



## Welcome to the May 2024 Newsletter!

Hello philanthropoids,

I hope you are all keeping well. I know I say pretty much every month that there has been a lot of philanthropy news and content, but this month there *really* has been a lot of it – to the point where when I began writing the first draft of this intro on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, I already had 4 pages of bullet points stretching ahead of me that I somehow need to turn into breezy-yet-insightful-and-please-God-not-that-long updates. (In particular the “Other Good Stuff” section this month is an absolute whopper...)

As such I’m going to keep this intro very short and sweet. I will just confine myself to saying that if you are reading this after the Philea conference in Ghent at the end of the month and we managed to meet: hello again! And if you weren’t there or we didn’t get a chance to meet: I’m sure there will be a next time. Given that I spend a decent proportion of my time sitting in an office in my garden on my own, I am definitely always keen for an excuse to get out and meet other actual human beings.

Right, on with the philanthro-waffle.

Rhodri

# PHILANTHROPY IN THE NEWS

## Please Close the Gates When You Leave

Even if you have an aversion to the celebrity gossip side of reporting on philanthropy, it was pretty clear that the big news this month was the announcement that [Melinda French Gates has resigned from the foundation that she co-founded and, for a long time, co-chaired with her former husband Bill Gates.](#)



(Image by [UK Department for International Development](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#))

French Gates is to leave the Gates Foundation as of early June, and as part of her separation agreement is to receive \$12.5 billion for her own charitable work, which she has already indicated will focus on addressing issues affecting women and girls around the world. There has been plenty of speculation about exactly what form that will take - [a lot of it centring around whether she will follow Mackenzie Scott in embracing rapid, large scale trust based giving.](#) There have even been

[rumours that she might team up with Scott on some joint philanthropic ventures](#). Which offers a tantalising prospect for philanthropy watchers, since each woman is already a major figure in current global philanthropy in her own right, so plenty of people (myself very much included!) would be fascinated to see what they could do in tandem.

## **It's Not Easy Being Green (Especially When You're Jeff Bezos...)**

In other Big Philanthropy news, an article in the *Guardian* this month reported that [concerns have been voiced in some quarters about the growing influence exerted by Mackenzie Scott's ex-husband, Jeff Bezos, on the climate funding space](#). Given that it wasn't that long ago that the main source of complaint about Bezos's philanthropy was that it was notable primarily for its lack of scale and clarity of purpose, perhaps we should view the fact that he is now being criticised for doing too much of as progress (of sorts)? Some of the criticisms of Bezos highlighted in the article are fairly generic ones levelled at big money philanthropy of any sort, particularly when it is a disproportionate player in any field- i.e. that it cannot help but distort and destabilize the wider ecosystem by imposing its own preferences and priorities (whether intentionally or not).



[Image by Thierry Ehrman, CC BY 2.0](#)

But there are more specific concerns too: in particular that the Bezos Earth Fund is using its funding and influence to promote carbon offsets as a valid means for companies to meet reduced carbon emissions targets. This has alarmed some climate scientists, who argue that carbon offsets are a tool for greenwashing because they allow companies to buy their way to sustainability credentials without actually changing their practices. And the further suspicion is that in Bezos's case, there would be a significant degree of self-interest in promoting the validity of carbon offsets, since this would be of huge benefit to his company Amazon (which has been widely criticised for its environmental impact).

At the same time, it should be said, there are plenty who have lauded Bezos's entry into the ranks of billion-dollar philanthropic donors; including many in the environmental world, who have welcomed the sums of money he has brought to the table for a cause area that has historically been underfunded. So, as ever, this is far from a clear-cut case of good or bad; rather it is just another example of the importance of maintaining scrutiny on elite philanthropy and holding it to account when necessary.

## British Reserve?

The *Sunday Times* Rich List, and its accompanying Giving List were published this month: an event that always strikes fear into the hearts of UK fundraisers, who just know that their CEO is going to come in on Monday morning and suggest that they contact all of the people in the Giving List as potential donors. [The headline from this year's Giving List was that the total amount given by the 100 philanthropists on the list was down by £200 million.](#)





This goes somewhat in the face of other research (such as [this from the Beacon Collaborative](#)) which suggests that giving by the wealthy is on the increase, but is important to remember that the figures on the Giving List don't relate to all wealthy people in the UK – only the 100 on the list. And those figures should be taken with a slight pinch of salt, in

any case, as they are calculated on the basis of publicly available information about donations these individuals (or their foundations) have made, so they don't necessarily paint an entirely accurate picture. That being said, given the wider paucity of data about philanthropy in the UK, the ST Giving List remains one of the main gauges of what is going on in giving at the very top end, so the fact that it suggests donations are down should be taken seriously.

