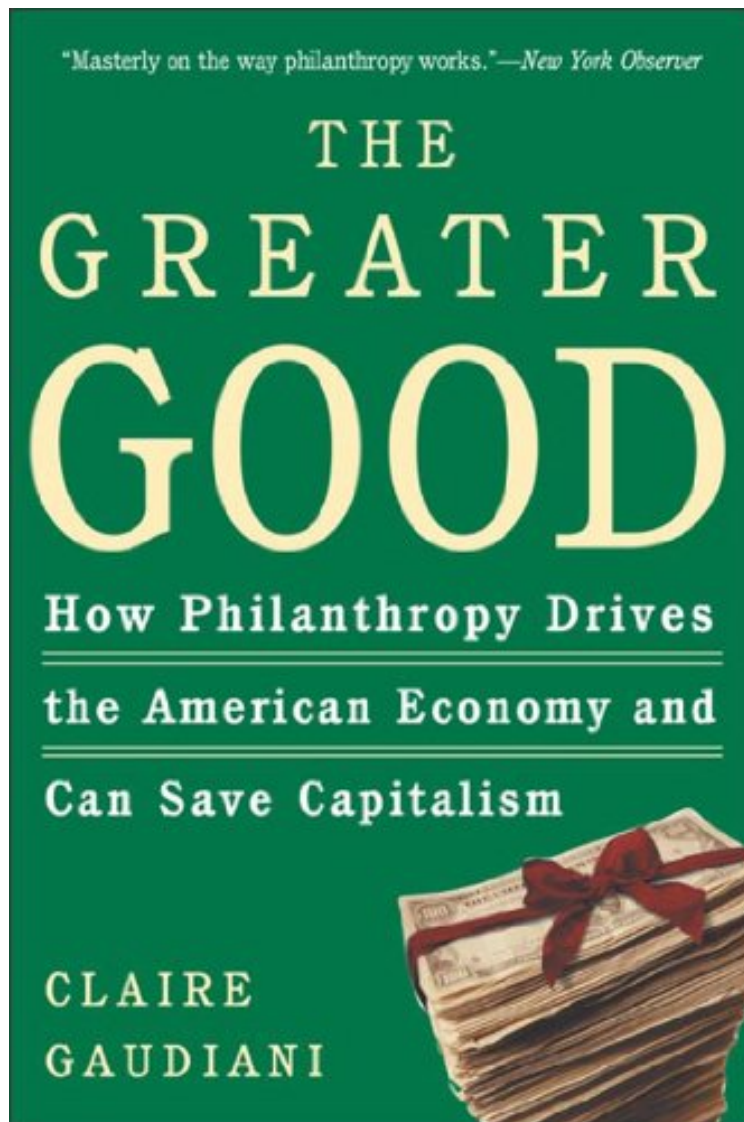


(Free read ebook) The Greater Good: How Philanthropy Drives the American Economy and Can Save Capitalism

The Greater Good: How Philanthropy Drives the American Economy and Can Save Capitalism

Claire Gaudiani Ph.D.

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Claire Gaudiani Ph.D. : The Greater Good: How Philanthropy Drives the American Economy and Can Save Capitalism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Greater Good: How Philanthropy Drives the American Economy and Can Save Capitalism:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The New Frontier of PhilanthropyBy AlessandroWith a hopeful view on the first decades of the twenty-first century, Claire Gaudiani presents in her book the stage on which a bold

philanthropy and a democratic capitalism could act to sustain the nation's economic prosperity, by further advancing the cause that philanthropy could save American capitalism from its unfolding negative directions. She links her argument to rights that have forged the American culture from the founders' ideals to generations of immigrants' hopes: the opportunity for upward mobility, and the pursuit of happiness. In essence, Gaudiani's aim is to build a compelling case about the role of philanthropy in the U.S. economy. Several factors concur to justify her mission: 1) the brand of U.S. capitalism that demands lower taxes, hence reduces resources for supporting the "social health" (153) of the nation; 2) the poorer 20% sector of the population that remains at a poverty level and could "become angriest" (150); 3) a kind of philanthropy that "enables people to build wealth, not dependency" (151). In many ways the author reaffirms the last point throughout the entire book, capturing early its relevance, as she states in the introduction "philanthropy is an investment in our democracy and our economy" (10). Ultimately, Gaudiani appeals to the reader to see how an engaging and bold philanthropy would be the fitting strategy and the force for successfully promoting change in the directions of American capitalism, as well as for saving it, by moving it toward a more efficient and socially responsible democratic capitalism.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Finding My Generosity By Torrey K. Byles This book is a manifesto and an operational guideline. It explains the "third force" of our social-economic system: philanthropy, and its pivotal role in insuring the successful functioning of free-enterprise in the economic sphere and democracy in the political sphere. The balance struck between capitalism and democracy is what matters, she says. And that balance is struck by acts of generosity. "Generosity is capitalism's open and pragmatic acknowledgement that, since democracy's freedoms enhance capitalism's economic powers, then democracy deserves assets from capitalism that contribute to its strength." P. 23. "Capitalism needs democracy's value to remain defensible in society. Conversely, democracy needs capitalism's wealth creation for pursuing justice and opportunity for all." (p. 21) Gaudiani makes the point that philanthropy (including volunteerism and giving) has been a critical component to the success of the American culture. It was particularly strong in the earlier part of the 20th century: during the "Progressive Era." Since 1970, however, the philanthropic urge has dissipated in relative terms. Because the distribution of wealth continues to get more skewed, and with the conservative trend in today's politics and zeitgeist fostering further disparities between rich and poor and the dismantling of social services such as universal health and social security, the need for philanthropy is never before greater. But the need isn't simply for more dollars to be given. The crisis is in understanding generosity and how it is part of human happiness. A correct understanding of self interest is needed, she says. We are at a crossroads and a crisis in our sense of philanthropy and generosity, according to Gaudiani. And, with the incredible rise in millionaire families, the next 30 years will see a class of people who face the choice: keep it all for myself and my children, or give some to insure that the society and culture in which I live will continue to thrive and be great. It is the American tradition of generosity, according to Gaudiani, and not religion, empathy, or social pressure, that is the most likely cultural force that will sustain the philanthropic spirit.

