

LAKE INSTITUTE ON FAITH AND GIVING

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RECEIVING  
& GIVING  
AS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

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THE SPIRITUALITY OF CARE IN SOUL, RELATIONSHIP, AND COMMUNITY



PAUL G. SCHERVISH

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The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University  
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## FORWARD

The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, a program of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, provides a public forum for exploring the connections between individual philanthropy and faith while fostering a greater understanding of the ways in which faith both inspires and informs giving. In addition, scholars contribute to research on the role religion plays in philanthropy and other philanthropic issues relevant to churches, communities and nonprofit organizations.

Among the Institute's exemplary programs is the annual Thomas Lake Lecture, named for Thomas Lake, a man of profound religious faith, a man dedicated to knowledge, understanding, and the power of faith and giving to bring about real change in communities. Through this lecture in his name, we engage the community in thoughtful discussion about philanthropy and religion. We are grateful for the support of Tom and Marjorie Lake, the Lilly Endowment, Karen Lake Buttrey and Don Buttrey in establishing the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving.

Paul Schervish, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College, devotes this year's lecture to an examination of the inner life of receiving and giving as spiritual exercise. As a spiritual methodology, it is through ascetical practices that we purify and enliven our souls, relationships, and community.

Dr. Schervish has been a long-time leader in the field of philanthropic studies and serves as a National Research Fellow at the Center on Philanthropy. He also serves the field as a board member of the Smith Barney Foundation, senior advisor to the Wealth & Giving Forum, and as a consultant to financial and development professionals and to wealth holders on the patterns and motivations of charitable giving and in discernment as a spiritual progress of conscientious decision-making around wealth and philanthropy. He is the author of "Gospel of Wealth: How the Rich Portray Their Lives."

Patrick Rooney  
*Interim Executive Director*  
The Center on Philanthropy  
September 2008

## A New Focus on The Spirituality of Receiving and Giving

Over the years, I have focused on the various animating factors that mobilize individuals, whether they appear to harbor character flaws or virtue, to allocate their financial wherewithal to charitable giving. I have written about the process of discernment that leads individuals to discover a personal vocation where self-fulfillment and fulfillment for others, happiness for oneself and happiness for others converge in the relationship of giving and receiving.

But to this point, I have not focused so exclusively on giving as a spiritual exercise in two related senses. The first sense is as an ascetical practice deepening the soul. The second sense of spiritual exercise is as a way of life or spirituality that is the outcome of this practice. Spiritual exercise is both an ascetical practice and its ensuing way of life. More than at any occasion in the past, I delve explicitly into the territory of personal formation that guides us to fuller hearts, wiser insights, and more caring practices. I examine the inner life of receiving and giving as spiritual exercise in the realms of soul, relationships, and community.

Also different from much of my previous writing and speaking, is that my message is not just for those with monetary wealth. I will continue to speak at times about wealth holders. But my message is equally directed, *ceteris paribus*, to the affluent, and really to anyone with choice about the disposition of their

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I am honored by the gracious invitation to present the 2008 Annual Thomas H. Lake Lecture on Faith & Giving sponsored by the Lake Family Institute on Faith & Giving at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. I wish to thank especially Karen Lake Buttrey for making this annual lecture possible. The opportunity to present the 2008 Lake Lecture offered me the chance to think through and convey some ideas I had not previously addressed in a public forum. I am also grateful to William Enright, Eugene Tempel, Natalie Ingle, and all those at the Lake Institute and the Center on Philanthropy who made my lecture and the events surrounding it both warm and engaging. I want also to thank Michael Bell, Dwight Burlingame, William Enright, and Meghan Volz for their careful and valuable editorial assistance. Paul G. Schervish is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College, and National Research Fellow at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

capacity in the form of receiving and giving. From the rich to the affluent to the poor there are different types and levels of choice. But we all receive a call to educate our desires, aspirations, and wants. Wherever and for whomever there is a quantity of choices, the ever-present question is the quality of those choices. Practicing and learning from spiritual exercises of receiving and giving are vital ways to deepen the quality of choice for all people. We are all involved in the care of souls—our own and those of others.

I address an asceticism or spiritual methodology that can deepen three related dimensions of our receiving and giving: the inner life, personal relationships, and societal association. Daily practice at each one of these levels entails carrying out related, yet nominally distinctive, spiritual exercises. Taken together, these three arenas of spiritual exercise form a spirituality of receiving and giving that occurs in the triangular intersection of soul, personal relations, and community. I will spend most of my time in this lecture on the first element; and will indicate the connections to the other two, having already written and spoken much about them (Havens and Schervish 2002; Schervish, 2005). I begin by stating the rationale that helps motivate my exploration of and exhortation for ascetical practices connected to receiving and giving.

## **The Need for Contemporary Spiritual Knowledge**

Increasing numbers of wealth holders and other individuals across the economic spectrum are seeking to understand the generative moral purpose and not just the quantitative prospects of their wealth, the magnanimity and not just the magnitude. They are asking and seeking answers to a question that has never before been relevant to whole groups and classes of people. The question is how to deploy at least some of their resources as a tool to achieve deeper purposes when a spiritual awareness opens the heart beyond wealth preservation and consumption to the aspiration of care for others. As John Maynard Keynes put it in his 1930 essay, “The Economic Prospects for our Grandchildren,” as we move toward solving the economic problem of necessity, there will be a change in “the nature of one’s duty to one’s neighbour. For it will remain reasonable to be economically purposive for others after it has ceased to be reasonable for oneself” (Keynes, 1933: 372). The shift of wealth from an end to a means, then, is arguably the most significant transformation of capacity and character for individuals who have solved, are near to solving, or are not overwhelmed by the economic problem.

