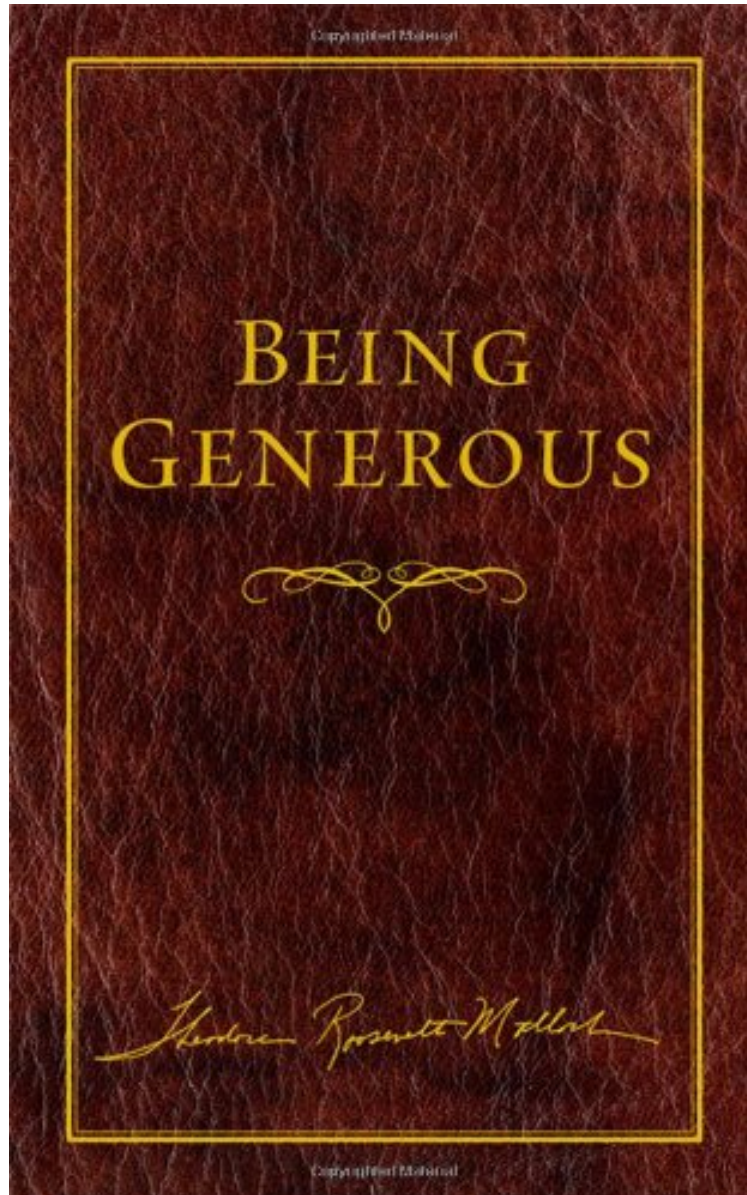


[Ebook pdf] Being Generous

## Being Generous

*Theodore Roosevelt Malloch*  
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**Theodore Roosevelt Malloch : Being Generous** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Being Generous:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Motivating but missing some coherence and practical advice By Paul Penley Theodore Roosevelt Malloch's embrace of the generous life and its reciprocating benefits bleeds through every page of his new book Being Generous. He wrote this short book with one simple goal for its readers: "Discover what

