Charity for Non-Monetary Purposes

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ABSTRACT: Charity is one of the biggest social network efforts to combat poverty, inequality and achieving a better society. Charity is most of the time referred to as an act to give money to common social endeavors or spending time on noble causes. The digital age has warranted attention to the advent of social online media. Charity has also found a vital place in online solutions, such as crowdfunding platforms and international online donation drives, e.g., in Facebook's Birthday donation calls or Twitter donation causes and Google charity for helping non-profit organizations to use some of their services (partially) for free. The internet and social online media forums have also become contested terrains that have been found to breed negative social dynamics and perpetuate cancel cultures. This paper makes the novel case that charity can also come to life in the form of non-monetary purposes. Not only devoting time and effort for the pursuit of noble social causes but also overcoming negative trajectories in social online media forums via mental strategies of forgiving is introduced as a way of charity. Opening up charity for non-monetary causes widens the range of charity givers to also the not so affluent and those with less time at hand. Experiencing charity as a non-costly act of forgiving and not canceling others can also breed positive notions of self-determined internal locus of control mechanisms, which usually go hand-in-hand with following through a plan more stringently and leading to better reported outcomes in terms of happiness. Charity in forgiving can thereby become a natural flow moment that is pursued for deriving pleasure from the act of forgiving. Extending the classical concept of charity for these novel purposes and causes promises to breed a more social and just society and online virtual world, in which people meet with respect, dignity and empowered strength to forgive – all features that are available for everyone, not just the affluent. Charity for non-monetary purposes therefore holds the key to equality in giving and improving societal conditions.

KEYWORDS: behavioral economics, charity, cancel culture, forgiving, giving, internal locus-of-control, non-monetary purposes, online social media, respect

Introduction

Charity is as old as humankind. Charitable acts are the mere giving to one another through altruistic acts. In charity people give without an expectation of a direct return. In most recent decades and capitalist traditions, charity has mostly been associated with money giving and time spending. Charity has also been seen as one of the implicit social welfare backup strategies (Brooks 2006). Charity is the biggest social network efforts to combat poverty, inequality and achieving a better society.

Charity is, therefore, the most important social welfare contribution besides state-controlled welfare. Charity across borders has an important influence in the quality of life of people around the world. In the cross-country charitable contributions, acts of charity are most of the time the best contribution to state failures to provide for decent social welfare.

Charity is most of the times referred to giving money to common social endeavors or spending time on noble causes. A charitable organization or charity acts are thereby focused on philanthropy and enhancing the social well-being of others. Charitable practice is thereby seen as

a benevolent act of giving and sharing. Charity is also rooted in Christian values and religious concepts of kindness and sharing.

Given the broad impetus of charity and the large-scale gains to be achieved from charity, it is surprising that charity is mostly seen as spending money on social causes with no direct financial return. Some accounts do consider time spend on social volunteering to charity (Brooks 2006). Interestingly, also in the digital world, charity is largely being associated with funding causes together. Digital platforms have evolved that help solicit crowdfunding for charitable causes. Charity has also found a vital place in online solutions, such as crowdfunding platforms and international online donation drives, e.g., in Facebook's Birthday donation calls or Twitter donation causes and Google charity for helping non-profit organizations to use some of their services (partially) for free. Some social online media platforms give options to donate to social causes or promote charitable acts. Search engines also have found ways to contribute to charity, e.g., in partially offering some of their services for a cheaper or no cost price to charitable causes or organizations or individuals trying to engage in charity.

Yet at the same time, the digital age has warranted attention to the advent of social online media. The internet and social online media forums have also become contested terrains that have been found to breed negative social dynamics and perpetuate cancel cultures.

This paper makes the novel case that charity can be in the form of non-monetary purposes. Not only devoting time and effort to noble social causes but also overcoming negative trajectories in social online media forums via mental strategies of forgiving is introduced as a way of charity. Charity thereby leverages as an act of giving without expecting anything in return. Giving in the meaning of letting go of one's own negativity towards another contestant. Drawing from insights about Human Rights Online, this paper will make the case that charity can also come to life in forgiving and not canceling others for a different worldview with particular attention to social online forums (Puaschunder 2023).

Opening up charity for non-monetary causes widens the range of charity givers to also the not so affluent. Experiencing charity as a non-costly act of forgiving and not canceling others can also breed positive notions of self-determined internal locus of control mechanisms. Extending the classical concept of charity for these novel purposes and causes promises to breed a more social and just society and online virtual world, in which people meet with respect, dignity and empowered strength to forgive – all features that are available for everyone, not just the affluent. Charity for non-monetary purposes therefore holds the key to equality in giving and improving societal conditions.

Charity

Charity is oftentimes equaled to a charitable organization or institution with the goal of philanthropy and enhancing overall social well-being. Charity is most of the time housed in a non-profit endeavor. Education and religion but also cultural events are often tied closely to charity. Most of the accounts of charity reported center around funds given by entities or individuals without any expectation of a direct monetary return. Charity is institutionalized in corporate givings, e.g., in matching or philanthropical endeavors that are reported in yearly reports or so-called Corporate Social Responsibility reporting. Charitable givings and non-profit activities are oftentimes exempt from taxation or tax deductible, which is a driver of non-state-funded social networks. The freedom to choose causes for funding and deducting charitable giving from taxes is attributed as crucial factor to lower tax evasion. In some countries, charitable organizations have to demonstrate that they provide a public benefit.