To realize the foregoing possibility we need to develop a spirituality of wealth, choice, and giving in a contemporary language and practice. I regret that, with some exceptions, the theology and ethics of churches and pulpit sermons do not adequately offer such a fresh understanding. Instead, the needed spiritual knowledge is emerging at the grass roots among those who conscientiously seek to discern how their wealth is to serve as a tool to accomplish simultaneously a vocation for their self and care for others. It is also surfacing among financial and development professionals who perceive the spiritual horizons of economic life and serve, often implicitly, in what may be nothing less than a pastorate of financial ministry.

Formal institutions, from churches to schools, have new spiritual knowledge to learn about finances and care. Idries Shah favorably quotes Hafiz as saying, “Halls and colleges and learned discourses and porch and arch, . . . what advantage are they when the wise heart and seeing eye are absent?” (Shah, 1978: 116). And so too, what are philanthropy and the nonprofit sector absent “the wise heart and seeing eye”?

Such fresh experience of the spiritual life of allocation does not take place only in regard to charitable contributions, but in and around many daily purposes not conventionally considered to be formal philanthropy. For instance, these purposes include gifts to children, other family members, friends, individuals with personal needs, and political causes and candidates. Because it opens the way to many paths of fresh thinking, it is fortuitous and insightful that the Lake Family Institute has opened the way toward the development of yet unfamiliar learning about both faith and giving. I embrace this liberty to address receiving and giving as a spiritual exercise, and to make the most of a broad conception of faith and giving. Faith is not first a denominational belief system, but a spiritual engagement available to guide all people in all religious heritages. It is thinking, feeling, and acting in the light of one’s ultimate origins, ultimate destiny, and ultimate depth. Giving, as I said, does not stand alone. Giving immediately begs the question about how giving is implicated in receiving. And again, the focus on giving and not formal “philanthropy” allows broader and deeper considerations.

## **The Ontological Existence of Receiving and Giving in the Soul**

In my view, *giving* as spiritual exercise is connected to the experientially and spiritually prior reality of receiving. Giving, of course, reinforces the grace of



receiving. In saying that giving is precipitated by the experience of receiving, I do not contest the case that one might make for the logical or experiential priority of giving, or for the softer case that receiving and giving are coexistent in origin. However, what I have learned and the material I draw on lead me to speak of receiving as a movement of the soul that sets the recursive dialectic of receiving and giving in motion. This is because, not least of all, I believe that God, Reality, the Universe first provides us with the appropriate faculty such that our most profound “first contact” is the receiving of the gracious gift of life, from God through our parents and others who care for us.

Before giving becomes everyday care, before it becomes formal philanthropy, before it shapes our world community—before all this, giving is a participation in the ontological or metaphysical reality of receiving and giving. This is something we often feel and know, but have rarely talked about explicitly in the context of philanthropy. An ontological phenomenon is the way things work whether we know it or not, and which many understand as corresponding to the activity of a divine being (see Tillich, 1956).

To speak of receiving and giving as an ontological reality is to maintain that this is the way human beings are situated in ultimate reality. As such, participation in the dynamic of receiving and giving is an inner faculty belonging to all individuals. This faculty is the capacity to digest suffering and evil and to produce love; and to digest love and goodness in a way that amplifies them. Moreover, this faculty is the inner foundation for all daily care, institutional philanthropy, and civil society. For me this is simply the way things work in their most compassionate and fulfilling manner. It is the reality that allows us to erase from our discourse the dualism of individual and community (see Giddens, 1988; and Selznick, 1992). Instead of speaking of individual and community as if they were two realities that must be integrated, our task is to explain at every turn just how they are already integrated—despite how we may think, feel, or speak otherwise.

### **Formative Education: The Goal of Spiritual Exercise**

Introducing the notion of spiritual exercise into the association of faith and giving is important because it is by ascetical practices that we purify and enliven our souls, relationships, and community life. Spiritual exercise allows us to take our self in hand (Dürckheim: 1972: 1) in order to abandon hurtful ways and take up compassionate ones. This, of course, is the classic curriculum of *via negativa* and *via positiva*. Keynes’s prediction that greater material wherewithal

will lead to greater financial care for our neighbor is not automatically destined to occur. Keynes proposes a vision for a benevolent and just world, but offers no commensurate asceticism for getting there. This is especially important because growth in wealth may lead equally in the opposite direction. The ever-expanding horizon of consumption, prodded at every turn by invitations to happiness via buying, wearing, and performing, can become an overweening spirituality of owning and displaying that supersedes the spirituality of receiving and giving. When material choice becomes quantitatively abundant, the inner life of desire, aspiration, and want requires education.

Such learning is what Werner Jaeger (3 vols. 1939, 1943, 1944) focused on in his study of *paideia*. Most simply *paideia* is “education.” But for Jaeger it is more profoundly personal formation; it is an education that instills more than information. *Paideia* is akin to what we often refer to as “schooling,” such as being schooled in the arts or schooled in a trade, such as carpentry. It is, points out Jaeger, the instructive activity of the gods toward humans. There are many things to be schooled about and many ways to become schooled. In fact a literal translation of Jaeger’s Greek title is *The Formation [Figuration/Configuration] of Greek Humans (Die Formung des Griechischen Menschen)*. *Paideia* is how at our best we come to be put together as wise beings. Such personal formation through work on self is the goal of spiritual exercises.

In the subsequent sections I turn to ways of becoming schooled about receiving and giving. This schooling takes place through spiritual exercise resulting in the mindful awakening of inner life, social relations, and civil society. Only through a continuing ascetical methodology can we work on our self—purifying and enriching our desires, aspirations, and needs—so that we are schooled in care from within our souls and then outward to our spiritual citizenship.

