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Expanding altruism in blood donation by applying the concept of covenant: A critique of Richard M. Titmuss

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ABSTRACT

This paper will examine the notion of altruism in blood donation as discussed in Richard M. Titmuss's, *The Gift Relationship: from human blood to social policy.* We consider Titmuss's views and assumptions about altruism and conclude that Titmuss's account of altruism is not incompatible with a religious motivation such as 'regard for the other' found in the concept of covenant. We propose that the covenant relationship between persons and/or institutions obliges those within the relationship to affirm responsibility for one another that in turn deepens altruistically based relationships as promoted in non-paid, voluntary blood systems.

Cet expose se penche sur le concept d'altruisme en rapport avec le don de sang tel que discute dans l'ouvrage de Richard M. Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: from human blood to social policy.* Nous avons pris en consideration la vision et les hypotheses que Titmuss a de l'altruisme et en avons deduit que son expose de l'altruisme n'est pas en desaccord avec l'idee religieuse " du souci de l'autre " telle qu'on la retrouve dans le principe de l'engagement. Nous sommes d'avis que les liens d'engagement entre des personnes et/ou des institutions creent l'obligation pour les parties prenantes de renforcer leurs responsabilites vis a vis de l'autre, rendant plus intenses les rapports d'altruisme, comme c'est le cas dans un systeme de don de sang non remunere et volontaire.

INTRODUCTION

> ***Ethical altruism is extremely bad in its consequences for our society because it tends to develop dependent, unenterprising and sentimentalistic personalities and reduces economic progress and political freedom.***
>
> ***Ayn Rand –The Virtue of Selfishness (1964)***

There is no doubt that Richard M. Titmuss would have difficulty in accepting Ayn Rand's statement cited above. His main contention is quite the opposite, that altruism is both morally sound and economically efficient and he specifically wants to substantiate his claim by applying it to a concrete situation, namely blood systems. In 1970, Titmuss published his book *The Gift Relationship: from human blood to social policy.* This comparative study of blood donation emphasized the contrast between the (non-paid) UK and the (paid) US blood systems. It argued that the differences between the quality of blood supply and transfusion services were dependent on the moral values prevailing in society.

One of Titmuss's main contentions was that a market-based system dominated by a profit motive was the principal explanation for a contaminated blood pool and the inefficiency characteristic of the US blood system. More significantly, Titmuss believed that this competitive, materialistic society based on hierarchies of power and privilege ignored the life-giving impulse towards altruism that he believed was a fundamental element of national blood policy.[1] In contrast, the voluntary donation of blood characteristic of the UK system represented the relationship of giving between human beings in its purest form because people give without the expectation that they will be given to in return.

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[1] Titmuss, R.M, Oakley, Ann and Ashton, John (eds.) The Gift Relationship: from human blood to social policy. London, UK: LSE Books, 1997: 7

A system that depends on this voluntary giving effectively institutionalizes altruism, provides a framework that encourages people to care for one another and thus results in a safer blood product because it is donated as opposed to being sold.[2]

The book's central thesis that altruism is both morally sound and economically efficient caused a significant impact in its time and continues to be a classic work when discussing blood systems and the transfer of human tissue even today. At the time *The Gift Relationship* was written, blood donation and transfusion services were becoming very important topics. Advances in technological medicine such as open heart surgery and organ transplants had increased the demand for blood transfusion services. With the rise of commercialism, governments began to think more seriously of introducing market-type incentives into the delivery of health and social services in order to alleviate this demand. However, the arguments that Titmuss proposed were so profound that the Nixon administration at that time consulted him to set up a task force that later confirmed Titmuss's claims. A greater emphasis was then placed on an all-voluntary donation system. The Federal Drug Administration took more action in surveillancing blood banks and introduced the ruling that all donated blood would be labeled 'paid donor' vs. 'voluntary donor' as the basis for screening possible contamination.[3]

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[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.* 6

Titmuss's exhaustive analysis concluded with four main arguments.[4] First, the market in blood was inefficient in production and administratively costly. Thus, blood was provided at a much greater expense than that in a voluntary system. Second, according to Titmuss's empirical evidence, a market system constituted a thirty percent wastage statistic and was four times more likely to create a contaminated blood pool vs. a voluntary system that was found to have had only a two-percentage wastage outcome. Third, the market was redistributive in the wrong direction where those less privileged and economically secure were exploited and at a disadvantage. Finally, what Titmuss might describe as his most powerful and profound finding, that a market in blood was ultimately degrading for society as a whole. Altruistic motivations for donating blood were driven out and replaced by the calculus of self-interest. Such a system restricted individual freedom, especially the freedom to give, eroded the ethics of professionalism by replacing it with a greed mentality and diminished trust. All of his comparisons and contentions have stimulated and continue to stimulate sociologists, economists and scholars alike in the debate about the advantages and disadvantages of a paid/market vs. non-paid/voluntary system for blood as well as other human tissue. However, for the purposes of this paper, I wish to explore simply his final conclusion about altruism in more detail, particularly Titmuss's understanding, interpretation and application of altruism in modern society.

