

# Social Justice Philanthropy

## An Initial Framework for Positioning This Work

by G. Albert Ruesga and Deborah Puntteney

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**WORKING GROUP**



*web* [WWW.P-SJ.ORG](http://WWW.P-SJ.ORG) *e-mail* [INFO@P-SJ.ORG](mailto:INFO@P-SJ.ORG)

## Preface

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This essay was written for those who seek a deeper understanding of social justice philanthropy and for practitioners of the craft who want to strengthen their efforts.

The authors frame the first part of this essay around the question, “What is social justice philanthropy?” It might surprise the reader that this has proven an especially thorny question and that many attempts to define the term have fallen short in one way or another. Consider, for example, the definition provided in the 2005 Foundation Center publication, *Social Justice Grantmaking: A Report on Foundation Trends*:

Social justice philanthropy is the granting of philanthropic contributions to nonprofit organizations based in the United States and other countries that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are least well off politically, economically, and socially.

This is a good starting point for a definition of the term. It’s succinct and captures characteristics that are top of mind for a large cross section of grantmakers. It also illustrates some of the challenges of pinning down the essence social justice philanthropy.<sup>1</sup> What do the authors mean by “structural change,” for example? What were they referring to by “increasing opportunity”? We can attempt to increase the opportunity of those who are least well off without taking a significant step toward what practitioners call social justice. We might, for example, help the members of some disadvantaged group achieve greater access to quality healthcare, and yet fail to change the conditions that made our intervention necessary in the first place. As we look at this definition, we can also quibble about whether we should be restricting our support to nonprofit organizations, and argue that our efforts need not always aim to help those who are the *least* well off. Similar problems attend other definitions of the term.

The approach suggested in this essay attempts to sidestep many of these challenges. We began by asking 80 practitioners<sup>2</sup>—grantmakers recognized for their work in social justice—to describe to us what they understood social justice philanthropy to be. As we studied how they described their craft, we were struck by the diversity of responses. Some described the founding principles of their work; others its methods and its aims. Some descriptions bore striking similarities to one another, while others seemed more distantly related.

How were we to make sense of this wonderful diversity of views?

We attempted, of course, to find the threads common to all the descriptions we heard, but we quickly concluded this was simply not possible. We decided on a different approach. Taking a

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<sup>1</sup> In all fairness to the authors of this report, they were not attempting to produce an airtight definition of the term. They were aiming, rather, to provide a standard definition that could be used by researchers in this and subsequent studies to look for trends in the field.

<sup>2</sup> These interviewees were participants in an international conference on social justice philanthropy hosted by the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace in February of 2009. Interviewees were asked, “What do you mean by social justice philanthropy?” Their responses were then transcribed and analyzed.

cue from the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, we suggest in this essay that social justice philanthropy is not one kind of practice but a family of practices connected by certain “family resemblances.” Wittgenstein illustrates this approach in his *Philosophical Investigations* when he considers what it means for something to be a “game”:

I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? —Don’t say: “There *must* be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’”—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. —For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that ...

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarity of detail.

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances”; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. —And I shall say ‘games’ form a family.

“Social justice philanthropy” forms a family of practices in much the same way. And as Wittgenstein suggests, there are many ways we might choose to describe the family resemblances among these practices.

What’s most striking about this approach is that what starts out as an academic exercise in definition quickly becomes a source of both power and caution for practitioners. We noticed that consciously or unconsciously, grantmakers appealed to certain well-established lines of thought or “traditions” of social justice, some that are very old and all of which have extensive literatures. We thought these traditions—in this essay we describe eight of them—would provide one interesting way of describing the resemblances among groups of social justice grantmakers. There was a subset of funders, for example, who grounded their work in a human rights framework, and who could thereby draw on many centuries of human rights thought and practice to strengthen their efforts. Just about every thrust and parry possible between human rights advocates and those who resist them has been attempted and reported on, and practitioners who work in this framework can incorporate these lessons into their efforts. The same goes for the other social justice traditions described in Part 1, below.

The “caution” alluded to earlier is this: many years of thought and practice have also uncovered critical weaknesses in all of the social justice traditions, the human rights framework included. We would be foolish to ignore these lessons of history as we go about our work. And as this essay makes clear, how we *think* about social justice has clear implications for the strategies we devise and the tactics we adopt.

Social justice traditions are not mutually exclusive, and most social justice grantmakers appear to work in multiple frameworks. Consider, as an illustration of this multiplicity of views, a publication from the Opportunity Agenda titled, “Real Solutions, American Values: A Winning Narrative on Immigration.” This fascinating document suggests messages for advocates who are gearing up to work on immigration reform in the United States. The second talking point reads as follows:

The most prominent positive values behind the core narrative are fairness and accountability. Many progressive audiences also see freedom from exploitation as important. And many native-born Latinos and African Americans view equality as important, when it comes to how immigrants from different countries are treated.

This message is grounded in the “shared values” tradition discussed in this essay. A little further on, the authors write:

Due process and fair treatment in the justice system are basic human rights, and respecting them is a crucial part of who we are as a nation.

Here the authors suggest a message very much from the human rights tradition. This shifting from one tradition to another is common among social justice practitioners. It has the benefit of enabling them to communicate effectively with multiple audiences. It also enables them to adopt ideas and draw strength from multiple schools of thought and practice.

Our hope is that social justice grantmakers will be able to draw both clarity and inspiration from this essay, that they’ll see themselves as connected across space and time with colleagues who have sown and are sowing similar fields. We see this essay as a living document that others will add to and subtract from as time passes. Our most fervent wish is that it will, in some way, ultimately serve the cause of social justice.

The Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace commissioned this essay. The careful reader will note, however, that we do not explicitly discuss the issue of peace. Social injustices that remain unaddressed over a prolonged period of time can certainly contribute to societal division and violent conflict. While the violence that ensues can sometimes overshadow the initial injustices, it is critical that any sustainable peace-building processes take into account these injustices in seeking to bring violence to an end. Careful attention to the intersections between social justice philanthropy, local participation, and peace building is critical to achieving a long-term commitment to nonviolent change.<sup>3</sup>

The sections of this paper are organized as follows:

- A brief summary of the philosophical traditions related to social justice, including examples of investments that reflect those traditions.
- A brief discussion of the difficulties facing the proposed taxonomy, including some challenges for taking this work to a deeper level.
- A matrix presenting the philosophical traditions and the characteristics of social justice philanthropy (see Appendix 1). The reader might find it helpful to examine this matrix before reading the remainder of this document.

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<sup>3</sup> Our thanks to Avila Kilmurray for this suggestion.