## Spiritual Exercise

In defining spiritual exercise, my starting point is that spiritual exercise is both a process and the outcome of that process. As a process, spiritual exercise is an ascetical methodology for accomplishing personal awakening or other spiritual outcomes. As an outcome, spiritual exercise is a way of living in which sacred reality and worldly reality become synchronized. Although there are innumerable sources to consult, I turn to two: the first is *Daily Life as Spiritual Exercise: The Way of Transformation* (1972) by Karlfried, Graf von Dürckheim (1896-1988), philosopher, meditation adept, and spiritual teacher; and *The Spiritual Exercises*

(1951) of Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits.

I speak about receiving and giving *as spiritual exercise*, rather than as a spiritual exercise. In doing so, I am simply following Dürckheim who speaks of “daily life as spiritual exercise.” I use exercise as a mass noun rather than a singular noun to indicate that receiving and giving is not just one among many spiritual exercises. Rather, it is one among an infinite number of activities that comprise an individual’s single unified life of spiritual exercise. A particular practice can be referred to as a spiritual exercise but cumulatively they form a life of spiritual exercise.

A parallel in the Jesuit tradition is to speak of contemplation and action as a mass noun, which like spiritual exercise is both an ascetical means and a way of life. For instance, Ignatius instructed his companions (sometimes the very same ones) to teach catechism to children and to serve as expert theologians at the Council of Trent. Both are acts of contemplation in action. Ultimately, for one imbued with Ignatian spirituality contemplation in action is a way of life resulting from the capacity to find God in all things.

For Dürckheim, the destiny of all life “is that it should unfold its nature to its maximum possibility” (1972: 1). Unlike a flower that automatically fulfills its destiny, says Dürckheim, a human “is only permitted to become fully what he is intended to be when he takes himself in hand, works on himself, and practices ceaselessly to reach perfection” (1). As such, “one is oneself the task at hand.” It is through dedicated spiritual exercise that a person combines two tasks. The first is the “worldly task” of self-dedication to the dialectic relationship between development of capacity and “adaptation to the external world.” Second is the “inner task” of “the attainment of a personal posture which corresponds to the inner essence and, throughout this difficult work, an absolute devotion to one’s progress along the Inner Way.” The end of life is the unity of the worldly and inner tasks. The inner way is *continuous exercitum*, to prepare individuals to live meditatively “in the service of transcendental reality” so that “the ordinary daily round can be transformed into ‘practice’” (2).

According to Dürckheim, a person is to be ever engaged in “setting himself to rights by the proper practice of right posture, right tension and right breathing” (37). Correct posture is living centered in the Hara, or belly, as a counteraction to having one’s center of gravity toward the shoulders and head (38). Right tension is the balance between rigidity and “shapelessness,” or “hypertension and slackness.” For example, letting go and lowering one’s shoulders fortify one’s presence in Hara

(40) and helps one shift from being dominated by the “worldly-ego” of a “never-ending treadmill” (33) of constant doing and “to exist from one’s essential being” (40). The third leg of the unified practice of everyday life is correct breathing—the area most directly linked to the theme of receiving and giving. For now, I will simply indicate that in right breathing—breathing that is done naturally from the center and not the upper part of the body—a person “gives himself away [exhale] and again receives [inhale] himself; loses himself and finds himself” (42).

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) depicts a notion of spiritual exercise that emphasizes the two-fold practice of *via negativa* and *via positiva*, complemented by an analogy with physical exercitum. The spiritual exercises both purify and sanctify. The purpose of the exercises, says Ignatius, is “the conquest of the self and the regulation of one’s life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment” (1951: 11). As to the meaning of spiritual exercises, Ignatius is quite explicit: “By the term ‘Spiritual Exercises’ is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of other spiritual activities” (1951: 1). Ignatius is concrete about the meaning of spiritual exercise as an engagement of mind, heart, and body, parallel to physical exercise. “For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises so we call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul” (1951: 1).

It should be added that in the spirituality Ignatius developed for his companions, spiritual exercise becomes every method of daily living. God is to be found in all things and a spiritually schooled person walks the earth with a worldly mysticism referred to as “contemplation in action.” Jesuit paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin puts it this way: “nothing here below on earth is profane to him who knows how to see. On the contrary, everything is sacred” (1960: 66). Such themes are explicit in “The Contemplation to Attain the Love of God,” the final exercise in *The Spiritual Exercises*. I will say more later about the *Suscipe*, the luminous choral prayer Ignatius interlaces throughout this meditation. But here, my point is that Ignatius too views all of life as spiritual exercise. In this three-part finale to *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius invites the retreatant to dwell on how all aspects of our life and of creation are realms for receiving blessing from and returning service to the Divine Majesty. As for Dürckheim, spiritual exercise is both an ascetical practice and a way of life; both an unlearning and a learning; and encompasses every aspect of life.

## Receiving and Giving as Spiritual Exercise

*Breathe in their pain and send them relief.*  
—Chödrön (1997: 125)

To this point, I have talked about the meaning of spiritual exercise as a method and a goal, its dialectics of purifying and sanctifying, and its realm being every aspect of daily life. I now move toward how most, if not all, spiritual exercise has a dynamic of receiving and giving that is connected to one's participation in ultimate reality. In doing so I begin with the Buddhist Pema Chödrön's teaching on *tonglen*, move to the Peace Prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, explore Dürckheim's teaching about receiving and giving, and end by returning to the *Suscipe* of Ignatius that he weaved into "The Contemplation to Attain the Love of God."