## A Life By The Numbers

This month saw [the loss of another big figure in 21<sup>st</sup> century US philanthropy, with the death of James Simons](#). Simons was a brilliant mathematician, who after gaining his PhD worked first as a cryptographer for the US government's Institute for Defence Analysis (a job that he was forced to leave over his refusal to work on Vietnam War-related project in the 1970s), before going on to pioneer the field of quantitative trading through the investment company he founded (Renaissance Technologies, also known as RenTech). This reportedly delivered returns of around 80% per year to investors, and made Simons a billionaire. In the late 1990s his attention turned towards philanthropy and he founded the Simons Foundation. This has gone on to become one of the biggest funders in the field of basic scientific research and mathematics, and also funded science communication initiatives such as the excellent online magazine Quanta (which, as a former maths undergraduate, I love reading to keep up on developments in maths- although I can't claim to understand all of it these days!)



(Image by TED Conference, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Simons then took his support for science one step further in 2016 with [the launch of the Flatiron Institute](#), a new research institute focused on applying computation methods to major problems in a variety of fields (astrophysics, biology, mathematics etc). This attracted many high calibre scientific researchers, with the promise of salaries well above those paid in academia as well as freeing them from the need to apply for grant funding. This led to some criticism that Simons was potentially having a distorting effect on scientific research as a result of his ability to impose his own priorities through his funding (in much the same way as Jeff Bezos's Earth Fund is now being criticised for skewing priorities in the environmental field, as per the story above). But again, many also welcomed it – particularly researchers in many fields of pure mathematics who maintain that their work in recent years would not have been possible without the funding provided by the Simons Foundation or the Flatiron Institute.

## **Giving the Gift of Giving?**

There was a great story this month about a billionaire donor, Rob Hale, who [surprised the graduating class at University of Massachusetts](#)



Dartmouth by giving them each \$1,000; but only on the condition that they keep half and give the other half to charity.

Apparently, this donor (Rob Hale) has done something similar for the last few years, with the aim being that as well as offering his own gift to students, he wants to encourage them to learn about the value of giving their own gifts:

""We want to give you two gifts. The first is our gift to you," Hale told the students. "The second is the gift of giving. These trying times have heightened the need for sharing, caring and giving. Our community needs you, and your generosity, more than ever.""



Image by US Department of Education, [CC BY 2.0](#)

This echoes other recent examples of big money donors using some of their philanthropy to support wider everyday giving, such as the gifts given by Ray Dalio or the work of the Gates Foundation through its philanthropic partnerships program. IMHO this is a really fascinating trend, as it highlights all sort of ideas about the inherent value of giving: e.g. as a means of building social capital, or giving people agency, or acting as a “nursery of democracy” (to borrow Alexis de Tocqueville’s phrase); which go above and beyond just the outcomes delivered

through philanthropy. Of course, a cynic might argue that this is driven in part by a desire to answer concerns about the anti-democratic nature of big money philanthropy by “spreading the love” a bit, but even if that is true, is it necessarily a bad thing? If everyday giving genuinely is a tool for strengthening democracy through fostering active participation, then even if it is not the whole answer to the sometimes tricky question of philanthropy’s appropriate role in a democracy, surely it can be an important piece of the puzzle?

## Is donating to charity “too easy”?

Occasionally it is good to read things that annoy you, just make sure you are still alive, which is why I enjoyed [a piece by Matthew Parris in \*The Spectator\* this month in which he bemoaned \(in a series of points which, it must be said, seemed fairly self-contradictory at times\) the fact that, in his view, giving to charity has become “too easy”.](#)

The trigger for Parris’s ire seems to have been a large number of recent requests for sponsorship from friends and acquaintances. Which Parris is quick to point out he doesn’t object to *per se* (which I believe, as he has always been quite strongly pro- charitable giving in the past); rather it is the sense that the number of requests has been artificially inflated by the efforts of what he calls the “big charitable machine”, together with a suspicion that not all of the money is “going to the frontline” that really bothers him. Now, none of this carping is new – as anyone who works in the charity sector and has recently had a conversation with a cynical family member about their work can probably attest. And I am also aware that columns in magazines are driven by the need to meet a weekly word count and to provoke a reaction, so I have tried not to be too bothered about this piece. But it is just worth picking up on a couple of things.



First of all, at one point in the article Parris says that “it’s tempting to bewail this increasingly insistent sleeve-tugging, and express nostalgia for the good old days when one didn’t feel menaced by a big charitable machine and a superfluity of dearly beloved supplicants. I shall not resist the temptation.” My question would be: when is this apparently prelapsarian utopia supposed to have been? From what I can see people have been complaining about being subject to fundraising requests for pretty much forever. An 1880 leader in *The Times*, for instance, bemoaned the fact that “when a name has once been printed on a subscription list, its owner becomes a marked man. He has joined, by his own act, the unhappy class to which an appeal can be made with some chance that it will be met. From that day forward his persecution will never cease.” And two years later, in 1882 another article in *The Times* argued that, “Among the recognized nuisances of the day charitable appeals are entitled to a high place. They are successful for the most part in the degree, not of their merit, but of their demerit; not of the goodness of their cause, but of the pertinacity with which it is urged.” So this very much feels like an appeal to nostalgia for something that never really existed in the first place.

