Compassion International.
9. "31 Days of Prayer for Your Sponsored Child," *Compassion International website*. Accessed January 11, 2015. http://www.compassion.com/get-involved/31-days-of-prayer-for-children.htm
10. "Volunteer Network Handbook" (1999) 3. USA1999.09.06.01, *Archival materials*, Compassion International.
11. "Unspoken" because, based on my discussions with staff in the Compassion and ChildFund marketing and research departments, surprisingly little information is gathered about sponsors' spiritual motivations for giving. A number of staff noted that this kind of research is stymied in part because it problematically inverts the logic of Christian witness and charity, clarifying a personal benefit in the "sacrificial gift" (Muehlebach 2013, 517). It also inverts the (not unrelated) logic of development work, which focuses on outcomes for recipients, not givers.
12. Verbon E Kemp to Miss Vivian Moffatt, *Letter* March 20, 1968. Box IIB7, Folder 8, JCC.
13. CCF never used "the sacred" indiscriminately. It is used with individual (Christian) givers but not in letters with the Better Business Bureau or other secular organizational bodies.
14. Dr. Jay Clarke, *Personal Interview*, December 11, 2014.
15. For example, Mrs. Charlie Snyder to Chamber of Commerce (Richmond, VA), *Letter*, September 23, 1953; Verbon E. Kemp to Miss Manila Lyman, *Letter,* May 19, 1955; Verbon E. Kemp to Frank Ziegler (Director of Public Relations, Nashville Chamber of Commerce), *Letter*, June 3, 1955; Miss Laura Roberts to Chamber of Commerce (Richmond, VA), *Letter,* November 5, 1957. Box IB26, Folder 11, JCC.
16. Clarke to Mrs. E.R. Goodwin (National Information Bureau, New York), *Letter*, February 26, 1947. Box IB21, Folder 9, JCC.

17. For example, Clarke to Sponsors, *Letter*, c. 1941. Box IB21, Folder 9, JCC.
18. For example, a commissioned biography of Clarke attributed the growth of CCF to the "miracle of human love" and quotes Clarke denying that he ever *asks* for funds; he merely tells Americans about needs and then God moves them to give (Janss 1961, 2, 30). Pierce, who saw himself as "the next Billy Graham," traveled Asia as a missionary and committed money to people based on where he felt God was leading him (King 2013, 76, 78).
19. Nevertheless, nearly every sponsorship organization descended into power struggles when the founding pastors (especially Jay Clarke and Bob Pierce) left in the 1960s. While there are differences – Clarke was elderly and highly controlling, Pierce was mentally unstable (King 2013, 78) – in both cases the Boards of Directors felt their presence hindered expansion and professionalization (including financial accountability). Both Clarke and Pierce felt ousted from what they considered a personal ministry and each one responded by starting new organizations. At Compassion, Swanson had the good sense to pass away early (in 1965); however, by 1980, his wife was also convinced to leave her position on the Board for similar reasons. The break was amicable and in 1990 she was given the honorary title "Director Emeritus" (Lee 2014, 130, 144).
20. Corsín Jiménez never quite defines what he means by "occult." However, his phrasing echoes John and Jean Comaroff's (1999) contention that "occult economies" result from the failure of emerging neoliberal capitalism, leading to systems where magical means (especially sorcery) are deployed to secure material ends. In Corsín Jiménez, "occult" seems to refer to supernatural systems of relations that are hidden, though not invisible. His examples include witchcraft among the Azande and the human-spirit economy in Willerslev's work.
21. I base this on a telephone survey conducted by Louis Weeks, former president of Union Presbyterian Seminary (Virginia) and on ChildFund's Board of Directors. In the weeks after the name change, he personally called about a hundred sponsors who had withdrawn or lodged complaints. While I was able to interview Dr. Weeks about the responses, and secure a list of his questions and one interview transcript, the remaining notes (which he put in CCF possession in 2010) seem to be lost.
22. Louis Weeks, *Personal Interview*, December 15, 2014.

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CHAPTER 6

Funding Meaning on Jewish Service Trips to Post-Katrina New Orleans

Moshe Kornfeld

On the third day of a weeklong service-learning trip to New Orleans, I joined a group of student volunteers from Ivy League U. at the Rebuilding Together warehouse where they were preparing salvaged construction materials for reuse. The warehouse, which serves as the rebuilding agency's field headquarters, is located to the East of the French Quarter in the St. Claude corridor, an area that has experienced significant gentrification in the years following Hurricane Katrina.[1] The student volunteers were working in an open-air courtyard flanked by large industrial steel frame shelving units similar to those one might encounter in the lumber section of a home improvement store. Cecily, an Americorps volunteer and the site supervisor, instructed us regarding how to strip nails from wall and ceiling board so that these materials could be reused. Throughout the morning, the sounds of chatter alongside the creaking of nails leaving wooden boards punctuated the calm spring air.

This particular trip had emerged through the collaborative efforts of two on-campus Jewish groups: a Jewish social justice organization called Jewish Funds for Justice, and Repair the World, a recently formed agency devoted to promoting service within the American Jewish community. The trip included three men and seven women, eight Jews and two non-Jews, and a

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Hillel professional. Additionally, Jewish Funds for Justice, the agency that was contracted to run the trip, provided two trip leaders who were responsible for logistics and for facilitating a series of educational workshops.

By the time we broke for lunch, the task of preparing the wall and ceiling board was mostly complete. As a result, after the break, there were not enough tasks to occupy all of the student volunteers. Noticing this, Cecily gathered spare materials and constructed a makeshift bench, which she then presented to the students as an opportunity to decorate—to "leave their mark." A group of three or four students, eager to remain busy, accepted the offer and began painting the bench. It soon became apparent that they had reached an impasse and were heatedly debating how to represent themselves in text on the bench. While some students wanted to represent themselves as coming from Hillel, a national Jewish campus organization, others insisted that they paint a text that indicated that they were members of the Jewish Student Association (JSA), an official student group that had formed in opposition to Hillel in order to provide students more control and oversight over Jewish life on campus.

The immediate debate revolved around issues of funding. Isaac, who was not only a student leader on the trip but also the president of the JSA, insisted that only the JSA be named as the on-campus trip sponsor because the group had provided a $500 cash grant and had donated materials for a fundraising bake sale. Isaac further noted that Hillel had provided no financial or material support for the trip. Another student, Hannah, countered that National Hillel and its local on-campus subsidiary served as the trip's official sponsor agency and had, in fact, provided significant support for the trip. Upset that Hillel's name might not be integrated into the design, Hannah informed Brooke, the Hillel staff person traveling with the group, about the disagreement. Joining the debate, Brooke asserted that Hillel had, in fact, dedicated significant resources to the trip in the form of dedicated staff time and gratis programming space in the Hillel building. Furthermore, Brooke commented that she had turned down a number of other programming opportunities in order to help coordinate the trip.

At this point, Isaac and Brooke left the immediate area in order to discuss the matter privately. After what was later reported to be an intense yet productive conversation, the two returned and announced that the students would include the following text: "Hillel and JSA [image of heart] NOLA." Ironically, when the workday ended, the students ultimately included no text as part of their decoration. Realizing that they had written the word "Hillel" in too large a font and with the workday quickly

coming to an end, the students painted over the text they had already written and the day ended with the bench painted in green, blue, light blue, and orange stripes with an off-white heart at its center. A photo, shown in Figure 6.1, reveals the word Hillel barely visible beneath a second coat of green paint.

Unpacking this episode reveals Jewish service tourists playing a number of different and sometimes contradictory roles. On one level, Jewish service trips are humanitarian projects oriented toward aiding non-Jewish Katrina victims. The proposed bench decoration, "Hillel and JSA [image of heart] NOLA," iterates this basic premise. From this perspective, service tourists function primarily as aid givers. However, in addition to giving labor and time, the service tourists I studied raised and expended funds in order to support their service trip. Here, we might imagine student volunteers primarily as aid receivers and as consumers. Lastly, I note that the trip in question emerged as part of an institutional effort to twin Jewish community-sponsored

Fig. 6.1 Bench decorated by service trip volunteers

humanitarianism with philanthropic projects devoted to stemming the tide of Jewish assimilation and intermarriage. Trip participants are thus also the objects of a Jewish philanthropic project oriented toward securing Jewish social reproduction.

In this chapter, I take these observations as a starting point for an analysis that situates Jewish service travel to New Orleans in relation to a series of interconnected and overlapping institutional and historical trajectories that account for the collaborative project that brought these and many other young Jews to New Orleans and other cities on Jewish service-learning trips. I examine in particular the consequences of two recent trends within Jewish philanthropy: the growth of Jewish social justice organizations and the emergence of a donor class of wealthy individuals with the ability to shape Jewish community policies. Building on Maussian conceptions of the gift, I argue that the American Jewish community functions as a type of gift exchange system that is solidified through a dense network of Jewish philanthropic organizations. As part of this analysis, I introduce ethnographic data on student fundraising in support of service travel to New Orleans. These ethnographic vignettes, such as the one I described above, highlight the disparity between institutional scripts focused on service and student attitudes about fundraising that emerge from class, familial, and social concerns. Reading this ethnographic data alongside institutional narratives illustrates how the position of young Jewish service volunteers as both aid givers and aid recipients creates complicated dynamics that lead to misunderstandings and sometimes to open conflict.

Studying Jewish Service in New Orleans

The trip described above was part of an effort to make "service" and "service learning" into central elements of American Jewish discourse and practice. This chapter considers this phenomenon in relation to ethnographic research I conducted on a series of service-learning trips to New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2011 and 2012, respectively. Working with an organization called Jewish Funds for Justice (since renamed Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice), I selected a (relatively) socioeconomically diverse set of groups. Two of the trips were from public universities and two were from private institutions. I use the pseudonyms Public U., Elite Public U., Private U., and Ivy League U. to identify the various Jewish Funds for Justice trips.

There is a large body of research on service, service learning, and service tourism. Much of this research is undertaken by practitioners looking to determine best practices for these educational projects. For example, Keith Morton's (1995) essay, "The Irony of Service: Charity, Project, and Social Change in Service Learning," challenges the standard view that service-learning pedagogy always includes a linear progression from hands-on charity work to a commitment to broad-based social change. Writing within disciplinary anthropology, Daniel Goldstein (2012) describes capitalizing on available resources for international service learning within his university in order to engage in relatively low-barrier and meaningful acts of reciprocal exchange that provided tangible material benefits to his research subjects, indigenous residents of the *barrios* at the edge of a Bolivian city. Capitalizing on the emergent popularity of service learning within higher education during the first decade of the twenty-first century, Goldstein posits that international service learning can be anthropologically responsible and achieve tangible aid objectives (Goldstein 2012:72).

In contrast to scholarly approaches focused on evaluating the impact of service initiatives for aid recipients and aid givers, my primary concern in this chapter is to consider the tensions that arise when young Jews function simultaneously as aid givers, aid receivers and consumers, and the targets of Jewish education and identity projects. In particular, I examine how these trips relate to efforts to cultivate a Jewish service movement. These efforts aimed to synthesize (and possibly appropriate) a surging concern with Jewish community-sponsored humanitarianism with Jewish identity projects by creating Jewish service experiences in which young Jews provided service, usually to non-Jews, while participating in workshops focused on Jewish identity and community.[2] Notably, while Goldstein's model centered on "putting people from very different backgrounds into direct proximity with one another, asking them to work together for mutual benefit," the trips I studied often included minimal contact with aid receivers in New Orleans. The lack of interaction between Jewish aid givers and non-Jewish aid recipients directed my analytical focus toward intra-Jewish dynamics and the internal politics of American Jewish philanthropy.[3]

Jewish Philanthropy and the American Jewish Collective

One of the notable achievements of American Jewry has been the establishment of a thick matrix of philanthropic organizations. For American Jews, philanthropy has long been orientated, not only toward a variety of

charitable causes but also toward the project of Jewish unity and Jewish identity. This is to say that this matrix—and in particular the system of Jewish community federations—has unified American Jews across class, religious, and political divisions. In fact, the very notion that one can speak of a mainstream American Jewish community, as opposed to a series of American Jewish communities, is a product of American Jewish philanthropy's unifying role. While the system of Jewish Federations is structurally similar to and has an overlapping history with the United Way, the former has come to play an important role in political and social solidarity in the Jewish community. Writing about Jewish ethnic identity, historian Joshua Zeitz (2007) notes that Jews "erected an enormous philanthropic network that set much of the tenor of Jewish identity in the postwar period" (Zeitz 2007:12). Commenting on the system of Jewish community federations, J.J. Goldberg, a journalist who reports on Jewish life, has described Jewish philanthropy as the locus of Jewish power in the United States (Goldberg 1996). Additionally, in the postwar era, Jewish philanthropy integrated a representative political role that led scholars of American Jewish philanthropy to describe this field as a polity (Elazar 1995), as a Jewish public sphere (Cohen 1980), as a form of Jewish civil religion (Woocher 1986), and as assuming state-like functions (Kelner 2013). In other words, Jewish philanthropy has played and continues to play a central role in the cultivation of what Benedict Anderson might describe as an imagined American Jewish collective (Anderson 1991).

In *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss considers reciprocity through gift exchange as a basic social institution that works to preserve and uphold society through the existence of obligations not only to give gifts but also to receive and reciprocate those gifts (Mauss 1990[1925]:13). Using terminology borrowed from Western political theory, Marshall Sahlins describes the gift as "the primitive analogue of the social contract" (Sahlins 1974:169). By analogy, we can reframe the scholarship above to suggest that the American Jewish community is solidified through a philanthropy network—that is, through a network of gift exchange—within which Jews establish their identities and vie for influence and power.

