



Why Philanthropy Matters

Welcome to the November 2025 newsletter

Ho ho ho philanthropoids!

Is it too early for that kind of yuletide schtick, I hear you ask? You may well think so if you are in the US and have only just celebrated Thanksgiving, but judging by my neighbours, who have already put up their traditional pair of 5 foot-high musical Xmas nutcracker figures either side of the front door, the answer is a firm “no”. I remain agnostic about whether this is acceptable behaviour, but I feel like I am fighting an increasingly uphill battle. Also, November has felt particularly full-on this year, so I am quite happy with the idea of getting into festive mode a bit on the early side if I’m honest. (Apologies to those of you reading this for whom Christmas has no cultural relevance btw – if you have another midwinter festival of some kind that you do celebrate, feel free to Find-and-Replace for that; or just disregard the whole of this opening paragraph).

Why has November been so busy? Well, thanks for asking. In part it has just been a continuation of the fact that Life In General seems consistently intense at the moment (and judging by many conversations I have had, I am far from alone in feeling that). But there are also a couple of other factors: one is that there has been a particularly high volume of philanthropy-related news, announcements and events this month (as you will see shortly, once I stop dribbling on and get into the

newsletter). The more important, and exciting, reason however, is that I have just started work on a new project: one that some of you might well be interested in and able to help with.

I'm working with the Rory and Elizabeth Brooks Foundation and looking at how we get better narratives about philanthropy in the UK. It still feels like there is a gap in terms of compelling stories which give a sense of how varied philanthropy is and the tangible impact it has had on people and communities around the country. To overcome this barrier, we want to collect and share stories from around the country about the different ways in which philanthropy has made a difference to people's lives. So if you work for, or with, any charities, arts organisations, universities or community groups in the UK that have benefitted from philanthropic support and done something amazing as a result, I would love to hear from you!

I have been blown away by the response so far, which has kept me very busy but has also done wonders for my general mood. (It turns out spending loads of time talking to people who are out there doing amazing things for the public good is a pretty decent way to restore your faith in humanity - I heartily recommend it). However, I still want lots more stories, so if you think you might have one that fits the bill, then do get in touch: rhodri@whyphilanthropymatters.com

Right, that's my big ask out of the way- now on with the newsletter.

PHILANTHROPY IN THE NEWS

Old Meets New: MrBeast teams up with the Rockefeller Foundation

We're starting this month with a story that only broke late in the month, but immediately went straight to the top of my pile. Regular readers will know that I have been fascinated by the YouTube phenomenon MrBeast (aka Jimmy Donaldson) and his approach to philanthropy for some time

now (including writing in depth about it in both [academic journal](#) and [blog form](#), as well as [discussing it on various podcasts](#)). I was absolutely fascinated, therefore, to read the [announcement that he is entering into a new partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation](#), with the aim of combining his undisputed ability to reach a younger audience with Rockefeller's track record and expertise in addressing issues around global health and poverty.



(Image credit: Courtesy of Beast Industries.)

This is particularly notable because neither Beast Philanthropy nor the Rockefeller Foundation has a particular track record of this kind of partnership. The benefits for both sides seem pretty clear, though. As Donaldson himself explains:

"I've spent my entire life making YouTube videos. They've spent their entire lives helping people... Obviously, they have a team who's way more experienced than me in helping people, but being able to pull on their knowledge and wisdom is amazing."

Given that MrBeast, or at least some of the people working for him, have [previously been quite dismissive of "traditional nonprofits"](#) and [suggested that part of the power of his approach is that it cuts them out](#)

of the picture this apparent humility might come as a bit of surprise to some. However, there have previously been signs that he is willing to take on board criticism and that his views have evolved (e.g in terms of acknowledging the fact that it would be better in many cases if governments addressed problems rather than philanthropists like him), so it is not totally out of keeping by any means. And to be honest, this kind of willingness to learn is not always something we see from more "traditional" philanthropic funders, so MrBeast seems to be doing OK on this front.