The second thing that bothered me about Parris’s article was his take on giving platforms. Now, anyone who has followed my work over the last few years will know that I have plenty of my own concerns about the

role of digital platforms when it comes to giving, but his line of thinking seems wrongheaded to me in a number of ways. For a start, Parris bemoans the fact that fundraising and charitable giving platforms charge fees, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the functionality they offer is useful in all sorts of different ways. He is far from alone in displaying this kind of cognitive dissonance on this issue, but the fact that people continue to want something for nothing when it comes to giving platforms is a problem. Unless the running costs of the platform can be underwritten by a philanthropic funder of some kind (such as a corporate foundation, as was the case with the now-defunct BT MyDonate platform), then it requires revenue of some kind to pay for its own costs (staff to run the platform, offices, investment in innovation etc). And where else do people expect this to come from? The fact that many commercial platforms for things like social media are ostensibly free probably doesn't help here (although, of course, these platforms aren't really "free" as they get huge commercial value out of the data, they are able to gather about users and the ability to advertise to them in a targeted way).

Parris also claims that in the case of JustGiving, which is one of the UK's most popular fundraising platforms, he would prefer that they simply charged commission on donations rather than using the voluntary additional donation model they currently have (along with its elements of nudge theoretic choice architecture, such as the automatic opt-in that has to be actively turned off). The problem with this is that the reason JustGiving, and other platforms, moved away from charging commissions on donated amounts a few years ago is that they came under fire for "diverting money away from the frontline". This has been an ongoing cause celebre for various right wing commentators and politicians for a long time, but it became more acute in the wake of series of reports that some of the money donated in response to highly emotive disasters (such as the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017) was being used by JustGiving and other platforms to cover their own costs. So if Parris is now criticising them for *not* charging commissions, it is hard to see how these platforms can possibly win.

The final point that bothered me was Parris's contrarian take on Gift Aid (the main tax relief available on charitable donations in the UK):



*“Next, and importantly, in the old days it was a nuisance for the supplicant or charity to claim the Gift Aid HMRC makes available, by getting each giver to sign the requisite declaration. Now you just tick a box on the website page. This must enormously increase the charitable harvest (and cost HM Treasury dearly) with no sweat on anybody’s part. Do you suppose HMRC checks up on each ticked box? One does wonder.”*

Now, there are legitimate debates to be had about whether governments should offer tax relief on donations, and what form these should take. But to grumble about charities using technology to make it easier to claim extra money that they are entitled to under the current system seems a bit perverse. It also flies in the face of the fact that levels of overall take-up of Gift Aid still [remain well below the theoretical maximum](#). And the idea that HMRC is somehow super breezy about Gift Aid being wrongly claimed is - in my experience of sitting in various interminable civil service meetings about charity tax over the years - absolutely laughable. My memory is that concerns about wrongly claimed Gift Aid were a constant theme of discussions, and often a significant barrier to any proposals about simplifying the system or making it more effective being taken forward. So Parris is talking utter bobbins on this one IMHO.

## **Altman of the moment**

Some interesting Giving Pledge news this month, with the announcement that [OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has joined the club of wealthy people who have committed to giving away at least half of their fortune during their lifetime](#), founded by Bill Gates, Melinda French Gates and Warren Buffett back in 2010. Altman has co-signed with his husband, Oliver Mulherin, and in the letter explaining their decision the couple said that their focus will be on “supporting technology that helps create abundance for people, so that they can then build the scaffolding even higher.” (And no, I don’t know what that means either).



Altman is obviously far from the only billionaire to sign up to the Giving Pledge (in fact there are now over 240 of them), but it is particularly interesting to see his name on the list given the apparently ambivalent (or even sceptical) attitudes towards philanthropy among a growing number of his wealthy tech peers. It is also interesting in the context of the hoo-ha at OpenAI last year, when Altman was sacked and then hastily reinstated. Many observers diagnosed the cause of that drama as a rift between two factions within OpenAI: tech “boomers” (led by Altman), who seem to think that the best interests of society (and, entirely coincidentally, their bank balances...) would be served by OpenAI growing as big as possible as quickly as possible, and tech “doomers” who are concerned about the potential risk to humanity that could come from developing an Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and want OpenAI to slow down (or even pause) its work. In that instance, Altman seemed to be firmly positioned as an accelerationist, who sees

technology as the most powerful way to transform society, so it might be seen as something of a surprise to see him make a commitment to traditional philanthropy. Perhaps, though, it is merely reflective of a belief that there is a need to separate profit and purpose to some extent, so Altman sees a role for philanthropic giving above and beyond any good that might be done through the success of OpenAI? (For more thoughts on OpenAI and what it says about combining profit and purpose, [check out this WPM article from last year](#)).