More recently, a number of competing Jewish philanthropy networks have challenged the centrality of the Jewish federation system within American Jewish life. In particular, the emergence of a donor class of extremely wealthy individuals eager to have more direct control over Jewish public policy has eroded the stature of the federation

system. Additionally, the emergence and growth of Jewish social justice organizations, loosely joined in the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable, has lessened the centrality of the federation system within American Jewish life and culture. These emergent formulations of Jewish philanthropy have contributed to the development of a field of overlapping and interconnected networks that compete to define American Jewish social responsibility. Despite this more recent diversification, Jewish philanthropy continues to provide a framework—a Jewish public sphere—within which ongoing and vigorous debates about the nature of Jewish social responsibility occur.

Perhaps the most notable shift in Jewish demography in the second half of the twentieth century to which the field of Jewish philanthropy has responded is the increase in exogamy.[4] Until the 1970s, Jewish endogamy was the norm; in 1970, the intermarriage rate for Jews was 17 percent (Pew 2013:9). Since that time, the rate at which Jews marry non-Jews has increased significantly. Among Jews married between 2000 and 2013, 58 percent married non-Jews (Pew 2013:9). Intermarriage rates of over 50 percent (first reported in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey) alongside low birth rates has led many observers to perceive the American Jewish community as being in a state of decline.

Responding to this sense of decline, major Jewish funders have dedicated significant resources to combating what is popularly described among Jews as the "continuity crisis." Concerns about Jewish continuity have reoriented Jewish philanthropic investments toward projects dedicated to Jewish identity cultivation. The young service tourists were thus part of a class of recipients, that is, young Jews, who have been the focus of significant philanthropic investment in an attempt to mitigate the effects of assimilation and intermarriage. Birthright Israel, a program that has provided nearly 300,000 young American Jews aged 18–26 with a free trip to Israel, is the most prominent initiative to have emerged from these efforts.[5] The trips I studied also emerged as products of this concern with Jewish continuity; in particular, the trips I studied emerged as part of an effort—funded by a number of major Jewish family foundations—to make "service" a defining element of Jewish life and culture. These foundation-driven efforts attempted to capitalize on the perception that young Jews were interested in volunteering and in service to others as an opportunity to invest these projects with Jewish meaning.

The Emergence of Jewish Social Justice Organizations

Classically, Jewish conceptions of charity and social action included a primary focus on aiding Jews and a secondary focus on aiding non-Jews. Jewish *halakhic* or legal texts frame these secondary obligations either positively (*mipnei darchei shalom*, because of the ways of peace) or negatively (*mishum eivah*, because of enmity).[6] Challenging this traditional paradigm, Jewish social justice organizations embrace a humanitarian ethic that demands that Jews aid those most in need. These organizations, which have grown significantly over the past quarter century, draw on Jewish resources—social, political, economic, and theological—in order to cultivate a progressive Jewish ethic. The dramatic growth of such initiatives can be perceived in the scholarly and public work of Jack Wertheimer, an historian of American Jewish life. In a 1997 article on the field of Jewish philanthropy, Wertheimer identified politically progressive Jewish charities as small-scale outgrowths of the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s that served as "mediators between Jews on the left and various broader American social causes" (Wertheimer 1997:33). Since 1997, what Wertheimer noted as an emerging and yet marginal trend has blossomed into a major player in the field of Jewish philanthropy. Wertheimer went on to acknowledge and critique the growing clout of Jewish humanitarian agencies in a 2010 polemic that asserted a need to devote more resources to cultivating vibrant Jewish life in the United States (Wertheimer 2010).

In an article published in the newsletter of the Michael Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, Ruth Messinger, the CEO of American Jewish World Service (AJWS; a Jewish community-supported international development agency) and a prominent spokesperson for Jewish progressives articulated a Jewish service agenda:

> Now more than ever a new paradigm of Jewish service is needed. Jews have historically had a universal mandate to improve the conditions of all the world's people. As the prophet Isaiah proclaims, part of our covenant is the responsibility of Jews to be of service to others . . . Many American Jews live at a level of affluence and security unprecedented in our history. Moreover, the world is increasingly interdependent—economically, culturally, and politically. And technology has so reshaped the world that the consequences of our acts will have global implications. That is why our ability to respond to people in need around the world will significantly influence the shape and features of American Judaism in the twenty-first century. (Messinger 1999:8)

Writing at a time when Jewish social justice organizations were just beginning to play an influential role in the field of American Jewish philanthropy, Messinger justified a concern with service to others as an expression of a historical, universalistic mandate and as a contemporary Jewish response to the secure position of Jews in an increasingly globalized world. In this passage, Messinger seems to be referring to the term "service" in a broad sense to suggest that Judaism needs to be oriented outward, that is, to involve a primary concern for the disempowered and the dispossessed. Service, used in this sense, encapsulates an agenda focused on drawing on Jewish resources (economic, political, and theological) in order to achieve humanitarian social justice objectives.

Jewish social justice agencies such as AJWS and Jewish Funds for Justice grew dramatically in part in response to large-scale disasters such as the tsunami in Southeast Asia (2004) and Hurricane Katrina (2005). For instance, as a result of its post-Katrina efforts, Jewish Funds for Justice's budget grew from just under $3 million in 2004 to almost $6 million in 2006. Similarly, AJWS quadrupled in size as a result of its response to the Southeast Asian tsunami, increasing its annual fundraising from $6 million in 2003 to over $25 million in 2005. As a result of AJWS' prior work in Southeast Asia, the agency was listed on the White House website as a responsible choice for donations in response to the tsunami. AJWS effectively leveraged this high-profile placement in order to increase the agency's scope and influence.[7]

Funding a Jewish Service Movement

In 2007, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation, the Jim Joseph Foundation, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation commissioned a consulting firm servicing the nonprofit sector to create a report assessing the field of Jewish service. Published in 2008, "Jewish Service Learning: What Is and What Could Be, a Summary of an Analysis of the Jewish Service Learning Landscape" included a survey of existing Jewish service opportunities as well as a blueprint for an ambitious expansion of Jewish service programs and initiatives. The report framed this expansion not only in relation to the capacity of existing organizations but also in terms of a proposed shift in American Jewish culture, suggesting "a future in which Jewish Service Learning is a cultural norm supported and inspired by high-quality programs that provide meaningful and impactful opportunities to serve" (Irie and Blair 2008:5). More specifically, the report stipulated that

the planned service initiative was to focus on Jews aged 18–24 with the goal of increasing the number of program participants from 3,100 during the 2007–2008 academic year to 40,000 participants, or 10 percent of the American Jewish population in this age cohort. The report specifically mentions Hurricane Katrina as a critical event for Jewish service programs and for growth in the field of Jewish service.

The foundation report explains that a Jewish service movement might synthesize inward-oriented concerns with Jewish identity and continuity and outward-oriented concerns with pressing humanitarian issues:

> For many reasons, this is a time to consider the potential that Jewish Service Learning holds for engaging young people in social and community issues and nurturing their Jewish understanding and identity. There are ever present challenges to engaging Jewish young adults—from their search for meaningful connections with Jewish peers to finding lives of purpose. There are ever present challenges to Jewish continuity—from the appeal of assimilation to the youthful disdain for the institutions of elders. There are ever present challenges to social and civil progress—from poverty to natural disasters. The world continues to flatten, placing greater pressure on the boundaries that define communities and the bonds that unite them. These developments lead to ageless questions about how to preserve Jewish culture and identity and what is the obligation of Jews to respond in the face of inequity, crisis and despair. (Irie and Blair 2008:1)

This passage makes clear the intention these funders had for pairing concerns for "Jewish culture and identity" with efforts to address the "obligation of Jews to respond in the face of inequity, crisis and despair." Applying some analytical pressure here, we see that the sentence structure in the passage above creates a three-way equivalence between entities faced by "ever present challenges": young Jews in search of meaning, older Jews who want that meaning to involve sustained participation in the institutions they have created, and non-Jewish victims of poverty and natural disaster. By placing these objects of concern on the same plane, the report's rhetoric effectively levels—and thus attempts to neutralize—intra-Jewish debates about which of these concerns deserves to be the primary focus of Jewish social action.

Furthermore, the report's focus on a particular age cohort reflects a broader Jewish communal concern with providing Jewish "emerging adults" with compelling experiences during a formative developmental life stage. The concept of "emerging adulthood" was first introduced by

Jeffrey Arnett, a sociologist who argues for the need to identify a new developmental stage between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett 2004). Arnett suggests that emerging adults should not be considered adults because they are generally unmarried, childless, and often remain financially dependent on their parents. At the same time, emerging adults cannot be described as adolescents because they have significant independence, often live away from their families, frequently relocate, and tend to experiment with various types of commitments regarding work and love. Arnett writes:

> Perhaps the most central feature of emerging adulthood is that it is the time when young people explore possibilities for their lives in a variety of areas, especially love and work. In the course of exploring possibilities in love and work, emerging adults clarify their identities, that is, they learn more about who they are and what they want out of life. (Arnett 2004:8)

The concept of emerging adulthood is not particularly anthropological insofar as it tends to erase cultural specificity in favor of an overarching definition of social development and is perhaps most applicable to EuroAmerican society. I emphasize Arnett's theory here because it has been influential to policy-makers within the Jewish community and may, in fact, describe the experiences of the young Jews I studied. Researchers and Jewish policy-makers often draw on Arnett's research in order to justify philanthropic investment in Jewish "emerging adults" that aims to encourage long-term commitments to Jewish community, life, and culture. Consequently, Jewish programs established in response to concerns about the future viability of American Jewish life often focus on Jews who have left home but who have not yet made more enduring adult commitments. The foundation-sponsored service report explicitly cites Arnett's research to argue that a focus on emerging adults is key to maximizing the impact service programs might have for cultivating higher levels of commitment to Jewish identity.

Ultimately, the service report advocated the establishment of an agency that might serve a role analogous to that played by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that runs the Americorps program.[8] In theory, this proposed agency would help to coordinate the expansion of service in the American Jewish community, thus implementing and cementing "service" as a defining element of Jewish life. To this end, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation

and the Jim Joseph Foundation provided $18 million in seed funding to establish Repair the World (an English translation of the Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam*), an organization that would help to shepherd the establishment of a Jewish service movement (Greer 2009). Repair the World immediately began implementing the service agenda outlined in the service report, providing funding for Jewish service program providers, initiating research on what might constitute "best practices," supporting the growth of existing programs, and encouraging other organizations to embrace large-scale evaluations of their programs and staff. The service trips to New Orleans that I studied were heavily subsidized by funds from Repair the World (Aisen and Manning 2011).[9]

The service report struck a confident tone about the value of Jewish service learning as well as the ability of philanthropic investment to create the conditions for a major cultural shift in American Jewish life:

> With all of these powerful impacts, the question this research raises is not whether Jewish Service Learning can provide a critical path to Jewish civic engagement, or cultivate a sense of Jewish identity or engage young people in solving critical social problems or generate lifelong relationships that bond and build a sense of community. Evidence strongly suggests and history shows that Jewish Service Learning, if executed well with clear intention, can accomplish these objectives.
> The question then, is whether the Jewish community will fully seize the opportunity to develop the potential that Jewish Service Learning holds. (Irie and Blair 2008:5)

The report reflects complete confidence in the project of Jewish service learning. In fact, discussions of possible risks throughout the report focused exclusively on external factors that might undermine what the report and, by extension, the funders asserted was an unquestionably good idea. We might understand this hubristic tone as the expression of philanthrocapitalism, a term that economists Matthew Bishop and Michael Green (2008) develop in order to argue that the extremely wealthy are more immune to market and political forces and thus in an ideal position to solve societal problems.

What, then, is the "learning" involved in Jewish service learning? In contrast to notions of service first defined by activists, such as Ruth Messinger, who emphasized systemic social change, the donors advocating the establishment of a mass Jewish service movement articulated a

more limited conception of the term "service," something akin to community service. This learning agenda does not necessarily imply the moves toward political advocacy or systemic social change usually central to service-learning pedagogy (Morton 1995). The curricular agenda defined by the service report is skewed toward particularistic goals such as the conveyance of "Jewish teachings and Jewish knowledge" and the cultivation of Jewish identity and Jewish leaders who might pursue "careers in Jewish Communal Organizations" (Irie and Blair 2008:17). Despite these inward-focused learning objectives, in practice, the Jewish social justice trips I studied, which were supported by the sponsoring foundations, integrated a more normative service-learning pedagogy, one that emphasized a curricular trajectory that began with direct service and moved to political advocacy (Morton 1995).

Within these overlapping frames, the growth of Jewish service must be understood as a product of intra-Jewish debates regarding what might constitute Jewish social action. In particular, Jewish service is an attempt to integrate particularistic projects oriented toward the cultivation of Jewish identity and progressive projects oriented toward developing a humanitarian Jewish ethic. While the turn toward identity is motivated, in large part, by concerns about Jewish continuity, those attempting to refocus Jewish social responsibility outward claim that Judaism needs to adapt to its current position of socioeconomic affluence and to the ethical demands of a flatter, globalized, interconnected world. A conception of service and service learning as a project that integrates helping others with Jewish education seeks to neutralize this intra-Jewish tension and to appeal to young Jews who are often perceived to be already oriented away from Jewish communal life.

