

The Decent Society

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The Welfare Society

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Both the ideological sources and the actual background for the growth of the welfare state and the welfare society are issues that have been discussed in great detail by many.' The eclectic character of the idea of social welfare indicates that the sources of the welfare river must be sought in many streams: Christian, socialist, and statist (Bismarck). These have often led to conflicting notions of the character of the welfare society, and especially to conflicting justifications for the necessity of such a society. Some thinkers have justified the need for welfare services by arguing that they are needed for protecting the capitalist system—they provide a social safety net for losers in the economic race who might otherwise undermine the system. Other thinkers, in contrast, have seen the welfare state as a moderate form of socialism which is compatible with a market economy, but expropriates some important areas from the market, such as health, education, and pension funds.

My own interest in the welfare society centers on the question of the relationship between it and the decent society. Among the historical sources of the welfare idea is the notion of the necessity for eradicating degrading treatment of the poor, of the type embodied in England's Poor Laws. The English Poor Laws, in all their transformations from the time of Elizabeth I, played a part in the use of humiliation as a deterrent against the exploitation of welfare by people looking for a free meal. The idea was that providing people with the bread of charity would encourage laziness and undesired dependence on society. The way to deter lazy people from asking for support was by offering such support under particularly humiliating conditions. Anyone who could accept these debasing conditions would thus be someone without any choice. The phrase "rogue pool-" was an expression of deep suspicion toward the penniless. This phrase was not just a remnant of the terrorism of wandering beggars in a society without street lighting. The suspicion was based on the belief that the poor are to blame for their situation. It was considered necessary to separate the swindling poor people who were actually capable of working, called paupers, from the deserving poor

who could not help their situation. The way to make this distinction was through their willingness to live in poorhouses. There, in the poorhouses, strict discipline—which was nothing but a euphemism for moral abasement and humiliation—was employed for the purpose of improving the morals of the lazy, swindling poor. George Lansbury, after his first visit to the poorhouse of which he was about to become a trustee, wrote that "everything possible was (done to inflict mental and moral degradation.)" The poor were put to the test of the poorhouse while the one who really ought to have been put to that test, in the words of Dr. Johnson, was society as a whole: "A decent concern for the poor is the true test of civilization."³

My detour into the world of Dickens is not an archaism irrelevant to the present-day world. Suspicion of the sham poor, who are nothing but lazy exploiters dipping their vampiric fingers into the public's pockets, still nourishes opposition to the welfare state and those in need of it. The desire to put the needy to humiliating tests of entitlement is not entirely a thing of the past. The Dickensian reality may have vanished from developed welfare states, but the desire to use humiliating tests as a deterrent to false demands and requests still exists.

I have presented one of the historical motives for the establishment of the welfare state as the desire to eliminate the humiliating manner in which support was given to the poor in societies relying on philanthropy. But one complaint against the welfare society is that it too is humiliating. Not only does it not prevent humiliation, it actually causes humiliation through its own institutions. The welfare society creates dependent people lacking in self-respect, who are willing to sell their birthright of personal autonomy and pride for a bowl of lentils from the public kitchen. It is a paternalistic society that takes upon itself the right to replace people's judgment about what is good for them by its own discretion. It is a society that perpetuates the second-class citizenship of the needy and gives them the practical status of nonadult human beings. The conclusion is thus that a decent society must not be a welfare society, because welfare societies are demeaning.

We are faced with two conflicting claims: on one view, the welfare society is a necessary condition for a decent society, because only the welfare society has the power to eradicate the institutional humiliation that disqualifies a society from being a decent one. On the opposing view, the welfare society is itself debasing,

and its humiliation is institutional, so that it cannot be a decent society.

Let us first discuss the claim that the welfare society is an essential complement of the decent society because it provides a safeguard against degrading life conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and illness. A considerable part of the discussion focuses on the question of whether poverty, unemployment, and illness are actually humiliating life conditions. We must keep in mind that our present interest in the welfare society is limited to the question of whether it prevents or promotes humiliation.