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## WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Here's a little update on what we have been up to at WPM over the last month.

### **MrBeast and philanthropy**

This month saw the publication of an article I wrote for the Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing, exploring the philanthropy of YouTube megastar MrBeast. Even more excitingly, this was a “pillar” article for a special Dialogues edition of JPM, so it was published in conjunction with a series of commentaries by academics coming from a range of perspectives (plus a response to all those commentaries from me). If you are interested in influencer philanthropy, or have kids who watch MrBeast and you want to have a more informed opinion about whether he is a good thing or a bad thing), then do check it out:





[Read the Special Edition of JPM](#)

## **Is "purpose" always a good thing?**

I published a long read on the WPM website this month, looking at the question of whether the growing trend for organisations across sectors to claim a social purpose is entirely a good thing, or whether there are potentially some reasons for concern.





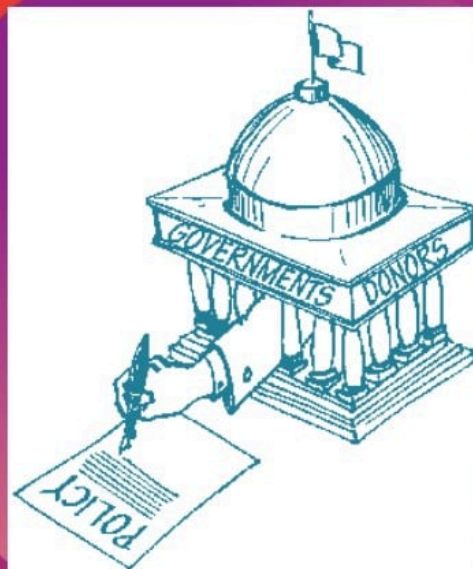
[Read the article](#)

## **Big Deck Energy**

This month I did my regular annual lecture for students on the MSc in Grantmaking, Philanthropy & Social Investment course at Bayes Business School, City University of London. I have been doing this every year since (I think) 2017, and over the course of that time my slide deck has evolved (some might even say “bloated”) into a big old collection of thoughts about philanthropy. On the assumption that a reasonable proportion of these slides will make sense by themselves, without me yakking away over the top of them, I have put them up on the WPM website for you to peruse at your leisure, should you so wish. (And if anyone reading does ever fancy the full immersive experience, do drop me a line as I’m always happy to do a version of this lecture for interested audiences).

# Public Good by Private Means:

Philanthropy  
policymaking in historical  
perspective



Rhodri Davies

Director, Why Philanthropy Matters

Pears Research Fellow,

Centre for Philanthropy at the University of Kent



Check out the slides

## On the Philanthropisms podcast

We had two great guests on the podcast this month. One of my favourite people in the philanthropy world, Fozia Irfan, came on to discuss her recent Churchill Fellowship report, “Transformative Philanthropy: A Manual for Social Change” (which you can, of course, [find on the WPM website](#)). I also had a really interesting conversation with Ian MacQuillin (founder and Director of the fundraising think tank Rogare), about his recent work on disintermediation in the charity sector and what it means to develop a theory of fundraising ethics.



## Philanthropisms

Fozia Irfan: Transformative  
Philanthropy





## Philanthropisms

Ian MacQuillin: Disintermediation & Fundraising Ethics



### Events

The big event for me this month (as already mentioned) was the Philea Forum, held in Ghent, Belgium. The theme for this year's event was "trust", and I was lucky enough to hear from and talk to a whole range of interesting people through the sessions and the many conversations between them. I haven't had time yet to process it all fully (or, indeed, to recover from the sensory assault of being in a room with 800 philanthropy professionals...), but I will no doubt be offering up some thoughts at some point.

Next month, event-wise, I am off to Frankfurt for a Grants Managing Lab organised by Vertrauen Macht Wirkung on 6<sup>th</sup>; and then on the 18<sup>th</sup> I am taking part in a live podcast recording at the [Third Sector Conference in London](#) (as something of a follow-up to their recent podcast series on "The End of Charity").



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## OTHER GOOD STUFF

This is the bit where I share other philanthropy-related things I have come across this month that might not quite count as news but are definitely worth checking out. As I warned up front, there is rather a lot of it this month, so I will try and keep the commentary from me to a minimum and just let you know where you can find it all!