Both sides in this new partnership are likely to benefit from improved perceptions of their legitimacy as well. Working alongside the Rockefeller Foundation will almost certainly improve opinions of MrBeast among the traditional philanthropic sector (assuming, of course, that this is something he actually cares about). But conversely, working with MrBeast may also help the Rockefeller Foundation to ensure greater awareness and positive opinion among younger people, who might otherwise be more sceptical of legacy institutions or formal nonprofits. At a time when the legitimacy of philanthropy and foundations within society is increasingly being questioned, building this new base of support may prove to be a very canny move.

There are, of course, going to be challenges on both sides as well. For Rockefeller Foundation, the main one is likely to be the potential reputational risk that inevitably comes with associating themselves with a high-profile celebrity figure – especially one like MrBeast, who has already attracted more than his fair share of controversy. Critics have accused him of using unhelpful depictions of poverty in his videos, and indulging in "white saviourism", and there have also been a number of allegations about mismanagement and poor working conditions in his commercial ventures. One presumes, however, that the Rockefeller Foundation have done their due diligence. And it was interesting to see in the announcement that Rockefeller's President Rajiv Shah made an appeal to his own personal interactions with MrBeast, and his subsequent assessment of MrBeast's moral character and motivations, in explaining the decision to partner up:

Shah acknowledged that the Rockefeller Foundation rarely does partnerships of this kind. But he said that spending time with Donaldson

and his mother, as well as watching his philanthropically minded videos, communicated the YouTube megastar's "personal commitment to philanthropy."

The challenge for MrBeast is likely to be whether he can combine the highly individualised and visual approach to philanthropy that he has previously adopted (which, as I have argued in the past, relies to some extent on problematic notions of gratitude from recipients), with the more systematic and structured work of an organisation like the Rockefeller Foundation. If he can, and is able to put his formidable storytelling talents to work in highlighting the value and impact of some of the less immediately glamorous, but absolutely vital, aspect of philanthropy (for instance, upstream work focussed on policy and advocacy, rather than just direct service provision), the impact could be enormous.

What's in a Name? Open Philanthropy becomes Coefficient Giving

There was an interesting story for fans of philanthropy terminology and branding this month, with the [news that Open Philanthropy \(Dustin Moskovitz and Cari Tuna's giving vehicle\) is rebranding as Coefficient Giving](#). Apparently, according to [an interview in Vox with CEO Alexander Berger](#), the rationale behind this name change is that: "coefficient is a multiplier: the "co-" nods to collaboration with other givers; the "efficient" is a reminder of the north star of effectiveness".

So, just like all the band names I spent my time coming up with as a teenager, It Works On Multiple Levels. (Now, if I was being a really pedantic asshole - which my kids will, I'm sure, attest is something I *never* do - I might point out that "efficiency" and "effectiveness" are not by any means the same thing, because you can be really efficient at doing something totally ineffective and vice versa. I'm also tempted to question whether "coefficient" sounds a little unambitious, when they could have gone for something like "exponent giving" or "inaccessible cardinal giving" – but then again, maybe it also reflects a welcome bit of humility about their organisation's own role, so I'll leave them alone). I

did find it interesting that they have dropped the word “philanthropy” from the name in favour of “giving”, however. When I posted about this news on LinkedIn, I even posed the question of whether - in light of Mackenzie Scott and Melinda French Gates’s choice of names for their philanthropic vehicles (Yield Giving and Pivotal Ventures, respectively) - this was symptomatic of a wider move away from the concept or terminology of “philanthropy”? This might be reaching slightly (although I have provided 3 examples, so technically that would constitute A Trend for the purposes of many media outlets...), but it is definitely something worth keeping an eye on. (And we certainly found in the research for the recent book [“Rich Expectations: Why Rich People Give”](#) that Beth Breeze, Theresa Lloyd and I worked on that the views of wealthy donors in the UK about the word “philanthropy” were mixed at best).