Poverty and Humiliation

We must first distinguish between the welfare state and the welfare society. A welfare state is a society in which the state is the provider of welfare services. A welfare society is one in which voluntary, or quasi-voluntary, organizations provide these services. The State of Israel, for example, is a welfare state. The Jewish Settlement in Palestine at the time of the British Mandate constituted a welfare society. We are discussing the welfare society, but the most convenient way to illustrate it is through the example of the welfare state.

Humiliation is not necessarily the outcome of an intent to humiliate. It can be the outcome of life conditions brought about by institutions or individuals. For example, a recession that leads to unemployment may well be the planned result of an anti-inflationary monetary policy, but it may just as well be—and in most cases is—an unintended outcome of economic behavior. A welfare society is supposed to ameliorate not only intentional humiliation but also degrading life conditions, such as unemployment, that are not generally the result of planning.

Not every sort of human distress is a cause of humiliation. The question is how we can judge when the life conditions of human distress are to be considered humiliating. Poverty is a prototypical case for testing the problem of when to call certain states of affairs or life conditions humiliating—states of affairs that are the result of human action, but without the intention to humiliate anyone. Our focused question, then, is whether poverty as such is humiliating.

The question is not whether poor people feel humiliated, but whether they have a sound reason for feeling that way. Harsh poverty may dull the feeling of degradation, but that would not eliminate the justification for it. The way I have

chosen to discuss this question is through a poem of Hayyim Nahman Bialik's. A poem is not an argument, but it can be turned into one. Bialik's poem "Widowhood," in which the poet is pained by his widowed mother's poverty, contains an implicit argument in addition to a devastating description of destitution.

The poet has no doubt that poverty is humiliating, "for Man's grandeur is defiled." He even challenges God: "How did God see and forbear as the glory of his image on earth turned demon of destruction?" Human dignity is described as being created in God's image, and this dignity has been destroyed. These poetic utterances are an emphatic version of the view that poverty is humiliating. But Bialik also provides a description of the aspects of poverty in virtue of which it is humiliating:

Upon the ruins of her house and her life's desolation she suddenly was
displayed,

Exposed and empty of all, without shelter or security

Alone and without means of defense, abandoned to her soul and her
failure

A worm among human worms like her, creatures grieved and oppressed.

Women embittered and wretched,

Twisted of' form and dreadful of- mien,

Divested of' grace and mercy, obliterated of any semblance of' mother and
wife,

A crippled rabble ... Enraged by cats of-prey howling for ferocious
skirmish

Over every bone broken open and every piece of putrid meat flung
casually before them.

(translated by Harold Schimmel)

The aspects of degrading poverty that corrode human dignity are exposure, lack of shelter; being "alone and without means of defense," that is, total vulnerability and helplessness; abandonment to failure; the battle for life, which is a dog-eat-dog battle over a thrown bone, being lowered to its bestial level in its desperate battle for existence; loss of the semblance of womanhood and motherhood, inability to provide food for one's children. All these are joined by filth; loss of normal physical appearance, loss of interest and desire for life; insulting crudeness "covered by the (lung of the mouths" of those with whom she is competing for existence, the lack of basic human sisterhood among the suffering women; humiliation on the part of those who "casually" throw the "bone broken open," the "putrid meat," without compassion or sympathy, but as if they were throwing it home to a homeless (log.

Standing in contrast to this view of poverty as humiliating is early Christianity's view of poverty, even at its most wretched, as ennobling: "[To the poor] is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The idea is that what prevents humans from fulfilling their noble vocation as the possessors of a soul is material possessions. To be poor means to be liberated from all the trappings and traps of materialism, and so it is elevating rather than corrupting. Society's problem is not how to eliminate humiliation by eliminating poverty, but how to remove the humiliation from poverty.