Service Tourism in Post-Katrina New Orleans

In addition to capitalizing on the emergence and growth of Jewish social justice initiatives, foundation-sponsored efforts to define a Jewish service movement also came out of a broader faith-based volunteer response to the storm. Volunteer efforts and, in particular, efforts sponsored by faith-based agencies played a central role in providing post-Katrina humanitarian aid and assistance. Scholars have framed this outpouring of post-Katrina volunteer support in relation to the failures of government-sponsored aid programs and in relation to neoliberal logics focused on the maximization of profit at the expense of adequately addressing pressing post-disaster

social welfare concerns (Adams 2013; Erdely 2011; Klein 2007).[10] Medical anthropologist Vincanne Adams (2013) frames her analysis of long-term, post-Katrina recovery in relation to what she describes as the "affect economy" within which altruistic citizen responses to the suffering of others enables and provides "cover" for private government contractors focused on the maximization of profit. Adams writes,

> The affect economy we live within today makes use of affective responses to suffering in ways that fuel structural relations of inequality, providing armies of free labor to do the work of recovery while simultaneously producing opportunities for new corporate capitalization on disasters. (Adams 2013:10)

While Adams appreciates the crucial and often life-saving support faith groups provided to Katrina victims, she suggests that we retain a healthy dose of skepticism regarding the social ramifications of rearticulating post-disaster aid as an expression of "commitments of faith" at the cost of aid articulated in terms of "citizenship rights" (Adams 2013:136). While Adams' critique of post-Katrina aid is widely applicable to Jewish service tourists, the trips that I studied included a series of workshops that attempted to introduce a political critique of structural inequality into the experience.

Though not as prominent or centrally organized as the efforts of Christian denominations, the Jewish community also participated in this affect economy, providing volunteer labor as part of its response to Hurricane Katrina. Most prominently, United Jewish Communities (now Jewish Federations of North America) sponsored more than 3000 Jewish college students who traveled to the region during school breaks in the years following the storm (2007–2009). In addition to these centrally organized efforts, Jewish individuals and synagogues initiated independent service trips, usually working with local nonprofits and rebuilding agencies in order to coordinate housing, food, and volunteer tasks.

Though the Jewish community did not establish its own large-scale infrastructure to feed and house post-Katrina volunteers, as some Christian denominations did, a modest institutional infrastructure emerged in order to help interested Jewish groups plan and implement service travel to the region. For instance, the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans hired a staff member devoted to providing logistical support for Jewish service groups. Additionally, a social entrepreneur from

Chicago established Volunteer Expeditions, a small nonprofit organization that coordinated educational Jewish service tours to New Orleans. Local synagogues and the local Hillel also provided institutional support and assistance to service tours. One synagogue, for example, purchased inflatable mattresses and installed a shower in their building to accommodate service groups.[11]

As the larger-scale trips that were coordinated by Hillel with financial support from United Jewish Communities wound down, Jewish Funds for Justice began offering smaller scale, Jewish-themed rebuilding trips. In contrast to prior trips, these efforts had more of an educational focus and were more politically progressive in their orientation. These trips emerged as part of the wellspring of interest in the idea of service discussed above and through a complicated and often onerous collaboration between a variety of differently situated players including funders, trip participants, on-campus Jewish groups, staff leaders, and the sponsoring agency.

The Paradox of Student Fundraising

By the time I arrived to New Orleans to conduct ethnographic research on Jewish philanthropic responses to Hurricane Katrina, the initiatives outlined by the foundation-sponsored service report were being implemented by Repair the World, the agency founded to cultivate a field of Jewish service learning. For instance, Repair the World was a lead funder for Jewish Funds for Justice's service department, which was established in the years following Katrina in order to organize service trips for Hillels and other Jewish organizations, both to New Orleans and to a number of other cities across the United States. In the continuation of this chapter, I suggest that attitudes toward trip fundraising have profound influence on the ways in which participants understand and experience service tourism to New Orleans. In particular, I examine how student volunteers present themselves to family, friends, and institutions in the hope of gaining financial support in order to participate in service trips. As I will show, the self-perception of young Jews as fundraisers and aid recipients can sometimes lead to tensions, misunderstandings, and miscommunications both before and during service travel. Ultimately, I argue that through such efforts students ignore, interpret, influence, resist, and sometimes co-opt the larger philanthropic project that enabled their journey as service tourists to New Orleans.

Unlike some other initiatives conceived and funded by extremely wealthy Jewish philanthropists that are provided free of charge, students traveling on Jewish service-learning programs were asked to pay a programming fee and were usually required to cover some of their travel expenses. While trip participants received some direct subsidies, the majority of the funding from Repair the World was directed toward provider agencies (e.g., Jewish Funds for Justice) and to the project of building a field devoted to Jewish service learning. In 2012, students attending Jewish Funds for Justice trips were asked to pay a $400 programming fee, contribute a $100 fundraising quota, and cover their own travel expenses. Students—individually and collectively—would often attempt to fundraise in order to offset these trip costs.

The extent to which students perceived themselves as needing to fundraise for the trip was dependent on a number of factors including parental support, student access to independent funds, willingness to spend independent funds, and the availability of other funding sources. Though each trip included students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, those attending the private institutions tended to come from wealthier backgrounds than those attending the public institutions. Somewhat paradoxically, this class difference was evident in the fact that students on the Public U. trip were most likely to hold jobs both during the academic year and over school breaks while in college and therefore had more access to their own funds as college students. On the various trips I studied and in post-trip interviews, I observed a variety of approaches to the project of trip fundraising. These differences not only were practical in nature but also reflected different understandings of service travel as well as class differences.

Students at Elite Public U., for instance, organized a yearly Valentine's Day rose sale in support of Hillel spring break trips. The sale of small-scale items such as roses or baked goods is a rather typical fundraising activity. While the altruistic objective might encourage consumers to purchase the goods, purchasers need not commit, in any sort of serious way, to the project being supported through the fundraising activity. In fact, the charitable element of such sales is, to a certain extent, obscured by the application of asocial, market-based logics. Thus, those soliciting funds do not need to elaborate on the cause they are seeking to support and givers do not need to be convinced by the claims made by those seeking aid. It is likely for this reason that market-based fundraising activities (e.g., bake sales, rose sales) are often preferred when individuals and groups raise funds in support of causes—such as travel expenses—that are, to some

degree, explicitly self-serving. This is to say that in contrast to Hillary Kaell's (this volume) analysis of child sponsorship, "trust" and "distrust" are not salient categories for these types of fundraising efforts. At the same time, the roses and home-baked goods sold as part of these fundraising efforts are easily recognizable as objects related to intimacy. These objects thus inhabit and perhaps exploit the interstitial space between commodities for sale and objects that circulate and solidify the social realm.

The tendency among scholars who extend theories of the gift to capitalist societies is to focus on domestic spaces as social realms where Mauss' gift-giving principles are still in operation (Appadurai 1986; Carrier 1995; Kopytoff 1986; Miller 1988, 2001; Rochberg-Halton 1986). A central preoccupation for scholars attempting to understand how gift exchange functions in capitalist societies is the process whereby impersonal commodities are transformed into the types of objects described by Mauss, that is, into objects that are "invested with life, often possessing individuality" (Mauss 1990:13). "Appropriation" is the generic term anthropologists use to describe the conversion of commodities into possessions. Possessions are "objects that bear a personal identity" and can be considered using anthropological theories of the gift. Commodities, on the other hand, are "objects that are alienated, that bear no such identity" (Carrier 1990:693). Borrowing language used by Robert Foster (2008) in his analysis of branding practices, fundraising sales enact intimacy and distance and thus "soften" the distinction between gifts and commodities in a way that ultimately aids students in covering their own travel and trip expenses. Students thus avoid direct requests for assistance while subtly referencing familiar social and kinship bonds in order to draw in the support of customers, friends, and family members. Notably, these efforts rarely involved discussions of faith or religious identity and were typically framed as being in support of a nonsectarian humanitarian initiative. These modes of asking rely on interpersonal logics and on an implied humanitarianism. The questions and politics of Jewish identity so central to the larger scale philanthropic debates and projects I described above are noticeably absent from this mode of fundraising.

However, in other cases, questions of Jewish identity are central and create tensions between student aid receivers and on-campus Hillel professionals. On some campuses, additional funding for service travel came from local donors and nonprofit agencies interested in supporting Jewish service travel in general as opposed to any one particular trip. For example, the Hillel at Private U. had secured a multi-year grant dedicated to

alternative spring break trips from a donor looking to advance Jewish continuity. Attempts to use financial resources in order to secure higher levels of Jewish identification have become standard practice within the field of Jewish philanthropy and, in particular, for independent philanthropists concerned with the future viability of American Jewish life and culture. In *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty*, Jessica Cattelino draws on the concept of the fungibility of money defined by "its substitutability and exchangeability for itself" to explain how the Seminoles convert casino revenue into forms of cultural value (Cattelino 2008:2). Here too, we can perceive the essential transferability of money as a key element for funder-driven Jewish identity projects.

Stephanie, the Hillel staff person at Private U. responsible for the trip I studied, explained that grant funds were used to cover the program fee for the traveling students. Stephanie described how students who requested financial assistance from Jewish Funds for Justice received an additional subsidy to cover their travel expenses. While the donor remained anonymous and gave indirectly, the Hillel staff member responsible for the trip functioned as the direct giver of aid. Stephanie often used the first-person pronoun, appropriating the act of giving as her own.

During a post-trip interview, Stephanie expressed her frustration with what she perceived to be students' self-presentation as "needy":

> And people really fight about the cost no matter what it is. Even if I said that it was a hundred dollars, there would still, I feel like, be the same reaction. 'Cause it doesn't matter what it is, it's just an amount. And they have this kind of [attitude], 'I'm a college student, I have no money, I can't do that'. If I said it was one hundred dollars, they would be paying a hundred dollars for groceries for the week, for staying wherever they're staying, wherever they're living, paying their rent. But that is not even a calculation in their head. Money equals 'really hard, don't want to give it up, it's what I need for my drinking money' [said in a mocking voice] or something. (Interview, April 24, 2012)

I found this perspective somewhat surprising considering the prominent role of service on the campus of Private U. In fact, a number of participants from Private U. told me that they chose to travel to New Orleans with Hillel because they were not able to secure a spot on one of the many trips sponsored by the university's community service center. While I wasn't able to verify Stephanie's generalization, it is possible that students

experienced in philanthropy-sponsored Jewish privilege may have felt more entitled to funds coming from an organization and donor invested in their personal life decisions.

Paradoxically, I often found that private university students from more affluent backgrounds were more likely to present themselves as not having access to funds to support service travel. This sense of not having money may reflect their continued financial dependence on parents and thus the need to have parental support to pay for the trip. Returning to the concept of emerging adulthood, it seems as if those from a higher social class background were more dependent on their parents and can be thought of as being closer to adolescence while those from lower social class backgrounds presented themselves as more financially independent and may have edged closer to what Arnett describes as adulthood.

For instance, Jessica, a student at Ivy League U., was very concerned with fundraising because, though she came from an affluent family, her parents were not particularly supportive of her interest in the not-for-profit sector and wanted her to prepare for a more lucrative career in the for-profit sector. Jessica's father had worked diligently to achieve financial success and wanted the same for his children. Jessica expressed this expectation as her father's frequently repeated adage, "you can be anything you want as long as you go to law school" (Interview, May 16, 2012). Jessica explained that her father was concerned with self-sufficiency and with her ultimate ability to support herself. When it came to Jessica's interest in engaging in service programs during school breaks, she reported her frustration with her father's focus on resume padding and expressed that she was motivated by a desire to help others. And yet, responding to her father's focus on self-sufficiency, Jessica was very concerned with being able to fundraise enough money to cover trip expenses.

Jessica's concern with fundraising played a role in how she experienced and interpreted service travel to New Orleans. The following anecdote from the Ivy League U. trip illustrates how Jessica's concern with fundraising influenced her understanding of the trip. After working for a few days gutting a blighted home in Gentilly—a relatively low-lying, middle-class, mixed-race neighborhood hit hard by the storm—John, the director of the agency responsible for coordinating the service component of the trip, visited the site in order to distribute t-shirts and to speak with the volunteers. Over lunch, which the students ate sitting on the ground beside a dumpster filled with debris from the blighted home, John described his five-year ascent from Americorps volunteer to Executive Director of

Rebuilding Together New Orleans.[12] After speaking about his professional journey and about his agency, John invited the group to ask him questions. John answered a question about his main responsibilities as Executive Director by explaining that his work mostly involved fundraising and staff management. Following up on this response, Jessica asked for suggestions regarding how to raise funds. John advised, "tell your story—share your narrative. People want to hear your story and will want to help." A post-trip interview revealed that Jessica's question was motivated by ongoing group efforts to raise funds to cover the expenses for their current trip to New Orleans. The group had pooled their fundraising efforts and had planned to distribute the funds equally. Thus, in this particular interaction, learning about Katrina and its aftermaths was refocused toward the project of raising funds for mostly affluent students studying at Ivy League U.

This concern with fundraising was not limited to Jessica but was a general concern for the trip. Isaac, one of the student leaders on the Ivy League U. trip, told me, "from the beginning, it was on my mind how much a factor fundraising would be." Before they started organizing the trip, Isaac reported that Brooke, the Hillel staff person, highlighted the challenges of fundraising. As a result, a concern with fundraising to cover their own expenses became a central lens through which the student volunteers from Ivy League U. viewed the project of organizing a service trip ostensibly focused on giving in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Alexis, a trip participant from Public U., had a different approach to trip fundraising; she informed me that she had essentially liquidated her bank account in order to participate in the trip. Working to put herself through college, Alexis perceived herself as willing to make what she considered to be a significant personal sacrifice. For Alexis, this sense of sacrifice became an interpretive lens for explaining tensions that existed between Jewish Funds for Justice trip leaders and the student volunteers from Public U. On the Public U. trip, a number of trip participants, mostly a group of "brothers" from a Jewish fraternity, clashed with the Jewish Funds for Justice leaders. These students resented having to participate in the educational component of the trip, a series of facilitated workshops with names such as "Why is our society like this?" and "Ways to make change" that framed volunteer activities in relation to social justice and political activism.[13]

As the week wore on, the dissenting students grew bolder in their attempts to undermine trip programming. For instance, during a workshop that was held in the courtyard of the youth hostel where the group was staying, a drunken man stood nearby and began making loud sounds,

disrupting the session. Trip leaders were thus distracted from their attempt to frame Sabbath observance as a practice that might help sustain a long-term commitment to social change activism. I later learned that the man was acting at the behest of some of the trip participants who had told him about their dislike for the trip leaders.