## Part 1: Eight Social Justice Traditions

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The Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace invited funders around the world to reflect on a term they often use to describe their work: *social justice philanthropy*. While the term is used liberally, many who use it—in struggling to define exactly what they mean—end up making a series of statements that say something about their values, goals, and approaches to investing in change. Sometimes they speak about the kinds of groups they support; sometimes they discuss how they focus their work. Often, they relate their work (explicitly or implicitly) to philosophical traditions that undergird their efforts. In other words, they describe one or more of a family of concepts into which their work fits, but are mostly unable to provide a concise definition. Consider this effort from one participant in a recent conversation among funders:

Social justice philanthropy means supporting work that is linked to social transformation, equal access to human and civil rights, redistribution of all aspects of well-being, and respect of all beings; and promoting diversity and equity across categories of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture, and disability status.

This definition, in fact, captures a range of philosophical perspectives that describe the nature of social justice, as well as some values and an array of more specific issues for which support might be provided. It is one description of social justice philanthropy, but is not comprehensive, nor does it clarify whether it represents an absolute definition or merely the selection of some attributes that describe this particular funder's work. Most likely it is simply one funder's attempt to make sense of a complex set of ideas and philanthropic actions. Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>4</sup> first proposed using the idea of a *family resemblance* to define abstract concepts. Instead of assuming that every instance of social justice philanthropy shares one or several essential features, we might assume instead that they're related by a series of overlapping similarities. In other words, it is likely that in looking across the various characterizations of social justice philanthropy, certain family resemblances would emerge.

This paper represents one step toward describing members of the *family of social justice grantmaking*. We asked a hundred practitioners to define social justice grantmaking. We then looked for similarities among their descriptions—the “family resemblances”—alluded to earlier. We found that these similarities fell into eight categories, which we refer to as social justice “traditions.” We chose the term *tradition* because to each of these eight classes there corresponded a well-defined body of literature as well as a community of practitioners. We labeled the eight traditions as follows:

1. Structural Injustice
2. Universal Human Rights
3. Fairness / Equal Distribution of Resources
4. Legalism / Rule of Law
5. Empowerment
6. Shared Values
7. Cultural Relativism
8. Triple Bottom Line

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<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. New York: MacMillan.

We describe each of these eight traditions below. We noted that most practitioners do their work by appealing to *multiple* traditions. Based on the analysis just described, we developed a matrix that enables funders to more systematically examine their work across two key axes: 1) the philosophical traditions to which particular interpretations of justice are related, and 2) the characteristics of their practical application. This matrix is included as Appendix 1.

The philosophical traditions on which we base our social justice grantmaking influence how we construct our theories of change, how we choose our strategies and tactics, and how we conduct and understand the impact of our grantmaking. One immediate goal of this paper is to begin to sort social justice grantmaking efforts into clearer categories of work so that grantmakers can better understand and articulate how their work is related to that of others. Our ultimate objectives are to help funders adopt social justice grantmaking practices, provide support for them as they make social justice investments, and increase the quality of social justice work.

## Structural Injustice Tradition

From this perspective, when evidence of inequality—in outcomes, access, or voice, for example—is encountered, the structure of our institutions, policies, and decision-making practices are viewed as the potential cause or at least as a mechanism that helps perpetuate the inequality. In the American context, the idea of structural injustice can be traced back at least to 1835 when Alexis de Tocqueville argued that the peculiar nature of American individualism produces a populace blind to social structures and the ways these can both constrain and promote personal freedom and well being.<sup>5</sup> This blindness allows privileged individuals to deny both their indebtedness to society and its structures, and their moral responsibility for the very structural injustices that advantage them. This same blindness also serves to mute the responses of those disadvantaged by these structures. This happens for two reasons: first, they also have been conditioned to understand their disadvantage as the result of their own choices rather than the consequence of structural constraints, and second, as they break free of this notion and begin to object, the dominant society whose self-interest lies in protecting the dominant paradigm, takes aggressive action against them.

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in the structural injustice tradition, grantmakers will need to contemplate the enormity and complexity of the task at hand. The structures that support injustice are ubiquitous in the United States and around the world, and are camouflaged in the sense that the faces of the elites whose self-interest shapes policies, laws, and institutional practices are often not plainly visible. It's far easier to see the institutions than the decision-making that shapes them. In the early 21st century, despite the fact that institutions as prominent as the World Bank recognize structural injustice, this recognition has contributed little to the actual transformation of policies and practices worldwide.<sup>6</sup> Just as Turner (2008) suggests in his analysis of Tocqueville, people can be desensitized to the very fact of structural injustice, making it all the harder to eliminate.<sup>7</sup> In the American context, for example, in order to justify visible disparities in individual outcomes and in order to maintain

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<sup>5</sup> Tocqueville, Alexis (1835). *Democracy in America*. London: Saunders and Otley.

<sup>6</sup> Sobhan, Rehman (2006). Poverty as Injustice: Refocusing the Policy Agenda. In Keith B. Griffin, & James K. Boyce (Eds.), *Human Development in an Era of Globalization* (pp. 325-343). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>7</sup> Turner, Jack (2008). American Individualism and Structural Injustice: Tocqueville, Gender, and Race. *Polity*, 40, April 2008, (pp. 197-215).

the myth of unfettered opportunity, the ways that social structures function to constrain the opportunities of some and promote the opportunities of others must be ignored. According to Turner, structural constraints in the American context are most prominently apparent in the areas of race and gender. To quote one proponent of this view:

[Racial] disparities are too high to be explained by individual choices or behavior. Nor can they be explained completely by conscious racism on the part of individuals. To understand racial disparities in the U.S. and why many of us across race lack the health care, education and quality jobs we need, we must look across our policies that have structured society.<sup>8</sup>

The question of whether individualist ideology facilitates structural injustice is a recurring theme in American politics. W.E.B. Du Bois suggested in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) that the ideology of individualism obstructed America's social and economic democratization.<sup>9</sup> After the Civil War, because most white Americans believed that any individual could succeed through self-discipline and hard work, there were major objections to federal programs such as the Freedmen's Bureau, which sought to provide African Americans the economic underpinnings of freedom. In a 1986 National Election Study, 59 percent of white respondents agreed that "it's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites," and 61 percent agreed that "most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried."<sup>10</sup>

From Robert Gordon's legal perspective, the only remedy for structural injustice is to reform the structures/institutions/systems that allow the injustice to occur.<sup>11</sup> Therefore the primary project of social justice work—including social justice philanthropy—should be to identify and eliminate the structural causes of persistent inequality or marginalization. Potential challenges to this work are likely to include those that originate from a specific cultural character, such as the tradition of American individualism, and from those who question whether such work is attempting to right past wrongs or to prevent new ones via some form of questionable social engineering. The kind of analysis that would support a charge of structural injustice can also be quite involved and require significant expertise.