This story is not just about rebranding, though: Open Philanthropy also announced that in its evolution to Coefficient Giving it would also be shifting its strategy significantly. In particular, as well as continuing to do its own funding, the organisation will now offer free advice to other existing or potential philanthropist who want help deciding how best to deploy their assets for social good. Given that Open Philanthropy has long been affiliated with the Effective Altruism movement (and a major supporter of many organisations within it), some people who are sceptical about EA may be concerned that this is essentially a strategy to proselytise and convert other donors to the EA cause. However, [in an article in the Associated Press Cari Tuna downplayed these fears,](#) acknowledging that other funders who work alongside them may not be sold on EA as a whole, but might still be interested in benefitting from the research that Coefficient Giving has done in various different cause areas. Which, it seems to me is eminently sensible: I don’t happen to agree with everything about EA ([as explained in more detail in this article](#)), but I do think that there is plenty to be learned from the rigorous approach that many EA organisations have brought to funding and measurement.

As well as advising other donors, Coefficient Giving will also be looking to collaborate with them on funding opportunities. This is something the organisation has already started doing (existing co-funders include Bill Gates, Stripe cofounder Patrick Ellison, and Lucy Southworth – the wife

of Google founder and [newly-anointed 2nd Richest Man in the World](#), Larry Page), but is now looking to do in a more deliberate and systematic way. This is reflective of what seems to be a wider trend towards collaborative or pooled approaches to giving, which has been one of the most interesting developments of recent years (especially given the historic bias towards what I like to think of as “the myth of the philanthropic lone hero”).

It's the Impact Economy, stupid

Now for a trio of UK-based stories. First up, we have the announcement by the UK Government that it is establishing a new “Office for the Impact Economy” to act as a focal point for government engagement with philanthropists, social investors and purpose-driven businesses. This follows years of concerted lobbying by various organisations within the UK charity and nonprofit sector and should be taken as a big win, as there is definitely a big opportunity here to get philanthropy and civil society issues much further up the political agenda.

Image credit: [Sergeant Tom Robinson RLC/MOD, Open Government Licence](#)

However, without wanting to cement my status as That Guy, I do feel duty bound to flag up a couple of potential concerns/questions. (I know, I know – it’s quite tedious, but I have made this my job). The first is where philanthropy fits in all of this. I’m certainly not against talking about things in terms of the “impact economy” per se; in fact, I think it is important to acknowledge that the landscape for doing good is broader than it has ever been, and that some of the traditional divisions and distinctions we make between sectors and legal forms that are seen as so vital within the nonprofit world often mean very little to most normal people. However, I also have a concern (based largely on past experience) that when people starting getting excited about “blended models” and “impact-first investments”, there is a danger that this can result in more traditional approaches to philanthropy being seen as “boring” and getting somewhat sidelined. So, I just hope that the government is mindful of this, and recognises the importance of

understanding the “impact economy” in such a way as to give equal billing to grants, gifts and volunteering alongside whizzy bits of financial engineering or emerging tech applications. In fact, I would hope that this could be an opportunity to go beyond simple acknowledgement, and instead to develop a more sophisticated narrative about the role of giving and philanthropy that positions it alongside all of the other options for doing good that are available, and highlights its unique strengths and value. (Which is something that the philanthropy sector itself should be pushing for and taking a lead on IMHO).

My other slight concern is that when government *does* pay attention to philanthropy, there is always the danger that it does so in a way that largely instrumental: i.e. seeing philanthropy largely as a means of additional funding that can be leveraged in and aligned with government policy and spending priorities. This is totally understandable, especially at a time of ongoing economic challenges and constrained public finances, and in some cases it can work; there is certainly interesting work going on around the idea of developing PPPPs (or Public-Private-Philanthropic Partnerships). However, if this is the *only* way that a government thinks about philanthropy, I would argue that this is a problem, because it leads towards a view in which the legitimacy or value of philanthropy is measured solely by the extent to which it fits in with the interests of government, and not all philanthropy fits this bill. What, for instance, about philanthropy that is focussed on advocacy and campaigning to change society that might be highly critical of government? Or philanthropy focused on things that are not considered priorities by government (or are entirely outside the realms of governmental responsibility, but which many would agree are valuable public goods (e.g. art galleries and museums, or mass participation organisations like the Boy Scouts or Girl Guides)? I am certainly not saying that it is the role of government to try to drum up philanthropy for any of these causes in particular (as I suspect that would be counter-productive apart from anything else); rather what is important is that whatever approach the government takes to encouraging or supporting philanthropy is one that recognises the importance and value of giving to causes that are not necessarily

aligned directly with government priorities but do represent public goods.