As many commentators have noted, what made Titmuss's book so significant was his use of blood systems as a social indicator of the larger social

[4] In the reedited version of the Gift Relationship (1997), Le Grand outlines what he believes are

relationships that predominate in society. For Titmuss, these 'stranger' relationships dictated how we relate to others and ultimately define our moral core as a human community. Yet, as one reads Titmuss's work and becomes persuaded by many of his arguments, one is uncertain as to how Titmuss is actually defining altruism and its origins from which he conceives his arguments. Titmuss addresses altruism in various ways including a socio-biological and socio-psychological context. However, he also implies that a greater sense of altruism is possible through the need to 'love' the stranger. Such an implication may be further explored from the perspectives of the motivation that is being addressed and how 'love' of the stranger is interpreted. Titmuss does not expand upon what he means by loving the stranger but rather focusses his attention on the relationship that it establishes and the potential of institutions and structures that encourage or discourage anonymous helpfulness.

The philosophical and religious origins of altruism are extensive but because of Titmuss's ambiguity, the reader is not certain about Titmuss's starting point or the underlying motivation he is presuming when speaking of altruism. That ambiguity is an inescapable reality in the analysis of this thesis. As altruism is at least religious in origin, does Titmuss's analysis include this understanding? Much of what Titmuss expresses could lead the reader to conclude that his notions imply the possibility of a religious motivation when considering the needs and love of the stranger, but that is by no means certain. The notion of 'other-regarding' is known in all major religions, East and West. Christianity in particular, prides itself on its vision of universal love and love of the neighbour. If

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Titmuss's four main arguments.

a religious motivation for giving and responding to the needs of a stranger does provide an additional perspective, then we may well conclude that Titmuss does not acknowledge the entire picture of human potential for relationships, while a Judeo-Christian source of 'other-regarding' for example could encourage a wider view. The main objective of this paper, is to examine whether such an understanding broadens Titmuss's analysis. Does it in fact clarify, modify or distort his position? That is our question in this thesis.

What I will consider primarily is how this religious motivation found in the concept of covenant is related to altruism. Furthmore, the concept of covenant in its original historical and religious roots provides a descriptive social metaphor that draws upon our social connectedness and obligation to one another. Might this concept be conceivable within our social structures in providing a model for gift relationships and relationships in general? As John O'Neill (1994) notes, "the language of covenant has never been founded upon atomistic self-interest, rather on a covenant family of human beings that worship the ties between them."[5] I will conclude that the covenant relationship between persons and/or institutions obliges those within the relationship to affirm responsibility for one another. This in turn would deepen altruistically based relationships as found in blood systems. Thus, in exploring how a covenant perspective is compatible with Titmuss's views, I will also identify what the additional factors are in the concept of covenant that enrich such relationships.

This paper is presented in two parts. Part I introduces the notion of

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[5] O,Neill. John. The Missing Child in Liberal Theory: Towards a covenant theory of family, community, welfare and the civic state. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1994:54

altruism, beginning with an assessment of its origins. Altruism is a more recent term stemming from 19th century philosophical thought. Benevolence is central to altruism and makes it the norm of moral relationships which is equally the case in the religious understanding of 'regard for the other'. By considering the origins of altruism, I will be able to elucidate the features that distinguish its secular meaning from that of a religious understanding. While both meanings are complementary, the motivational source of each is very distinct. In order to adequately examine Titmuss's use of altruism, I will briefly present the early to present day understandings of altruism. Having provided this basis there will be greater clarity in determining Titmuss's context and underlying assumptions regarding his claims about the blood donor's motivation in giving.