**Example:** The work of Funders for LGBTQ Issues on a project called Common Vision focuses explicitly on structural change. Common Vision has brought together two cohorts of funders working in the areas of environmental justice/clean water, and food justice/food security. The groups began by building a theory of change, then considered the larger question of structural transformation, and are now looking at the issues—environmental and food justice—in direct relationship to structural change. Common Vision emphasizes altering policies, procedures, and practices at multiple levels and across multiple dimensions. So, for example, the structural change they would envision around food justice would focus on changing agricultural subsidies, immigrant labor laws, and food delivery systems, in addition to altering policies and practices at every level of the systems that put food on people's plates. In their schema, changing the food policies of a single school district, for example, would not be expansive or far-reaching enough to qualify as structural change,

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<sup>8</sup> Center for Social Inclusion website: [http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/struct\\_racism.html](http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/struct_racism.html).

<sup>9</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. (1935). *Black Reconstruction in America, 1869-1880*. New York: Touchstone Books.

<sup>10</sup> Kinder, Donald, & Mendelberg, Tali (2000). Individualism Reconsidered: Principles and Prejudice in Contemporary American Opinion. In David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, & Lawrence Bobo (Eds.), *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America*, 44-74. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon, Robert W. (1996). Undoing Historical Injustice. In Austin Sarat & Thomas Kearns (Eds.), *Justice and Injustice in Law and Legal Theory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

because they see structural change as addressing the relationships between multiple, interconnected systems. *Synopsis from interview with Ellen Gurzinsky at Funders for LGBTQ Issues.*

**Example:** The Ms. Foundation for Women’s investment in structural change is guided by its new strategic framework, *Creating Connections: Strategies for Stronger Movements*. The Ms. Foundation is helping to make new and deeper connections across race, class, and gender, and across issues, constituencies, policymaking levels, and geography. The goal of this approach is to build greater power to advance women’s grassroots solutions and promote long-term, inclusive changes in policy and the broader culture. Each year, the Ms. Foundation invests in over 150 national, state, and local groups that connect with one another and across issues to address structural barriers to equity and justice. For example, the Ms. Foundation supports organizing that brings incarcerated women, social service providers, abuse counselors and policy advocates together to reduce the number of women in prison in Alabama. The Foundation addresses crucial links between access to public transportation and access to reproductive justice for migrant women farmworkers in rural Texas. And it builds the collective power of women of color and low-income women across the US to promote inclusive and equitable health care reform. *Synopsis from interview with Sara Gould, Ms. Foundation for Women.*

## Universal Human Rights Tradition

From this popular perspective, social justice is achieved by acknowledging and respecting the human rights of all individuals. The concept of a “human right” as most people understand it, is of recent vintage, whereas its cousin, the “natural right” can be traced as far back as the ancient philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and to thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many human rights activists appeal to contemporary sources such as the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, among other things, provides a basis for criticizing the actions and inactions of national governments.<sup>12</sup> The rights asserted in this document include the right to freedom from certain kinds of interference (e.g., freedom from slavery or servitude), as well as the right to various kinds of benefits (e.g., the right to rest and leisure).

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in the universal human rights tradition, grantmakers will need to understand both its strengths and its vulnerabilities. An extensive literature has been produced that both defends and attacks the notion of a “human right” or of a right *tout court*. The themes addressed by this literature are fairly predictable: (1) We can fairly easily understand our rights under the law, but how do we make sense of a human right or a natural right? (2) In advocating for certain human rights, are we thereby advocating for some kind of international adjudicating body? (3) Many commentators have noted that in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, out of 30 articles, 28 specify our rights, but only one of these (article 29) mentions anything about our *duties* to the community in which we enjoy these rights. Some American readers might also recall that in the 1980s and 1990s, many social conservatives made sport of mocking the great profusion of rights that seemed to appear out of nowhere, with each new right adduced to serve the liberal cause of the moment.

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<sup>12</sup> Available online at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.



Adopting a universal human rights orientation also has clear implications for the development of a grantmaking strategy. To begin with, human rights, as understood in the global North, have no natural cognates in many cultural contexts, and there are many who deny there is any such thing as the kind of “right” claimed by human rights advocates. Does our grantmaking strategy assume that the notion of a human right is essentially unproblematic? Consider, for example, recent research by The Opportunity Agenda, which showed that many people surveyed:

... held a conditional view of who should have certain human rights. For example, undocumented immigrants, in the minds of most key audience members, have forfeited some of their human rights because they have broken the law to be in the United States. Therefore, many question, and even object to, undocumented immigrants receiving health care.<sup>13</sup>

This same study also found that “when members of the key audiences begin to distinguish between rights which are *protected*—freedom from torture, freedom of speech, etc.—from rights which are *provided*—health care, education, etc.—we begin to see some hesitation about calling the latter human rights.”<sup>14</sup> The lesson here is not to jettison the human rights perspective in social justice grantmaking, but to understand clearly the conceptual and practical barriers that will stand in its way.

**Example:** For the Reconciliation and Human Rights Program of Atlantic Philanthropies, rights are the cornerstones of social justice. Its work supports (a) a culture in which everyone’s rights are more likely to be respected and protected, (b) advancement of policies, laws, and practices to protect human rights and the rule of law, (c) mobilized constituencies working for human rights and reconciliation, and (d) building an enduring capacity to create lasting change and promote human rights and reconciliation. Atlantic’s overall grant portfolio includes support for groups working on aging, health, children and young people, and reconciliation and human rights. *Synopsis from interview with Martin O’Brien, and the Atlantic Philanthropies website.*<sup>15</sup>

**Example:** The Global Fund for Women advances women’s human rights worldwide. The fund raises money from a variety of sources and makes grants to women-led organizations that promote the economic security, health, safety, education and leadership of women and girls. Grants are made based on an analysis of the issues that interfere with the rights of women and girls. For example, a group in rural Kenya is being funded to provide clean water, improve women’s health, protect girls’ right to education, and boost women’s economic status. Another grant supports a women’s federation and its legal aid division to advance the rights of rural women by focusing on HIV/AIDS education and awareness. By targeting the complex web of issues that surround injustice, the Global Fund believes it can defend women’s human rights and promote social justice. *Synopsis from the Global Fund for Women website.*<sup>16</sup>

## Fairness/Equal Distribution of Resources Tradition

From the perspective of the fairness/equal distribution of resources tradition, social justice consists of equality—or near equality—of *outcome* rather than in equality of opportunity.

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<sup>13</sup> Available online at [http://opportunityagenda.org/public\\_opinion\\_research\\_2009](http://opportunityagenda.org/public_opinion_research_2009).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The Atlantic Philanthropies online at <http://atlanticphilanthropies.org/about/management>.

<sup>16</sup> The Global Fund for Women online at <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/cms/about-gfw/who-we-are/>.

Fairness in the process may be important, but it is how things end up that really matters from this perspective. Distributive justice is concerned with the allocation of goods in a society, and a community that functions by the principles of distributive justice is one in which there are no significant inequalities that result from this distribution. Strict distributive justice requires the equal allocation of goods to all members of society. Trying to produce more equal outcomes can be undertaken via the deliberate *redistribution* of resources, or through the creation of systems that distribute resources more evenly from the outset. Redistribution, of course, involves taking resources from those whose share is viewed as unfairly large, and giving them to those whose share seems unfairly small. Thus redistribution will likely cause resentment for some, while adjusting systems to distribute resources more equally from the outset will be slightly less controversial, if only because the manipulations will be less visible.