As to the possibility of eliminating poverty itself, both Christians and Jews face a contradictory text. In Deuteronomy we find two views expressed in the very same chapter (chapter 15). On the one hand, the view that guided devout Puritans and Victorians is expressed in verse 11: "For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land." On the other hand, the view that a society without poverty is possible is expressed in verse 4: ""There shall be no needy among you."

Noble poverty requires two conditions: one, that the poor are not responsible for it family; and two, that the poverty is voluntary. In both Christianity and Buddhism noble poverty is the poverty of the monk and the nun. A reevaluation of poverty, in the sense of removing the humiliation from it, is bound to be limited to voluntary poverty and the poverty of the childless.

Reevaluation of poverty as noble is like the Stoic attitude in its Cynic form. What I wrote at the beginning of this book about the Stoic attitude toward

humiliation, or, more precisely, about the Stoic belief that slavery is not humiliating, is also true about the notion of noble poverty.

The notion of poverty is relative. A person who is poor in California may be well-to-do in Calcutta. But being poor does not mean being in the lowest decile of income. Poverty is not defined relative to income distribution, but to the social concept of the minimal conditions of existence. "This minimum is connected to the social conception of what is needed for living a human life. The minimum reflects the concept of humanity prevalent in each society. It also reflects the idea of it threshold for economic citizenship in the society.

So far I have kept apart the notions of self=esteem and self=worth. But when it comes to setting a threshold for self-esteem, it becomes very difficult to maintain such a separation-especially when poverty is defined as failure, a failure whose painful effect is that poverty might leave the poor without even one option for living a valuable life. Valuing a way of life does not require considering it a preferred way of life, but it does require at least one option for a way of life that the person can respect and finds worth living. Poverty closes off ways of life that people consider dignified. In addition, there is a sense that being poor is the fruit of total failure.

"Throwing the blame of failure on the narrow shoulders of the poor was one of the manifestations of self-righteousness in the Poor Laws. The changed attitude toward the poor that led to the rise of the welfare society stems, however, from a severe blow dealt to the idea of the poor as responsible for their plight: business cycles in capitalist economies have thrown too many people out of work for it to remain credible that their poverty is the result of laziness or drunkenness. Recruitment of the masses into national armies also led to a change in attitude toward the penniless recruits. These were suddenly perceived as having the power to contribute to the war effort. But although the claim that being poor is the result of a moral defect has lost some of its strength, it still exists and serves as a poisoned arrow in the attack on the welfare state.

The unjustified claim that poverty in general results from failure on the part of the poor is first of all just that-an unjustified claim. It also diminishes the social honor of the poor. But why should the claim that a person's poverty means failure diminish the person's dignity as a human being? Failing an examination that may be crucial for one's career, whether or not this failure can be excused,

prevents the person, at least temporarily, from achieving her preferred way of life. This failure may be very painful, but it is no reason for rejecting the person as a human being. Any reassessment of the person who has failed, whether by the society or by the person herself, is an evaluation of only one aspect of the human being, albeit an important one. But seeing poverty as failure implicitly includes a wholesale judgment of the person as worthless, as someone who cannot secure even the minimum necessities for existence. Seeing poverty as closing off possibilities of living that are worthwhile in the eyes of the poor themselves makes them seem worthless to themselves as well, as if they are incapable of living a life that is worthwhile even in their own eyes. Total failure is liable to be perceived as failure as a human being, and not merely in a particular task. When the accusation of failure is baseless, it is especially cruel and wicked since it is also humiliating.

The conclusion is that poverty is humiliating. The welfare state was created to eradicate poverty or at least to eliminate some of its humiliating features. The welfare society attempts to do this differently than the charity society, which relies on pity as the emotion motivating people to give to the poor.

Pity

Poverty is an important issue in a charity society, where poor people are given charity, whether directly or through public but voluntary charity collections. The emotion that motivates the charity society—as distinct from the emotion that is supposed to justify it—is pity. The founders of the welfare society intended it to eliminate the feeling of pity as a motive and a justification for supporting the needy.