### **A pot-head history:**

One of the most interesting things I read this month was a piece in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* by seasoned philanthropy reporter Marc Gunther, [detailing the history of philanthropic involvement in the long fight to get Marijuana legalised in the US](#). I am fascinated by this aspect



of philanthropy anyway (i.e. its role in taking issues from the margins to the mainstream over a long period of time, and thereby driving change) so was always going to be a sucker for this article, but it particularly grabbed me because it is a story I didn't know and Gunther manages to draw out some really interesting wider lessons for philanthropy. Highly recommend this one.



[Read the Article \(\\$\)](#)

## **“Yes, And” Philanthropy:**

Sticking with the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* for a moment, an interesting article from friend of the newsletter Ben Soskis on [the possibility of “Yes, And Philanthropy”](#) caught my eye this month. (Incidentally, this is part of the Chronicle’s new segment “[The Commons](#)”, which is a really interesting attempt to provide a space where potentially polarising or divisive issues affecting philanthropy can be debated in a constructive way). The idea of Yes, And philanthropy comes from an op ed by Gates Foundation CEO Mark Suzman earlier this year in which he suggested that one way to square the circle between respecting donor intent and making sure that money goes to the places that most need it is to make it a condition of wealthy individuals making gifts that reflect their own personal preferences that they also make a matching gift to a related but underfunded cause. For instance, if a donor gives a big gift to a university and gets a building named after them, they should also have to make an equally large donation to scholarships for students from marginalised backgrounds, or to a program that makes access to textbooks more equitable. Soskis takes this idea and expands on it in various interesting ways, exploring how it might work in practice and what this might mean for the role of grantee organisations.



[Image by Visualpun.ch](https://visualpun.ch/), CC BY-SA 2.0

[Read the article](#)

### Rinehart's not amused:

If you want a look at some less edifying aspects of philanthropy, there was a great piece this month by Matt Wade from Latrobe University, on the [attempts by Australian billionaire philanthropist Gina Rinehart to get an unflattering depiction of her in a new painting by artist Vincent Namatjira removed from the National Gallery of Australia](#), and what this says about donor power and the role of gratitude in philanthropy.



[Read the article](#)

### **Giving Pledge Jr:**

We mentioned the Giving Pledge already in the news section, and there was a really interesting article in Forbes this month highlighting the



ways in which [some of the offspring of Giving Pledge signatories are engaging with philanthropy](#), both individually and collectively.



[Read the article](#)

### **Philanthropy in Singapore:**

The Giving Pledge very much represents the ongoing dominance of the US in the global philanthropy landscape, but if you want a sense of how this centre of gravity might shift in the future I would recommend [a piece in Think China about the growth of philanthropy in Singapore](#).