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in the tradition of fairness and equal distribution of resources, grantmakers must understand exactly how they will apply the concepts, and decide how they will overcome the challenges posed by such factors as time (e.g., intergenerational distribution and accumulation), global/international considerations (e.g., how this could happen given current structures of governments and economies), measures (e.g., standard of living vs. absolute wealth), desert (e.g., why an individual who invests no effort should be entitled to an equal share), and other philosophical and utilitarian considerations.

In its less pure forms, the idea of fairness in the distribution of resources has been diffused as interpretations and practical applications have multiplied. Some suggested applications are more concerned with achieving the “best” (a term itself open to interpretation) possible results—e.g., equal distribution is unnecessary as long as everyone has more than they started with; some are a response to righting past wrongs—e.g., redistribution in post-apartheid South Africa, an application which inevitably raises claims of reverse discrimination; and some are feminist critiques which claim that principles of distributive justice tend to ignore the unique circumstances of women as caregivers and suggest that practical applications must reflect the fact that women spend less of their lifetimes in the market economy than men and are far more engaged in unpaid household labor.

The idea of a fair distribution of resources is generally linked to concepts of human rights, human dignity, and the common good, and is grounded in what civilization is said to owe its individual members in equal proportion. But, as the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* argues, “Governments continuously make and change laws affecting the distribution of economic benefits and burdens in their societies. Almost all changes, from the standard tax and industry laws through to divorce laws have some distributive effect, and, as a result, different societies have different distributions.”<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, this is a highly contested space, and in its practical application has individuals of all political persuasions using various arguments to defend their own perspectives on what a “just” distribution of resources would look like.

**Example:** PARFUND (Philippine Agrarian Reform Foundation for National Development) supports programs and projects of small and emerging NGOs and peoples’ organizations engaged in poverty reduction among rural communities in the Philippines. The approach is a redistributive one that focuses on areas defined by the Philippine agrarian reform

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<sup>17</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice-distributive/>

movement. It supports initiatives that create resource tenure and improve productivity in rural areas. PARFUND works for land and water rights for the marginalized sectors of Philippine society, including farmers, indigenous peoples, and fisher folk, and for the agrarian reform that is the centerpiece of farmers' struggles. It uses a holistic rather than a highly centralized blueprint for rural development, and bases its assistance on the primary resources and strengths of individual communities. PARFUND believes that by supporting the redistribution of the means of sustainable livelihoods, including land rights, it can have a positive social justice impact. *Synopsis from Philippine Agrarian Reform Foundation for National Development website.*<sup>18</sup>

## Legalism/Rule of Law Tradition

From the legalism or rule of law tradition, social justice consists of protecting marginalized communities through the rigorous enforcement of existing laws. Litigation in this case replaces agitation. This tradition emerges out of the classical liberal tradition, in which *equality before the law* is a grounding principle. Here the idea is that if every individual is subject to precisely the same laws, and no individual or group enjoys special rights or privileges under the law, justice prevails. Hayek actually argued that equality before the law is fundamentally incompatible with material equality as a social justice principle, as strictly equal treatment before the law will inevitably produce unequal material outcomes.<sup>19</sup> In this tradition, the state is expected to provide a just legal framework that encourages people toward productive lifestyles, and with this legal framework in place and upheld, society is expected to run itself and produce just outcomes. The laws provided are understood to be value-neutral, i.e., the state can only claim to be supporting justice if the laws it upholds reflect no values that might indicate a preference for a particular vision of the good or provide an advantage to a particular class of people.

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in a legalism/rule of law tradition, grantmakers may find themselves at odds with other social justice perspectives that do emphasize some version of equality of outcome as an important element. For example, some people would argue that the results of the US Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, established a value-neutral law that enabled states to protect vulnerable citizens—i.e., it required that public school students be treated equally regardless of race, and ruled that segregated schools violated the idea of equal treatment. The law, once established, provided the mechanism for a vulnerable group to gain equal treatment. Others would argue that *Brown v. Board of Education* would have had a different outcome had not community organizing resulted in a series of judicial battles over interpretations of the law. Thus, even within the legalism tradition, there is room for maneuvering via challenging the courts to establish an interpretation of the law that actually produces just outcomes.

Recent judicial decisions on gay marriage in the United States provide a contemporary illustration of the legalism/rule of law tradition in action. While many who oppose the legal changes required to enable same-sex couples to marry would argue that the values that support such changes are immoral, in fact the position supporting gay marriage may be more value-neutral than they care to admit. In establishing laws that legalize gay marriage, the courts would actually be rejecting the conservative values that drive current interpretations of

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<sup>18</sup> PARFUND online at [http://www.parfund.net/contents.php?go=peasant\\_initiatives](http://www.parfund.net/contents.php?go=peasant_initiatives).

<sup>19</sup> Hayek, Friedrich (1960). *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

marriage laws. From the pure legalism point of view, this is completely appropriate as the law would then be the position of supporting justice via a law that treats all individuals equally.

**Example:** Lambda Legal Defense Fund in Iowa provided support for a Director of Marriage Equality Education staffer working at the One Iowa Education Fund to advance a coordinated and compelling campaign for marriage equality statewide and to continue education and other organizing work around Lambda’s marriage equality case in Iowa, *Varnum v. Brien*. Lambda Legal is a national organization pursuing high-impact litigation, public education and advocacy on behalf of equality and civil rights for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and people with HIV. Its work changes laws, policies and ideas. Lambda makes the case for equality in court and through education, and helps individuals obtain and advance their rights. *Synopsis from Lambda Legal Defense Fund and Funders for LGBTQ Issues Funders websites.*<sup>20</sup>

**Example:** The Media Foundation for West Africa supports activities that promote media/press freedom and individual freedom of expression. Two of its major strategies—the legal defense of journalists prosecuted on criminal charges, and media law and policy reform—are grounded in the idea that law can be used to protect freedom of the press and individuals. The Media Foundation provides defense and support to media representatives whose expressions are criminalized by states, and it defends the speech of journalists who are unable to afford an attorney. In the area of media law and policy reform the Foundation engages in legislative processes for media law reform—for example, reviewing proposed legislation for protections of free expression or exposing bad laws or repressive legislation. The Foundation works through coalitions for legislation that open up freedom of expression and freedom of the press. *Synopsis from interview with Kwame Karikari, Media Foundation of West Africa.*