The poor are given charity out of pity—not solely out of pity, but pity plays an important part in giving alms. Begging for alms is humiliating. The rabbis, in their commentary on the "Torah, attempted to mitigate the humiliating aspect of begging from door to door by saying, "God stands with the poor person at the door" (Midrash Leviticus Rabbah). But the attempt to mitigate the humiliation does not succeed even when the almsgiver acts with a willing heart. The basic situation of begging for alms is humiliating. In contrast, mercy is considered an ennobling emotion, and the quality of mercy one of the higher human qualities. The attribute of mercy is the first of the thirteen attributes of God (see Exodus

34:6-7), and in Jewish prayer God is called "the merciful Father." The tension is palpable: on the one hand, mercy is an uplifting quality for the giver; on the other hand, being on the receiving end of mercy is humiliating. This tension is inherent in mere, N' hick vacillates between pity and compassion.

A strong advocate of reevaluating the emotion of pity (Mitleiden) was Nietzsche.' His critique of pity as a moral emotion has particular weight as a criticism of the charity society. The welfare society attempts to respond to the problems which the charity society was designed to solve, but without relying on pity. When Nietzsche called for a reevaluation of all values he was not merely demanding that accepted values be replaced by new ones. He was demanding a second-order evaluation of first-order values-that values seen as desirable should now be seen as undesirable, and vice versa. The criterion for evaluating values is to see what strengthens and what weakens human self-perfection. This is the way to understand Nietzsche's criticism of pity morality. Morality must begin, according to Nietzsche, with a reflexive attitude in which the individual takes steps to perfect himself Only if the individual truly cares about his own authenticity can he be generous toward others. The sort of morality that begins with pity causes the individual to run away from himself to a sentimental posture toward the other. Sentimentality is an emotion which, according to Nietzsche, lacks the cruelty needed for a sober view of what can really be done to help the other. The opposite of altruism is not egoism but self-perfection. Perfecting oneself requires the individual to change his values with respect to his accepted notions of pride. In lieu of these accepted notions he must acquire a notion of pride befitting the overman (Übermensch).

Nietzsche was not the first to criticize the emotion of pity. Spinoza did so long before him,' claiming that it is based on it metaphysical illusion: just as one does not pity an infant for not being able to speak, so one should not pity a person's defects. Such defects are the result of the same sort of necessity that prevents the infant from talking. But for our purposes Nietzsche is the relevant critic of the emotion of pity, since he compares it with human dignity. The problem is that Nietzsche compares pity with the wrong sort of human dignity-the honor and pride of the overman. The concept of honor that concerns us is the honor of human beings as they actually are. The important questions for the present discussion are: What's wrong with pitying those in need? What's wrong with this emotion if it effectively motivates people to help those in distress? Why is pity

so bad that it decent society must not be based on helping others out of pity? And, finally, is there a sound reason to consider yourself humiliated when other people pity you? You undoubtedly suffer from the problem for which you are pitied, but why should you also consider yourself humiliated?

The relation of pity is not a symmetric one. There is a feeling of superiority built into the emotion of pity: "It happened to you, but it can't happen to me." It is this asymmetry that distinguishes pity from compassion. Compassion is potentially a symmetric relation. When someone performs an act of charity out of pity, there is an implicit assumption that the one benefiting from it ought to be grateful. The feeling of pity does not leave room for the possibility that the pitier herself might need pity some day. On the contrary, the pitier implicitly assumes that she is inherently superior to the person she is pitying. Her pity is formed from a protected standpoint, as if she were immune to trouble and distress. When the pitier's standpoint is not protected in this way, the relation is transformed from pity to compassion. The distinction I am making between "pity" and "compassion" is not generally maintained: the two words are often used interchangeably. But it is a distinction with merit.