Anyway, I will get off my soapbox now.

A Brit of Respite: US donors seeking shelter in the UK

The UK government's enthusiasm for the "impact economy" may have come at a particularly opportune moment, as another piece in the *Financial Times* this month reported that [a growing number of US philanthropists and funders are establishing giving vehicles in the UK and moving assets over here](#), due to fears about ongoing attacks in the US and the volatility of the political situation over there.

We have previously covered similar suggestions in the newsletter, as part of the counterpoint to the "all the rich people in the UK are leaving" narratives, but at that point it mostly seemed to be a mishmash of anecdote and supposition. Now, however, there seems to be firm evidence that this is really happening and that the UK is increasingly seen as a safe and stable haven for US philanthropists who want to hedge against future threats to their work. It will be really interesting to see how this develops (I have already heard some figures on how much philanthropic money has so far come into the UK from the US this year, and it definitely sounds substantial). And also, longer term, what impact – if any – it has on our own domestic culture of philanthropy in the UK.

(Co)mission Statement: favourite to be new Chair of Charity Commission announced

Last, but not least, in our trio of UK stories is the news that the government has announced its preferred candidate for the role of Chair of the Charity Commission for England and Wales: Dame Julia Unwin.

This might seem quite a parochial piece of news that will only be of interest to UK sector nerds, but I think it is more important than that.

The Charity Commission's powers and resources are often assumed (by

both critics and supporters) to be far greater than they actually are, but one thing that the regulator definitely can do (and always has done) is to play a crucial role in setting the tone for the government's wider relationship with the charity sector. At a time when there seem to be signs that the sector is going to be further up the political agenda, this is likely to be more important than ever.

The good news on this front is that Dame Julia appears to be a popular choice among people in the charity sector (which, having met her a few times, I can well understand). And given that a number of Charity Commission chairs in recent memory have had, let's say, 'mildly combative' relationships with the sector <cough, cough, Baroness Stowell>, it will probably come as a relief to many charities - at a time when they are already facing major challenges - to think that the people leading the regulator understand their needs and priorities and have their best interests at heart.

Furthermore, given what has already been said about the influx of US philanthropic funders and nonprofits to the UK, the influence of the Charity Commission (and its Chair) might be felt more widely than ever before, so I would definitely say that this story matters.

Tech it to the limit: CZI goes big on AI

We have covered in previous editions of this newsletter the various ructions over the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative's (CZI) decision earlier this year to abandon its commitment to social justice work and double down on scientific research. This month [CZI announced that it is going to shift the vast majority of its resources to its science organisation Biohub, and focus on using AI tools to accelerate scientific discovery.](#) (In particular, using AI to create virtual models of cells and the immune system that enable new approaches to be tested).

Image credit: [TechCrunch, CC BY 2.0](#)

I've got a few thoughts about this. The first is that the virtual modelling capabilities of AI are undoubtedly among the technology's most exciting

applications so far (hence why the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to the developers of the AI tool AlphaFold – including DeepMind cofounder Demis Hassabis – in recognition of the revolutionary impact it has had on our ability to predict protein folding). So for a (now) science-oriented funder like CZI to double down on this area of AI makes a lot of sense. On the other hand, it does seem to suggest a worldview in which everything is viewed through the lens of technology, and tech is seen as holding the answers to all of the world's problems. And, as critics have pointed out, [this kind of worldview seems particularly prevalent among billionaires](#) who come from the tech world, and there may be a danger that it leads them to conclude that there is no need for them to engage in anything like traditional philanthropy because the ways in which they make money are already doing enough good for society.

My other main thought is that at time when government funding for science in the US is being massively cut back, philanthropic funding is more needed than ever – so hearing this new commitment from CZI may well be music to the ears of many researchers. However, as many have pointed out before now, the risk when science becomes dependent on philanthropy is that wealthy individuals and funding institutions gain a disproportionate amount of power to dictate the priorities for research by virtue of what they are interested in and willing to fund. In CZI's case, they have clearly decided that AI modelling is The Thing; which may well be fine for plenty of institutions and researchers who are already working in this area or for whom it would make sense to work in it in future, but what about those who are taking different approaches? Will they increasingly find it more difficult to come by funding, or will some of them feel driven to pivot their work towards where CZI and others are willing to offer funding, even if this isn't what they would otherwise choose to do? As ever, philanthropy at the scale that Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan are able to do it brings with it particular responsibilities; which includes being mindful of the potentially distorting effect that choices about what to fund (and what not to fund) can have on the wider field in which you operate, as well as on public policy.