More significantly, I will address the complexities that arise in Titmuss's account of altruism and its relevance to blood systems, including the unique aspects of the blood gift itself. Ambiguity in Titmuss's interpretation exits in his attempt, implicit as it may be, to go beyond the self-interest paradigm and incorporate the notion of 'regard for the other' and the need to 'love the stranger.' As this notion harbors a religious motivation, it may indicate that there is a subtle nuance to altruism that covenant expands. Thus, a concept such as covenant may prove compatible to secular views by expanding and deepening our understanding of altruism. While Titmuss contends that the 'awareness' of a stranger's needs grounds the gift relationship, covenant bases the gift relationship on 'responding' to the needs of the stranger. As I will be discussing the use of covenant beyond the exclusively religious domain, I will also consider the possibility of transcending the bounds of self-interest without religious motivation.

Part II proceeds sequentially as it develops in more detail our understanding of the covenant relationship that is defined through its historical and religious roots. Here, I address the transcendent and absolute worth of the neighbour and the capacity to love without self-interest. Yet, the concept of covenant in its normative and descriptive meaning may also arguably have specific contemporary application and usage that can dissociate it from its theological foundation. Certain elements of a relationship develop out of a religious covenant and necessitate it as a model for gift relationships such as those found in blood systems. These elements will be described. In addition, we also find that covenant serves as an efficacious model that may be utilized in practical terms. It will be applied to specific constituents of Titmuss's analysis particularly his discussion of the quality/safety of blood supply and the distribution of blood services.

Central to Titmuss's analysis is his belief that the way in which society organizes and structures its social institutions can encourage or discourage altruism in persons. Institutions therefore have the potential to foster expressions of altruism. Thus, one must also consider the depth that institutional arrangements play in public consciousness. This is not a new subject. French sociologist, Emile Durkheim writing in the 20th century, considered the collective mind or consciousness to be the most important aspect of society. "Collective representations shape the content of the individual mind which in turn is responsible for individual behaviour."[6] Sociologists, anthropologists and scholars

[6] Durkheim, Emile. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. New York: MacMillan, 1915: 260

alike continue to explore the institutional structure of social systems and motivational processes in human beings that are involved in the maintenance and change of institutions. Thus, in our final section we will consider the impact institutions have in their potential to shape 'regard for the other'. We recognize that covenant, when considered as religious narrative and/or representation, can function as an expressive symbol that helps to communicate, codify and reaffirm the central values of a society. A covenant paradigm therefore can extend into our collective life and identity as communities. It provides a reaffirmation of what is fundamentally historical and grounded in reciprocity. This is a crucially important issue that will only be discussed in this thesis in a relatively preliminary and limited manner due to the space limitations. It merits being addressed in a far more comprehensive manner but at another stage of this research.

The claims made in this analysis of the interface between altruism and covenant are modest yet important. Titmuss discusses the nature of altruism by focussing on blood donation that according to him represents a relationship of giving between humans in its purest form. I will conclude that a religious understanding does not appear to be incompatible with his positions. Our own thesis is that the concept of covenant can expand Titmuss's position as it involves persons entering a relationship based on trust and determines a commitment to respond to the needs of the universal stranger.

PART ONE

Section I

Defining the notion of Altruism

Altruism is a very complex topic that is addressed in numerous philosophical and psychological treatises. The dominant view in Western thought has been that we are exclusively self-interested. Advocates of universal egoism, which constitute the majority in Western philosophy, psychology and social science, claim that everything we do, no matter how noble and beneficial to others, is really directed toward the ultimate goal of self-benefit. Thus, anything that appears to be altruistic behaviour is seen as a cloak for more primitive and determinative selfish motivation. This prevailing assumption that characterises humanity as fundamentally self-interested, leaves little room for anything resembling genuine interest in or concern for the welfare of others except where this interest and concern is of benefit to ourselves. As powerful and deep as this assumption is, it may also be incomplete or at least emerge as a minimalist view of altruism and the human condition in light of the original meaning of altruism.

The analysis in this section will demonstrate that the origins of altruism consisted of a distinct motivation separate from egoism and that throughout its evolution in the 19th and 20th centuries, social science has imposed various theoretical orientations which prominently highlighted self-interest in the development of modern self-understanding. This is evident in disciplines such as evolutionary biology and various schools of thought in psychology as will be indicated below. Yet, the notion of 'other regarding' is also defined by a religious source in the Judeo-Christian context namely *agape* or neighbourly love. This

notion is perhaps closest to the purer form of altruism as expressed in its origins and reflects the same unselfish nature. It does of course encompass a distinct motivation. However, despite that and the other distinguishing features of *agape*, we find that both the secular and religious understandings of altruistic beneficience are not necessarily diametrically opposed because of their roots, but share common and compatible features.

