

Healing Wealth In The Time Of Collapse by Alnoor Ladha, Lynn Murphy

The following is excerpted from *Post Capitalist Philanthropy: Healing Wealth in the Time of Collapse*, by Alnoor Ladha and Lynn Murphy. Co-publisher: Transition Resource Circle.

“In the dark theopoetics of the cloud, might the very fold between our non-knowing and our non-separability begin to appear [as] possibility itself, posse ipsum?” -- Catherine Keller

Post capitalist philanthropy is a paradox in terms. A paradox is the appropriate starting place for the complex, entangled, messy context we find ourselves in as a species. Those of us who are embedded in the muddled sub-sect of humans working in the sector known as philanthropy find ourselves pushed even further into contemplating the stark bifurcations of paradox.

There is a sheer irony in the act of arbitrarily giving away relatively small portions of money (compared to wealth holdings) derived from an unjust, extractive system within a philanthropic framework that enables tax-free, privately-controlled accumulations of assets, all in order to solve the very problems that wealth accumulation creates in the first place. That such philanthropic actions take place within an economic operating system that is openly destroying our collective home - the Gaian ecosystem that maintains all of Life - can often feel like too much for any one soul to bear, especially without a framework or container for shared inquiry.

As such, we are embarking on a collective journey with no presumption of conclusions or certainties. At times, the content we offer may be provocative and challenging to some sensibilities and beliefs. This is why we will continually come back to the body and felt experience. We urge readers to take the time to sit with our exercises and contemplations rather than aiming to get to the last page or to find some kind of resolution.

This book is an opening salvo for a deeper dialogue - an admission of befuddlement and a cry for earnest inquiry. It is also a call for grief, outrage and humility amongst practitioners; an invitation to create emerging, embodied cultures; the opening of spaces for spiritual and political practice as on-going praxis; the reimagining of community-building amongst those working within and affected by this growing and powerful sector of philanthropy; and a provocation to become contextually relevant beings in troubled times.

Although the etymology of the term philanthropy simply means “the love of humanity”, it has come to refer to an industry of non-governmental organisations that formally provide grants, ostensibly for public benefit. Much of the focus of this book is on institutional philanthropy, with a bias towards the United States, and to a lesser extent Europe, as these are still the centres of global neoliberalism in terms of both capital and cultural

influence. Nevertheless, many of the observations and insights in this book can be applied to other geographies, other forms of social change work and to personal philanthropy (i.e. charitable giving) more broadly.

Institutional philanthropy cuts a wide swath. It encompasses the full political spectrum from conservative to progressive ideas on one continuum, and from “passive” (i.e. funding research work) to “active” (i.e. funding direct action) on the other. Regardless of political motivations or where funds are directed, the sector of philanthropy is an externalisation of capitalism - it is both a consequence and protection mechanism for the existing system. A small group of people have amassed large sums of wealth through an extractive system and then created a sector by which they can decide the agenda for civil society while receiving a multitude of publicly-conferred benefits (from tax breaks to lobbying power to social influence) that further concentrate private financial and social power.

Although this book is an inquiry into the possibilities of post capitalist realities more broadly, we mainly situate it within the context of philanthropy because this sector has the potential to play a critical role in rebalancing wealth, knowledge and power while repairing historical injustices. Yet, all too often, philanthropy exacerbates our current exploitative system through undemocratic and unaccountable processes; by increasing endowments through existing market mechanisms; and through a lack of imagination on how to support the requisite paradigm shifts.

As co-authors of this book, we have spent a cumulative forty-plus years giving grants, advising philanthropic organisations, and/or fundraising for political work. Over the past few years, we have set up a “temporary organisational zone” called the Transition Resource Circle to bring funders and activists into deeper dialogue about the liberatory potential of philanthropy.

The word “transition” indicates the desired shift from the meta-crisis to transformative possibilities. “Resource” refers to the goal of alchemising and liberating capital in service to Life. And “circle” connotes ways of working which move us from hierarchical models and individual entitlements to honouring our collective entanglements. Through the Transition Resource Circle, we facilitate conversations through circle ways (e.g. non-hierarchical, embodied cognition approaches) so as to integrate the multiple intersections of our historical precedents, our respective lineages & storylines, and what future beings to come (including ourselves) require for reconciliation and healing.

This book is a direct result of these working lines, the fabric of relationships we steward, and our ongoing inquiries. What we have written in these pages is informed by our engagement with funders, activists, social movements, elders, cosmologists, anthropologists, economists, financial investors, business leaders, policy wonks and others. In addition, we conducted ongoing research of critical discourse in the space, hosted and led funder gatherings, and interviewed over a hundred people to inform this text.

As we listened deeply to discussions of how philanthropy could lead a response to our current civilisational crisis, we found that no one person or group has “the answer”. Instead, the conclusion we came to is that we must open up our inquiry to a broader audience than those working in philanthropy; we must ask those embedded in and affected by the sector to engage in fierce, honest conversations; to look deeper into how we see and make sense of the world; and to humble ourselves out of the certainty of answers. As such, this book is an offering and an invitation into collective sense-making at

this critical crossroads.