Pema Chödrön is an American Buddhist nun who is resident teacher at Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia. I first became aware of Chödrön's teaching thanks to my friend Tom Jeavons who gave me his personal copy of her book, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* (2002). It is Chödrön's counsel that has spawned the content of this lecture. Chödrön gently and clearly explains how daily life may become a path of compassion and lightness for both others and for ourselves. For my purposes, the most important facet is her teaching on *tonglen*—a spiritual exercise of receiving and giving. Her teaching on *tonglen* is set against the backdrop of a much fuller Buddhist spirituality. Yet it is not possible or, in the end, necessary for us to have a thorough understanding of Buddhism in order to benefit from *tonglen* as a spiritual exercise. Chödrön provides a concise stand-alone summary of *tonglen* on the Internet: "The Practice of Tonglen" (<http://www.shambhala.org/teachers/pema/tongline1.php>).

For Chödrön, *tonglen* is a "practice" of spiritual exercise. It is an ascetical method and a way of life, an instrument and a way of living. *Tonglen* is a practice for "connecting with suffering. . . for dissolving the tightness in our hearts. . . [and] for awakening the compassion that is inherent in all of us" (2002: 120-121). *Tonglen* becomes the intersection of receiving and giving that connects self and others. Its goal is to attain compassion for others and ourselves. But this compassion moves from the inside outward. "*Nemo dat quod non habet*," I remember learning. No one is able to give what one does not have. "In order to feel compassion for other people," says Chödrön, "we have to feel compassion for ourselves" (120).

For Chödrön, "*tonglen* can be done for those who are ill, those who are dying or have died, those who are in pain of any kind. It can be done as a formal meditation practice or right on the spot at any time." We can also do *tonglen* for ourselves.

Tonglen entails breathing in suffering, facing it directly so as to digest and purify its venom, and breathing out a healing energy. It is receiving, processing, then giving. “Use what seems like a poison as medicine,” she says (123). For Chödrön, taking on the worries, hurts, anxieties, doubts, and angers of those we encounter and of our self is an important asceticism because it goes against the grain, seeks to be avoided, and yet, is so transformative. This is no maudlin practice: it is one of lightness, openness, and compassion. In Chödrön’s words:

Tonglen reverses the usual logic of avoiding suffering and seeking pleasure. In the process, we become liberated from very ancient patterns of selfishness. We begin to feel love both for ourselves and others; we begin to take care of ourselves and others. It awakens our compassion and it also introduces us to a far larger view of reality. It introduces us to the unlimited spaciousness of shunyata. By doing the practice, we begin to connect with the open dimension of our being. At first we experience this as things not being such a big deal and not so solid as they seemed before. (122)

The practice begins, explains Chödrön, by “taking on the suffering of a person whom we know to be suffering and wish to help.” We identify that suffering as best we can and breathe it in with the desire to remove all the pain. As we breathe out we send happiness or whatever would relive the person’s suffering. The method is straightforward: “breathing in others’ pain so they can be well and have more space to relax and open—breathing out, sending them relaxation or whatever we feel would bring them relief and happiness” (121). Tonglen, however, is not just for encounters with suffering. “Whenever we encounter happiness in any form, the instruction is to breathe it out, send it out, with the wish that everyone could feel joy” (114). We breathe in happiness and joy and breathe out an appreciation, sharing, and propagation of that happiness for everyone in the world.

Chödrön indicates other equally valuable venues for tonglen. The first is when we ourselves are the ones on the point, troubled, guilty, or otherwise distressed. In this case, we breathe in that distress, facing it squarely. “We come face to face with our own fear, our own resistance or anger, or whatever our personal pain happens to be just then” (121). We then process this consciousness without trying to run from it or cover it over with distractions or addictions. Maybe we can name the pain; maybe we can only feel it as “tightness in the stomach, a heavy darkness, or whatever” (124). In either case, we practice tonglen for ourselves and for all others “just like us who at that very moment are feeling exactly like us” (121). “We simply contact what we are feeling and breathe in take it *in*, for all of us—and send *out* relief to all of us” (122).

Whenever we practice tonglen, advises Chödrön, we are to “make it bigger than just that one person” (124). When we do tonglen for a loved one in pain, we should expand our horizon to receive the pain of all people like our loved one, and extend to them release from the pain as we exhale. Finally, Chödrön recommends that we do tonglen for our enemies, “thinking of them as having the same confusion and stuckness as your friend and yourself” (124-125)

## **Tonglen, Receiving and Giving, and the Prayer for Peace**

In view of Chödrön’s teaching about tonglen, the Prayer for Peace ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi can become an exercise in receiving and giving. Just as tonglen is always enacted on behalf of others, so also is the Prayer for Peace, which appears to have been composed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and not by St. Francis.<sup>1</sup> It may be taken up as a practice of receiving and giving for self, and then moving outward in concentric circles as far as the praying emissary envisions.

In reading the prayer’s first stanza (see Figure) notice the potential of the prayer to introduce a quality of mysticism into ordinary worldly life. Notice too the prayer’s natural affinity to tonglen practice—breathing in one reality and exhaling its countervailing antidote. As we breathe in, we inhale suffering; and as we breathe out, we exhale blessing. We receive what plagues our fellow beings: vices, cardinal sins, activities, and wounded hearts. They enter our purview as suffering which we receive into our care as one of life’s true gifts. This practice of taking in or receiving hurt and then voluntarily sending forth or extending care as a self- and world-healing practice is the receiving and giving at the level of the soul. We receive the gift of awareness of suffering; welcome and transmute that suffering; and sow a countervailing blessing. One translation of the prayer’s second line reads, “Make me a channel of your peace.” This metaphor of a conduit that freely receives discernable suffering and channels it outward as a gift of compassion is surely one of the deepest ways to understand receiving, giving, and faith as an inner exercise that plants the seed for an outer exercise of care.