I.1 From early, secular origins to present day understanding

The word 'altruism' comes from its Latin root 'alter' or simply 'other'. It was conceived in the mid-19th century by August Comte who believed that egoism and altruism were two distinct motivations existing in the individual. Comte did not deny the existence of self-serving motives in helping behaviour, and called the impulse to self-benefit and self-gratification egoism. But Comte also believed that some social behaviour was an expression of an unselfish desire to 'live for others'. It was this second type of motivation to benefit others that he called altruism. The crucial difference between the two terms according to Comte, was the goal of motivation. He conceived altruism as devotion to the welfare of others based in selflessness. This suggests that the act needs to be performed entirely for its own sake apart from any considerations of self-satisfaction, pleasure or utility. For Comte, the greatest problem of life was achieving the ascendency of altruism over egoism. The difficulty in defining altruism may arise from different understandings of its critical elements of selflessness and motivation. There is considerable disagreement about selflessness and motivation required in an altruistic act.

Oliner and Oliner (1988) comment on this problem and contend that at one extreme of this continuum, the actor conducting the altruistic act must have no concern for self and derive no benefit from the act. At the other end of the continuum are those who say that an act satisfying both the self and other is also altruistic. Types of motivations can also be considered within a continuum with innumerable gradations in between. A motivation can range from mere intention to help, to helping others for any reason despite any extrinsic or intrinsic reward. The difficulty is in attempting to characterise such motivational states. The expression of 'the welfare of the other' presents a set of conceptual and pragmatic problems. Various schools of thought within social science and psychology have tried to alleviate these conceptual problems and explain altruistic behaviour by making the self-interest paradigm their starting point.[7]

Sociobiologists or evolutionary biologists propose an hypothesis that relates biological factors to altruistic behaviour. This discipline relies principally on the Darwinian concepts of individual selection and survival of the fittest. Evolutionary biologists believe that altruistic behaviour is based in genes and maintain that no species can survive unless certain individuals within it are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of the group. This is also known as kin altruism or kin selection theory.

According to this theory, one organism assists another because doing so contributes to the former's inclusive reproductive fitness. A clear example is that of a dominant baboon male who defends his bands against external threats and

[7] The research conducted on the topic of altruism in these disciplines is exhaustive. I wish to simply present the basic framework that they consider when addressing altruism, as this will explain Titmuss's approach later in the paper.

engages in what is called 'altruistic bravery'. This behavioural tendency has evolved because the risk of the male being wounded or even killed is not greater than the reproductive benefit that accrues from protecting their relatives and therefore copies of their own genes from predation.[8]

Evolutionary biologists such as Trivers (1971) contend that natural selection extends beyond kin relations to unrelated members of one's group as well. He defines this as reciprocal altruism and argues that under certain conditions natural selection favours altruistic behaviours because in the long run they benefit the organism performing them.[9] He asserts that natural selection of reciprocally altruistic behaviour can explain the function of human altruistic behaviour and aspects of the psychological system underlying such behaviour. He states:

> "There is no direct evidence regarding the degree of reciprocal altruism practiced during human evolution nor its genetic basis today, but given that universal and nearly daily practice of reciprocal altruism among humans today, it is reasonable to assume that it has been an important factor in recent human evolution and that the underlying emotional dispositions affecting altruistic behaviour have important genetic components."[10]

In short, selection will favour a mechanism for establishing reciprocal relationships if it is assumed that it is to the advantage of each individual to form the maximum number of reciprocal relationships where the cost of helping others is less than the benefit of receiving help. It also assumes that all things being

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[8] Pope, Stephen J. The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 1994:10

[9] Trivers, Robert. The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism. *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, 1971(46): 35

[10] Trivers, *op. cit.*, 1971:35

equal, each individual will be, at some moment in time, a recipient of altruistic behaviour.

Although it is highly probable that biological features do contribute to altruistic behaviour as it was briefly presented above, it appears unlikely that biology alone accounts for altruistic behaviour. Monroe (1996) notes in her discussion concerning biological explanations of altruism that these explanations work well for understanding patterns of behaviour but do not contribute to our understanding of the more extreme forms of altruistic behaviour where situations of genuine self-sacrifice for people not of one's kin or social group arise. She states that what evolutionary biologists are explaining is not altruism but rather the limited and isolated acts of charity in which even the most self-interested rational actor will engage intermittently.[11] Another theoretical framework may therefore be necessary to understand altruism that can be found in sociopsychology. As Pope (1994) declares, human altruism should be placed in a class by itself because of the intricate and complex workings of the brain, and our highly cognitive abilities. He notes that human behaviour is strongly influenced by sociocultural structures, values, norms, myths, customs, social institutions, systems of beliefs as well as political, economic and psychological factors.[12]