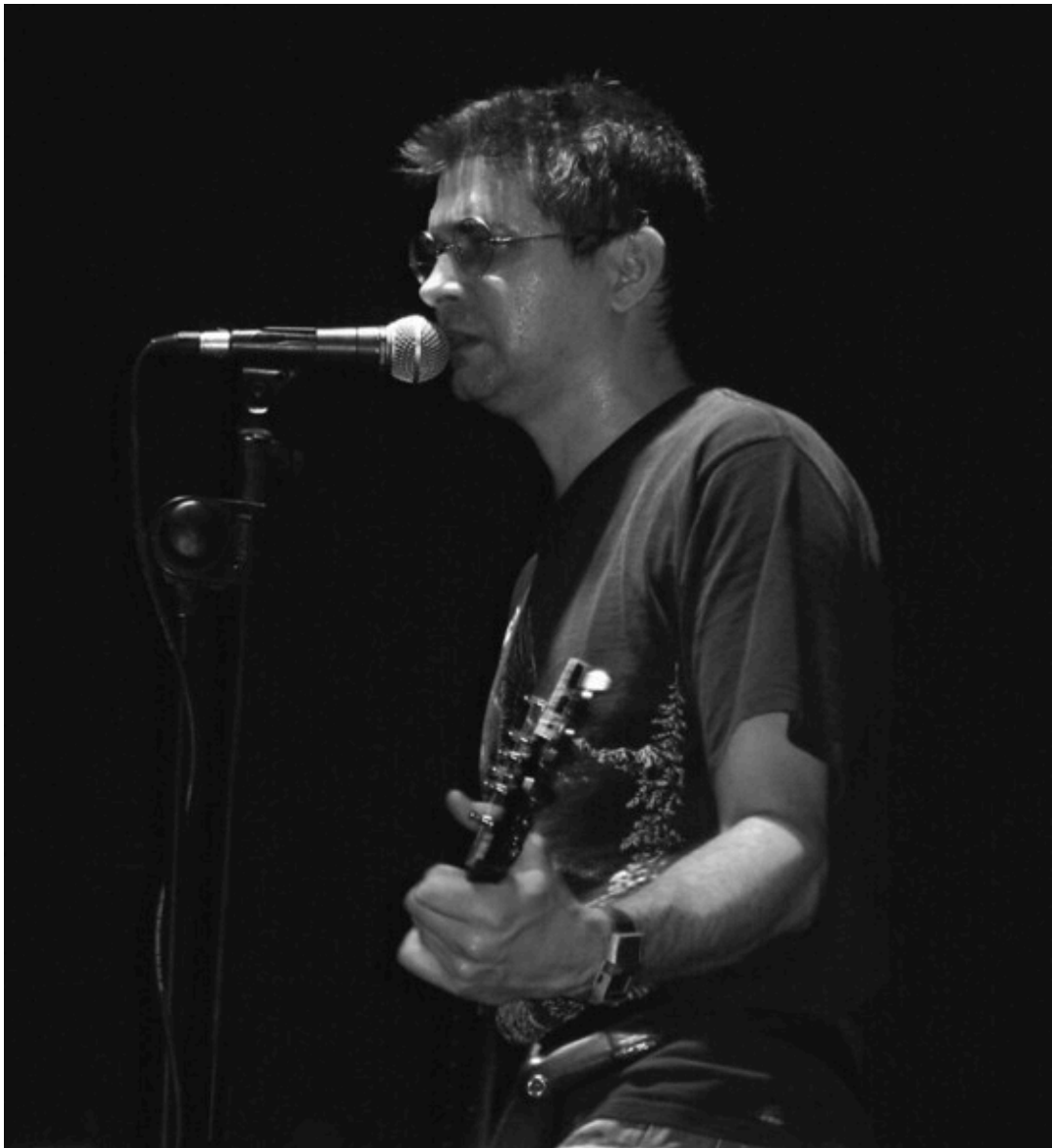


[Read the article](#)

### **Steve Albini's Angry Charity:**

I was deeply saddened this month to hear about the untimely death of Steve Albini at the age of only 61. I have long been a fan of Albini's work as a producer and of his band Shellac (heck, I even went to the All Tomorrow's Parties festival curated by Shellac in 2012). Albini was, by his own admission, something of a curmudgeon and had been a confrontational figure in his youth (sometimes veering over into unacceptable behaviour- which, to his immense credit, he had acknowledged and apologised for in recent years without trying to excuse in any way). So I was fascinated to find out in reading more about him after his death that Albini had a long history of charitable deeds- most notably in the form of a tradition where for more than 20 year he and his wife and a group of friends took food and presents around to families in Chicago living in poverty every Christmas. In 2015, [Albini wrote a piece about the tradition in the \*Huffington Post\* which is really worth reading](#). In typical fashion, it is not a warm, fuzzy take on the magic of giving at Xmas, but rather a fiercely angry argument for the

necessity of charitable support whilst being outraged at the failings that make it necessary. It's a powerful example of that often unavoidable tension between the need for charity and the desire for justice.



[Read the HuffPo piece](#)

### **Social Media Influencers & awareness of charities:**

A piece in *Civil Society* highlighted new research from Eden Stanley, the GOOD Agency, and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising (CioF), which found that adults under 40 are more likely to say that they have heard



about good causes from social media influencers than from local, national or international charities recently.

[Read the article](#)

### **More on Lankelly Chase:**

There was an interesting blog from Lankelly Chase Foundation CEO Julian Corner this month, expanding more on the thinking behind his organisations's decision (reported widely last year) to redistribute all of its assets over the next five years, and why the foundation feels that it is necessary to "dismantle itself in this way.