being generous means, and begin living it." Although he proficiently educates us on the tangible value of developing a generous life, he comes up short on practical advice to "begin living it." Chapter One ("Generosity: A Universal Moral Urge") cogently captures the universal religious appreciation for generosity. Whether called Tzedekah, caritas, zakat, dana, Patshatl, or philanthropy, Malloch ably demonstrates that being generous is "not just a core part of the human condition, but a universal moral urge, our defining nature." (29) In Chapter Two ("Charity and Gift") he focuses on his personal religious heritage and explains how Christianity continues the heart of the Jewish Torah summed up in the Creator's command to "love thy neighbor." From his analysis of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan he concludes that "a neighbor is someone whom we encounter and whose need we observe and to which we have the opportunity to respond by giving...." (32) That Christian call to charity has grown louder and wider as "[t]he growing interconnectedness of people around the globe" exposes us to the pressing needs of so many people near and far "from other ethnic groups, other nations, and other religious faiths." (32) Malloch's conclusion: God has created us to give, and therefore commanded us to embrace that blueprint for our life. Chapter Three ("Stewardship Spirituality") in essence continues the argument of Chapter Two while focusing on the concepts of grace and gratitude. "Those who truly understand the meaning of grace ultimately have just one way to respond, and that is with gratitude." (41) In a genius historical observation Malloch presents evidence that socialist states replacing the concept of gift with the concept of one's "right" to all resources for a good life actually dehumanize their citizens and destroy their generosity. For example, Lenin eliminated private charities after the Bolshevik revolution, and the Communist party closed down all ten thousand volunteer societies in Hungary after two years of control. In Malloch's words, "Remove gift and gratitude from human society, and what remains is not a community but a 'lonely crowd'." (43) The main point: erased awareness of undeserved gifts undermines the gratitude that drives generosity. In making this point about gift, gratitude, and generosity Malloch falls victim to reductionistic logic. How? First, he labels every person's time, talent, energy, influence, and resources as a gift that they should steward gratefully. Then, he concludes, "[I]f a transformation is to take place and if stewardship is to become a way of life--a kind of 'life principle' that touches every corner of life--it must begin with gratitude, with genuine thanksgiving to God for all his wonderful gifts." (45) This assertion contradicts both scientific facts (see Chapter Six) and anecdotal examples used elsewhere in the book (e.g., Ted Turner). A person may choose to give not out of gratitude but in pursuit of the joy that comes from generosity. It may not be with thankfulness for what one has but with the goal of gaining a feeling and reputation that one does not yet have. The strict connection between selfless stewardship and gratitude for gifts particularly breaks down when one considers that many resources and talents are the result of working diligently and sacrificially and not merely receiving a gift. It is hard to treat what one has earned as if it were a gift. Of course, here the pragmatic reader bumps into a theological claim that all things come from God whether you earned them or not, and there is no real argument to be had on matters of faith. However, the careful reader will find that Malloch has a difficult time consistently using that logic in his promotion of generosity and view of personal resources. For example, he attributes good generosity in Chapter Five to an "appreciation" for "earning it," and again in Chapter Eight, "[I]n giving we help ourselves. In giving, we demonstrate that it is we who control our possessions, not vice versa. ...The more we advance in generosity the more we advance in happiness and in turn are motivated to increase the good fortune of others." (102) there are many more motivations to give than gratitude for gifts. Chapter Four ("Time, Treasure, and Talent") provides a concise reminder that giving can and in its most fulfilling forms will involve our time and talent, not just our treasure. There is little argument to be had, and I might add, fresh insight to be gained from his basic reminder. Overall, I applaud his comments in Chapter Four on "risky" giving but question his reductionistic claim about the concept of "genuine" gifts. As for "risky" giving Malloch notes that our "risk-averse society" blockades great gifts and hinders our growth as human beings (58). If the risk of giving ourselves and our resources prevents bold giving, then it in fact frustrates our pursuit of the deepest human experiences and joys. Being a philanthropy advisor myself, I have seen clients confirm his conclusion when they recall that the greatest gift they ever gave involved financial risk. As for his comment on "genuine" giving, I believe he succumbed to unnecessary semantics: "In short it is only when we devote our time on earth to others that we make genuine gifts." (56) To judge the "genuineness" of gifts by one's internal devotion appears somewhat superfluous or tendentious. I don't think the many Oxford graduates whose lives have been boosted by Oxford's educational quality and reputation are concerned with the insincerity or genuineness of Dr. John Radcliffe's significant benefaction at the end of a miserly life. Chapter Five ("Economics and Morality") presents a striking macroeconomic argument. The thesis is: Good economies go hand in hand with virtuous practices and people. Malloch employs arguments from economists Herbert Gintis, Tibor Machan, and Adam Smith to make a solid case for low taxation, free market societies producing more generous people with more money to give. He asks a sensible question: Would not earners be better trusted giving their money to help others than the government would be? As he sees it, "[G]overnments are poor at generosity because they use other people's money and have no appreciation for either earning it or stewarding it." (70) Here I am persuaded by his logic and wholeheartedly agree that there is a difference between a person carefully spending hard earned money to benefit others and politicians spending citizens' hard earned money to ensure re-election. Chapter Six ("Generosity and Science") presents scientific data that humans are hardwired for generosity. From Stephen Post's psychological research to Martin Nowak's