Recipients of pity have a sound basis for suspecting that they are not being respected, because what triggers pity are helplessness and vulnerability. If people are in control, they are not pitied even when they are in severe distress. Pity is accorded to people who have lost important sources of self-esteem, bordering on the loss of the means of defending their self-respect.

Nietzsche, that sharp-eyed critic of pity, claims that this emotion is directed toward Man's animal nature, toward what humans and animals have in common. Pity is not based predominantly on Man's human aspect. One pities a person the way one pities a suffering animal—a yelping dog, a cat yowling with hunger, a caged sparrow. In short, pity is predominantly a response to physical suffering. The poor who are the objects of the sentimental attitude of pity become incarnations of innocence, like sad-eyed lassoed horses. Sentimentality fakes emotions by presenting its objects as incarnations of innocence, lacking their own will or personality. One of the bad things about pity is what's had about sentimentality in general: both of them morally distort the nature of their objects.

The words "piety" and "pity" are both derived from the Latin *pietas*, but they have become semantically differentiated in English. Piety is a religious

sentiment which includes unconditional obligation toward the other (especially sufferers) that comes from its sincere religious consciousness. The religious claim is that the truly just society is based on piety rather than pity—on an obligation to the poor derived from Man's obligation to God, rather than condescension toward the poor. Nietzsche's inability to have this feeling might seem to religious people as a fault of Nietzsche's rather than its problem with the feeling.

Of course, Nietzsche would not have accepted the distinction between piety and pity. But whatever Nietzsche's position might be, my own obligation is to base the decent society on the humanist assumption. A just society based on piety does not satisfy this condition.

In summary, the welfare state tries to eliminate the humiliation born of pity on two levels: it attempts to eliminate the degrading life conditions of poverty, or at least to mitigate them substantially. Moreover, it tries to eliminate poverty itself without making use of the insulting and perhaps also humiliating motive of pity, the emotion which motivates the charity society.

The Welfare Society as a Humiliating Society

Ludwig von Mises was no friend of the welfare state, but he was aware of the humiliating elements in the charity society it purports to replace:

The indigent has no legal claim to the kindness shown to him. He depends on the mercy of benevolent people, on the feelings of tenderness which his distress arouses. What he receives is its voluntary gift—fin- which he must be grateful. To be an almsman is shameful and humiliating. It is an unbearable condition fin a self-respecting man.'

Von Mises was skeptical, however, that replacing almsgivers by the officials of the welfare state could make the crooked straight. He declared a tie between the humiliation of the indigent in the welfare society and in the charity society. We are interested in finding out whether the competition between the philanthropist and the bureaucrat, between the charity society and the welfare society, really ends in a tie, or whether the welfare society either ameliorates or worsens the humiliation of the needy inherent in the charity society.

Comparing the philanthropist and the official as representatives of the charity

society and the welfare society, respectively, presupposes that the welfare society is essentially bureaucratic. Thus the complaints directed against the welfare society are mostly the same ones that are directed against bureaucracy's humiliating potential. If the welfare society is really bureaucratic by its very nature, then I have no need to recycle what I have already said about the humiliating elements in bureaucracy. Everything said there applies to the welfare society as well.

We have already discussed the argument that there is a necessary connection between welfare and bureaucracy. The welfare society attempts to improve the situation of the handicapped, the old, the unemployed, and the poor without making use of the market mechanism. It thus requires a clerical staff that is not supported and regulated by the market. This staff is responsible for providing services and transferring payments to the needy. Bureaucracy is thus built into the structure of the welfare society. The terms "bureaucracy" and "clerical staff" conjure up a picture of an entire system consisting of coffee-chinking clerks sitting behind desks. But the people taking care of the needy in a welfare society are of many different types: nurses, social workers, and the like. Of course, this is only true in cases where the welfare society provides the services itself and (does not consist entirely of a clerical staff that transfers payments to the poor to buy their own services on the market. A welfare society that is restricted in the extent of its services does not necessarily restrict the amounts of money it gives the needy. In such a society the application of the notion of bureaucracy is restricted to the narrow sense, as including only officials. A welfare society based solely on transfer payments has a much more restricted bureaucracy, but it too cannot exist without any bureaucracy at all.