## Empowerment Tradition

From the empowerment perspective, social justice is achieved through increasing the social, economic, and political strength of individuals, groups, and communities that have been marginalized in a given society. This tradition suggests that equality of opportunity—to have a voice, to participate, to be part of the process—is the goal, rather than any specific outcome that may be achieved through the process of participation. Empowerment may involve building the confidence, understanding and awareness, and skill sets of individuals and collectives as part of a broader strategy to help them take effective action on a specific issue or cause, or to help them overcome the negative results of some form of marginalization (e.g., race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or disability). The “tools” associated with this tradition include voter registration drives, community leadership training, community organizing, and other related interventions. Early thinkers in empowerment include Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, both of whom developed educational pedagogies designed to help the poor and oppressed free themselves (in Freire’s case),<sup>21</sup> and to help concerned people challenge justice systems (in the case of Horton and the Highlander School).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Funders for LGBTQ Issues online at <http://www.lgbtfunders.org/news/news.cfm?newsID=65>; Lambda Legal online at <http://www.lambdalegal.org/issues/marriage-relationships-family/>

<sup>21</sup> Freire, Paulo (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

<sup>22</sup> Jacobs, Dale (2003). *The Myles Horton Reader: Education for Social Change*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in an empowerment tradition, grantmakers must be able to reconcile the more concrete beliefs about social justice they may hold with the idea that justice derives primarily from the ability to take action on one's own behalf. The explicit rights associated with this tradition have to do with people's ability to participate on an equal footing with others; there are no concomitant guarantees that equal access to decision-making processes (e.g., to voting) will not produce some other form of injustice. Of course grantmakers can avoid this conundrum by focusing their empowerment strategies on groups that have a specific outcome in mind that matches an outcome the grantmaker finds desirable and fair.

While empowerment is sometimes construed as occurring along a linear path (i.e., empowerment builds from the social, to the economic, to the political), the notion of being fully empowered generally, though not always, includes obtaining equal political power for all members of a given society. The World Bank's definition (below) is less explicit on this point, although some political power is implied in the proposed goal of enabling people to transform choices into outcomes, and to impact the fair use of assets:

Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions that both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional contexts which govern the use of these assets.<sup>23</sup>

Several other approaches bear a resemblance to the empowerment tradition in that they also seek to help prepare individuals, groups, and communities to engage on a more equal footing with the more powerful entities and systems surrounding them. For example, asset-based or strength-based community development approaches encourage community members to build on the capacities they already possess, rather than internalize anyone else's definition of them as somehow deficient. From this perspective, empowerment occurs as people begin to take action (social, economic, and political) based on increased confidence in their own capacities and potentialities. Capacity building is another related approach that focuses more on building specific skills sets and providing tools to help people build better lives.

**Example:** The National Foundation of India makes grants to help communities work for more just and humane social relationships in their micro-contexts. The Foundation believes the best way to approach social justice is to increase the ability of ordinary people to be autonomous agents for change and resist oppression in their midst. It looks for opportunities to support organizations that do constructive work to alter social and power relations. NFI's vision is to help organizations do grassroots work that is self-critical and sustained. *Synopsis from interview with Ajay Mehta, National Foundation for India.*

**Example:** The Community Foundation for the Western Region of Zimbabwe works to promote social justice by empowering local leaders such as village heads and kraal heads to play a pivotal role in the promotion of social justice. Communities have learned the importance of local leadership, and residents are increasingly able to make decisions on community issues and approach local leaders confidently because those leaders have a role in ensuring that the community's decisions are adhered to. One entry point for the Foundation is through working with community leaders to build village development

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<sup>23</sup> Available at the World Bank's PovertyNet website online at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTEMPOWERMENT/0,,contentMDK:20272299~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:486411~isCURL:Y,00.html>

committees and ward development committees and encouraging engagement in them at the grassroots level. The Foundation works with local leaders to make sure that children's rights are not violated, for example, and that the resources of orphans are not taken from them. The Foundation works with school development committees to ensure that all children go to school whether they have the money to do so or not. In cases where there are financial constraints, the Foundation has helped set up a system in which the child's guardian pays in the form of labor that benefits the school. *Synopsis from interview with Inviolatta Moyo Mpuli of the Community Foundation for the Western Region of Zimbabwe.*

## Shared Values Tradition

The idea here is simple: social justice can be most effectively promoted by appealing to shared values. These values may be explicit or implicit, but are treated as universal—values like fairness, respect for human life, or equality of opportunity. Because they are associated with worth, meaning and desire, values are a primary source of motivation in people's lives. Shared values are considered to be the foundation of ethics, community, and culture. When people's values are met or matched, they feel a sense of satisfaction, harmony, and rapport. When their values are not met or matched, people feel dissatisfied, incongruent, or violated—that is, they feel an injustice has been done. In some ways, this tradition reflects beliefs in opposition to those associated with cultural relativism (see below); that is, shared values are important because they do *not* change from group to group or situation to situation.

Scholars in this field contend that in groups, organizations, and social systems, values form a type of non-physical framework that surrounds all of the interactions of the people within the system. Values, and related beliefs, determine how events and communications are interpreted and given meaning. Thus, they are the key to motivation and culture. Shared values and beliefs are the glue that holds social groups together. Conflicts of values are the source of disharmony and dissension, and in the case of this inquiry, a source of injustice. From the sociological perspective, a complex web of systemic interactions support the development of shared values, but other sciences suggest the much more straightforward view that shared values—fairness, for example—can also be located in other species, and our tendency to feel a sense of injustice may simply be the result of evolutionary processes.<sup>24</sup>

Religious and spiritual beliefs are often associated with the shared values tradition, and it is common for the idea of social justice to emerge from both religious values and spiritual beliefs. Some people would even claim that values can only emerge from religious principles or spiritual traditions, though in its purest interpretation, the tradition of shared values suggests values that exist outside the scope of any specific set of religious beliefs.

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in a shared values tradition, grantmakers may be confronted by a frustrating sense that even within a given group values seem difficult to agree upon. Joseph Heath argues that values aren't actually shared and even where they are, there are perverse incentives existing outside of value systems that can drive how things happen in a social group.<sup>25</sup> One example Heath provides is wages. Although a shared value is that people

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<sup>24</sup> See [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0917\\_030917\\_monkeyfairness.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0917_030917_monkeyfairness.html).

<sup>25</sup> Heath, Joseph (2009). *Filthy Lucre: Economics for People Who Hate Capitalism*. New York: Random House.

should be paid salaries based on the work they perform, this does not happen. Rather, wage levels are often based on other considerations such as the difficulty of replacing employees doing a particular job. If values are not actually shared within a given group or society, grantmakers are left struggling to find common values on which to ground their arguments for social justice.