evolutionary research, Malloch makes an adequate case that humanity is designed for being generous and benefiting from it (despite the fact he missed or omitted other significant supportive studies that Nicholas Kristoff has reported in the New York Times). Chapter Seven ("Responsible Generosity") is the first chapter to finally address the question of how to execute one's generosity rather than simply exploring the motivations behind it. His intention with the chapter is noble. "Responsible generosity consists of more than mere good intentions. It steers clear of careless strategies or ideologically motivated theories. It includes a willingness to follow through, to examine the results of the charitable giving. It takes full responsibility for the use of the donated resources." (83) Although I applaud the written description of responsible generosity, he does not provide guidelines for giving, possible accountability structures, or practical steps to examining results. Instead he cites ad campaigns and books promoting giving and an internet site that lists giving opportunities with no clear vetting process mentioned for those projects and their results. Since I serve multiple family foundations with the purpose of strategizing and executing high-impact philanthropic portfolios, I find the chapter void of practical guidance on the matter of "responsible" generosity. Chapter Eight ("Generous Society") is a difficult chapter to describe. From a reader's perspective, it represents the least organized and coherent collection of thoughts in the book. Whereas Chapters One, Five, and Six present thematically coherent arguments, Chapter Eight joins Chapter Seven and Ten in compiling somewhat disjointed thoughts not always plainly connected to the chapter title. Chapter Nine ("Generosity and the Purpose of Life") is a questionable venture in overestimating the book's call to generosity. As he considers the question of life's ultimate meaning, he concludes, "[T]he answer is giving. That is what life is all about. Living well has to do with the extent to which we live generously." (106) It is one thing to demonstrate that generosity breeds joy and quite another to assert its practice as the totality of life itself. His claim seems to be a classic case of unwarranted extrapolation (poor argumentation) driven by noble zeal (honorable intent). Chapter Ten ("Final Thoughts") ends with some simple and practical advice for becoming generous. His thesis for becoming generous is that generosity is formed in a person; so it is best to start young. That's good advice. As for how to practice generosity, he urges a whole life commitment and provides four one-sentence tips on good giving execution. His point can be summed up in some of his closing words. "To be generous, therefore, it is not sufficient to give money: you must also give time and energy--the time needed to follow things through and the energy needed to convey your gift into the hands of the ones whom you wish to help." (123) As a believer in the joy and meaningfulness of generosity, I commend his compilation of motivations for being generous. Although they are not always presented coherently in thematically linked and structurally sound arguments, there is enough substance to make any reader give serious consideration to his call to generosity. However, as a philanthropy advisor, I must acknowledge that his practical advice on how to "begin living it" leaves the reader wanting. In my experience good intentions are not enough in the discipline of giving. Those readers who will undoubtedly be inspired by Malloch's call to generosity will need more specific steps for evaluating past giving, creating a philanthropic focus, using available resources to create and measure impact, leverage gifts and influence, and find joy in the celebration of proven results. Of course, my critique is driven by the fact that I spend each day of my life walking people through those practical steps. So maybe I am being a bit hard on him and could benefit from a more generous review of his finer points. Hopefully one day I will get a chance to talk these things through with him and experience the generous character that so deeply shines through his words.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Bon Appetit! By John W. Pearson

The author of *Being Generous* shares a transparent axiom at the beginning of his 139-page panoramic and profound sweep of global generosity. He confesses, "I had to practice religious disciplines in order to become more generous. This is something I still must work at constantly, for ultimately the business of giving is unfinished business." The good news: this is a no-brainer gift book for every person who wants to be a God-honoring and generous giver. The bad news: just when you thought you understood generosity and believed yet-one-more-book is certainly not needed on the subject, Theodore Roosevelt Malloch serves up a sumptuous feast. In 139 pages, no less! You may be tempted to sample the dessert first: 27 one-page profiles of generous givers from the Pew Family to the Maclellan Family. From George Cadbury to William Wilberforce. From Bach and Mendelssohn to J.C. Penney, John Walton and Eli Lilly. Then there's Joan Kroc, Mother Teresa, Oprah Winfrey, Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett and C.S. Lewis. The profiles will enlighten and, often, surprise you. Malloch writes, "The story is told that when a friend heard that Lewis had given money to a beggar in Oxford, the friend remarked that he shouldn't have done so because the beggar would only spend the money on alcoholic drink. Lewis replied, 'If I kept the money, I would only have spent it on drink!'" But the profiles are just the dessert. The meat and potatoes (10 short chapters) offer remarkable and synergistic insights. Malloch delivers a smorgasbord of generosity research and commentary: historical, political (why socialism inhibits generosity), religious (all the major religions promote generosity), theological, physiological (our brains are hardwired to give), societal, scientific and cultural. You're quickly convinced. You must embrace generosity as a virtue--and help others to do the same. *Being Generous* is profound--yet very, very readable. It's not yesterday's leftovers--it's new thinking pulled from the widest array of knowledge--served up with inspiring side dishes that motivate and are generously seasoned with wisdom. Malloch suggests we give greater priority to a balanced diet of time, talent and treasure (not just treasure) when practicing the virtue of generosity. He proposes a "Generosity Index" that would chart two items along an axis: --How you use your time (your date book) --How you use your money (your check book)" By calculating these two

points along a graph," he adds, "you could see where you are in terms of generosity. You could tell if you are living a generous life and if any axis is falling short. You could compare yourself with others and against yourself over time, year-to-year, decade-to-decade." He's on to something. If you're a leader in your church, synagogue or mosque, or you're a CEO or development officer of a nonprofit, this is a no-brainer gift for yourself and for your Top-100 donors. If you're just hungry to be a more generous person, bon appetit!

Through the ages, the world's cultures and great religions have in profound, though different, ways sought to answer the big question: how should we live? Part of the answer has to do with how we ought to treat others, particularly those who are most in need. Ample evidence suggests that giving selflessly to others lies at the heart of what it means to be a thoughtful and moral human being. In *Being Generous*, author Theodore Roosevelt Malloch leads an exploration of this important concept of generous giving. He begins by examining how generosity fits into the various spiritual traditions, philosophical schools, and economic systems. Further chapters illustrate how generosity need not necessarily always be about money, showing instead how it might also involve the sharing of time and talent. Elsewhere, Malloch explores the science behind generosity, looking, for example, at the relationship between various chemicals in the brain and generous behavior. Beyond the theory and the science of generosity, readers will also find a wealth of inspiration in a collection of profiles of past and present icons of generosity. *Being Generous* concludes with a practical action plan that lays out concrete steps that can guide readers toward lives of greater giving.

From the Inside Flap  
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