During a closing activity in which trip participants were asked to pair up with one another and then to compliment one another, Alexis told me that, unlike the trip leaders, I did not condescend to the group. She explained her sense that the leaders thought that they were better than the students. Later on, while I tagged along for a final evening of partying on Bourbon Street, I asked Alexis to elaborate on the comments she had made during the appreciation activity. In response, Alexis told me that the trip leaders didn't appreciate that the student participants cared and wanted to help people. She understood the students as perceiving the trip leaders to be unappreciative of the students' dedication to helping others. Comparing herself to other students who spent their breaks working, lounging at home, or traveling to a more stereotypical party break destination, she was frustrated by the suggestion, implied by the curriculum, that privileged white American Jewish service volunteers were somehow complicit in and responsible for the structures of inequality that exist in American society. Having sacrificed discretionary income from her job and without access to further family assistance, Alexis resented this educational framework and interpreted trip members' frustration as a response to these assumptions. While I note that this understanding might not correspond to that of the fraternity brothers, Alexis' interpretation demonstrates how attitudes toward fundraising undermined what the trip leaders perceived as a key component of the service-learning experience, that is, lessons about how direct service might relate to larger societal issues.

These anecdotes point to class differences as an important variable for understanding the dynamics of service-learning trips. Despite these differences, the task of raising funds in support of service travel emerged as a key interpretive lens through which the service tourists understood themselves and their trips. Considering these conclusions, further research is needed to consider what role fundraising in support for service travel plays in other religious groups or in nonsectarian service experiences. Additionally, while funders were often confident in their ability to enact a particular reality, I argue that student attitudes toward fundraising had profound consequences for defining the meanings of Jewish service programs. These meanings often undermined institutional

scripts or simply functioned as parallel understandings that had little to do with providing humanitarian assistance in New Orleans or with the cultivation of Jewish identity. Ethnography thus illustrates the limits of philanthropy-driven identity projects whose aims are subverted by socioeconomic realities, family pressures, and the moral sensibilities of traveling college students.

Conclusion

We are currently in the midst of a new gilded age, an era characterized by extreme wealth and by extreme wealth inequality. One of the byproducts of the concentration of wealth at the very top socioeconomic stratum is the emergence of a donor class of individuals who apply their wealth to a variety of social projects. According to the Foundation Center, an agency that gathers data and supports the work of private foundations, in 2001 there were 61,000 foundations that distributed $30.5 billion with assets totaling $477 billion. By 2007, there were 75,000 foundations that distributed $44.5 billion with assets totaling $682 billion.[14] Multibillionaires such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffett have embarked on massive philanthropic projects that parallel those initiated by the robber barons at the turn of the twentieth century (Bishop and Green 2008:2). The Jewish donors who initiated the service-learning report and attempted to situate "service" at the center of American Jewish life are part of this class of extremely wealthy donors. For example, the family foundation headed by Lynn Schusterman, a multibillionaire and major Jewish philanthropist dedicated to Jewish identity projects, played a leading role in efforts to cultivate a Jewish service movement. As a participant in Warren Buffet's Giving Pledge, Schusterman has made a commitment to donate at least half of her wealth. Schusterman and her foundation exemplify one aspect of growing income inequality in contemporary American society—namely, the emergence of a class of wealthy donors with a significant, though not unlimited, ability to shape social policies and agendas.[15]

In this chapter, I presented an example in which a number of large Jewish family foundations attempted to resituate "service," as in "community service," at the center of American Jewish life. Through this initiative, the funders sought to capitalize on Jewish community enthusiasm for humanitarian projects in general and for volunteerism in response to Hurricane Katrina in order to integrate more particularistic concerns such as the cultivation of Jewish identity and support for the state of Israel into projects ostensibly oriented toward helping those outside the Jewish community.

Major Jewish donor-sponsored efforts to promote Jewish service in the years following Hurricane Katrina aimed to reproduce and expand youth travel experiences first established by Jewish social justice organizations such as AJWS. Thus, we see that Jewish foundation-driven efforts to redefine Judaism in relation to the notion of service appropriate and reshape Jewish progressivism in order to advance a philanthropic agenda primarily concerned with cultivating and deepening Jewish identity. This appropriation integrates service (in the form of volunteer work) with normative Jewish philanthropic objectives focused on the preservation of Jewish identity and the cultivation of support for the State of Israel.

My analysis of student fundraising and of students' attitudes toward fundraising illustrates the limits of mass philanthropic projects that define our new gilded age. In this case, the limits of large-scale philanthropy emerged as a result of student fundraising that created alternative narratives about the meaning and value of the trip that were ultimately not connected to the humanitarian or Jewish identity objectives imagined by institutional trip sponsors. The question of philanthropic limits is central for the American Jewish community, which is structured by a dense network of donors and philanthropists. In a more general sense, as American society and politics became subject to philanthropic projects that emerge as a result of socioeconomic inequality, the question of the limits of large-scale philanthropic projects becomes increasingly important. In his book, *Philanthropy in America: A History*, Olivier Zunz (2012) describes how the philanthropic efforts of early twentieth-century tycoons such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie shaped (and continue to shape) American society and democracy. Similarly, there is no doubt that contemporary philanthropic projects will shape our next century, though the ultimate outcomes may not be those intended and may emerge from competing narratives and motivations.

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Notes

1. In an article posted on nola.com, Richard Campanella—a geographer whose work is focused on the city of New Orleans—designated the area around the warehouse as "very cool" and at the center of post-Katrina gentrification

trends. www.nola.com/homegarden/index.ssf/2014/03/putting_cool_on_the_map.html, accessed May 29, 2014.

2. Elizabeth Tonkin (2009) provides an analysis of the ways in which service to others can lead to the solidification of intragroup social bonds.
3. In contrast to the trips I studied, meeting Israeli peers is a central component of Birthright Israel, a free Jewish philanthropy-sponsored trip to Israel (Kelner 2010).
4. Lila Corwin Berman (2008) describes how sociologists have become key figures for defining American Jewish identity. The role of sociology is most notable when it comes to documenting and debating the dramatic increase in rates of intermarriage within the American Jewish community.
5. Birthright Israel website, http://www.birthrightisrael.com/, accessed July 28, 2015.
6. Maimonides, Laws of Giving to the Poor, Chapter 7:1–7.
7. These insights are based on a conversation I had with Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Foundation, a major player in the field of Jewish philanthropy (interview, July 23, 2013).
8. The analogy between Repair the World and the Corporation for National and Community Service was further solidified in 2013 when David Eisner, former CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, was selected as CEO of Repair the World, the organization formed in response to this report.
9. I should note that I also received a small grant from the organization to begin my research on service learning.
10. The essays collected in *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans* (2011), edited by Cedric Johnson, explore the intersections of post-Katrina recovery and neoliberal governance.
11. At times, some local Jewish agencies felt burdened by the constant stream of groups, especially those groups that expected local Jewish agencies to provide them with food and lodgings, thereby taxing local resources and staff.
12. Post-Katrina New Orleans provided charismatic activists and social entrepreneurs, often poststorm transplants, with opportunities to assume leadership positions that they would likely not have achieved within the same time frame in other contexts.
13. These titles come from the "Participant Guide" Jewish Funds for Justice provided to the student volunteers. Trip leaders used these booklets to facilitate trip workshops.
14. The Foundation Center website, www.foundationcenter.org, accessed May 30, 2014.
15. The Giving Pledge website, www.givingpledge.org, accessed May 30, 2014.

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CHAPTER 7

Dignity, Not Pity: Fundraising, *Zakat*, and Spiritual Exchange

Rhea Rahman

In April 2009, a few hundred Muslim students, activists, scholars, and volunteers gathered at the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archeology and Anthropology for the annual Muslim Student Association Eastern Regional Conference. The Africa Gallery on the second floor housed the "bazaar room." Nestled between brass belt masks from Benin and Akan gold weights, vendors sold items targeting a Muslim audience – from women's headscarves, to men's T-shirts with street-art inspired Islamic caligraphy, to hand-painted Eid greeting cards. Toward the back of the room, beneath a large blue tent with white tulle draped along the sides – designed to look like mosquito nets in a West African rural hut – the Islamic Relief-USA booth was buzzing with staff and volunteers. The organization was promoting their newly launched "Bite-the-Bug" Malaria campaign, asking students to register for the campaign which sought to: "1) Educate, 2) Communicate, and 3) Eradicate" – asking students to collect multiple $10 donations to provide a family in Mali a mosquito net to protect against malaria-carrying mosquitos. A young man with shoulder-length dark hair and glasses approached the booth and asked the small group of volunteers whether Islamic Relief exclusively assisted Muslim communities.

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Sporting a brown Islamic Relief tackle-vest worn by field staff abroad and a stylishly blue and white headscarf to match her Islamic Relief T-shirt, Amira – a staff member from an East Coast fundraising office – seemed slightly uncomfortable at the question but explained that Islamic Relief works from, as she said, "the humanitarian side of things – not the political." In her response, she distinguished Islamic Relief's commitment to the humanitarian responsibility to help anyone in need (regardless of race, religion, or gender), from what might be considered a politically motivated imperative to help only other Muslims. The young man persisted, "But do you do *Islamic* poverty relief?" Amira maintained, "Islamic Relief is not faith-based, but faith-founded." Seemingly unsatisfied with the response, the young man protested, "as long as you are operating under an Islamic name." He trailed off as he walked away, but his implication was clear that an organization calling itself "Islamic" ought to abide by Islamic law and tradition, which for him seemed to mean first and foremost helping other Muslims. After the encounter, other Islamic Relief staff and volunteers told me that the student was from Saudi Arabia and that they often have this kind of trouble with Muslims from the Gulf States in particular.

Later Amira explained to me that there was a lot of discussion in Islamic Relief-USA over what it means to be "faith-founded" as opposed to "faith-based." As she and other employees in the national headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, explained, calling themselves faith-founded was a way to distinguish themselves from what they saw as the proselytizing faith-based Christian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that had been recently revitalized with federal funds by an executive order signed by former President George W. Bush. Amira explained, "Inspired by our Islamic values, our job is to take care of other people. Other people might think, 'I can change things, that's why I help.' But Islamic Relief does not say 'you're welcome' to those we serve. We say 'Thank *you* for letting me help you.' We treat people with dignity; we do not try to convert them." When political persecution after 9/11 closed a number of Islamic NGOs in the United States, Islamic Relief-USA not only avoided political suspicion but paradoxically saw annual donations increase. As I show in this chapter, this success is due at least in part to their distancing themselves from any sort of proselytizing and in their promotion of a "professionalized" universalist approach to delivering humanitarian aid.[1]

Guided by Islamic values and principles, Islamic Relief Worldwide is a UK-based international development and humanitarian organization.

Founded and headquartered in Birmingham, England, the Islamic Relief "Global Family" consists of thirteen national fundraising partners and development projects in over forty countries. While the adoption of universal standards of aid such as impartial neutrality earns Islamic Relief credibility among Western secular partners, the organization must also continuously negotiate tensions that arise when confronting Muslim donors and supporters with conflicting views. By promoting a humanitarian impartiality that staff and volunteers expressed as founded on Islamic principles – that is, by emphasizing the God-given dignity of every human being – Islamic Relief maintains credibility among both "secular Western" and more "conservative Muslims."[2] However, while maintaining an organizational commitment to universal impartiality, staff members were often confronted by Muslim donors (who are a major source of Islamic Relief's funding and of its credibility as an Islamic organization) who preferred Muslim beneficiaries to non-Muslims.

Within the moral economy of giving in Islamic Relief – an exchange in which material assistance of donors is exchanged for prayers and gratitude of beneficiaries – donors' biases implicitly prioritize certain beneficiaries over others. A comparison between Islamic Relief's global fundraising practices in Mali (a country with a Muslim majority) and South Africa (with a Muslim population of approximately 3 percent), reveals that Islamic Relief staff would capitulate to donor demands and prioritize projects for Muslim beneficiaries. This was the case despite the organization's stated commitment to educate Muslims that a proper interpretation of Islamic giving is that it should not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or gender.[3]

I first consider Islamic Relief's negotiation of international humanitarian standards and Islamic ethics. While the organization's emphasis on dignity is based on an Islamic conception of spiritual equality (namely, that all people are equally *in need* in relation to Allah), Islamic Relief's interpretation of *zakat* suggests that an imagined global community's interdependence is predicated on material inequality – an underlying issue that is not addressed by Islamic Relief's initiatives. I then contrast fundraising in Mali and South Africa to consider the ways that Islamic Relief negotiates tensions between an organizational commitment to universal impartiality, on the one hand, and a partiality among Muslims donors to give to supposedly pious Muslim beneficiaries, on the other.