Altruistic behaviour can be developed or explained by various schools of thought in Psychology. Monroe (1996) states that the easiest way to summarize psychological studies is to divide them into two main approaches: the developmental and social psychological. Developmental psychologists stress

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[11] Monroe, K.R. The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a common humanity. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1996:178

[12] Pope, *op. cit.*, 10

learning and learning stages as predictors of altruism. For example, psychoanalytic theory offers one of the most comprehensive explanations of human behaviour. It denies the existence of selfless motivation, since Freud believed that all behaviour was rooted in satisfying the self. However, it is through the identification with others and the constraints imposed by society that individuals learn to help others.[13] According to psychoanalytic theory, this identification fosters the development of the superego. This superego supresses the basic selfish desires and altruism emerges. This may be the result of guilt imposed by the superego for moral transgressions imposed by the superego and through the internalization of certain values and standards that were developed and learned in early childhood.

Other theorists in developmental psychology, such as cognitive developmental theorists, propose that altruism develops as the child learns to value other human beings. Individuals progress through stages of moral reasoning as a result of mental maturational processes. Altruism along with other forms of moral action occurs only at the highest stages of ethical growth.[14]

Social psychologists who analyse altruism move beyond the individual actor and examine the interaction between the individual actor and the external world. Social psychologists examine social learning, self-reinforcement and role modeling. Social learning theorists maintain that reinforcement of learned behaviour is experienced through externally administered rewards and altruistic models. This theory also maintains that an internal reward system such as

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[13] Oliner & Oliner, *op. cit.*, 9

[14] This fundamental cognitive behavioural theory is presented by Piaget and Kohlberg

pleasure in meeting another's needs or in fulfilling some value also influences altruistic behaviour. Social psychological theory considers situational predictors such as the physical environment in which the altruistic act occurs. They associate personal and external factors as the basis to behaviour.

Oliner and Oliner (1988) root their study of rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe in the social psychological framework. According to this orientation altruistic behaviour is the result of a decision-making process that involves both internal characteristics, such as personality, and values. This process is mutually influenced by situational factors that are representative of the immediate external environment. The decision can be influenced more heavily by either the internal or external factors.

Explanations of altruism, whether it is defined through evolutionary biology or developmental and social psychology, are dominated by the self-interest paradigm. While sacrifical behaviour was prominent in explaining altruism in evolutionary biology, many psychologists contend that an agent's motives and intentions are critical determinants of whether an act is altruistic or self-interested. The significance of motivation is also found in the religious roots of regard for the other; however, this concept encompasses distinct features.

I.2 The religious sources of altruism

The notion of 'other-regarding' is generally considered a religious concept. Some version of the golden rule "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," is known in all major religions. In the Judeo-Christian context, the faithful abide by their second commandment, 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Christianity in particular prides itself on its vision of

universal love and *agape*- neighbourly love. *Agape* is the Greek word most often used to refer to the rule or law of love in the New Testament. Within the interpretation and understanding of *agape*, a person is to consider the interests of others and not simply their own. Similar to the notion of altruism, *agape* requires that others be regarded for their own sakes, for what they want or need, and not because they bring benefits to the agent. Christians consider *agape* a doctrine of love that recommends, at least in principle, treating non-family groups with equal regard to our own loved ones. It therefore involves not only treating the stranger in a spirit of generosity but also in reciprocity.

Whittaker (1992) states that an ideal Christian extends consideration to the neighbour regardless of the neighbour's qualifications. The believer values other people simply as human beings, treating them as individuals whose worth is established by their common status as creatures of God. But one of the most distinctive features of Christian love is that it depends on the first and foremost commandment that one should love God. As Whittaker (1992) points out, *agape* represents more of a dispositional guide rather than a commandment to perform a certain action. However, to have such a disposition, one would be committed to a certain faith or believe in a certain power, namely God as true love comes from the love of Him. The needs and happiness that believers had once felt responsible for securing on their own becomes replaced with the trust that it will be given to them in God's way.

