



# CHOOSING A NEW WAVE OF

ly, money has been seen as separate from the path of conscious transformation. Seen through a noetic lens, though, money can serve our most precious values and boldest dreams. Its flow reflects the quality of our consciousness and the clarity of our intentions, shaping our ecological and social footprint as well as our personal legacy. It represents our power to infuse energy into life-affirming organizations or projects. Money, when seen with awareness, becomes part of our creative magic, even part of our blessing power.

A new wave of conscious philanthropy is rising that reflects these insights and goes beyond guilt-induced redistribution to the poor for a tax break. “Venture philanthropists” bring business disciplines to social change, focusing on innovation and entrepreneurial empowerment. Transformational philanthropists—as noted by scholar Duane Elgin—dig deeper into root causes of social ills and rework the very foundations of society. Theodore Mallon’s *The Journey Toward Masterful Philanthropy* and Tracy Gary’s *Inspired Philanthropy* highlight still other facets of this next wave. What unites the various approaches is a desire to engage the process of human betterment more strategically and consciously, not only with dollars, but with talents and time. Stewardship is often seen as central. Instead of seeing resources as “ours,” we begin to see them as collective assets that we have the opportunity and even responsibility to steward with wisdom, compassion, and discrimination.

Another essential shift involves seeing philanthropy as an act that not only helps someone else, but changes the philanthropist him or herself. Giving becomes an act of mutual evolution and empowerment. The connection between a philanthropist and a recipient bridges two missions and engages the total self of each person involved—his or her knowledge, values, worldview, beliefs, talents, awareness, and skills. The philanthropic relationship thus involves dreams, ideas, and talents in addition to money. Truly conscious philanthropy empowers the

**P**hilanthropy literally means the “love of humanity.” However, we often associate the term with a one-dimensional flow of financial resources rather than the full awakening of our noblest virtues and capacities. Money is, of course, a key part of the philanthropic equation, but a more expanded vision allows us to approach philanthropy as a transformational relationship entered into for the benefit of all beings—including the person who chooses to give. In this expanded vision, philanthropists intensely engage the human experiment, and are willing to channel their full resources towards human betterment. These resources might include anything from marketing skills, to a neighborhood network, to an inspiring speech. The true philanthropist sees each moment as an opportunity to gift the world with whatever assets he or she has available.

An essential step in moving towards this expanded vision involves shifting our understanding of money. Historical-

# TO GIVE: CONSCIOUS PHILANTHROPY

Social Choice 

STEPHEN DINAN AND DEVAA HALEY MITCHELL

next wave of change agents on *both* sides of the giving equation. Therefore, creating conditions where individuals can engage in meaningful growth is vital.

One of the leaders in this work is IONS Board Vice Chair Lynne Twist, who authored the recent bestseller *The Soul of Money*, and who has raised \$200 million for causes as varied as The Hunger Project, the Pachamama Alliance, and IONS. In an interview for this article, Lynne emphasized the importance of shifting away from charity, which tends to alleviate the guilt of those with “too much” by giving to those who are resource-poor, towards real philanthropy—working in partnership towards a shared goal. The donor and recipient become equal partners in the relationship, each with essential assets, skills, and talents to offer the shared mission, which might be anything from drought relief in Africa to the scientific study of forgiveness. Money is part of the exchange, but not the only part.

Lynne sees one of the central challenges of our day to be the reallocation of our society’s resources away from fear-based expenditures, such as defense budgets or security systems, and towards those based on love, such as programs to preserve the rainforest or explore mind-body medicine. In shifting the societal fear-love balance, the philanthropist becomes a cultural healer, using the flow of money to reorient society to more life-affirming goals. She sometimes thinks of this as “money laundering.” By blessing and consecrating it, we can cleanse money that was earned in exploitative ways and redeem it for more soul-filled purposes, moving us beyond scarcity into abundance. In engaging this financial alchemy, we bring our relationship with money into the heart of our spiritual life and practice. In Lynne’s words, “When we align our financial expression with our spiritual truths, that’s where true prosperity lies.”

Lynne strongly believes that our money carries our intentions. In one of the most poignant stories of her

book, Lynne accepted fifty hard-earned dollars from a low-income Harlem woman named Gertrude, while sending back \$50,000 to a corporation trying to smooth over a tarnished reputation. Lynne could feel that the money given by Gertrude had such pure intention that it would make a significant difference in ending world hunger, whereas the other money was given with the wrong motive. In the end, Gertrude’s story has inspired and galvanized thousands of people, contributing to ending hunger in remarkable ways. And the CEO of the company was so struck by the return of the original donation that he eventually made his own shifts and gave far more money personally to The Hunger Project.

More than anything, Lynne hopes that our lives become increasingly measured by what we allocate rather than what we accumulate. Bringing greater consciousness to how money flows becomes central to aligning our society with our noblest ideals. In reflecting on Lynne’s example, we believe she demonstrates how to infuse philanthropy with evolutionary potential, enabling us to create abundant, generous, and joyful lives while transforming the world. This is true regardless of the quantity of resources involved; it is the quality of intention, consciousness, and relationship infusing our actions that matters the most.

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LYNNE TWIST WILL LEAD A “SOUL OF MONEY”  
WORKSHOP ON IONS’ CAMPUS JANUARY 14-16,  
2005. SEE [WWW.SOULOFMONEY.ORG](http://WWW.SOULOFMONEY.ORG) FOR DETAILS

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STEPHEN DINAN is the editor of *Radical Spirit: Spiritual Writings from the Voices of Tomorrow*, a workshop leader, and a marketing consultant. His website is [www.radicalspirit.org](http://www.radicalspirit.org). IONS

Director of Member Engagement DEVAA HALEY MITCHELL is the former executive director of the Full Circle Fund. 