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<sup>1</sup> I was surprised to learn from research by Christian Renoux (“The Origin of the Peace Prayer of St. Francis,” <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/franciscana/peace.html>) that the French original of the prayer first appeared anonymously in 1912 in a French religious magazine as the *Belle prière à faire pendant la Messe* (*A beautiful prayer to be said during Mass*). It became attributed to St. Francis of Assisi as his Prayer for Peace only in 1927—no less than by a French Protestant movement called The Knights of the Prince of Peace.

**Figure**  
**The Prayer for Peace\***

Lord,  
make me an instrument of Your peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, let me sow pardon;  
where there is discord, let me sow unity,  
where there is error, let me sow truth,  
where there is doubt, let me sow faith;  
where there is despair, let me sow hope;  
where there is darkness, let me sow Your light;  
and where there is sadness, let me sow joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that one receives,  
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,  
it is in unlearning (forgetting) that one learns (discovers insight),  
and it is in dying that one rises to Eternal Life.

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\*With some emendations by me, this translation is the familiar English rendering of the prayer's original French version. Most English versions omit from the French original the lines in the first stanza extolling unity and truth, and the line in the second stanza describing the path to insight.

In the second stanza of the peace prayer we enter a second dimension of the *via negativa*, the path of purification. As with tonglen, we view the world from a reverse perspective. Receiving what appears difficult and contrary to what we tend to desire, we learn the vocation of receiving and giving. We find in the Peace Prayer the disposition to trust the inner workings of ontological reality. We give better than we receive. According to Chödrön, the point is “to lean toward the discomfort of life and see it clearly rather than to protect ourselves from it” (23). It is by receiving suffering and sending relief that we become compassionate.



## Receiving, Giving, and the Suscipe of Ignatius Loyola

The dialectic of receiving and giving is also the most pronounced dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola (written 1522-1524). This is summarized in the directives Ignatius provides for the last exercise, which I have already discussed—The Contemplation to Attain the Love of God. In this meditation Ignatius reiterates the cosmic reality of receiving and giving that is to fill the daily personal experience of the exercitant. Ignatius states that in this meditation exercitants should ask for what they desire. It is “to ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessing received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty” (Puhl, 1951: 101). We are invited to reflect on (1) “how much God has done for me;” (2) how God dwells in all creatures, including myself, giving being and life; (3) how God “labors for me ” in providing me the heavens, the elements, the plants, and animals; and (4) how all my power and all my virtue “descend from above as the rays of light descend from the sun, and as the waters flow from their fountain” (102-103). After contemplating each of these “points,” the exercitant is exhorted to capture the meaning of all reality in the Suscipe, a prayer named after its first Latin word, “take”:

Take, Lord, and accept all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace for this is sufficient for me. (1951: 102).

The spiritual logic of the Suscipe moves from receiving gifts from the Lord to returning love and care through service. Grasping the spirituality of this logic is not simply an intellectual realization. As with *tonglen* and the Peace Prayer, the logic is learned by a formative exercise whereby the realization is an active indwelling. We are not just hearers or learners; we are bearers of the formative dialectic of receiving and giving in our soul and out into the world. Something that I cannot go into at this time, but deserves reflection is the seldom-articulated notion that God is a receiver. We receive and we respond by asking God to receive us as a gift. This is a recursive relationship, we receive and give as God gives and receives. Buddhist spirituality would not be likely to say this, but in Ignatius’s view, a personal God is engaged in a pattern of attention that is akin to *tonglen*. The “Lord” in the Suscipe and Christ throughout the Spiritual Exercises are exemplars of receiving suffering and giving love; they establish the model for us to emulate.

## Relationships of Care as Spiritual Exercise

The practice of *tonglen*—accepting others’ suffering and bestowing respite—is not limited to the level of the soul. Its emphasis on compassion, care for those we know, and regard for all across the world indicates an outward as well as an inward trajectory. In this section I want to indicate briefly the connection between social relationships of care and my foregoing exploration of receiving and giving as spiritual exercise. In the subsequent section, I will extend my exploration to indicate the nexus of spiritual exercise and societal care.

I have previously written about taking to heart the needs of others as a social relation (for example, Ostrander and Schervish, 1990; Schervish 2005, 2006). The essence of the argument is that personal relations of care exist in formal philanthropy and in ordinary and extraordinary forms of direct personal care. What both these forms have in common is the care of others. Following Jules Toner (1968), care is the implemental or instrumental aspect of love. It is an affective connection that animates a spiritual practice to meet the true needs of others. Aristotle’s understanding of *philia* dovetails with Toner’s notion of care (see Aristotle 2002). *Philia* is *friendship love* by which individuals live out a relationship of mutual nourishment. “A friend is another my self,” says Aristotle. As does Toner with his notion of love and care, Aristotle recognizes that individuals extend their friendship love outward to the world in ever-widening concentric circle. For Toner and Aristotle, this requires individuals to regard others as having a value equal to their own.

In view of Toner’s concept of care and Aristotle’s discussion of *philia*, the next step in connecting inner to outer practice is to understand that formal philanthropy is at its best “nothing more” than practices of care and friendship as spiritual exercise. Epic heroes and common folk performed practices of care long before we institutionalized philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. Hence, when we start with this more universal phenomenon, we see formal philanthropy as one expression of it. We sometimes refer to this daily care of individuals as “informal philanthropy”—those relationships where nourishment is given and received, and true needs are met as we go about our daily round of paid work, home work, and associational life with family, friends, and other individuals. This is also true for business practices that meet the needs of society. As Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University from 1869 to 1926 wrote in his book, *Great Riches* (1906):

What are ordinarily called benefactions—that is, gifts for beneficial uses—are, therefore, by no means the only benefits very rich men

can confer on the community to which they belong. Any man who, by sound thinking and hard work, develops and carries on a productive industry, and by his good judgment makes that industry both profitable and stable, confers an immense benefit on society. This is indeed the best outcome of great riches. (17)

So what is the core of such informal and formal care? It is the sensitivity, compassion, identification, or empathy of one individual to nourish another.

