HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH
By Jay Hughes

Recently Charlie Collier asked me to respond to a question of his raised by family members who intend either to make significant capital gifts to members of their families or leave substantial inheritances to them "how MUCH is enough?".

Necessarily, there cannot be a correct answer for every situation to this question since every potential recipient's situation is different. Reciprocally, every potential donor's situation is also different.

Regardless of the fact that one answer cannot fit all, I do feel there are basic truths to be used in discerning one's own answer.

The most important truth I believe is whether the gift will permit the recipient to bring his or her own dream to life, to enable his or her vocation as his or her "work" in the world to be brought forth, and thereby help him or her become self knowing and free to act in the World from that knowledge of self.

Each spiritual path seeks to help its adherents find, through its tenets, the means for self actuation and self knowing toward that individual becoming free, becoming liberated and awakened. Any gift that seeks to achieve this end for its recipient will be a good gift. It will flow from the altruism of the giver who knows and appreciates what his or her gift can do to help its recipient become self knowing and free. It will respond best to the human question which altruism demands "how can I help this person who I love" rather than "what needs of his or hers can I instrumentally fulfill".

Another truth is that if the recipient receives a greater sum than necessary for his or her needs for a liberated life, then that sum will require that individual to be a conserver and steward of funds that will make no difference in the quality of his or her life. The excess funds will impose a quantitative responsibility upon that individual that will in my experience restrict the qualitative experience of life the gift was designed to achieve,

He or she, who as donor says "more is better" all too often misses the reality of what the recipient needs to achieve freedom and seriously burdens the possibility of its achievement by imposing duties and obligations on the recipient to manage funds beyond any need he or she will ever have and that will in no way enhance his or her life. Necessarily, too little will unduly constrain the possibility of freedom one is seeking to enable. Only the deep reflection on each individual's needs that the practice of prudence requires whenever we act on another, as we could do harm, will, in my experience, bring forth a golden mean for each individual recipient. Interestingly I find that many donors use this objective practice of prudence and do no harm for their philanthropic gifts to strangers while ignoring and acting subjectively toward their family members. Yes we are all human and I do it too!!

So my answer to Charlie's question is "enough so that when he or she awakens each morning he or she can decide how he or she will spend the rest of that day toward achieving his or her "work" in the world

and not so much that that freedom is reduced by the management of funds that will in no way enhance the achievement of that 'work'". This level of freedom and the serious responsibility to self and then to others that it enables is given to so few human beings and thus is of inestimable value.

While no donor can know how the recipient will "spend" their freedom, the possibility of enabling a positive qualitative life for a recipient which helps that individual achieve the true freedom of full self knowing and the liberation that flows from that knowing toward achieving their work in the world is the greatest gift to another that can be given.

To me discerning what I can do for each recipient to enable that possibility defines "how much is enough" for that individual. It helps me define what I believe will enable that individual to awaken in the morning and decide how he or she will spend the rest of that day in pursuit of his or her work toward full self knowing and the freedom that flows from it.