Gimme Sam More: Altman joins the Giving Pledge, Buffett steps back

Linking us into our next story is another tech billionaire who seems to believe that the technologies which have made him phenomenally wealthy are also the best focus for his philanthropy: OpenAI's Sam Altman. After a turbulent few years in which Altman has mostly been in the news for his efforts to overturn his organisation's nonprofit status (a battle on which he finally seems to have conceded some form of defeat), [it was announced this month that Altman is joining the Giving Pledge.](#)

Image Credit: [TechCrunch](#), CC BY 2.0

In news that will come as almost no surprise to anyone familiar with Altman's previous MO, he is apparently planning to focus on "technology that helps create abundance for people". (And in fairness, [ChatGPT has already helped to create an abundance of AI slop across the internet](#), so he's arguably well on track here...) Again, snark aside, there is nothing inherently wrong with this – Altman is likely to be more aware than most of the transformative potential of technology, and almost certainly does believe that further its development is the best way to help humanity. The convenient thing, as critics point out, is that this is also likely to bring significant personal benefits to him beyond merely a "warm glow", as some of the technology projects that Altman and others fund as acts of 'philanthropy' end up becoming wildly successful commercial ventures as well. (The development of ChatGPT by the commercial subsidiary of the nonprofit OpenAI being the obvious exemplar of this).

The other aspect of this story that is worth noting is that in some ways this is an odd moment for someone like Altman to be signing up to the Giving Pledge. Not only because he seems like the sort of tech billionaire that might be sceptical about traditional philanthropy (as his contemporaries like Elon Musk and Larry Page certainly are), but because the Giving Pledge itself seems to be going through something of a transition period. It is undoubtedly still worthwhile as a marker of public intent and commitment to philanthropy by very wealthy people, but [a growing number of critics question whether the pledges that have been made have been delivered on in the majority of cases](#). The

dissolution of the original founding partnership of Bill Gates, then-wife Melinda French Gates and Warren Buffett may also have resulted in a bit of a loss of leadership and momentum. Indeed, one of the other stories that caught my eye this month concerned [new comments from Warren Buffett about why his original plans to give away 95% of his wealth as part of his Giving Pledge commitment hadn't worked](#), and why he is now planning on giving far more money than anticipated to his children for them to use for their own philanthropy. Buffett also announced that he will be "going quiet" soon, raising further questions about his involvement in the Giving Pledge and what that means for its longer term sustainability. Against this backdrop, it is hard to know exactly what to make of Sam Altman's decision to make a pledge at this point. (Although I guess it means that more than ever before, we will have to judge him based on what he actually *does* rather than on what he has said about his intent).

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

This is the section where I provide a bit of an update on what WPM has been up to over the last month.

Philanthropisms Podcast

We had more great guests on the podcast this month. First up, ahead of this year's Giving Tuesday next week, we had GT's CEO Asha Curran on the show to discuss the organisation's evolution from a US-based giving day to a global movement for 'radical generosity' and what has been learned along the way.

We then had Suzanne Ehlers and Rachael Jarosh from USA for UNHCR, to discuss their work developing a new female-led and female focussed philanthropy program in support of the organisation's work.



Philanthropisms

Rachael Jarosh & Suzanne Ehlers:
Women-led philanthropy for
refugees and migrants



Philanthropisms

Asha Curran: Radical generosity &
the power of everyday giving



[Listen to the episode with Rachael & Suzanne](#)

[Listen to the episode with Asha](#)

Rich Expectations stuff:

[Philanthropy Australia this month published a Q&A with me about my recent book *Rich Expectations: Why Rich People Give*](#) (with Beth Breeze and Theresa Lloyd), outlining some of the key findings and their relevance for the Australian context.

There was also [a very generous review by Hilary Pearson in *The Philanthropist Journal*](#), assessing the book from a Canadian perspective.