To better understand the importance of inner practice for outward relational practice, it helps to distinguish relations of *philia* from commercial relations. In commercial relations, individuals on the demand side signal their needs through the medium of money. Those on the supply side must ultimately meet these needs because the supply side depends on revenue from consumers to continue in business. As an economist would put it, expressing needs through buying power is *effective* demand. It *causes* the supply side to act on behalf, ultimately, of its own survival. This is the gist of consumer sovereignty.

In personal and philanthropic relations of care, donors rather than sellers populate the supply side. These donors do not depend on or expect those with needs to express them through the medium of money. Instead of being mobilized by the medium through which individuals express their needs, donors are mobilized directly by the persons in need. The donors consummate the relationship of care or friendship based on their sensitivity to the persons in need, not the medium through which the persons communicate their need. This is what I call responding to *affective* demand—the spiritual, religious, or moral calling to heed the needs of others precisely because they are human beings in need. This, of course, is the way concerned parents respond to the needs of their children; the way we respond to the needs of our family and friends, and the way individual donors and foundations, at their best, respond through philanthropy to the needs of people across the globe.

The foregoing overview of the meaning and practice of relationships of care in our local and global community comes into a profounder purview in the light of tonglen and the other aspects of spiritual exercise I described. There are several implications of inner spiritual exercise for the spiritual practice of relationship of care.

First, the quality of inner life of the donor matters and needs development. In personal relationships of care and formal relationships of philanthropy, so much depends on the donor's sensitivity to the needs of others. Unlike commercial relations, which are demand-led by those with needs, relationships of care, both informal and formal, are supply- or donor-led. In commercial relations, the need

is fulfilled when the persons in need consummate the transaction by transferring assets. In relations of care and philanthropy, the need is fulfilled when donors on the supply side consummate the transaction. The key, therefore, is that donors be attuned to the suffering, anxiety, and pain of others.

Such empathy must be an educated one, and requires that we be attuned to ourselves as well. This is made clear by a Sufi narrative recounted by Idries Shah in one of his books, a reference to which I cannot now locate. As I recall, Shah tells how good people want to treat others in the way they are treated. Generous people want to treat others in a way that is better than the way they are treated. But the Sufi counsel is to not indulge in being good or generous. Rather, to be wise. Treat people in the way they need to be treated. As Chödrön reminds us, there are levels to generosity. The spiritual practice of tonglen and meditation purify our generosity, increase its sensitivity, and lead us to care for others as they need to be cared for, rather than as we first may think. Generosity, says Chödrön, is “the journey of learning how to give” (Chödrön; 129). But this learning first involves an unlearning. “When we feel inadequate and unworthy, we hoard things” (129). Through mediation, tonglen, and awareness, we grow “past the poverty of holding back” and learn more about how to give.

“So the basic idea of generosity is to train in thinking bigger, to do ourselves the world’s biggest favor and stop cultivating our own scheme. The more we experience fundamental richness, the more we can loosen our grip.” (130). Returning to Shah (1998: 152), “Don’t you see how people use your greed? They only have to say: ‘Do not be greedy’ for you to develop a greed for generosity. Do you imagine that a greed for generosity is not a greed, with all its destructive aspects?”

A second implication is that daily life as a spiritual exercise is a unity. The personal practice of spiritual exercise in regard to receiving and giving and the conception of relationships of care lead me to eschew any dualism between individual development and relational care. They are each spiritual practice and are mutually constituent. Personal practice develops the capacity for being receptive to affective demand and for responding in a developed manner. Exercising relations of care are also spiritual exercises and provide the fertile ground for deepening inner compassion, perhaps becoming the content of tonglen in meditation and in waking consciousness. “What we do on the outer level [to help people]” says Chödrön, “has the power to loosen up deep-rooted patterns of holding on to ourselves” so that we may “open ourselves and let ourselves be touched” (131).

A third implication is that the practice of spiritual exercise as in tonglen, the Peace Prayer, and Ignatius's Contemplation on Love and the Suscipe, may become part of the process by which individuals discern the causes about which they care most and to which they will direct greater resources. The needs of people are infinite. Today we not only have the will to resolve the unnecessary suffering of others, we also have the communications to know about it, the technology to employ, and the material wherewithal to invest. In light of the awareness of such vast need and the ability to attend to it, particular individuals often wonder what their specific philanthropic vocation may be in their time and place, and with their mixture of capacities and aspirations. One approach to discern their calling may be to carry out the practice of breathing in the suffering of people with a particular need that interests them and breathing out relief, doing so for another group of interest with a particular need, and so forth. They can watch the effect on them, the level of compassion that arises, and the experience of happiness or consolation, as Ignatius suggests, that ensues not just during, but also after the practice concludes.