**Example:** The Annie E. Casey Foundation works with other organizations on *Stronger Together*, a program defined by values shared across generations. By starting with the fact that generations share the same needs, goals, and desires, the program seeks to refocus the larger national discussion in the United States toward solutions to issues like health care that take children, youth, families, and older adults into account. Embedding their work in the values that generations share allows Casey to focus policy discussions away from divisive intergenerational competition, and toward policies that produce just outcomes for all. Stronger Together has identified eleven key areas of policy convergence across generations, including budget and tax policy, education and community engagement, environment, and economic security. *Synopsis from Stronger Together report available on the Annie E. Casey Foundation website.*<sup>26</sup>

**Example:** Funders Together is a network of foundations in the United States who have come together to support strategic grantmaking that reflects their shared values about the need to end homelessness in the United States. While not a grantmaking organization per se, Funders Together supports members in sharing grantmaking strategies and investment opportunities, connects grantmakers to build partnerships and leverage funds, supports grantmakers in their own community activities, and helps access experts on local, state, and national policy governing the homeless. The values this group shares include six principles for implementing their long-term vision on ending homelessness. *Synopsis from Funders Together website.*<sup>27</sup>

## Cultural Relativism Tradition

From the cultural relativism perspective, social justice consists in learning to value—or at least respect—worldviews and worldways that exist outside one’s own culture. Cultural relativism is the principle that what an individual believes and how he acts should be evaluated in terms of that individual’s own culture. The origins of cultural relativism go as far back as Kant, who argued that human experiences of the world are mediated through the mind, which is influenced by sensibilities that emerge from time and place.<sup>28</sup> In the late 19th century, the anthropologist Franz Boas discussed how understanding the workings of a given civilization was only possible in relation to its own context. Cultural relativism is related to the question, *how do we know what we know?* Those who favor this perspective would respond that we know things to be true because they are true in the context in which we live. Members of indigenous communities who believe the rights associated with their own culture have been abrogated by the culture now dominating their land may rely on the cultural relativism tradition to explain their grievances. In many ways the opposite of the shared values tradition, the cultural relativism tradition suggests that values are not necessarily shared across groups.

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<sup>26</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation online at <http://www.aecf.org/SearchResults.aspx?keywords=stronger%20together&source=topsearch>

<sup>27</sup> Funders Together online at [http://www.endlongtermhomelessness.org/about\\_the\\_partnership/funding\\_principles\\_for\\_ending.aspx](http://www.endlongtermhomelessness.org/about_the_partnership/funding_principles_for_ending.aspx)

<sup>28</sup> Need citation



If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in a cultural relativism tradition, grantmakers will need to differentiate between the legitimate claims of different groups—for example, indigenous groups that have suffered genocide at the hands of their conquerors—and claims by regimes that seek to defend their own extreme behavior—for example, Iran and its recent abuses against women.<sup>29</sup> Certainly ethnocentrism—the view one’s own group is at the center of everything, and that other groups should be judged by the standards prevalent in our own group—is worthy of challenge if we are concerned about broad principles of justice. But cultural relativist arguments can easily be made by groups that do not share a larger understanding of social justice.

Anthropologist Melville Herskovits used the idea of cultural relativism to express concern about the work of the Commission on Human Rights in preparing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the mid-20th century. Because primarily people from Western societies developed the Declaration, Herskovits was concerned that the rights defined would reflect values that were not universal:

The problem is thus to formulate a statement of human rights that will do more than phrase respect for the individual as individual. It must also take into full account the individual as a member of a social group of which he is part, whose sanctioned modes of life shape his behavior, and with whose fate his own is thus inextricably bound . . . Today the problem is complicated by the fact that the Declaration must be of worldwide applicability. It must embrace and recognize the validity of many different ways of life. It will not be convincing to the Indonesian, the African, the Chinese, if it lies on the same plane as like documents of an earlier period. The rights of Man in the Twentieth Century cannot be circumscribed by the standards of any single culture, or be dictated by the aspirations of any single people.<sup>30</sup>

Disagreements about the Universal Declaration are far from resolved. On the IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis website, sponsored by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the debate is ongoing. Some still argue that only culturally relative rights make sense, and reject the notion of a universal definition of rights, which they contend will inevitably end up representing Western perspectives. Others suggest that the industrial powers of the West are the worst cultural relativists in that they apply a certain interpretation of rights to their own citizens, while reserving a lesser category of rights for citizens of other nations.

**Example:** The Indigenous Peoples Survival Foundation works to promote understanding between ancient traditional peoples and modern civil society. In addition, the Foundation endeavors to support the connecting of indigenous knowledge and global resources to promote economic prosperity for needy people. In the Himalayas, the Foundation works with the Kalash and Khow tribes to ensure that a culture that has survived for over two millennia will not be lost as a result of cultural exploitation and uncontrolled tourism and deforestation. Justice for these tribes consists in gaining control over their ancestral lands

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<sup>29</sup> Islam: Governing Under Sharia. Available at <<http://www.cfr.org/publication/8034/>> and Afshari, Reza (2001). *Human Rights in Iran: The Abuse of Cultural Relativism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

<sup>30</sup> Herskovits, Melville (1947). Statement on Human Rights. *American Anthropologist* 49 (4) 539-543. Presented to the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association revised and delivered to the Commission on Human Rights.



and being able to support themselves through their traditional means of herding livestock and small agriculture. *Synopsis from IPSF website.*<sup>31</sup>

**Example:** The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation supports indigenous communities in the United States by strengthening both traditional cultural practice and contemporary expression. One kind of social injustice occurs when dominant peoples delegitimize indigenous cultures in their own homelands. In these cases social justice philanthropy may consist in reinvigorating the cultural practices that have been diminished, outlawed or forgotten due to the actions of the colonial state, and encouraging free expression by the artists and culture-bearers that are citizens of those nations. Supporting the revitalization of communities' dances, stories, songs, images and other traditional knowledge, as well as their contemporary expressions, are important to the protection of Native peoples and the preservation of their self-determination and sovereignty. *Synopsis from an interview with Betsy Richards, Ford Foundation.*

## Triple Bottom Line Tradition

From the newly emerging triple bottom line perspective, the profit motive associated with the market is entirely compatible with the idea of creating socially responsible solutions to the world's problems. According to Savitz, the triple bottom line is the place where corporate and societal interests intersect.<sup>32</sup> The triple bottom line suggests that justice can be served through the use of an expanded definition for measuring business performance that takes economic, ecological, and social factors into account. These are known as the three pillars of the triple bottom line.<sup>33</sup> Following several decades of very public and egregious corporate scandals (e.g., Enron, Worldcom), corporate social responsibility started to become a more salient idea for many. A socially responsible corporate policy is understood to function as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism whereby business monitors itself and ensures its own adherence to law, ethical standards, and international norms. In the ideal application, businesses would embrace responsibility for the impact of their activities on the environment, consumers, employees, and communities, and proactively promote the public interest by voluntarily eliminating practices that might harm the public sphere, regardless of their legality. The practice of corporate social responsibility through attention to the triple bottom line is subject to much debate and criticism. Some assert that it is in the interest of businesses to be socially conscious citizens; some argue that it is merely window dressing, a sneaky way to increase profits; still others argue that allowing corporations to self-monitor preempts the role of appropriate watchdogs (e.g., government) over corporate behavior. In its ideal form, it certainly appears to make sense: Why not make the world a better place through profit for good?