P. 168. Gaudiani speaks in terms of universal human values and wisdom (generosity is a value shared by all world cultures), and forcefully shows with example after example how this force operated in US history. Thus, her book is a great example of interpretive speaking for concrete social action. Her words invoke a cultural shift, and disclose a new world of possibility, while showing us that it can be based on beliefs we already hold, and actions that we already do. She does not introduce new metaphysical premises, but merely reframes, reconfigures, and adds emphasis to what is already within our capacity. The strength of the book is its organic vision of philanthropy as necessary to fulfill democracy in a free enterprise economy; its comprehensive overview of the main areas of social capital (human, physical, and intellectual capital) and the scores of historical examples of how generosity and philanthropy made important investments in social capital; and its pragmatic program, with specific targets for philanthropy (e.g. increased home ownership by the poor) and plethora of possible mechanisms to achieve these targets (e.g. microlending, ROSCAs, matching donation banks, among others). The questions that went unanswered by Gaudiani's book, for me, are in the realm of psychology and personal, emotional intelligence. Gaudiani speaks to the need for finding that "correct understanding of self interest" where giving, generosity, and concern for the collective is part of one's personal happiness. She references Enlightenment philosophy about living the good and honorable life, and the new direction in 'behavioral economics'. But she is light on detailing the emotional and psychological dimensions of generosity and altruism. How do I embody a generous outlook and make it work in my life? What does my motivation feel like when I pursue my self interest as incorporating the greater good? What do my interpersonal relationships look like? How do I balance my ego's need for recognition and my concern for others? How do I get from co-dependence to interdependence? How do I transcend my fears of not having enough money or not being good enough so that I am compassionate and know a sense of interconnectedness? Gaudiani's case is compelling from an objective, systems point of view. And I agree, from this standpoint, with her provocative point: America is rich because it is generous (not vice versa). But from the subjective, personal, 'human interior' point of view, I still wonder how I can be generous and successful. From a personal standpoint, it seems, I can't be generous until I am rich. Perhaps the psychological aspects are for another book. Gaudiani points to the world's culture wisdom traditions as providing the possibilities for restoring generosity as a prominent value in society. Generosity is truly a universal human value. All cultural traditions esteem it highly. The very concept of human being in the Chinese tradition incorporates benevolence. The

Hindu concept of Ahimsa includes sharing one's prosperity with others. The Islamic tradition discourages interest and debt-based financial cooperatives in favor of equity sharing arrangements. Gaudiani suggests that the cultural diversity of the US - with all the wisdom traditions represented here - is a huge untapped asset for bringing forth new understandings of generosity in our culture. This multidimensional value, that interpenetrates all domains of life, can be re-energized in our culture, she suggests, by encouraging the different ethnic traditions to bring it out. To me this is an area where citizen discussion groups and workshops could play a big role. These programs would have individuals come together to share their experiences and emotions around the realities of making a living, taking care of oneself, and taking care of others. This is a big complex thing for people to work on, and it is better done within groups, not by individually reading a book. If a companion book is to be written to Gaudiani's important current book, it would be a guidebook for discussion groups to unpack these many personal, life history, and cultural aspects around self interest, the pursuit of happiness, and cultural renewal.