Aside from the claim that the problem with the welfare society is its bureaucratic nature, which diminishes the self-respect of those requiring its services, there are other complaints about the welfare society. One central complaint about a humiliating aspect of the welfare society is that it impairs the autonomy of the needy. It turns them into parasites drugged by public funds who are no longer able to rely on themselves. The money provided by welfare services is easy money from the point of view of the needy. They do not work for it, and so they are strongly motivated to remain dependent on the welfare services rather than stand on their own feet. As they have already made the humiliating move of accepting these services, they feel that they might as well

enjoy the "dividends" of their humiliation.

The welfare state thus deprives the needy of the ability and authority to decide their own affairs, and hands over decisions that should express the individual's autonomy to paternalistic officials. This criticism of the welfare state nonetheless recognizes that if it hands over transfer payments instead of providing the services itself, it is less humiliating than the ordinary welfare state; it allows the needy to make decisions relevant to their lives.

One counterargument to this claim is that the poor do not simply require income supplements; what they need are specific services and products. Poverty is often associated with a culture of poverty. One of its manifestations is that the poor have an order of priorities which does not reflect what they really need. The stereotypical complaint is that poor men are liable to spend their income supplements on alcohol instead of medicine for their children. A negative income tax increases the consumption of the members of the poverty culture, but not of the necessities whose lack is what defines them as needy. What is consumed in a culture of poverty, such as drugs and alcohol, constitutes a breach of autonomy far more serious than any paternalistic intervention by well-meaning social workers.

When I referred above to the poor man's family I touched on a particularly important point. We often discuss human dignity as if society were composed of individuals making their own decisions for themselves, whereas in reality heads of families often make decisions that affect their dependents. Taking away part of the autonomy of the head of a household may perhaps serve to secure more autonomy for the other members of the family.

The conflicting arguments just presented gain their force from pictures of the welfare society which hold us captive. It is easy to go wrong here and identify the welfare society with our powerful stereotypes of its main protagonists: on the one hand, good-hearted social workers unconditionally devoted to the families they take care of; on the other hand, brutal night visits by supervisory authorities at the homes of single mothers to check whether there is a nian hiding under the bed.

Most of the issues are factual ones to which I have nothing to contribute. The way I suggest of comparing the humiliating aspects of the charity society and the

welfare society is by considering the ideal types of these two societies rather than their actual manifestations. By ideal types I mean not only types of people but also the principles guiding the charity as opposed to the welfare society. We must remember that the officials we associate with the welfare society do not belong exclusively to this type of society. Traditional charity societies were also often run by appointed officials, and not only by voluntary or elected charity collectors. Muslim charities in large cities, church charity collections, and the charity funds of traditional Jewish societies all possess a significant bureaucratic structure. Even the collection of the money- is not based purely on voluntary contributions, but is a sort of taxation with considerable power to compel people to contribute. It makes very little difference if the compulsion to contribute is based on social pressure-in the form, say, of excommunication that might involve economic ruin-or institutional sanctions.

The emphasis is thus on comparing the principles guiding the two societies in the help they offer the needy. The charity society at its best is based on the principle of benevolence, the welfare society on the principle of entitlement. I claim that a society which assists the needy on the basis of their being entitled to the assistance is less humiliating in principle-whatever the application might be-than a society based on benevolence. As mentioned, this claim is based on ideal types that are more ideals than actual types. In the ideal sense the welfare society should be less humiliating than the charity society. But to claim that the charity society is motivated by the principle of benevolence does not mean that charity is actually given out of benevolence in the sense of being an act that is not obligatory. Charity is one of the important obligations of traditional charity societies. The idea is that even though the giver is obligated to give, the recipient receives the charity as a gift rather than as a right. In other words, obligations are disconnected from rights.