The triple bottom line tradition intersects with philanthropy for social justice in several ways. In its purer form, it might entail investing only in sustainable organizations that can demonstrate their concern for all stakeholders in their domain and take responsibility for the impact of their work across multiple indicators of well being, thus increasing the likelihood of just outcomes. It might also entail accepting donations only from sources that adhere to these

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<sup>31</sup> Indigenous Peoples Survival Foundation online at [http://indigenouspeople.org//index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://indigenouspeople.org//index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

<sup>32</sup> Savitz, Andrew, with Weber, Karl, (2006). *The Triple Bottom Line*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

<sup>33</sup> A term used by John Elkington, (1998) in *Cannibals with Forks: the Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*. Stony Creek, CT: New Society Publishers.

same principles, thus avoiding a contradiction of purpose in the flow of resources. But looser definitions of philanthropy and justice have allowed for innovative interpretations of the whole idea of the triple bottom line and corporate responsibility.

Creative capitalism is a case in point. From this perspective, social justice is a property of systems of exchange that are free from well-meaning but ultimately destructive forms of market intervention and social engineering. Popularized by Microsoft chairman Bill Gates in 2008 at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, this view suggests that an emerging form of creative capitalism can *both* generate profits and solve the problem of inequality.<sup>34</sup> This model recognizes that disparities between rich and poor are greater in the present than ever before, but suggests that market forces represent the most appropriate tool with which to overcome these disparities. In creative capitalism, the business acumen of corporations will lead to new and innovative ways of solving the problems of the poor, and people in business will be motivated to elevate their natural caring impulses to the same level of importance as making a profit. Gates argues that finding a sustainable way to help those in the world who are likely never to have the resources to pay their own way will depend on the paired motivators of “self-interest and caring” and the paired systems of “capitalism and philanthropy.”<sup>35</sup> And Gates agrees with philosopher Adam Smith that when markets are regulated, the natural motivations of self-interest (profit) and caring (philanthropy) are derailed and inequalities are actually produced as a result.<sup>36</sup> Critics disagree. Noted economist Richard Posner argues on the blog he produces with Gary Becker, that Gates is simply wrong in the economic arguments he puts forward about creative capitalism. He suggests that altruism in business simply doesn’t stand up to scrutiny, and that “doing good” is a motivator only when it corresponds to an increase in the bottom line. Since companies will only engage in those activities that increase the bottom line, their good works will necessarily be limited. He also suggests that the whole notion of creative capitalism deflects attention away from questions about why so many people are poor in the first place.<sup>37</sup>

Some strategies that utilize the market as a mechanism for remedying the world’s social ills do appear to achieve a positive impact, at least in terms of investments made. Numerous consumer campaigns, for example, attempt to increase the sales of their products by encouraging consumers to think of themselves as philanthropists when a small percentage of each sale is donated to a worthy cause. These strategies range from shopping to support a nonprofit (e.g., iGive.com<sup>38</sup>), to shopping to support a specific cause (e.g., RED<sup>39</sup> and its fight against AIDS in Africa). Part of the attraction of these strategies is in how easy it is for people to “give”: all they have to do is something they want to do anyway, and they get the added benefit of feeling good about their generosity. But certainly not all of these giving opportunities reflect the true principles behind the original idea of the triple bottom line. Instead of expanding awareness of how one’s actions impact other people and the planet, here giving is distanced from every other element in the process of doing good. The commonalities across these different variations on

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<sup>34</sup> Available online at <http://www.weforum.org/en/events/ArchivedEvents/AnnualMeeting2008/index.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> Gates, Bill (2008). Making Capitalism More Creative. *Time Magazine*, July 31, 2008. Available online at <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1828069,00.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, Adam (1759). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. London: A. Millar.

<sup>37</sup> Posner, Richard. Bill Gates on Corporate Philanthropy. The Becker-Posner Blog can be found online at [http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/archives/2008/02/bill\\_gates\\_on\\_c.html](http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/archives/2008/02/bill_gates_on_c.html).

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.igive.com/isearch/index.cfm>.

<sup>39</sup> See <http://www.joinred.com/Splash.aspx>.

the theme of the triple bottom line are the ideas of profit and good. But these manifest themselves very differently: at one extreme profit is a byproduct of doing good, while at the other extreme, good is another product to be purchased out of profits.

If social justice grantmaking is to be grounded in the triple bottom line tradition or any of its variants, grantmakers must reconcile concerns about (1) the sources of the money they invest (and the unjust practices that may have supported its generation), (2) what they are actually trying to change, (3) how purely they are prepared to interpret the tradition's principles, and (4) the extent to which they are comfortable using the same forces to generate solutions to problems that many would argue represent at least part of the problem. They will probably need to ratchet up their understanding of the various arguments economists make about how markets work in order to do so. The idea of creative capitalism may be attractive because it allows us to carry on with the systems we have, and to believe that we can solve the world's ills with a few adjustments of that system. After all, if the market itself is capable of producing better outcomes for everyone, that's a simple fix, and why not just encourage that to happen?

**Example:** The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation always takes an approach to funding that reflects business principles. Bill Gates believes that foundations are useful instruments only in cases where capitalist markets have failed to deliver security and well being for the most disadvantaged members of society. "Foundations provide something unique when they work on behalf of the poor, who have no market power, or when they work in areas like health or education, where the market doesn't naturally work toward the right goals and where the innovation requires long-term investments." So while the work of the Gates Foundation has always had a business orientation (e.g., reviewing strategies, demanding results and accountability), one of Gates' new efforts will be to promote the more strategic use of markets to increase the social good he feels they ought to be capable of producing. *Synopsis from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation website.*<sup>40</sup>

**Example:** According to its website, RED is "a simple idea that transforms our incredible collective power as consumers into a financial force to help others in need. RED is where desire meets virtue." Since 2007, consumers have generated more than \$22 million to fight HIV/AIDS in Rwanda by buying products branded as Product RED. And it is having an impact. For example, an AIDS treatment and research center in Kigali was barely coping with an endless flow of patients unable to find care elsewhere. Now, a physician at the center credits creative capitalism and the American shopper with funding improvements that enable doctors to spend less time on crises and more time researching how to slow HIV transmission. Rwandan officials report RED contributions have built 33 testing and treatment centers, supplied medicine for more than 6,000 women to keep them from transmitting HIV to their babies, and financed counseling and testing for thousands more patients. The RED campaign "combines consumerism and altruism" by using the market economy to generate funds that support worthy causes. *Synopsis from the JoinRED website*<sup>41</sup> *and the New York Times.*<sup>42 43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation online at <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/Pages/2009-annual-letter-introduction.aspx>.

<sup>41</sup> JoinRED online at <http://www.joinred.com/Learn/AboutRed/Idea.aspx>.