### **Spiritual Practice and Societal Association**

To this point, my logic has been that inner spiritual practice, flows to outer spiritual practice in the form, first, of personal relationships of care and, then, through formal philanthropic relationships. The next step is to explain how inner spiritual practice and relational spiritual practice shape societal association in the form of what I call the *moral or spiritual citizenship of care*. By moral citizenship of care I mean the array of privileges and responsibilities that express a conscious aspiration of those belonging to a community to freely attend to the true needs of others that are signaled by affective demand. "Moral citizenship," I have written elsewhere (Schervish, 2005) "originates in the tribulations and aspirations surrounding what is close at hand and extends to an ever-broadening horizon of others in need. Moral citizenship does not divide the private from the public, the local from the distant" (161). A *moral citizen*, then, is an individual or organization that enters into relationships, mobilized by affective demand, for the relief of tribulations and the enactment of aspirations. As I will explain, a fresh and useful definition of civil society is the ensemble of all the social relations carried out by individuals and organizations in their capacity as moral citizens.

A society characterized by a moral or spiritual citizenship of care is one in which the principal formative culture recognizes and encourages myriad associational and organizational relations of care. Such a society is attuned

to and inclined to meet the direct needs of others, not just those signaled by effective demand as in commercial relations. Such a society becomes increasingly characterized by an extensive and verdant associational life of care and *philia*. It is alert to and responsive to needs expressed through affective demand. Such needs may be personal or societal; simple or complex; local or global; oriented to the present or future; or requiring personal or organizational attention. In regard to the topic of this paper, the quality of such a societal moral citizenship greatly depends on the developed awareness, wisdom, and compassion of its moral citizens.

There are several elements of the moral citizenship of care that are directly related to the spiritual exercise of giving and receiving. In doing so, I draw on John Havens and my discussion of moral citizenship (Havens and Schervish, 2002) that put into larger context the findings from our Boston Area Diary Study that documented an extraordinarily high level of formal and informal care performed by a random sample mainly of middle income individuals. One aspect of moral citizenship we address in the study, but which I will not go into here, is our differentiation of moral citizenship from political and economic citizenship.

Although we first developed our notion of moral citizenship independently, the concept is akin to what Philip Selznick calls “the moral commonwealth,” where self and the community converge. The first element of moral citizenship, which comes into clearer focus through the lens of inner spiritual exercise, is that the pervading culture of moral citizens is a widespread, internalized consciousness that arises not from “an external ethic” but from our daily round:

[H]uman values are rooted in the troubles and strivings of organic life, especially in the transition from immediate impulse to enduring satisfaction. They arise out of the continuities of social existence, including the need to nurture what is immature and unstable. . . Friendship, responsibility, leadership, love, and justice are not elements of an external ethic. . . They are generated by mundane needs, practical opportunities, and felt satisfactions (Selznick, 1992: 19).

The practice of *tonglen* and its parallel spiritual practices of giving and receiving go a step further; these practices bring into daily life an ascetical method for understanding and living our mundane life as the only reality we have (see Chödrön: 169-170) and by making it grist for growth in “friendship, responsibility, leadership, love, and justice.”

A second aspect of moral citizenship that is relevant to my discussion of spiritual exercise is the need for revitalization of compassion and beneficence. This need for continual reinvigoration of compassion, helps us understand how inner

and relational spiritual practices flow outward into a communal culture through practices of giving and receiving. It also helps us see how such a communal way of life flows inward, buttressing and deepening the growth of our spiritual faculties.

Adam Smith is normally seen as advocating the exercise of free markets as the path to society-wide benefit. Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) is not a total prescription for society. It does, however, chart the way economic markets work to provide a basic social order if governing is not to become tyranny, and personal freedom is not to become anarchy. Through markets, the pursuit of personal benefit accrues (whether intended or not) via an invisible hand to the benefit of all. Markets do not produce the best of societies; they just provide a society that is free and stable enough to go on to higher societal aspiration. Like with our spiritual life, we go on functioning at some minimal level until we take ourselves in hand and deepen our soul.

We obtain a fatally flawed understanding of Smith's ideas if we fail to put *The Wealth of Nations* into the context of Smith's earlier and increasingly respected, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1776/1759). For Smith, the economic citizenship of the free market provides a framework and a floor for rudimentary well being within society, but not for greater well being:

Society may subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection; and though no man in it should owe any obligation, or be bound in gratitude to any other, it may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation . . . . Society may subsist, though not in the most comfortable state, without beneficence. (1776/1789: 166)

Most of us are not content with a society “upheld by mercenary exchange” and motivated “from a sense of utility” alone, and one bereft of “any mutual love or affection.” We chafe at being chained to the economic market in those societal practices, such as health care, we believe we should pay more attention to affective than effective demand. We resist as best we can the cultural whip of earn-buy-and display; we seek to recover wiser patterns of expenditures and make room for expenditures on behalf of the purposes and people for which we care. We desire to resist and transcend the social forces and cultural tidings of markets when they over-reach their proper place. This requires the voluntary moral sentiment of beneficence. Establishing moral citizenship calls for cultural sentiments whereby, says Smith, we become more and more accustomed to respond to the needs and injuries of others out of love, gratitude, friendship, and esteem:

All the members of human society stand in need of each other's assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship, and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. All the different members of it are bound together by the agreeable bands of love and affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common centre of mutual good offices . . . (1759/1976, 166-167).

So what is the source of this beneficence? How does "one common centre of mutual good offices" come about? Smith says that it emerges in the same way all sentiments do. It arises from the "fellow feeling" we develop as we learn to look upon ourselves in the way others look upon us. This leads us to seek approval and resist opprobrium. From this interaction comes the baser and the nobler moral sentiments. Not being his purpose, Smith offers no ascetical methods for working on oneself to develop the nobler sentiments. He describes no spiritual process that would make beneficence and friendship more deeply seated and robust than other coarser sentiments. For Smith beneficence makes society flourish and happy. Chödrön teaches us how to become beneficent: the empathetic practice of tonglen for others and for ourselves.