Dignity and Reciprocity

The ethical imperative of impartiality – providing help to anyone in need, regardless of race, religion, or gender – is one of the foundational principles of contemporary humanitarianism (Barnett and Weiss 2008). Scholars writing about Islamic humanitarianism have considered whether universal humanitarian principles – in particular that of impartiality – are compatible with Islam (Bellion-Jourdan 2007; Benthall 2003; Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2009; Ghandour 2003; Hashmi 1993). Political scientist Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan has suggested that international Muslim aid groups arose in the 1980s out of a perceived need to provide aid to Muslim communities, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, which had until then been assisted exclusively by Western organizations "suspected of combining relief with cultural indoctrination" (2007, 648). Africanist John Hunwick proposed that international Islamic organizations perceive sub-Saharan Africa "as a field for missionary endeavor and an area where they may roll back the tide of Christianity" (1997, 50). Similarly, scholars have questioned the ideological influence and geopolitical implications of an increased presence of Islamic NGOs from the Arab world in sub-Saharan Africa (Mohamed Salih 2002; Ahmed 2009; Weiss 2008; Kaag 2008). In her account of the growing influence of Arab Islamic NGOs in Chad, anthropologist Mayke Kaag shows how these organizations, in combining material aid and proselytization, promote a particular interpretation of Islam that is culturally, religiously, and politically oriented to the Arab world. On the other hand, in her comparative study of the Saudi Arabian International Islamic Relief Organization and Islamic Relief Worldwide, Marie Juul Petersen has suggested that in an effort to appear moderate to Western audiences, the Western-based Islamic Relief promotes an "almost invisible Islam" (Petersen 2012, 147). In this reading, unlike Saudi NGOs, which adopt an "all-encompassing" Islam and which problematically entangle proselytizing and relief, Islamic Relief is primarily guided by the secular development and humanitarian principles of "Western" aid agencies (De Cordier 2009; Petersen 2012).[4]

In my ethnographic research with Islamic Relief in fundraising offices in Europe and the United States and field offices in Western and Southern Africa, I too found staff members striving to distinguish Islamic Relief from "unprofessional" Islamic NGOs which, in comparison, they saw as neither "transparent" nor "impartial." The duty to help *anyone* in need is foundational to the Islamic Relief's official mission. The 2013 Annual Report (Islamic Relief Worldwide n.d.) declares:

> The overarching aim of Islamic Relief Worldwide is to provide relief of poverty in any part of the world. Inspired by our Islamic faith and guided by our values, we envisage a caring world where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled and people respond as one to the suffering of others. We aim to do this through our relief, development and advocacy work with vulnerable communities around the world – *regardless of race, political affiliation, gender or belief and without expecting anything in return* (emphasis added).

In an Islamic Relief publication entitled "A Brief History of Humanitarianism in the Muslim World," research and policy analysts Mamoun Abuarqub and Isabel Phillips (2009) explore the history and practice of the Islamic concepts such as *zakat* (charity) and *waqf* (religious endowments) in relation to contemporary humanitarianism.[5] In emphasizing the Islamic foundations for nondiscrimination, for example, they corroborate "the centrality of humanitarian principles in Islam."

When potential donors, such as the student Amira encountered at the Islamic Relief booth in Philadelphia, imply that an Islamic organization should focus primarily or exclusively on helping Muslims, staff reiterated that Islamic Relief is first and foremost a humanitarian and development organization that is guided by Islamic values, focused solely on *needs* and not politics or proselytization.[6] In particular, the question of whether or not funds from *zakat* – the Islamic obligation to donate a portion of one's annual wealth to those less fortunate – could be used for non-Muslims, posed a dilemma faced in many sites within the organization. However, despite a commitment to universal impartiality I maintain that Islamic Relief does not promote an "almost invisible Islam" (Petersen 2012). Rather, attending to fundraising practices on the ground, I claim that the perceived duty to help anyone in need is premised on a vision of Islamic duty to respect the dignity of every human being. This is not to suggest that respecting the God-given dignity of every person is particular to Islamic traditions, but that the administrators of Islamic Relief emphasize dignity in order to distinguish the organization from other charitable enterprises.

Islamic Relief's official mission affirms that their aid work is carried out *without expecting anything in return*. The question of reciprocity – of what is exchanged and what, if anything, is owed by those who receive assistance – is one that has long concerned scholars writing about charity, philanthropy, and aid, particularly faith-inspired aid (Bornstein 2006; Godelier 1999; Heim 2004; Laidlaw 2000; Parry 1986). In his classic examination of gift exchange, Marcel Mauss (1990) argues that in spite of the modern notion

that a true gift is one given without the expectation of a return, the idea of a gift given without the expectation of return is an impossible contradiction. Rather, the duty to give, receive, and reciprocate is one of the foundations upon which human society is built (1990, 5). As Mary Douglas writes in her foreword to Mauss' essay, "Charity is meant to be a free gift, a voluntary, unrequited surrender of resources. Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue we know that it wounds . . . What is wrong with the free gift is the donor's intention to be exempt from return gifts coming from the recipient. Refusing requital puts the act of giving outside any mutual ties" (Douglas 1990, ix). In keeping with Douglas's concerns about the wounds of the unrequited gift, Islamic Relief fundraisers did not pity their beneficiaries but rather thanked them for their thanks and prayers, emphasizing notions of mutual exchange and social obligation between beneficiaries and donors as well as the inherent divine dignity of every human being.

In 2012, a group of volunteers and staff from an Islamic Relief fundraising office in Northern England came to Mali to collect promotional materials for fundraising initiatives back home. Over the course of three days, I traveled with the team of two staff members and ten volunteers (most of whom were second-generation Pakistani British men in their early twenties), and local Malian staff to visit Islamic Relief project sites and beneficiaries in Bamako and in the rural southern province of Oulessebougou. The team's first visit was to a fourteen-year-old sponsored orphan living on the outskirts of Bamako. After asking some general questions about his home life and family, interpreted by the Malian staff member who managed the boy's case, one of the British team leaders said that he would like to talk to the boy directly. Abdallah, a dynamic, driven, and energetic fundraiser born in the UK to Libyan and Welsh parents, sat next to the boy and put his arm around him. He told the boy that he and this team of young men from England had come to give their *salaam* (offering of peace) to him and to his family. Abdallah also told him that the children of the UK were thinking of him. Overwhelmed, the boy started to cry and Abdallah asked another member of the team to start filming. He then turned to the camera and in a temperate London accent said, "Here, 10 kilometers outside of Bamako we are visiting this brave young orphan. He lost his father when he was only six years old. He was too shy to talk to us and he broke down in tears out of emotion. He doesn't know how to express his happiness. His message for the donors is that he and his family are making *dua* (offering prayers) for you, the donors, every day. Though the reward for your efforts is with Allah, the benefit here is also great."

During their visit the British fundraising team interviewed sponsored orphans in their homes, visited a women's income-generation shea-butter processing initiative, a rural school in need of improved sanitary facilities, a microfinance collective of widows, and attended the opening ceremony for a rural maternal health center. In each site, fundraisers asked beneficiaries to smile for their cameras, to explain to them how Islamic Relief programs were helping them, to offer messages of thanks to their sponsors abroad, and to pray for the generous donors back in the United Kingdom. At one point, one of the volunteers became frustrated that they were not getting the stories they wanted and blatantly asked one of the local staff members to "just give us case studies." These occasions, when the expectations of British fundraisers were not met by beneficiaries or intermediating local staff, illuminated just what was being asked of beneficiaries in return for their donors' generous gifts. Fundraisers were soliciting gratitude, blessings, and prayers.

Thus while "ultimately the reward is from Allah", the poor serve as necessary intermediaries for donors to receive future rewards in the afterlife. In an account of Islamic charity in Egypt anthropologist Amira Mittermaier (2013) proposes a reading of giving that takes into consideration the interconnected this-worldly and otherworldly rewards for giving. While donors are concerned with their rewards from God in the afterlife, that return is enacted through a particular relationship to the poor in the present. As one social worker notes, "It is the poor who allow us to go to heaven" (2013, 282). Islamic Relief fundraising practices also exemplify the belief that one can only show one's love for God through the ways one treats other people in this life. Thus donating to Islamic Relief is not a "free gift", given without the expectation of reciprocity. However, the critical role of the poor as the gateway to heaven for donors means that not all poor are equally valued by Muslim donors. Despite official claims of universal impartiality, I show that Islamic Relief fundraisers gravitate toward Muslim beneficiaries over non-Muslim ones and that they also highlight programs that suggest the moral piety of beneficiaries. For example, they showcase programs emphasizing water, orphans, and widows in Mali over those addressing HIV-affected communities in South Africa.[7]

Amira's suggestion that Islamic Relief workers do not say "You're welcome" to beneficiaries but rather "Thank *you*, for letting me help you," suggests that donors and aid workers benefit from the prayers of the poor. Another person's material hardship gives donors the opportunity

to do good work, to receive prayers from beneficiaries and therefore divine grace. The same obligations that suggest a spiritual equality between all humans is predicated upon material *inequality*. In the following section, I explore the relationships between notions of spiritual equality and material inequality by attending to this moral economy of *zakat*.

Zakat – Spiritual Versus Material Equality

Zakat – often translated as "alms" or "charity" – is one of five foundational pillars of Islam. It is an obligatory payment of money or goods (determined as a specific percentage of one's annual excess wealth) that must be distributed to one of eight specified categories of qualifying recipients. Islamic Relief-UK's fundraising website page entitled "What is Zakat" refers to the following verse from the Quran: "Take from their wealth so that you might purify and sanctify them" (9:103). The authors explain that "By recognizing that one's wealth is a gift from Allah and giving away a portion of it to others, a Muslim purifies the rest of his or her wealth from greed and miserliness."[8] The purification of *zakat* protects an individual from becoming too attached to material possessions and keeps one from feeling superior over anyone else. *Zakat* reminds people that their money is not their own – it belongs to God, so that they must use what God has given in a good way.

Yet while *zakat* is intended to purify the wealth of the donor, it is not a call for equitable redistribution. In a YouTube interview with Canadian journalist Gavin Seal, Islamic Relief founder Dr. Hany el-Banna maintains that in Islam, the accumulation of wealth is, in itself, not unethical. What matters is *how* one spends one's wealth.

> Financial success is a part of success and a part of satisfaction, but it is not the satisfaction and it is not the success . . . You can be a very wealthy business man, but you must have a philanthropic approach to the community. I would love for you to become a capitalist, a multi-millionaire, a billionaire! I have no problem with this. As Muslims we believe that people can become very rich, but they have this corporate social responsibility on them (Gavin Seal Media 2013).

Likening the aid encounter to a business transaction, he continues, "So really I want you to become very rich, but you cannot have the full satisfaction from richness only, the other side of the coin would be from

the people you serve and you help and you think about because *they are your customers*" (Ibid., emphasis added). Here Dr. Hany (as he is affectionately referred to by the many staff members and volunteers I encountered who admire him greatly) suggests that one can be both a very religious and very wealthy person, even in the context of devoting one's life to help others through relief and aid work. According to this logic, the more wealth one acquires, the more opportunity it presents to please God by spending that money in a good way. Islamic Relief's "What is Zakat" website explains that "*Alhamdulillah* (all praise to Allah), your *zakat* has the power to transform people's lives, turning them from *zakat* recipients into *zakat* givers. That's our ultimate goal." Nonetheless, *zakat* is not a tax to make a materially equitable society. Rather, in the moral economy of *zakat*, those with resources help those without, and in return, the beneficiary gives the donor divine grace facilitated through his or her thanks and prayers.

Yet, while *zakat* does not promote material equality, Islamic Relief's interpretation of *zakat* promotes the perspective that giving is not a choice on the part of the wealthy, nor simply an obligatory commandment from God, but rather is a *right* of the poor. The Islamic Relief webpage dedicated to defining *zakat* includes the following qualification: "The verse given above from chapter 70 also highlights the concept of *zakat* is a right which the poor have over the wealthy; it is the duty of the wealthy to fulfill this responsibility to those who are less fortunate." Sayyid Qutb, whose works such as *Social Justice in Islam* (Qutb and Shepard 1996) were spotted on many bookshelves in Islamic Relief offices that I visited, was an Egyptian author, educator, leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s, and one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century. Anthropologist James Toth (2013) points out that Qutb sought to distinguish Islamic perspectives on charity and justice from the "condescension and disdain he found in the West" (2013, 184). In line with Mary Douglas's understanding of charity as wounding, Qutb criticized ascetic traditions in Christianity that promoted the removal of one's self from the concerns of this world, together with, in his view, social obligations to others. Emphasizing the rights of the poor, Qutb maintained that "under Islam, the poor have the right to a reasonable standard of living and to a share of the wealth of those who are more fortunate" (Toth 2013:184).

Considering *zakat* as a *right* as opposed to a *gift* alters the calculation of debt and reciprocation between giver and receiver. As Scherz points out in

this volume, analyses highlighting the "poison" of the gift, whereby receivers are thought to be in a position of debt toward givers because they can never reciprocate the gift, oversimplify understandings of reciprocity by overlooking spiritual modes of exchange. As Abdallah, one of the leaders of the UK-based fundraising team in Mali, reminded donors that their reward is with Allah, so too does Scherz point out in her analysis of a Catholic orphanage in Uganda that charity for the sisters is not only about serving the poor. It is a way to enact one's love and devotion to God. Questioning assumptions that receivers are indebted, Scherz highlights the agency exercised by beneficiaries as they ask for and receive help from others.