[Read the Philanthropy Australia Q&A](#)

[Read the review in the Philanthropist Journal](#)

EVENTS:

It has been a busy old month for events, too. Including:

- A panel on AI and Philanthropy for Prism the Gift Fund.

- An RSA Fellows network event talking about *Rich Expectations*.
- Being part of a panel on “ideas for the future of the charity sector” at the law firm Bates Wells’s annual Spotlight conference (Video available [HERE](#)).
- A roundtable on philanthropy and legacy for the North West Philanthropy network (in the wonderful setting of the Portico library, which I hadn’t visited before).
- Speaking to attendees at the Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council AGM about philanthropy and the voluntary sector.
- Appearing “In Conversation With” David Sloan (and Beth Breeze) for an online event.

(I was going to put some pictures of the events here, but I thought I would share this photo of the spot in the Clwydian Hills where I ate my lunch on the way back from the DVSC AGM instead. Hyfryd iawn).

OTHER GOOD STUFF

This is the bit where I share other philanthropy-related things I have come across that might not quite count as news but are definitely worth checking out.

The End of USAID – an opportunity?

There was [an interesting long read in the *Guardian* this month, posing the challenging question of whether the recent dismantling of the US government aid agency USAID should be seen as an opportunity rather than a disaster](#). This is an idea I have heard discussed a few times this year: usually in the context where people point out that there are many longstanding critiques of the aid sector, and of USAID in particular, so whilst this is not the way most people would have chosen to do things (since it has already led to demonstrable harms to many people and

communities around the world), rather than simply pining for things as they were, the sensible thing to do is to see this as a moment of opportunity to fundamentally rethink and reshape how we do international aid and development.

There is an interesting question, to my mind, about whether some people will think along similar lines if certain existential challenges to philanthropy in the US come to pass: there are plenty of critics within the philanthropy world who want to see radical reform, so would they see this as an opportunity to make that happen, or as a moment to dial down calls for reform in favour of defending what we already have? It is hard to know.

[Read the article](#)

Sierra Club crisis:

While we are on the topic of challenging reads, one that only narrowly missed the cut for the “In The News” section of this newsletter was [a story in the New York Times about the travails of the Sierra Club, the storied environmental nonprofit in the US which is facing major challenges right now](#). In part, this seems to be about the classic mix of poor leadership and internal cultural issues, but the more interesting aspect – which potentially has far wider implications – is that the organisation’s issues also seem to be a result of its efforts to reframe its work through the lens of social justice, which it has done over the last 5 years in various ways. As a result, the article reports, major internal rifts have opened up at the Sierra Club, as well as rifts between the organisation and many of its supporters, who feel that it has lost sight of its original mission and taken positions on issues that have alienated many of them (often whilst not being core to the organisation’s work). As a result, the Sierra Club has haemorrhaged members in recent years (losing 60 per cent of them since 2019) and had to go through multiple rounds of layoffs.

I clearly only know as much about this story as I read in the NYT article, and there may well be other points of view not coming across that

would significantly change the narrative, but taking this piece at face value there is a lot to digest and think over for everyone working in the philanthropy world. (Assuming you can get past the paywall, of course...)

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

Be a (not so) Bad Guy: Billie Eilish calls out billionaires

It was reported in *Rolling Stone* this month that [the singer Billie Eilish took the opportunity of receiving an award from the Wall Street Journal Magazine for Music Innovator of the Year award to issue a call to billionaires to give more away](#). Eilish was quoted as saying:

"We're in a time right now when the world is really, really bad and really dark... People need empathy and help more than, kind of, ever, especially in our country. I'd say if you have money, it would be great to use it for good things and maybe give it to some people that need it.... Love you all, but there's a few people in here who have a lot more money than me. If you're a billionaire, why are you a billionaire? No hate, but yeah, give your money away, shorties."

Apart from anything else, this has made me realise that pretty much the whole of my career can actually be summed up by the phrase "give your money away, shorties", so I'm not quite sure what I have been doing with the rest of my time.