The Charity Paradox

The previous section may have given the impression that the charity and the welfare society differ solely in the motivations of the givers-that the question is whether they are motivated by benevolence (which conceals a sense of superiority) or by a sense of obligation toward needy people who are entitled to assistance. In the case of a welfare society based on rights, recipients of assistance are humiliated when officials act as though they are giving out of

benevolence what the recipients are entitled to by right. The welfare society humiliates the needy when its officials treat them according to the norms of the charity society. We are interested in comparing the two societies at their best. The question is thus whether we can imagine a charity society based only on pure motives of providing assistance without humiliating the recipients, through a sincere concern for their well-being. If a charity society of this sort is possible, then giving alms in a humiliating way is nothing but a distortion of its true nature. This would be, as noted, a distortion of the charity society at its best, not a statistical deviation from the normal behavior of charity societies. What we must do is consider charity in the pure sense, and not as it appears in the guise of egotistical

The question thus is whether a charity society based on pure benevolence is more capable than a welfare society of respecting the dignity of the needy. After all, the welfare society is based on allocating what was obtained by taxation, while the charity society at its best is based on voluntary donations. At first glance it would seem that this fact is enough to grant the charity society a great moral advantage over the welfare society.

When Richard Titmuss, the great student of the welfare society, was searching for a good model of how to give the needy what they require, he used the example of the social institution of the blood bank. In other words, Titmuss's model was taken from the charity society at its best. The act of giving blood is immeasurably nobler than the act of selling it, yet the person who needs the blood does not consider herself humiliated in accepting blood donated out of benevolence. The conclusion is that giving blood is an example of the charity society at its best, and this sort of giving is preferable to any other sort of assistance to one's fellow human beings. If accepting donations of blood is not humiliating, then we must see to it that accepting donations of money should be considered equally respectable by the needy.

The counterargument states that one cannot infer from the example of giving blood that it is possible to donate money as well in a charity society without humiliation. Giving blood, says the counterargument, is very different from giving money or the equivalent of money. The recipient of the blood, in contrast to the recipient of the money, does not accumulate it, and the donor does not miss it. There is no element of greed in the case of blood. Having more blood in one's body is not a source of social prestige. Thus willingness to give blood has a

different meaning than willingness to give money to the poor. It is impossible for the recipient to waste the blood or spend it on something it was not intended for. The blood donor, in contrast to the donor of the money, did not do anything to become the owner of the blood. It is true that she could have considered selling the blood, but in considering this possibility she does not see herself as having invested anything in it. Blood donors see themselves as saving lives. There is an immediate dramatic impact to giving blood, whereas there is rarely such an impact in giving money to the poor. But the main point is that blood donors can easily see themselves as needing blood one day, whereas donors of money do not easily see themselves as needing donations of money from others.

Moreover, aside from the differences in the act of giving itself, giving blood is not a good model of charity societies from the standpoint of the way the system is run. In some countries blood donations are considered a form of insurance, where the family or friends of a patient in need of blood donate units to make up the shortfall. There is no analogous possibility in the case of donating money, since poor people's friends are generally as poor as they are. The conclusion is that giving blood cannot tell us anything about the way we ought to provide people with financial assistance.

But one can rebut this counterargument as well. One can claim that it is precisely the giving of blood that is instructive as a possible social paradigm for donating money in a decent society. The reason is that in order to give or receive blood people have to overcome deeply entrenched prejudices: magical beliefs, rituals, and racism, all of which are connected with blood. The prejudices associated with blood are also associated with honor and humiliation. It was the Castilian nobility who arrogantly claimed to have "blue blood" (sangre azul)-blood unadulterated by the "dark blood" of Jews and Muslims. As evidence, these nobles displayed their blue veins, which could be seen through their pale skin.