In a similarly expansive reading of the ethical significance of charity exchanges, Islamic Relief's interpretation of *zakat* challenges notions of the indebtedness of the receiver. Instead of the pitying the poor, Islamic Relief promotes the notion of "returning" wealth to its rightful owners. While Scherz's account highlights a temporality of immediacy, disregarding the future implications of giving and instead concentrating on the "simple intention" in the present, Islamic Relief's temporal frame is future-oriented in that it presents charity as a "right" of the poor. In Mali, one of the British fundraisers showed me some promotional videos from his laptop, one of which stars Dr. Hany in the Daadab refugee camp in Kenya. In the video, seated on the ground in a temporary structure in the camp and surrounded by the inhabitants of the shelter, Dr. Hany proclaims to donors: "We should restore their respectable lives with their own wealth and not our wealth. This is their wealth and not our wealth." The imperatives to remember that one's wealth does not belong to oneself and to restore "respectable lives" to beneficiaries imply a future-oriented goal of a world in which the dignity of all human beings is recognized and respected.[9] However, I suggest that Islamic Relief operates within multiple temporal frames. As an organization oriented toward institutionalized international development, it promotes a future-oriented developmental perspective. At the same time, when promoting their programs to donors, the organization emphasizes direct relationships that will address beneficiaries' immediate needs.

Preserving the dignity of their beneficiaries was a strong moral claim I encountered across disparate sites within Islamic Relief. In line with those who critique charity and humanitarianism for its "politics of pity" (Boltanski 1999), staff and volunteers at Islamic Relief prioritized

respecting the dignity of their beneficiaries by refusing to pity them. In Mali, despite fundraisers' requests that beneficiaries provide case studies, smiles, and prayers for their donors, they also always emphasized their own gratitude to every beneficiary for meeting with them. At a meeting of widows and orphans outside of Bamako, fundraisers told these beneficiaries, "It has been an honor to meet you . . . we see you as our mothers, brothers, sisters, and children. We will continue to work harder."

In Johannesburg, I interviewed Hasaan, a fundraiser of Pakistani descent from Scotland who was invited to host Islamic Relief-South Africa's annual fundraising gala dinners. Whereas the team I met in Mali was there to collect marketing materials in order to raise funds in the United Kingdom for development projects in Mali, Hasaan was in South Africa to raise funds from South African donors for Islamic Relief projects carried out globally.[10] Hasaan traveled around the world reporting on Islamic Relief development and humanitarian projects and he related his stories at fundraising events for various national partner offices. Donning a green plaid kilt and black fez and sporting a well-manicured white beard at a gala dinner at an exclusive hotel in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, Hasaan explained that part of Islamic Relief's unique approach is the manner in which they deliver aid.

> It's a partnership with these people [the beneficiaries]. We never, never think we're here to help, that we're superior in any way. We see them as partners. . . . We're not giving the impression that they're beggars. I've seen inexperienced charities giving in the worst manner you can think of, you would not even feed animals like that. Whereas our staff, you know, it is so strict that our staff are not even allowed to drink water in front of these people. You could be so thirsty, so hungry, but we are not allowed to eat in front of them. That is how strict Islamic Relief is. We are trained in a manner before going to the field, where you must remember the dignity, the respect, of the people that you're serving and to see them as superior to yourselves. Our role is to serve them. Tonight the orphans who came,[11] our staff will see them as angels. Because of those children, donors gave us money. Some of that money will end up paying my wages. So at the end of the day my employers are technically those orphans. It is because of those poor people that I have a job, if you think about it.

While Dr. Hany described beneficiaries as an aid worker's customers, here Hasaan likens them to his employer. In either instance, a donor or aid worker

must refrain from thinking himself superior and remember that the role of a donor or aid worker is to *serve* the beneficiaries and to respect their dignity.

Islamic Relief's emphasis on dignity attests to the spiritual equality of all before God. However, while all are equally spiritually *in need* before God, material and social inequality ensure social interdependence. As Hasaan notes, he wouldn't have the job he does if there were no poor for him to serve. Islamic scholars have pointed to the religious significance of the poor members of a community: the wealthy may in fact *need* the thanks and prayers of the poor to gain access to paradise.[12] Louise Marlow (1997) highlights the particular sayings of the prophet (*hadith*) which attest to the particular religious merit of the poor members of a community, citing the following *hadith*: "This community will only be saved by the supplication, prayer and devotions of the weak" (1997, 122n34). Jonathan Benthall also proposes in his exegesis on *zakat* that prayers of the beneficiary are a way for a donor to receive a return. Referencing Meccan imam and scholar al-Khayyat, Benthall writes, "The poor are always praying that they will get help; and if you are the person who gives help, then the benefit of the prayer will go to you and your family and even to your wealth itself" (1999, 36).

I have suggested that Islamic Relief's interpretation of the universal humanitarian principle of impartiality is grounded in an Islamic conception of the inherent God-given dignity of every human being, though I also highlight the necessity of material inequality as the basis of social interdependency. Since donors and aid workers need the prayers and thanks of beneficiaries to enter paradise, they are apt to consider the gratitude of Muslim beneficiaries as more valuable than that of non-Muslims, despite stated commitments to universal impartiality. In the following two sections, I examine fundraising practices in Mali and South Africa to show how donor preference for Muslim beneficiaries operates in practice.

Global Families – Mali

Before the military coup in March 2012, Mali was long considered a "donor darling" in the international development arena (Bergamaschi 2008). The large amount of international institutional funding received by the Islamic Relief-Mali office clearly demonstrated how the headquarters in the United Kingdom benefited from Mali's reputation.[13] However, in addition to the institutional funds, Islamic Relief utilized promotion of

their Mali projects as a source of private funding from Muslim donors worldwide. Fundraising staff whom I met in the United States, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom were all aware of Islamic Relief's campaigns and projects in Mali.[14] Compared to a lack of knowledge among fundraising partners about Islamic Relief-South Africa's development projects, I realized that Islamic Relief-Mali was a donor-darling not only for institutional donors, but for private Muslim donors as well. Over the course of a period of six weeks I spent in Mali, three separate teams of fundraisers and managers from the headquarters came to conduct training workshops and to collect promotional fundraising materials, despite instability and fighting in the northern regions of the country at the time.

The fundraising team mentioned above arrived in Bamako from a tour in Tanzania and Kenya where they completed a fundraising challenge to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. They then went to Mali to collect stories and pictures to bring back to the UK. The team explained to me that charity was more than a voluntary activity to them. "Fundraising, charity," one of the fundraisers explained to a group of beneficiaries, "it's a big part of our lives, we take what we learn here back home to try to help you more." In addition to maintaining full-time jobs or study back in England, these young men worked tirelessly organizing fundraising dinners and campaigns. I caught a glimpse of this exhausting work ethic as I watched the team maintain a grueling schedule for the four days they were in Mali, with local staff arranging as many field visits as possible, often across vast distances on difficult terrain.

During one of the many exceedingly long, bumpy rides on dirt roads to a rural field site, Imraan, the manager of the northern England fundraising office excitedly described the efficiency and hard work that characterizes the fundraising side of Islamic Relief. Showing me photos on his smart phone, he explained that most of his job is done on Facebook. All of his fundraising events in England are planned and executed on Facebook and the photos and videos he posts from Mali are immediately "liked" by donors and friends back in England. He was also excited about a new electronic accounting system they were working on which would be completely efficient and transparent. "Any donor can come and see exactly where and how his donation was spent." Imraan told me that when he was with a fundraising team in Pakistan, a donor had asked what happened with his food donation parcel; it happened to be delivered the day the team was there. They were able to physically account for the donation, to take

pictures and prove the donation had the impact the donor desired. Being able to "see" the direct impact of donations was a value the fundraisers respected and worked hard to create for their donors. Imraan also emphasized the importance of taking their own photos and videos. He told me that whereas other NGOs often used stock photos for their advertising, Islamic Relief always used their own: "we want to give real stories," he declares. These technologically mediated social connections created a kind of global family for Islamic Relief. However, decisions about who was to be included in that family were not as impartial as the organization sometimes suggested.

Throughout the British team's visit, I was struck both by their more explicit references to Islam and their asking for prayers from beneficiaries for their donors. They greeted all beneficiaries with the Muslim greeting *assalamu alaykum* (peace be upon you) and often playfully demanded that beneficiaries respond with the prescribed response *walaykum assalam*. In most cases, to excite the children they would request the response to be repeated again and again, each time louder than before. In contrast to the team from the United Kingdom, the Malian local staff used Bambara greetings when addressing beneficiaries. During one visit, I asked a Malian staff member with the orphan sponsorship program whether the beneficiaries we were visiting were Muslim or not and he said he wasn't sure. According to the US Department of State International Religious Freedom Report (2008), approximately 90 percent of the Malian population identify as Muslim, 5 percent as Christian, and 5 percent as "traditional indigenous religion or no religion." The staff member mentioned that while foreign donors sometimes asked to sponsor a Muslim child, it was often difficult for the local staff to comply because it never occurred to them to ask potential beneficiaries whether they were Muslim or not. Whereas local Malian staff did not consider the religious background of the beneficiaries, the fundraising team seemed to assume every beneficiary they encountered was Muslim. The fundraisers, focusing on orphans, widows, and access to water – issues that have particular relevance amongst Muslim communities – highlighted beneficiaries and programs that would be uncritically supported by their Muslim donors back in the United Kingdom. It seemed that the ability to raise funds was contingent upon the piety of both fundraisers and the beneficiaries whom they chose to highlight. Their pursuit of pious and relatable beneficiaries is thrown into relief when considered in comparison with fundraising practices in South Africa.

South African Geographies of Aid

After an abrupt departure from Mali after the 2012 coup, I proposed to Islamic Relief managers in Birmingham that I continue my research with Islamic Relief in South Africa. While my research in Mali was enthusiastically supported, one manager discouraged a visit to South Africa. Assuming that the South African office was only a fundraising partner, he told me that I would not see much development work in South Africa. Undeterred by the dissuasion, and since the bureaucracy of Islamic Relief-South Africa did not require approval from the headquarters to accommodate my visit, in August 2012 I arrived in the heart of a dry, cold Johannesburg winter. It was the last week of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and my host, a community fundraiser in the Johannesburg office, took me to the neighborhood of Fordsburg to participate in a programs event. As the office conducted domestic development projects and international fundraising, they referred to the former as "programs" and the latter as "fundraising." Muslim donors were invited to sponsor a "child-in-need" and to take them shopping for new clothes for the Eid holiday that marked the end of Ramadan. As with many of the Islamic Relief-South Africa programs' events, the Eid shopping day offered a direct, one-to-one aid experience for donors and beneficiaries. Here donors did not need a technologically mediated connection to those they were helping.

Along with a group of volunteers – many of whom were affluent Muslim South Africans of Indian descent – I stood in the cold sunshine outside the department store and checked off donors' names from a list as they entered the store with their sponsored child. Many donors brought their own families, providing new playmates for both donor and beneficiary children. Tasneem, the fundraising and events manager, told me that she organized the same event the previous year and that the donors enjoyed it so much that they asked her to do it again. Events that offered donors direct contact with beneficiaries such as this were extremely popular. Further, this event provided Muslim donors the opportunity to support Muslim children specifically. Not only do Muslims cite extra rewards for good deeds done during Ramadan, the event offered donors the added satisfaction of helping a Muslim child celebrate Ramadan and Eid.

In Johannesburg, Islamic Relief's development programs were situated in two geographical areas with distinct religious and ethnic communities. Islamic Relief's administrative office is based in Fordsburg, a neighborhood

just west of Johannesburg's Central Business District. A site of interracial and interethnic mixing from the city's earliest days (Brink 2008), today the predominately Indian neighborhood of Fordsburg is home to a significant migrant population despite attempts during the apartheid era to render it a Whites-only neighborhood through forced removals (Carrim 1990). While migrants from South Asia continue to flock to the area, Fordsburg is also home to migrants from across Southern, Central and Eastern Africa. Amid the ethnic diversity, the prevalence of mosques and Muslim NGOs[15] mark the neighborhood as a hub for Muslim migrants and Muslim South Africans. While Islamic Relief's office in Fordsburg is primarily an administrative office, it also hosts development programs, such as the Eid Shopping event described above, and a weekly support group attended mostly by Muslim migrant women.[16]

The other, more established development program in Johannesburg is a community center in the township of Ennerdale, about 40 km southwest of central Johannesburg. Under the Group Areas Act of the apartheid regime, Ennerdale was designated a Colored Area for populations forcibly removed from neighborhoods like Fordsburg that were close to the city center (Center on Housing Rights and Evictions 2005). Today Ennerdale is home to an increasingly predominant Black South African population, many coming from impoverished rural areas in the Eastern Cape. Although in recent years proselytizing Muslim groups have entered townships such as Ennerdale and have established mosques and madrassas,[17] for the most part the beneficiary population from Ennerdale is non-Muslim. As was the case among local staff in Mali, with few exceptions Islamic Relief-South Africa staff members did not wish to distinguish Muslim from non-Muslim beneficiaries, but they did have to confront donor demands to do so.

The question of how to use the funds collected for *zakat* in a religiously sanctioned manner was a particular source of tension between donors and Islamic Relief staff. Several times a year, Islamic Relief-South Africa hosted live fundraising telethons on the South African Islamic channel, ITV. During a live segment with Islamic Relief's country director, a caller accused the organization of improperly using *zakat* funds for administrative costs. According to the caller, it was against Islamic teaching to use *zakat* for program costs. The country director justified the use of the funds for administrative purposes by quoting a verse from the Quran. "There are seven[18] categories of deserving recipients of *zakat*, one of which are the *wal-'alimony*

'alayha, the administrators of *zakat*." Backstage the producer from the television station – a towering man with booming voice – told those of us who were taking calls from viewers, "you need to know these *hadith*, [sayings of the prophet], these *ayah* [verses from the Qur'an]. Be prepared for the callers' comments and questions. You should remind those people who challenge us of the *ayah* that curses anyone who gets in the way of other people's giving."