6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The Christian community should read this book. By Chip M. Anderson "Most people think that Americans are generous because we are rich. The truth is that we are rich...because we are generous..." So writes Claire Gaudiani. Why should Christians read this book? We don't want to save "Capitalism," do we? Perhaps not, but we know we'd miss it, if it was destroyed. Yes, the Christian community ought to find time to read this wonderful book on the history of American Philanthropy and how it has, in the past, played a vital role in helping to maintain the uniqueness of the American experiment. More importantly, Gaudiani explains the perils of our current "giving habits," the cultural reasons for the trend, and solutions to restore the spirit of philanthropy. She writes, "As more of us are better able every year to satisfy our wants and needs, we are not sharing a larger percentage of our income and wealth. We are retaining it in savings or spending it on ourselves and our families. Yet some segments of the population...are experiencing reductions in their well-being, notably children." Christians for the most part should appreciate America's history of philanthropy, for much of it stems from either the Judeo-Christian worldview or simply from a genuine Christian faith that seeks to "give away what God has given to make other people's lives better." The Christian community should also find a welcome friend in her words: "Philanthropy has, in the past, been quicker than government to imagine, test, and implement innovative methods for solving social problems." Of all people and social groups, the Christian community should read this book, if for anything to learn to appreciate the history of Philanthropy. Giving and developing strategies for philanthropic adventures are more than mere altruism. After reading Gaudiani's book, I find that philanthropy of any kind (American or Christian charity) is the human experience where self-interest and compassion are not in conflict. It is in the best interest of Americans (dare I say Christians) to ensure that everyone has access to the American Dream--the dream of upward mobility. In the humble opinion of this reviewer, more Christian communities and churches should design their own philanthropic adventures and meet the social needs that are knocking on their church doors.

A persuasive re-examination of American prosperity and the generosity that has built our nation. For over a century, the United States has stood as a beacon of prosperity and democracy, proof that big business and big dreams could flourish side by side. Yet few Americans realize the crucial role that generosity plays in keeping that fragile balance. And now, with gated communities, oppressive personal debts, shrinking government, and tax and welfare reform crusades, that essential moral glue is at risk of melting away. A leading voice for community development, former Connecticut College president and scholar Claire Gaudiani explores all these issues as she examines American prosperity from the Constitution to the New Economy bust. She traces the push and pull of the robber barons and the progressive movement, the New Deal and the postwar boom, and the Me Decade and the technology revolution, finding that altruism powerfully invests in people, property, and ingenuity. Rather than pitting the capitalists against the populists, Gaudiani brings both sides to the table to reseat this fundamental social contract and provide a blueprint for a just future. The Greater Good is a passionate, pragmatic, and, finally, optimistic manifesto for revitalizing the promise of the American economy.

From Publishers Weekly. As president of Connecticut College in the 1990s, Gaudiani saw the school's endowment quintuple, no doubt bolstering her enthusiasm for philanthropy and inspiring this foray into writing about public policy. Declaring "no people on earth are as generous with their money as Americans are," Gaudiani posits "citizen generosity" as not just an alternative to government spending or corporate investment, but an integral fulfillment of the nation's "democratic imperative" of upward mobility. She mostly chooses her historical examples well, as in sections on Chicago's vibrant (and lucrative) museum culture and the origins of the March of Dimes, but does stumble occasionally: as evidence of our generosity, an early chapter observes that 89% of Americans made charitable donations in 2001-but fails to mention that September 11 might have made the year's giving patterns atypical. Her optimism also leads to a debatable argument that the happiness the founding fathers wanted us to pursue lay in contributing to others' success and that revived attention to various religious championings of generosity could inspire a philanthropic revolution. Gaudiani makes much of the idea that we need charity because we can't rely on government to fix our problems, especially since we hate paying taxes, and conservatives and libertarians will undoubtedly cite this book to support increased tax cuts "freeing up" money for donations. Some will agree, some will not, but what can

anyone really say against a book that suggests we all give more to charity? Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist In a way, former Connecticut College president Gaudiani has an axe to grind. Her thesis here is that generosity, as one of the most widely shared U.S. values (on average, we give 2 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, compared to the U.K.'s statistic--our closest competitor--of 0.7 percent), is fast receding. She builds her case carefully, pointing to the tremendous positive impact American philanthropy has had on human, physical, and intellectual capital, from the GI Bill and Sears Roebuck-founder Julius Rosenwald's construction of Chicago's famed Museum of Science and Industry to the formation of such nonprofits as MADD and Environmental Defense. To continue those kinds of contributions, she contends, demands eight different solutions, including making meaningful partnerships, plans that grow giving, more home ownership for low- and lower-middle-income citizens, community centers, among others. It is, indeed, an intelligent and well-reasoned argument designed to promote the greater good. And, on paper at least, it works. Barbara Jacobs Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "As Gaudiani examines the directions in which philanthropy must advance in the years ahead, she offers some stark alternatives that will demand the attention of our policy makers. Insightful." -Edwin J. Feulner, president, The Heritage Foundation