A third aspect I want to emphasize about tonglen and moral citizenship is the constant need to reinvigorate and redirect the focus of our compassion. In contrast to moral citizenship, economic (and political) citizenship focus foremost on access to and participation in a process of determination, rather than directly the content of that determination. In moral citizenship conscientious cultural and organizational practice attends directly to occasions of need and suffering. As needs change, societal practices, cultural sensibilities, and personal beneficence of care and *philia* need to alter. For example, societal and cultural concern about HIV/AIDS was virtually non-existent 35 years ago. Today government, commerce, and philanthropy are intertwined in attending to its spread, treating its victims, and supporting research for its cure and prevention. The practice of tonglen keeps us alert and dedicated to the changes in and arrival of new sufferings. Such sufferings may be historically new or new to the eyes of the world. Tonglen is one way to make it our habit not only to observe and remedy suffering. It also introduces new manifestations of compassion into the recesses of our soul. It makes us wise in our giving so that it matches the reality and not the ideology of contemporary circumstances.



## Conclusion

My discussion of tonglen and its neighborly modes of spiritual practice add a dimension to what I have previously written about philanthropy. In the past I have argued that both formal philanthropy and informal *philia* are relationships in which donors respond to the affective demand expressed by those in need. This requires donors to have realized a sufficient development of compassionate sensitivity. This enables individuals freely to meet the prayers and sufferings of people who express them simply and compellingly through vocal and silent entreaty.

I have also written about the moral citizenship of care as a way to understand the spiritual practice of care at the societal level. For me, moral citizenship of care delineates the hard-to-define notion of civil society. There are many conceptions of civil society and of the underlying attitudes and practices that indicate the relative health of civil society. In my view civil society exists in all familial, relational, and social practices where interactions are based on friendship, love, and care. A healthy society is characterized by the strength and liberty of people to interact outside of commercial and political markets in realms ranging from street encounters and family to social movements and formal philanthropy. It occurs anywhere that we focus on the persons in need rather than the medium through which they express their need. In light of the moral citizenship of care, civil society exists wherever we respond to affective demand. Tonglen and its ascetical cousins nurture the empathy, compassion, and joy that amplify our sensitivity to the entreaties of affective demand.

My hope has been to turn our attention to the inner spiritual dimension of receiving and giving. This spiritual reality shapes and, in turn, is shaped by social relations of care and the moral citizenship of care. Personal spiritual exercise creates residents of the inner life. These deepened souls connect profoundly to receiving the grace of self-awareness of their own suffering and the suffering of others. As new suffering arises, as it always will, spiritual exercise takes that up accordingly.

Individuals who are developed in their inner life are poised to implement their cultivated compassion, empathy, and identification with the fate of others to whatever worldly reality that comes to them or they create. They sense the needs of others and respond to them as an inviting responsibility. With patience, practice, and perseverance the sensitivity and responsiveness to affective demand become widespread. The thoughts, feelings, and activity of spiritual citizens responding directly to persons in need become a regular way of life for more and more people.

Directly responding to individual, cultural, and societal needs in an extra-market manner becomes part of the constellation of the “rules for life” that we store in our consciousness about what is and what ought to be. Sensitized citizens become bearers of the values, feelings, norms, and behaviors of affective demand in more profound ways and in expanding concentric circles of engagement. We fortify this friendship love through *tonglen*, express it in affective relationships, and form it into a moral or spiritual citizenship of care.

I have offered a modest new understanding of the spiritual underpinnings of giving as an asceticism or spiritual exercise. Such understanding serves as the propaedeutic or the formative personal pre-learning that is necessary for developing orientations to a wiser, more insightful, and more compassionate practice of receiving and giving. *Tonglen*, the Peace Prayer, and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola indicate methodologies or ascetical practices for the life of the soul. Practicing philanthropy as a social relation of care and *philia*, one that depends upon the spiritual development of the donor for its consummation, makes daily life spiritual exercise. Similarly, the moral citizenship of care—the ensemble of social relations we mobilize around the affective demand of care and *philia*—makes societal association a spiritual exercise.

Karlfried Dürckheim (1972: 34) pulls soul, relationships, and commonwealth together:

Practice in daily life has many aspects. It requires that we make a movement towards the center of our being and such a movement inevitably involves a complete change of direction in the world. Through practice we are led to relinquish the world so that our innermost being may reveal itself. But once we have experienced this innermost core and awakened to our essential being, we begin to sense essence in all things. And so, in the midst of our life in the world, we become aware of Divine Being everywhere.”

And Chödrön (2002) speaks of the journey of ascetical training that will serve “the future of the world”:

Year after year, we just keep taking off our armor and stepping further into groundlessness.

This is the training of the bodhisattva [“those who have committed themselves to the path of compassion” (126)], the training of the servants of peace. The world needs people who are trained like this—bodhisattva politicians, bodhisattva police, bodhisattva parents, bodhisattva bus drivers, bodhisattvas at the bank and the grocery store. In all levels of society we are needed. We are needed to transform our minds and action for the sake of other people and for the future of the world. (138-139)

May all our asceticism of the soul convey us to “daily life as spiritual exercise.” Receiving and giving is at once and inseparably a unity of inner, relational, and societal spiritual exercise. Just as inner exercise flows into outer exercise without borders, outer exercise flows into inner exercise without borders. The holy trinity of spiritual exercise is compassionate souls, relationships of philia, and the moral citizenship of care.

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The Center on Philanthropy's Lake Institute on Faith & Giving is dedicated to helping people of faith, regardless of their religious persuasion, think creatively and reflectively on the relationship between their faith and their giving. The Institute engages in research, provides resources that will educate and help people better understand giving as a reflection of their faith, and creates venues for civic conversation on this subject.

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