(Image credit: [crommelincklars, CC BY 2.0](#))

[Read the article](#)

Eisenberg's Certainty/Principles:

Actor Jesse Eisenberg, star of [The Social Network and the Now You See Me franchise, has just announced that his is giving away one of his kidneys](#). No, this is not some particularly macabre celebrity charity auction but an "altruistic" (or "nondirected" donation – i.e. one where Eisenberg as

the donor is not giving his kidney to any particular person that he knows, but for the potential benefit of some unknown future recipient. It is easy (not to mention often fun) to be slightly cynical about celebrity philanthropy at times, however it feels quite hard to be snarky in the face of someone choosing to give up a bodily organ in this way, so I think we just need to take our collective hats off to Eisenberg in this instance. (Also, this did provide me with the opportunity for the highly-contrived pun in the title, which has made me happy at least).

(Image credit: [Harald Krichel, CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

[Read the article](#)

Is philanthropy fuelling distrust of AI?

An intriguing new front seems to have opened up in the long-running debate about philanthropy's political influence, with [comments reported this month from Donald Trump's "AI Czar" David Sacks suggesting that public negativity towards AI is not a reflection of genuine grassroots concern, but rather a result of the deliberate efforts of philanthropic funders to sour the debate](#). Sacks cited the work of the academic Nuri Weiss-Blatt, who has mapped what she claims is a network of "AI Doomer" organisations and foundations that fund them (with Open Philanthropy being singled out for particular criticism). At a time when there is growing emphasis within the philanthropy world on the need to play a role in shaping the development of AI and addressing potential harms this might be a concern, as it is easy to see how narratives like this could be used to delegitimise the work of funders and nonprofits in this area in future.

[Read the article](#)

Finn-ianthropy?

In amongst the more hand-wavy abstract stuff about philanthropy that I do, I also like to keep tabs on interesting examples of actual philanthropists and what they are doing. One I noticed month was [a profile of the Ahlström family from Finland](#), who appear to be doing all kinds of interesting things in terms of engaging their next generation, exploring their own past, and giving in innovative ways.

[Read the profile](#)

Philanthropy Policy for Jersey:

There was another addition to the growing list of countries around the world that are developing (or have developed) a governmental philanthropy strategy, with news that [the UK Channel Island of Jersey has given its support to the development of a new strategy for philanthropy by the Jersey Community Foundation](#). This follows on from similar initiatives in Ireland and Australia, as well as a number of other places around the world, and it will be interesting to see what emerges in a strategy specifically tailored to the context of Jersey

[Read the article](#)

Polling on charity donations as gifts

YouGov US puts out daily findings from its various polls, and one that caught my eye this month showed that [the majority of people \(56%\) said that they would consider it a good gift if someone gave a donation in their name to a charity that the other person selected and believed in](#). (And only 6% said that would be a bad gift). Potentially useful intel ahead of Christmas? (Although it is not clear whether any over-excited 6 year olds were included in the polling sample...)

AND FINALLY...

It's a two part 'And Finally' section for you this month.

First up is a minor silver lining in the tale of the England cricket team's woeful collapse in the first Ashes test against Australia in Perth: apparently it was so bad and the game finished so early that [it resulted in the largest ever donation of surplus food in Western Australia](#). Nice to know that monstrous cricketing ineptitude can produce an unintended positive consequence. Maybe this even represents an entirely new form of philanthropy? (The donation of cheap wickets for social impact perhaps...?)

And then last, but definitely not least, we have the important news that [seeing someone dressed as Batman can prompt a higher degree of altruistic behaviour](#). Researchers in Italy conducted a field experiment on the Milan subway, where one of them entered the carriage dressed as the Caped Crusader and they then assessed people's willingness to give up their seats - noting a significant increase in pro-social behaviour from the control conditions. Obviously this is Great Science, although there is still a need to test the effect in field conditions so I would definitely recommend that all fundraisers plan to spend at least a few working days in the next quarter dressed up as a superhero. (Preferably not when working from home, as that would presumably defeat the point....).

(This is my Batman of choice).

[**Read the article about the Ashes**](#)

[**Read the Batman article**](#)

Right, that's it for another month. I will do my best to get another newsletter out before xmas, but just in case life gets in the way of that, I hope you all have a good festive season whatever you are doing, and I

will see you on the other side.

Best,

Rhodri



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