During the commercial break, one frustrated staff member exclaimed, "only the *ulema* (the community of religious scholars) in South Africa make such mischief." Another staff member suggested that it was competition between NGOs that was the source of these kinds of tensions. There are a number of Muslim NGOs in South Africa and one of the ways they could distinguish themselves was by how they claimed to spend the money they raised. One of the more conservative Islamic organizations in South Africa, the Jamiatul Ulama, had rigid procedures in place for administrating *zakat*. Their office was across the street from the Islamic Relief office in Fordsburg and when I met with the manager of their welfare services, I was told that potential recipients of *zakat* had to first qualify and that the qualification process included an application form and interview. To exemplify the complexity of the question of how *zakat* funds should be spent, another Muslim South African NGO – the South African National Zakah Fund – includes on its webpage a number of zakah articles, a page dedicated to Zakah FAQs, a Zakah calculator, a Zakah calculator cellphone app, as well as a live chat option to discuss quesitons with a Moulana (a religious scholar). The religiously correct way to spend *zakat* thus became a point of distinction between different Muslim organizations.

The other contentious question regarding *zakat* is whether or not the funds can be used to assist non-Muslims. While this debate is a concern for the organization at a global level, managers in South Africa explained their particular issues. One manager in Johannesburg explained:

> We don't go into the religious debates, we keep it quiet. Even my own *zakat*, I donate it and it goes to non-Muslims. When you give, you don't know who will die with *imam* (faith) and who will not. For us in South Africa, we mainly help orphans, children, some may even die before the reach the age of *baligh*,[19] so it does not matter if they are Muslim or not at the time. We have to think practically, we live in a Muslim-minority country. If we go into

> a community and there are ten Muslims and thirty who are not – are you only going to help the Muslims? If we did that, when we leave, we'd be jeopardizing the Muslims in that community.

A fundraiser tells me that she sometimes just tells the donors that the funds are separated and that *zakat* funds only go to Muslims, "because [otherwise] people wouldn't give." Another manager explains, "How do you explain an institutional charity that differentiates [between Muslim and non-Muslim], thereby jeopardizing Muslim security interests? In a practical sense, we can't differentiate. There was even a *fatwa* declared by local *ulema* that affirmed that *zakat* can be used for non-Muslims." Despite the effort on the part of NGOs and scholars to convince donors that *zakat* can and should be used for non-Muslims, many Islamic Relief donors still felt it necessary to prioritize Muslim beneficiaries.

Islamic Relief-South Africa holds a unique position in that it is the only branch of Islamic Relief that is a fundraising partner and field office. Radical income inequality, massive displacements and migration, and historical racial and ethnic discrimination also created a uniquely complicated geography of aid relations within South Africa itself. In comparison with Islamic Relief-Mali, Islamic Relief-South Africa was relatively isolated from the global Islamic Relief network.[20] While this was in part due to its unique institutional status, Islamic Relief-South Africa engaged with social issues that were not so easily accepted by private Muslim donors. Though not widely advertised (even within South Africa itself), its development projects addressed issues such as drug abuse, domestic violence, and HIV. Even within South Africa, staff complained that their most popular live telethon fundraiser of the year was in support of Islamic Relief programs in Palestine, where they raised three times the amount as a comparable fundraiser for Islamic Relief programs in South Africa. At a conference on HIV and Islam organized by Islamic Relief-Netherlands in Amsterdam in 2012, Dr. Hany lamented the problem of conservative Muslims donors who were willing to donate to water or orphan programs, but who were reluctant to contribute to causes involving climate change or HIV/AIDS. He deplored the shortsighted acts of giving in which Muslims were likely to engage, while neglecting longer-term development goals. Whereas at an administrative level Islamic Relief sought to change Muslim donors' practices of giving (for example, by trying to alter the view that *zakat* should only be given to Muslims), in practice fundraisers often had to capitulate to donor demands.

Conclusion

Giving in Islamic Relief is not a free gift that negates social relations; rather, giving, asking, and receiving constitute the basis of social interdependence. Paradoxically, the same social relations that suggest spiritual equality are also predicated on material inequality and the maintenance of social and material hierarchy. However, when calling on donors to remember that *zakat* is a "right" of the poor, Islamic Relief signifies a mode of giving and asking that employs the moral principle of sharing. When all resources belong to God and thus one's wealth is not really one's own in the first place, then giving is not really a choice but rather the enactment of God's will. *Zakat* entails an ideal future in which everyone's needs are met, though not everyone is materially or socially equal.

Dr. Hany's call to "restore their respectable lives" expresses the long-term goal of eradicating poverty. Also, since rewards for donors are postponed to the afterlife, the time period over which beneficiaries can pray for and offer thanks to givers is indefinite. Although giving practices in Islamic Relief do not entail ongoing material exchanges between specific donors and beneficiaries, the spiritual connection occasioned in the act of giving is potentially eternal. This notion substantiated claims that *zakat* could be spent on non-Muslims. As one manager in South Africa suggested, one should give to anyone as one could never know if a non-Muslim beneficiary might one day become a Muslim. Yet Islamic Relief also advocates an "ethics of immediacy" (Mittermaier 2014) in that fundraisers work hard to create social bonds between donor and beneficiary, posting pictures, videos and stories, or facilitating fact-to-face encounters, to remind donors of the urgency to help those in need. Despite efforts to engage longer term and more abstract advocacy goals of climate change or HIV and AIDS, many donors continued to seek the "feel-good" short-term benefits from installing a water pump or providing an orphaned child school supplies.

As a Western-based Islamic NGO, working with secular, Christian, and other Islamic aid organizations in over forty countries across the globe, Islamic Relief navigates various contradictory means of "doing good." According to the organization's official discourse as expressed in marketing material and annual reports, it is deeply committed to the humanitarian principle of impartiality that dictates providing aid to anyone in need, regardless of race, gender or religion. At the same time, Islamic Relief does not merely adopt "Western" humanitarian values, nor do they advocate a uniquely Islamic ethical

imperative contrary to universal humanitarian principles. Rather, the imperative to remain impartial is situated within an Islamic tradition that emphasizes the spiritual equality of all people as created by God. As Hasaan explained in South Africa, and as demonstrated by the British fundraising team in Mali, fundraisers underwent rigorous ethical training before visiting development projects abroad where they learned that the imperative to respect the dignity of beneficiaries is crucial. Referring to beneficiaries as their superiors, employers, and customers, aid workers attest to the special value the poor hold for those more fortunate. Observed in practice, Islamic Relief's ethical stance is co-constitutively universally humanitarian and Islamic.

Yet while staff emphasized the ethical imperative to help anyone in need, they frequently faced Muslim donors who felt otherwise. Islamic Relief staff often capitulated to donor demands by highlighting certain kinds of projects, programs, and beneficiaries, despite their expressed desires to change the hearts and minds of Muslim donors. The bias for Muslim beneficiaries is better understood with consideration of a moral economy of giving in Islam. Asking and giving in Islamic Relief creates interdependent social bonds in that beneficiaries *need* the material support of donors, while donors *need* the spiritual support in the form of thanks and prayer from beneficiaries. And because donors consider the prayers and thanks from beneficiaries as their key to paradise, Muslim beneficiaries are implicitly considered more valuable. Thus despite an organizational commitment to helping anyone in need, Islamic Relief works primarily in Muslim-majority countries.[21] Islamic Relief's global fundraising practices highlight how efforts to redefine the ethical practices of *zakat* are both expressed and subverted.

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Notes

1. Islamic Relief-USA's annual donations increased from approximately $7 million to $25 million in the months following 9/11 (Strom 2009).
2. I put "secular Western" and "conservative Muslims" in scare quotes to note that I do not take such categories as essential or mutually exclusive but rather to articulate the ways such categories are meaningful to those who use them. My perspective is informed by the work of anthropologist Talal Asad in *Genealogies of Religion* (1993) and *Formations of the Secular* (2003), analyzing the historical and political production and use of such categories.
3. One of the founders of Islamic Relief-USA explained to me that Islamic Relief is equally in the business of educating Muslims about the proper interpretation of Islam (which he explained to me meant that as Muslims they should help anyone in need, regardless of race or religion), as they are in the business of development and aid (interview with author April 29, 2009, Alexandria, VA).
4. Like Petersen, political scientist Bruno De Cordier (2009) – analyzing the particular value of Western-based Muslim NGOs in the international aid sector – also distinguishes "organisations that have a religious agenda and use humanitarian aid as a vector for it, and organisations that are aid workers initially but are inspired by religion – in the case Islam" (609). He suggests that Western-based Muslim NGOs such as Islamic Relief Worldwide and Muslim Hands belong to the latter category.
5. Since 2008 Islamic Relief Worldwide have been publishing academic articles on their website investigating Islamic perspectives on contemporary humanitarian and development issues. Today these are published through Islamic Relief's Policy and Research Division which can be accessed here: http://policy.islamic-relief.com/our-work/
6. However, scholars of humanitarianism have long pointed out the entanglement of politics and ethics in the humanitarian duty to save lives (Malkki 1996; Redfield 2005; Ticktin 2006; Fassin 2007; Feldman 2007).
7. In an account of giving among Christian evangelicals in the United States, Omri Elisha (2011) highlights the conflicting moral ambitions of donors to give with unconditional compassion, while also holding receivers accountable with the expectation of reformed moral behavior. Given many Muslim donors' preferences for certain kinds of beneficiaries (not only Muslims, but more specifically pious Muslims), I suggest that expectations for a particular moral character on the part of beneficiaries are expressed *before* the act of giving as opposed to afterward.
8. "What is Zakat," *Islamic Relief UK*, http://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/resources/charity-in-islam/zakat/, accessed January 14, 2015.

9. Amira Mittermaier uncovers discrepancies between future-oriented goals of social justice as articulated in the Egyptian uprising of 2011–12, and an "ethics of immediacy" which is radically oriented to the present through traditions of giving, sharing, and hospitality (2014).
10. Islamic Relief-South Africa is the only office in the global organization that was designated as both a field office (in that they execute domestic development projects) and as a fundraising partner (in that funds raised in South Africa are distributed to Islamic Relief projects worldwide). However, whereas the 2009 Islamic Relief Worldwide Annual report lists South Africa as both partner and field office, the 2014 Annual Report designates South Africa as only a Partner.
11. A group of about 15 sponsored orphans from a township outside of Johannesburg performed "We Are the World" at the fundraising dinner. When after the performance one of the orphans was singled out by Hasaan and began to cry on stage, board members later advised that they need to exhibit caution so as to ensure fundraisers do not exploit the children.
12. Sayyid Qutb likened charity to a loan made to God whose repayment is assured in paradise. "It is a means of purifying one's soul, an expenditure that credits the donor on Judgement Day" (quoted in Toth 2013: 185).
13. For every grant Islamic Relief-Mali received, Islamic Relief Worldwide in Birmingham, received a percentage of the total funds.
14. While managers in the United Kingdom encouraged me to move my research site to Mali after security concerns prevented my return to Chad, staff in the US proudly recounted to me the 2010 high-profile campaign with the American Imam Zaid Shakir in the northern Mali desert, together with the Bite-the-Bug anti-malaria campaign described in the introduction. In the Netherlands, a program manager in Amsterdam showed me their elaborate selection criteria process and explained how Mali was chosen as one of four countries for which Islamic Relief-Netherlands raises funds.
15. In addition to Islamic Relief, there are two more South African Muslim NGOs with offices located on the same street as Islamic Relief.
16. The group ranged from approximately seven to fifteen women. In addition to South African women, migrant women in the support group were from Congo, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Burundi.
17. A madrassa is an Islamic education center. A number of children who participated in Islamic Relief's community center also attended local madrassas. Though Muslim proselytization in South African townships is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to point out its presence. Commenting on the presence of madrassas in the townships, one fundraising staff member from the Johannesburg office incredulously said to me, "Youngsters from informal settlements can read and speak to each other in Arabic!" Some children from non-Muslim families subsequently converted

to Islam. One particularly enthusiastic grandmother told me that she was Christian and her grandchild converted to Islam, exclaiming, "I'm glad she accepted, nobody forced her."

18. According to the Qur'an, there are eight categories.
19. The legal term for "post-puberty" in Islamic jurisprudence. It is the age at which a person is deemed mature and therefore ethically responsible to accept Islam.
20. Whereas over six weeks in Mali I witnessed two teams of fundraisers from the United Kingdom gathering promotional materials, during my twelve months in South Africa, no fundraisers came from the headquarters in Birmingham to promote South African development projects abroad. Instead, most of the funds for South African domestic development programs came from local private or small-scale institutional donors.
21. Islamic Relief's response in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake gained international attention, as it was the first country without a significant Muslim population where Islamic Relief opened a field office.

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CHAPTER 8

Afterword: Begging the Questions

Omri Elisha

Something about Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* (1964) always troubled me. For the initiated (I trust there are few), the celebrated children's book centers on a boy's lifelong relationship with an apple tree. The tree is personified and feminized as a loving provider, whose gifts are increasingly sacrificial as the boy matures. When he wants money, she tells him to sell her apples. When he wants a house, she offers her branches as lumber. When he wants a boat to get away from it all, she invites him to cut down her trunk. In the long intervals of time between each gift, the boy is absent and the tree is unhappy. At the end, she is reduced to a stump, and the boy, now aged and tired, returns looking for a place to sit. With nothing but that one gift left to give, "the tree was happy."

Since its publication in 1964, the international bestseller inspired volumes of critical analysis of its various ethical, emotional, theological, and even ecological themes. I will not summarize or expand on these here, except to add my voice to the chorus of dedicated readers who, even as children, felt a deep and perhaps guilt-ridden ambivalence about the behavior of the boy, who asks for so much and returns so little.