Some of the questions we will sit with together as you engage with this text include: How can philanthropy help transform capitalism when it was created by the very contradictions and inequities stemming from the system? Would any desirable post capitalist future still include a sector called philanthropy? Would an elite few still have the power to decide the agenda of the civic life of others? And, importantly, why would anyone invested in the current system be interested in creating post capitalist realities, especially if this would mean having a smaller piece of the proverbial pie?

Before we start to deepen into these lines of inquiry, let's first discuss the use of the term post capitalism, which, within our context, is purposefully unspecific.

What is post capitalism?

Post capitalism is an umbrella concept for us to better understand what we want to transition out of and transition into. Capitalism is not simply a system of market exchange. It is a system that measures and reduces the value of Life - including human labour, living ecosystems, relationships and life-force - via a crude system of transactional monetary exchange.

It is based on generating and accumulating ever-more commodified surplus value - i.e. more capital - by extracting, separating and abstracting currency from the human and more-than-human world. Capital is primarily created through debt, and therefore requires perpetual growth. Capitalism is a self-terminating algorithm based on socialising costs to the many while privatising gains for the few.

Post capitalism is not simply another 'ism' to replace previous ideologies. It is not a euphemism for socialism or anarchism or Nordic capitalism, although it may contain some elements of each. Post capitalism is a conceptual container for social pluralities based on shared values that stem from an experience of the shortcomings of the existing system and the lived experience of life-centric alternatives.

Some of the core uniting values of this idea might include: reciprocity, altruism, cooperation, gratitude, gifting, regeneration, equity consciousness, communalism, shared governance & decision-making, empathy, non-violence, interbeing and solidarity with all Life. In short, we are endeavouring to find approaches, practices and models that usher in systems rooted in interconnected relationships and a broader honouring of Life, in all its diversity and mystery.

We do not include a dash between 'post' and 'capitalism' in order to make clear that it is not simply a temporal state that exists after capitalism. Post capitalist realities exist right now, and many have existed for hundreds (if not thousands) of years despite the dominant system(s). For example, Indigenous cultures and communities that are based in the values mentioned above are inherently post capitalist even if they were not created in opposition to capitalism; their very existence is a form of resistance in the face of the dominant culture's desire to eradicate and undermine them.

Resistance movements such as the Zapatistas in Mexico and Rojava in Kurdistan are already living post capitalist realities. As authors, we have an explicit desire to help create contexts that cultivate more experiments and support existing, emerging possibilities. This is what we mean by post capitalist futures. We acknowledge they are here now, and some have always been here. There will be more (their challenge to the dominant system

is inevitable), and these realities do not require any future end-state to be validated.

This also does not mean these experiments are operating “outside” of capitalism or in a “pure” state, because, as we will discuss, there is not necessarily an “outside” - either materially or metaphysically. Late-stage capitalism is the water we swim in and we are all entangled in the consequences to our ecosystem, nervous systems, food systems, communities, relationships, waterways, psychological conditioning and our very life-force.

Although the prefix post can imply a “context after”, it also implies a state which is informed by the context prior to it. This is why understanding the dominant system is so critical. If we do not have a clear perspective of capitalism, we become contextually irrelevant. However, if all we have is a critique of the dominant system, we in turn become spiritually and creatively impoverished. This is why post capitalism is a necessary discourse for the collective imaginary.

Within our working definition, post capitalist realities are possible pathways that share the following principles:

Post anthropocentric: beyond the human-centric gaze and species exceptionalism, and towards the valuing of all Life.

Trans-rationalist: where rationality is incorporated but not elevated beyond other ways of knowing, sensing and being.

Post transactional: where acts of exchange are based on relational acts of genuine connection, reciprocity, generosity, cooperation and solidarity.

Anti-patriarchal: where gender or sexual orientation do not determine socio-economic or cultural hierarchies.

Post hierarchical: there may be functional, fluid hierarchies agreed upon by members of relevant constituencies without domination, coercion or violence.

Anti-colonialist: where systems and cultures are created to prevent widespread domination, extraction and/or imposition of worldviews onto “others”.

Anti-racist: acknowledging the structural disparities and inequities brought about by the construct of race, white supremacist culture and its historical antecedents, while structuring new-ancient-emerging systems that honour differences and seek to integrate reparations and reconciliation.

As the reader/practitioner/editor/co-creator of this text, you will have to decide which of the many constraints and limits to our dominant forms of capitalism most concern and animate you, what post capitalism could mean to you, how you will contribute to its creation, what values you will centre in your articulation of new-ancient-emerging states, and how, if at all, philanthropy will play a role in the coming transition(s) and creation of post capitalist realities.

We are not approaching our analysis, suggestions or questions with a sense of certainty, even though it may feel like this at times (especially when we render a picture of the current context). If you disagree with our approach or content as you read this text, we encourage you to notice more precisely what you disagree with and ‘why’ rather than just the ‘what’, and note moreover where the disagreement lands in your body.

You can also pause along the way for moments of reflection and somatic tracking. Of course, feel free to skip pages or sections that do not resonate, although we invite you to stay with any discomforts that may arise as we often learn most deeply in places of dissonance. Our endeavor is not to convince you of our arguments; rather, we are gesturing towards ways in which each of us can deepen into inquiry and embody practices of other ways of knowing, sensing and being.

For more inspiration, join an upcoming Awakin Circle with Alnoor Ladha and Lynn Murphy. More details and RSVP info [here!](#)