Donating time

One extension of the traditional concept of charity in financial transfers without direct return, is the idea of donating time to charitable causes. Churches, non-profit organizations and other welfare organizations have become essential parts of the social network glue. Giving time to charitable causes not only extends the range of opportunities to contribute to the social good. Giving to social causes also allows non-affluent people to engage in charity. While donating time is assumed to be the more broad-based contribution to charity, financial charitable givings still dominate the overall perception and reporting of charity. Most recent decades have seen a growth in donating time for social causes revolution in the corporate and the financial world. In the wake of shareholder activism and Corporate Social Responsibility reporting, giving to social causes time and allowing employees to have paid time off from work for engaging in community development and pro-social causes have become the state-of-the-art in large and publicly-listed corporations in the US.

New avenues to extend the concept of charity

Charity in forgiving to avoid cancel cultures
Charity has often been traced back to religious roots of forgiving each other's mistakes. Different religious foundations advocate for a general idea of forgiving mistakes and grievances in society as a vital part of human interaction. Forgiving is also a non-monetary act of kindness and charity. Forgiving can be practiced by everyone, despite social status and monetary accounts. Forgiving not only has a deep social function to keep the social glue intact and pro-social norms alive in a society. Forgiving also is deeply rooted in psychological accounts how to heal from emotional and burdensome wounds.

In most recent decades and with the advent of internet social online media forums, the practice of 'cancel culture' has evolved. Starting in the late 2010s and rising in action in the 2020s, cancel culture is a phenomenon that uses ostracizing, boycotting, banning and shunning unwanted actions by targeted individuals. Especially practiced in social online media, listservs and individual group chats, the cancel culture oftentimes calls out a target of hate and criticism to then draw on an oftentimes widely anonymous group of internet users that engage in online shaming and call for banning 'canceled' individuals. While sometimes the pursuit of canceling a person has noble merits, the practice is oftentimes clear in canceling any future interaction with the canceled target. For the canceled individual, the canceling oftentimes has wide economic impacts, e.g., such as firing from jobs or frozen bank accounts or canceled online access to certain platforms.

While the underlying causes sometimes may be understandable or justified to protect, the call out and cry for cancelation is mostly undebatable and without any consideration of forgiving. Problematic appears the decreasing incentive to argue and listen to another person's opinion, which shuns self-reflection by seeing the world through the eyes of others. The overall chilling effect on public discourse is deemed to be unproductive and believed to breed intolerance in the upcoming internet-savvy generation. Additional negative side effects are cyberbullying and free speech infringements, which have become subject to scrutiny from a Human Rights perspective in the social online virtual context (Puaschunder 2023).

Online social media is believed to have elevated cancel cultures onto a new level as the speed of communication, anonymity of participants as well as the international outreach have perpetuated the impetus and negative echo effects of cancel cultures (Ng 2020; Norris 2021; Puaschunder 2023). Minority views are silenced, careers are destroyed and diversity of thought

as well as a positive culture of debate vanishes in the wake of rising cancel culture trends (Bouvier and Machin 2021). A majority of the American population therefore thinks that cancel cultures have gotten out of control (Manchester 2021; Morning Consult 2020; Schulte 2021a, b). The connection of social online media being a driving force in cancel culture cultivation, make the concept being naturally connected to the upcoming generation, who appear to be the main target group of social online media (Lizza 2020; Puaschunder 2023).

Potential remedies proposed are ethics of "calling in" rather than "calling out" people with controversial opinions, meaning to facing discourse with those of other opinions (Bright 2017). Concepts like science diplomacy have a long history of embracing the adverse parties with connecting via scientific facts to then discuss the differences amidst other common academic endeavors (Puaschunder 2022). Many people have actively spoken against cancel culture that is believed to be rising. Among them is also Pope Francis (2022) of the Catholic church who criticized canceling to "leave no room for freedom of expression" and comparing it to a cancelation of "all sense of identity." While the main concern with cancel cultures is the economic, legal and societal loss, there is no advocacy to view forgiveness as an alternative act of charity as a remedy against cancelation.

Charity extension of forgiving to combat negative aspects of the cancel culture trend

Charity, as a monetary allowance without any expectation to receive a financial return in reverse, is limited to only those who are as affluent that they can give to others. If extending charitable actions to deeds, then time becomes a scarcity problem that secludes those with less time at hand from contributing to charity. Charity is also oftentimes primarily seen as a prerogative of the rich and elder, who can afford – time and money-wise – the luxury of giving money to others or spending ample amounts of time for a good cause.

When now trying to tap into another source of charitable giving in society, the young and not financially-free can also be ennobled with charitable activities, when considering charity as a voluntary act of forgiving others. Charity, including acts of forgiving, could thereby leverage into a self-determined and empowering moment for those who neither have time or money to spend on others. Charity in forgiving thereby can become a great equalizer of other inequalities implicitly imbued in charity as a money transfer, which raises critical questions about social status hierarchies (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

The choice to forgive is also something personal and rather independent from any other source than those whom one can or cannot forgive. Forgiving is thus a self-determined act that is housed in an internal locus of control choice. The concept of locus of control describes where people view dependencies of their action to stem from (Rotter 1996). An internal locus of control is thereby be seen to primarily depend on one's own choice and volition. This concept is an important driver of happiness and following through one's plan. Charity in forgiving implying an internal locus of control moment could thus boost the determination and strengthen the self-esteem of the forgiver. Charity in forgiving can thereby become a natural flow moment that is pursued for deriving pleasure from the act of forgiving (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Forgiving as an act of charity may thereby leverage into a new trend that crowds out negativity and social exclusion online, which has many negative consequences. Extending the classical concept of charity for these novel purposes and causes promises to breed a more social and just society and online virtual world, in which people meet with respect, dignity and empowered strength to forgive. Charity in the age of online virtual exchange can, therefore, also mean to have the grandness to forgive and take pride in accepting others' point of view gracefully.

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