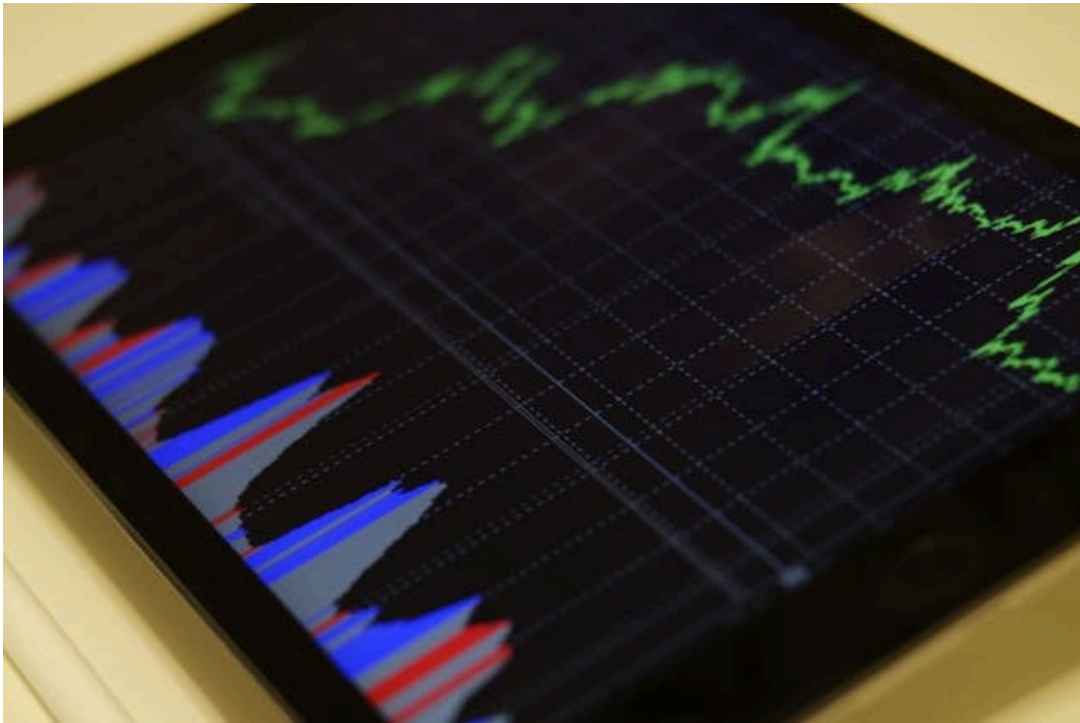
[Read the blog](#)

### **MRI in AI?:**

If you, like me, are interested in the role that philanthropy can play in addressing some of the potential challenges and unintended consequences posed by the development of AI, and also interested in the question of how foundations use their endowed assets, then you should definitely check out [an article in \*Observer\* this month by the CEO of the Omidyar Network and the Head of Mission Investments at Ford Foundation](#). The piece outlines the way in which both organisations have begun to invest in companies that they see as representing "responsible AI", and in particular highlights their investments in Anthropic – the highly successful AI startup that is seen by many as a more ethical alternative to OpenAI. Both authors urge other foundations to follow their lead in investing in Anthropic (in a way that veers weirdly close to a stock recommendation, it has to be said). As many have pointed out before, when it comes to endowed foundations, the scale of their endowed assets generally dwarfs that of their grantmaking – so focussing on how foundations can use their investments (as well as their



grants) to drive the development of responsible AI may well be a smart move.



[Read the article](#)

## **Checkout Giving**

I came across an interesting paper in the Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs by Lauren Dula and Ruth K. Hansen this month, which looks at “checkout giving” (when you are given opportunities to make a donation when paying for something, often by rounding up to the nearest pound or dollar), and explores the factors which determine whether or not someone is likely to respond to this kind of fundraising ask.

[Read the article](#)

**Is civil disobedience a moral obligation in a time of climate crisis?:**

Now this next one is a bit of a cheat on two counts – firstly because I saw it last month (but just after finishing the last newsletter) and secondly because it actually came to my attention via another newsletter (Chris Szymczak’s excellent weekly LinkedIn newsletter [Humanitarian Unknown](#), which you should definitely subscribe to if you are interested in the intersection of tech, the humanitarian sector and philanthropy). However, I thought it was too good not to share with all of you in this newsletter. The nugget in question is [an essay for Aeon by the philosopher Rupert Read, who used to be heavily involved in Extinction Rebellion](#), asking whether there is a moral obligation to engage in civil disobedience in the context of the climate crisis. Read’s argument (in a heavily condensed nutshell) is that there is no such obligation, and that furthermore there may be strong practical grounds on which to turn away from civil disobedience tactics (as, indeed, XR have done in the UK), because they are counterproductive. You may agree with this, or you may vehemently disagree with it; but either way this is a fascinating and important issue, and this article makes a really thought-provoking argument.



[Read the essay](#)

## California's first Black land trust:

An article in the *LA Times* detailed the intriguing story of California's first Black land trust, a Black-led conservancy nonprofit that has been set up to address challenges around racial inequity in access to the natural world, whilst also contributing to the fight against climate breakdown.

[Read the article](#)

## Waqfs for climate change:

In a similar vein of using philanthropic structures in innovative ways to pursue environmental goals was a story in The Lowy Institute's *The Interpreter*, which highlighted the potential for using Islamic *waqf* structures (similar to perpetual endowed foundations) for the preservation of forests in Indonesia.

[Read the article](#)

## Teaching the history of charity & philanthropy through objects:

A couple of academic philanthro-nuggets for you now. First is a [really interesting recent paper by historian Georgina Brewis from University College London](#), looking at the role that objects can play in teaching the history of charity and philanthropy, drawing on her own experience of putting together a "DIY collection" of objects to use in her own teaching.