But Castilian blue blood is ancient history now. Let us take it look at more recent history. During World War II the Red Cross still separated the blood of whites and blacks. I mention these facts in order to stress the prejudices that blood banks had to overcome. The idea of being related "by blood" is a deep, dark concept that refers to tribal, family, and even national kinship. Yet, wonder of wonders, donating blood is now universal. The only important factor is the biological one of blood types. When these facts, which show how ancient

prejudices can be overcome, are taken into account, they should strengthen our faith that giving blood is a possible model of nonhumiliating social generosity that could be emulated in other charity-related areas as well.

So far we have discussed two points. The first is the issue of the motive for almsgiving, and particularly the possibility of a purely altruistic motive-generosity without self-righteousness. The second issue, which is connected with the first, is the question of whether giving blood can serve as a model of pure charity in a fine spirit of voluntarism and generosity, without humiliation.

The charity paradox consists of the following conundrum: Is it preferable (with a view to avoiding insult and humiliation) for charity to be given out of good motives, or might it not be better for it to be given out of bad motives? Good motives are those concerned with the other person's well-being without the least tinge of selfishness. The donor gives to the needy purely out of concern for the other without asking for anything in return. Charity is its own reward. Bad motives for the present purposes are those where donors give to the needy out of the selfish consideration of how they, the donors, will be seen and regarded by other people. This is a bad motive because it makes use of someone else's suffering to raise one's own status in one's eyes and the eyes of others.

At first glance it seems simple: it's better to give out of good motives than out of bad ones. And indeed, that's how it looks from the donors' viewpoint, but our question is how it looks from the recipients' viewpoint. What is better for the recipients: to receive charity given out of good motives or out of bad motives?

From the recipients' viewpoint, if they are given charity from people with selfish motives, their very willingness to accept the gift provides the donors with selfish satisfaction, and so the recipients need not feel that they owe the donors anything. They are obligated to express their thanks but not to feel gratitude. One is obliged to feel gratitude only toward donors who give out of exclusive concern for the recipients. The donors cannot actually ask for gratitude, since they did not act for the sake of receiving it, but the recipients on their part are obliged to feel gratitude because they have benefited from the donors' generosity. Feeling gratitude, yet being unable to return the kindness, tends to put people in an inferior position, as compared with their situation when they only owe their benefactors lip service because the latter acted out of selfish considerations.

One might think that people who are prepared to give charity out of pure altruism would also be willing to make their donations anonymously. This would liberate the recipients from the need to express gratitude, but it would not solve the problem. The problem is the feeling of gratitude, not the utterance of thanks. Recipients of anonymous gifts are exempt at most from expressing thanks, but not from feeling gratitude. The problem is admitting that they are in such an inferior situation that they are unable to return the kindness shown them. Moreover, the donors are in no need of any favors in return for their gifts. The principle of mutuality in gift-giving is broken. This principle lies at the heart of the charity problem, which cannot be solved even by anonymous donations. Selfish donors can be compensated, but altruistic donors cannot be. People would rather receive gifts from someone they can give to in return than from someone they cannot give anything to.

The charity paradox attests that even the charity society at its best—when based on the pure motive of helping others without a tinge of selfishness—is not free of insulting and possibly even humiliating aspects, precisely because of the purity of the donors' motives. Moreover, it is not certain that such a society can avoid humiliation better than a charity society based on the donors' selfish motives.

Two issues have been conflated here: the type of bureaucracy a society must have in order to be a decent one, and the connection between a welfare society dependent on bureaucracy and a decent society. The issues were clarified by a comparison of the way the welfare society and the charity society deal with the humiliating situation of poverty.

There are many dimensions along which the welfare society and the charity society could be compared: efficiency, extent of assistance, even their goals. I have focused, however, on only one issue—that of humiliation. If the welfare society wins this competition, it is a decision on points rather than a knockout. What I mean is that the charity society is not necessarily nondecent for humiliating by almsgiving, while a decent society is not necessarily a welfare society, but can also be a charity society.