<sup>42</sup> Nixon, Ron. Bottom Line for (Red). *New York Times*, February 6, 2008. Available online at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/06/business/06red.html?\\_r=1&ei=5090&en=27c3d338c22f165c&ex=1360040400&adxnnl=1&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss&adxnnlx=1253466435-Fxqp35PVPipkPnrSheuNqQ](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/06/business/06red.html?_r=1&ei=5090&en=27c3d338c22f165c&ex=1360040400&adxnnl=1&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss&adxnnlx=1253466435-Fxqp35PVPipkPnrSheuNqQ)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. See same New York Times article for a critique of this approach.

**Example:** iGive is an online shopping mall that allows shoppers to raise money for their favorite cause, as a portion of each purchase is donated to the cause of their choice. The mission of iGive is to “To enable the economic power of individuals to benefit their chosen communities” and they advance their mission by donating up to 26 percent of each purchase at over 680 participating online stores. The causes that benefit include thousands of organizations all over the US. *Synopsis from the iGive website.*<sup>44</sup>

## Part 2: Discussion

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This document and the accompanying matrix in Appendix 1 provide food for thought for the continuing discussion about how funders position themselves within the domain of social justice philanthropy. With some funders using social justice language to describe their work and not having a clear idea of what they mean, and other funders using the language with a clear idea of what *they* mean but little agreement with other funders about what makes their work fit into the category, the present materials provide one perspective that may help move the conversation along.

Some aspects of the thinking behind and framing of this work have been challenged even in the process of preparing this document. Rather than attempt to address every one of these challenges as they came along, the work is presented with all its flaws, along with a list of issues whose resolution may help move the work to a better place. For example, the matrix identifies members, as it were, in the family of social justice philanthropy, according to the philosophical traditions on which they are based, and tends to describe the purest form of each category. The reality is that the categories are not discrete, and there are contemporary interpretations of these traditions that cross category lines. For example, the Legalism/Rule of Law tradition begins by defining its work as a “rigorous enforcement of laws already on the books.” And yet many funders doing social justice work actively promote *new* legislation. Additionally, the social justice work of many funders will have roots in more than one tradition. The dilemma arises in deciding whether to try to develop ever more refined definitions that make clear what the differences between the categories are, and/or ever more comprehensive definitions that incorporate every approach. In other words, how much specificity is enough?

One suggestion for framing the matrix and this document was to orient and name the tradition categories in their *aspirational* modes, that is, according to the goals the grantmaker might be trying accomplish. Thus, instead of including *cultural relativism*, the corresponding aspirational category might be *cultural pluralism*. Both forms are related to the idea that there is a multiplicity of cultures that ought to be recognized in some way. But cultural relativism and cultural pluralism really are two different things. The difference in terms of a discussion of social justice would be (to put it in very black and white terms) that (a) an approach grounded in cultural relativism would work toward different definitions of justice for each group, while (b) an approach grounded in cultural pluralism would work toward a sort of common denominator among different groups that everyone could agree represented justice (similar to shared values). A similar shift to the aspirational mode was suggested for the *structural injustice* category, to replace it with something like *social justice structures*. But changing the categories is not just a simple matter of renaming them. While the category cultural pluralism might be

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.igive.com/isearch/index.cfm>.

added as an additional philosophical tradition, in the case of structural injustice, the philosophical tradition really is about structural injustice, not social justice structures. So a bit of a dilemma exists here: Is the framing of the family of social justice philanthropy using the philosophical traditions that ground the work useful, or does it make more sense to rethink the document according to the aspirations of the grantmaking itself, or even to explore some other framing?

A concern about this document is that it does not articulate the process through which a philosophical tradition gets translated into a way of working. The matrix suggests what the approaches might look like in very general terms, but the links are a bit unclear. This challenge may lead us to take a harder look at the point of entry for funders trying to use this document. Will they read the document and matrix, find something that seems to reflect their work, and begin to identify with that tradition? Or will they recognize the family category, e.g., universal human rights, and then examine their own understanding of that category against the discussion presented here? Or, will they look for the next steps in translating the category into a more explicit set of practices? Or is the purpose of the document simply to provoke deeper thought and conversation?

Yet another dilemma is that the document fails to convey the array of different global interpretations and examples of these traditions—i.e., it tends to be Western-centric at best, and US-centric at worst. For example, in Europe there are assumptions like the centrality of the European Convention of Human Rights and the ultimately successful campaign to introduce it into domestic law. This accomplishment is viewed as an important underpinning for the Legalism/Rule of Law approach; if appropriate laws are on the books, the courts simply have to uphold those laws. But how are human rights understood in Africa, Asia, or Latin America? To what extent is it useful to expand the writing to include a more comprehensive review of how these traditions reflect what is going on around the globe? Would a more representative set of examples improve it?

# Family of Social Justice Philanthropy: Philosophical Traditions

DRAFT

PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS ON WHICH APPROACHES ARE BASED (Most people employ a combination of approaches)	CHARACTERISTICS			
	WHAT			HOW
	GUIDING PRINCIPLES/ VALUES	SOCIAL JUSTICE GOAL	ASSUMPTIONS/ ANALYSIS	APPROACH
<b>STRUCTURAL INJUSTICE</b>	Addressing root causes of inequality	Interconnected systems no longer structured to produce unequal outcomes for different groups	Interconnected systemic policies, procedures, and practices must be changed to achieve justice	Holding interconnected systems accountable
<b>UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS</b>	Security and dignity	Individuals and groups experience security under an umbrella of commonly agreed upon universal rights	People and governments can agree that universal rights exist and have moral or legal force; all people will be better off if universal rights are protected	Building political systems that support universal human rights
<b>FAIRNESS/EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES</b>	Equality of outcomes	Local and global resources are distributed among people in a manner that produces equal outcomes	Redistributive mechanisms can produce equal outcomes across time and place	Creating effective distributive mechanisms
<b>LEGALISM/ RULE OF LAW</b>	Equality before the law	Marginalized groups are protected when laws are rigorously upheld	Justice is defined in law; just outcomes depend on equal treatment	Ensuring that laws are enforced
<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>	Equal access to systems of power	Individuals and groups are powerful enough to have an impact on decisions about issues that affect them	Individuals and groups can be prepared to engage and be heard	Preparing people for engagement
<b>SHARED VALUES</b>	Agreement	Justice is defined and achieved when groups work together around shared values	Shared values form the basis for a system of justice	Shared values translated into justice goals
<b>CULTURAL RELATIVISM</b>	Equal recognition	All cultural perspectives, norms, and traditions are treated as equally valid relative to other cultures, especially dominant ones	All cultures must be recognized and understood in order for justice to be complete	Promoting understanding and diversity
<b>TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE</b>	Profit out of good	The market innovates in ways that increase individual, community, and planetary well-being	Unjust conditions create opportunities to which market-based organizations respond with "people, planet, profit" solutions	Creative use of markets; social ventures; creative capitalism

Notes: Content in the "What" columns derives mostly from literature; content in the "How" column derives mostly from interviews and individual funder materials. The matrix represents current status rather than an ideal; visible trends rather than systematic study.