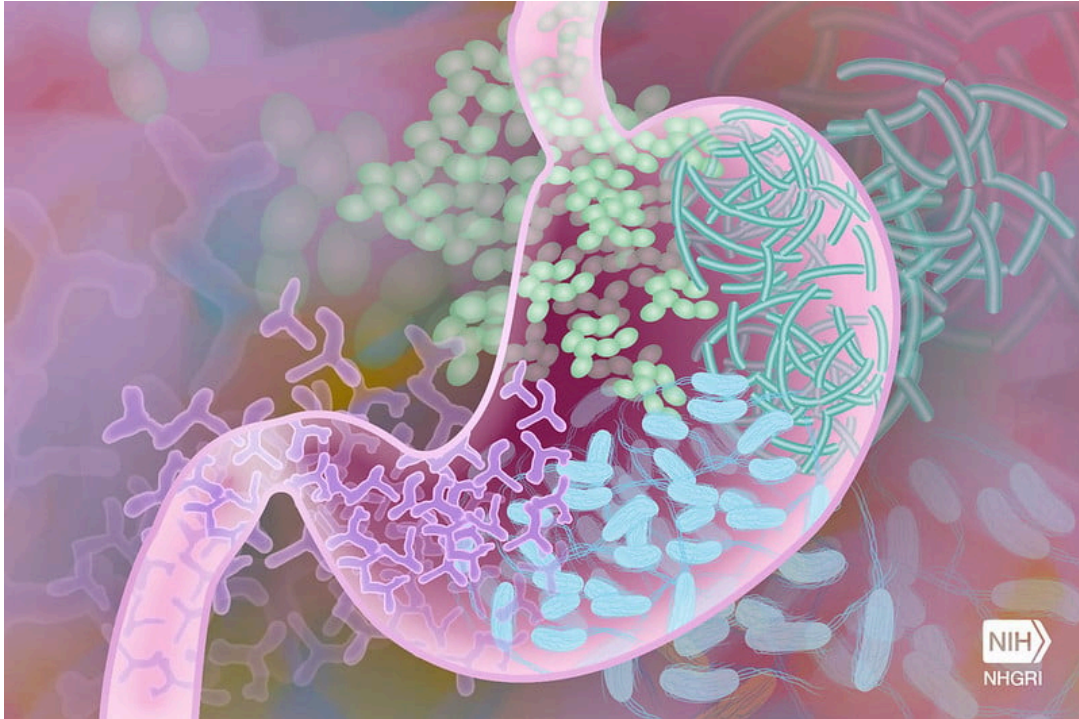
Read the paper

### A Gut Feeling:

A new paper in *PNAS Nexus* claims that [the composition of our gut bacteria may have an impact on our sense of fairness and our social decision-making](#). Researchers found that in an experiment in which one



group of participants were given a synbiotic dietary intervention for 7 weeks and another (control) group were given a placebo, the former group showed an increased likelihood of engaging in "altruistic punishment" when asked to take part in a classic ultimatum game. I'm not sure any charity fundraisers out there should be panic-buying probiotic yoghurt just yet, but this is definitely an interesting one to add to the long list of factors that might play a part in influencing altruistic decisions!



(Image by NIH Image Gallery, CC BY-NC 2.0)

[Read the paper](#)

### **Lin-Manuel Miranda's Dad seems like a good egg:**

I'm a big Hamilton fan, and I have always thought that Lin-Manuel Miranda seems like a god sort (as well as being annoyingly talented), so I was delighted to discover that his dad appears to be a thoroughly good egg too. The *Independent* carried [an interview with Luis Miranda Jr.](#) (who has a new memoir coming out), in which he talks quite a lot about his family's experience of philanthropy and activism.



[Read the article](#)

## **AND FINALLY: Getting a Good Rap**

If, like me, you're a fan of the intersection between pop culture and philanthropy, then you'll be excited to hear that definitely-not-suitable-for-kids rap superstar [Megan Thee Stallion has just launched her own philanthropic foundation](#), as reported in *Ebony*. The new foundation is called the Pete and Thomas Foundation, after her late parents, and will focus on “uplifting and helping women, children, senior citizens, and underserved areas in Houston and beyond.” There is some interesting stuff about her upbringing and her parents as an influence in the links in the article. (I also learned that she has just graduated with a degree in health administration from Texas Southern University, which is particularly impressive given how much else she has on and the fact that she presumably doesn’t need the qualification for job-seeking purposes).

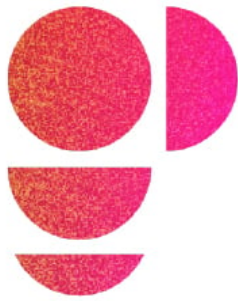


[Read the article](#)

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Well, that was lot, wasn't it? I'll be back at the end of next month with some more dispatches from the philanthro-sphere, but until then adieu.

Rhodri



# Why Philanthropy Matters

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