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It was the manner of his requests that bothered me most; statements like "I want to buy things and have fun. Can you give me some money?" or "Can you give me a house?" Such childish and unenterprising appeals, bereft of any self-consciousness, humility, or nuance. It discomforted me to realize that the boy's agency in the relationship is mainly characterized by seemingly impudent demands. The selfless generosity of the tree never concerned me, only the boy's total lack of compunction in asking it of her.

But what is revealed by my own reaction? What assumptions have I made about the relationship between asking and giving as moral acts? What kind of person do I insist the boy be, and what alternative ethics of personhood do I fail to acknowledge in the process? More generally, what principles shape our sensibilities when assigning value to acts of asking, and is it possible to recognize even the most forward and awkward requests (e.g., "Can you give me some money?") as having value not simply as precursors to exchange but reciprocal and even obligatory gestures in themselves?

The theoretical and comparative framing of this edited collection highlights and extends such questions, by integrating the category of the request into the classic Maussian paradigm. No single model of what constitutes a request is evident in these essays, and with few exceptions (parts of Silva's chapter for example) they mostly do not analyze requests as bounded speech events. The authors address processes, protocols, organizational networks, and structures of accountability through which patterns of reciprocity are initiated, in situations where they are less than likely to occur in the absence of such mechanisms. It is by processual means, which may but need not necessarily involve discrete acts of asking, that conceptions and expressions of need are linked to social practices that mediate the exchange, or denial, of material goods and services.

The volume's focus on religion and humanitarianism is particularly salient in this regard. Both spheres of activity address matters of principal concern to the human condition, including the boundaries of life and death, the meaning of suffering, injustice, and compassion, and the distribution of resources across lines of social and global stratification. Religion and humanitarianism are entangled domains where relationships are valued in transactional terms—you have givers and receivers, debtors and redeemers, saints and devotees, donors and beneficiaries, and so on. As important as it is to recognize religious and humanitarian giving as fundamentally altruistic practices, they are also in many cases intrinsically discriminating, not just because they tend to operate within political and moral economies that value certain askers, givers, and receivers over others, but because the realization of what Frederick Klaits calls

"just action" almost always depends on the maintenance of such differentiations in the first place.

One of the underlying themes in the essays presented here is the idea that situated practices and infrastructures of exchange are not wholly reducible to or encapsulated by the presumed power of the gift to obligate, dominate, and otherwise implicate those who ask and/or receive it. Indeed, explicit references to the "poison" of the gift in the preceding pages (notably in the chapters by Scherz, Rahman, and Silva) appear mostly in the context of questioning the limitations of the concept, in light of what the case studies reveal.

For example, in her study of a Catholic charity home in Uganda, China Scherz eloquently describes the "recipient agency" of rural villagers, as a corrective against agonistic models of exchange that scholars seem unable or unwilling to let go of. In cultivating relationships with the Franciscan nuns of Mercy House, Ugandans enacted "indigenous ethics of interdependence," modeled on local patron–client relations. Contrary to the assumptions and fears of development workers, hierarchical relations based on giving did not create dependency or generate symbolic violence but represented "asymmetric bonds of mutual obligation" that clients actively pursued as means of social mobility, and of expressing moral personhood and affection. Recruiting patrons in this context is an agentive act that confers status upon those who ask and receive, as well as those who give. Recipients of Catholic charity were not so much indebted as empowered, so that even the obligation to "give back" to God involved giving to others. By paying it forward, as it were, clients became patrons.

Scherz offers a persuasive case for destabilizing all-too-ready associations of gift exchange with incommensurability and misrecognition. Yet it is also worth noting that part of what makes local ethics of patronage significant here is the difficulty that international aid agencies and discourses of development always seem to have in accounting for them. If a notion like recipient agency complicates neoliberal ideas about dependency and sustainability, it is also a reminder that humanitarian encounters are interpreted and evaluated in strikingly diverse ways by different communities, institutions, and religious traditions.

This strikes me as another theme that runs through these essays, implicitly for the most, that is worth dwelling upon. As Klaits notes in his introduction, requests matter because they establish temporal frameworks within which transactions occur, and provide "a range of rubrics for valuing persons." At the same time, the relevant frameworks and rubrics

are hardly uniform and rarely harmonious in cases like these. The fact that religious and humanitarian varieties of giving tend toward universalistic principles, and motivate practices of intercultural and intersectional cooperation, does not mitigate—more likely exacerbates—the potential for those involved to become mired in ethical conflicts and miscommunications. By turning our attention to actual processes of asking, giving, and receiving across sociocultural lines, we gain clarity on what takes place in complex arenas of humanitarian aid, and even more we refine our understanding of why such arenas are plagued with indeterminacy, uncertainty, distrust, and apprehension.

Clashing cultural frames come to the fore in Britt Halvorson's discussion of the contrast between how donated medical supplies were valued by US Lutheran volunteers who sent them abroad, and clinicians in Madagascar who processed and monetized them for resale. Preoccupied with charitable goods being "useful," as opposed to "junk," Lutheran volunteers performed "acts of labor and prayer" as select forms of audit work meant to ensure their accountability before God, while instituting bureaucratic protocols that asked, or rather demanded that the Malagasy aid workers demonstrate theirs. By requiring not just transparency but a very particular *kind* of transparency—that is, one that adhered to expectations somewhat far removed from the logistical needs and realities of the Malagasy medical community—the US-based nongovenmental organizations (NGOs) disrupted the ideal balance of international partnership, and became so attached to a naturalized results-based value system that their methods of accountability failed, paradoxically, to account accurately for conditions on the ground.

While illustrating an apparent and hardly effortless fusion of religious subjectivity and economic rationalization, Halvorson highlights ubiquitous frictions and miscues that add layers of precariousness to cross-cultural encounters in the aid world. We also see that when requests become technologies of accountability, whether they involve prayers so that God will bless medical supplies or financial grants contingent on the submission of routine progress reports, they contribute to "moral anxieties" that often obscure more than they clarify.

The role of audit work in mediating the moral anxieties of religious humanitarianism is evident as well in Hillary Kaell's discussion of Christian international child sponsorship. Kaell demonstrates the power of trust/distrust as a binary paradigm in which affective, metaphysical, and "positivist/capitalist" valences converge. In their efforts to secure the trust of

donors and child sponsors, evangelically oriented agencies adopt "alternating forms of transparency"—one based on secular audit culture, the other on ethics of Christian relationality—which legitimize and verify the "realness" of international sponsorships while simultaneously complicating matters by locating absolute trust and trustworthiness in God alone, beyond the capacities of human nature.

The result is what Kaell describes as a dialogical model that allows sponsorship agencies to appeal to religiously motivated donors, even as it reproduces layers of ambiguity that make the breakdown of trust an ever-present, yet curiously indispensable risk to sustainable sponsorship networks. The potential for breakdown stems less from cultural or ideological differences than from the fact that like-minded members of a religious constituency occupy diffuse and differentiated positions within a shared field of humanitarian practice. In this sense, the priorities, expectations, and demands that motivate actors within spheres of charitable activity are determined not merely by overarching cultural schema, but by how their respective roles are conceived and structured within those spheres.

We see similar dynamics in the chapters by Rhea Rahman and Moshe Kornfeld. Based on multisited fieldwork with Islamic Relief, Rahman identifies "multiple temporal frames" variously at work and in conflict, as relief staff aimed to balance their commitment to an Islamic humanitarian universalism against the demands of conservative Muslim donors who wanted a return in the form of "spiritual revenue" and preferred to support projects that serve Muslim beneficiaries. Reflected in this divide were discrepancies in the interpretation of *zakat*, with significant implications for the fundraising efforts of Islamic Relief and how those efforts ended up shaping and even circumscribing the scope of their development-based initiatives.

As indicated in Rahman's account, few aspects of religious humanitarianism provoke as much ethical labor and handwringing as fundraising. It is in the course of determining how their bread is buttered that religious aid workers become pious pragmatists, cultivating symbolic capital and cultural strategies to maintain viable if tenuous alignments between their mission values, field activities, and the demands of wealthy donors and donor communities. With so many overlapping transnational and intersectional currents, such alignments are by no means guaranteed, despite the ostensibly unifying politics of "faith-based" activism.

If the request is a moral act, conferring value and status upon those who seek to initiate or extend social channels of exchange, fundraising is an especially determinative form of request because it is a key medial domain in which specific moral economies of aid are constructed and negotiated by humanitarian providers, donors, and recipients. This does not mean however that fundraising efforts necessarily facilitate consensus or clarification as one might expect.

Kornfeld's chapter, for example, reveals how fundraising activities have the potential to alter humanitarian agendas more than streamline them. As Jewish American college students raised their own funds to take part in post-Katrina service-learning trips, they (at least students of a certain class profile) developed a particular sense of themselves as both aid givers and recipients, and experienced that ethical subjectivity in ways that defied the cultural and educational intentions of Jewish social action groups and philanthropies. While trip organizers aimed to indoctrinate student volunteers to a progressive worldview, and foundation sponsors exerted a moderating influence by promoting projects of Jewish identity formation, the students themselves constructed "alternative narratives about the meaning and the value of the trip that were ultimately not connected to the humanitarian or Jewish identity objectives." The students, in essence, became refractive links in a nonlinear chain of material and institutional mediations.

My general point in raising all these examples of people working at cross-purposes, issues of accountability and distrust, and competing ethical, cultural, and temporal frames, is not to reinstantiate the agonistic model of exchange that Scherz and others in this volume rightly counterbalance. Rather, I mean to highlight another angle from which to elaborate the volume's central theme, drawing on the material in these extremely rich ethnographic case studies. Whereas one might say that a prime function of requesting, in whatever forms it takes, is to express value-laden needs, relationships, and intentions, and disambiguate them in the process, it is also and perhaps frequently the case that such transactional cues in humanitarian endeavors complicate matters by triggering moral anxieties, doubts, and uncertainties. This takes place despite and sometimes even because of the presence of social protocols meant to mitigate such complications.

None of this negates the simple enough yet crucial fact that humanitarian endeavors, religious and otherwise, proceed from strong ideological convictions and unambiguous sentiments of compassion, faith, and optimism. Nor is it a denial of the genuine human bonds that humanitarian acts of

asking and giving have the power to create across wide geographic and cultural distances. And yet, as we see in Sonia Silva's chapter, the potential for acts of asking and giving to generate ambiguity and ambivalence persists because they have the power to pull or "ensnare" people into realms of sociality the nature of which they can never be entirely sure. In fact, while Silva's chapter focuses less directly on religious humanitarianism per se, her discussion of the equivocality between the deathly domain of witchcraft and other life-giving spheres of exchange in northwest Zambia offers an opportune allegory for some of the dynamics I have described. In an environment where a question seemingly as innocuous as "Do you have a bit of salt to spare?" can be a subterfuge for witchcraft, gestures of reciprocity become "risky business," the stuff of everyday suspicion and fear. At the same time, Silva shows, they are the stuff of everyday altruism, nourishment, and survival, and can be mobilized as instruments of healing.

Either way, whether asking and giving are means of entrapment or escape, whether they repeat patterns of incommensurability and misalignment or facilitate relief from suffering and alienation, the request is a multimodal medium through which parties are embedded in social narratives that are suffuse throughout with elements of mystery. While the values assigned to persons and things may arise from ethical and religious norms that dictate the terms of reciprocity, the ensuing outcomes and affordances are never easily anticipated. Just as every question is an opening to more questions (as we like to tell our students), requests are preludes of potentiality, initiating and testing the limits of loyalties, commitments, credits, debts, and affections. Even prayer comes with an air of suspense. When evangelical Christians petition God, they have little doubt that God will hear their prayers and respond appropriately. They know as well that the obligations of faith will not end with offerings of prayer. What they do not yet know and await with hopeful but uneasy anticipation is the answer to the question "What is it that will God ask of me?"

The essays collected here are generous in giving us plenty of new questions to ask. There are implicit subthemes peppered throughout the volume that represent fruitful areas for further investigation, as well as related themes not addressed in these chapters that may be worth a closer look moving forward. An example of the former category is the role of emotion and affect in the social lives of requests, especially given how emotion and affect are variously invoked and operationalized in humanitarian endeavors, not just in the semiotics of moral suasion but notably in the otherwise rationalized processes for managing humanitarian care and accountability.

An example of the latter category is the role of language, and the influence of communicative cues and linguistic ideologies in directing how modalities of asking are constructed, especially those that require the manipulation or mastery of distinct performative, syntactical, and procedural styles in order to be recognized and validated. Additional future lines of inquiry might include comparative conversations assessing religious humanitarianism alongside other social spheres where similar modalities are routinely linked to moral values and ethics of personhood, including domains of legal–juridical, philosophical, pedagogical, and scientific practice.

There is yet one other type of request, and type of requester, hiding in the shadows of the preceding chapters but thoroughly embedded within them. I refer here to the unmarked category of the ethnographic request. Frederick Klaits introduced this volume with the literary character of Manasseh the *Schnorrer*, the beggar who derives his inflated self-importance from the belief that it is holier to ask than to give. I would like to close our discussion with the figure of the ethnographic fieldworker, a beggar of a different sort. It is we who enter the lives of others of our own accord—beggars can be choosers—and position ourselves as recipients of epistemic wealth that we knowingly, and so very eagerly, induce with the questions we ask. As ethnographers, graced with ethical sensitivities afforded by empathy and training, we commit ourselves to the idea that our acts of asking constitute or at least precipitate generalized acts of giving. We see inherent humanistic value in our requests, while we struggle against gaps in understanding and misrecognitions that we are relatively powerless to avoid. And ever mindful of the spirit of the gift, we challenge ourselves to recall, as all relentless questioners should, the one question that keeps us accountable to what we stand for: What is it that will be asked of me?

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