Reeder (1980) explains this distinct feature in another manner. He states that as God is all-sufficient to Himself, so He will be all-sufficient to the believer. Not only are one's needs and desires fulfilled, but one is perhaps beyond needs

and desires. In choosing *agape* as a principle, the believer has the corresponding disposition to achieve new strength because of their relationship with God. Karl Barth describes the relation with God as follows:

> "God creates new and loving men...making us free for love as for an action which differs wholly and utterly from all that we have done hitherto...a man whom God takes into fellowship with Himself...is given a determination which is not only new, but so radically and totally new that the change can be described only as a new creation or new birth."[15]

Barth indicates how *agape* encompasses a capacity for and disposition towards altruistic beneficience that is not derived from self-regard.

In addition, the Christ narrative that is fundamental to New Testament theology acts as an internal reinforcement that is available only to the Christian believer. The imitation of what Christ emobodies is a goal in Christian life. Thus to model one's behaviour on the actions of Christ can have reinforcing qualities. According to Christian belief, Christ's truly altruistic self-sacrifice has the potential to free the believer and create the possibility of being engaged in helping behaviour with no concern for obtaining rewards.

1.3 Conclusion

From this discussion, it appears that a secular analysis of altruism expresses an understanding of benevolence that is not beyond human potential. Evolutionary biology and theoretical orientations in psychology characterise

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[15] Reeder, John P. Assenting to Agape. *The Journal of Religion*, 1980 (60):25

altruism as a certain kind of action that is motivated by the regard for others. However, the act is not undertaken as an end in itself but as a means to an independent end that benefits the agent in some manner or another. It is derived from a dominant self-interest paradigm.

The religious injunction of 'other regard' is equally possible as such a command or disposition would be a violation of human nature if it were not in fact conceivable within our human capacity. However, the motivation underlying *agape* demands a departure from pure self- regard and requires one to meet the needs of the neighbour without weighing and comparing his needs with those of self. While elements of self-sacrifice and internal reinforcement mechanisms are apparent in both the secular and religious understanding of altruism, the religious source gives transcendent and absolute worth to the life of the neighbour. Love is the ideal that is nourished and supported by viewing the soul of the fellow human being from a transcendent perspective. As part of the Christian faith, a believer adheres to a distinct form of recognizing the needs of the stranger with God and Christ at the center.

As Grant (1997) points out, it is at least ironic that a discipline such as social science founded to champion altruism should have come to be so dominated by the self-interest paradigm. This does not appear to have been Comte's intention. However, the secular notion of altruism in its purer form, although not explicitly religious, is compatible with religious notions. It appears that a religious motivation may add a deeper meaning to this form of altruism by expanding it through the elements of love or *agape*. A religious understanding represents our capacity to love without self-interest. Augustine would contend

that our fallen spirit requires that the Holy Spirit be poured into our hearts since God's *agape* can presuppose any created altruism, redeem it and fulfill it. Certain beliefs therefore are necessary in order to support an 'agapistic' way of life.[16]

In more contemporary terms, Grant (1997) declares that although 'real-life altruists' may not attest to any particular religious motivation themselves, the reality of saintly or the purer form of altruism suggests freedom from the self that typifies the intent and promise of religions at their best. He believes that in order not to render altruism as essentially a variation of our self-interest, one would have to entertain the possibility that the point of life lies beyond ourselves, collectively and individually. For Grant this means that pure altruism may well entail a transcendence of self that is of religious proportions. Titmuss wavers in this understanding as will be discussed in greater detail. This transcendence of self may also exemplify the subtle nuance that defines the interface between altruism and the concept of covenant. Having discussed the origins of altruism, we can now turn to Titmuss's meaning and use of the term.

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[16] Whittaker, *op. cit.*, 220-230

PART ONE

Section II

Determining Titmuss's meaning and use of Altruism

The context and political era in which Titmuss wrote The Gift Relationship is one aspect that provides important insight into the immense influence his work has had in forming social policy. Other sources that describe not only his accomplishments but personal biography regard Titmuss's practical experience and passion for social justice as the hallmark of his work. This book, along with many others, was the product of over twenty years as Chair of Social Administration at the London School of Economics, to which he was elected in 1950. Given his unique personal history and experience, it is not surprising that Titmuss's approach to his comparative analysis of blood transfusion and donor systems is principally a statistical inquiry.

From a cursory overview of The Gift Relationship, it appears that Titmuss investigates the characteristics of those who give, supply or sell blood as an economist would in terms of the supply of and demand for blood. This is exemplified by his chapter titles as well as his extensive appendix that illustrates his findings from surveys and questionnaires. However, his methodology which has endured some criticisms is not the point of interest for this analysis. The focus of this paper is his larger theme of gift relationships that emphasizes the impersonal context and their potential to affirm solidarity.

Although Titmuss's contentions are formulated within an economist's framework as he applies criteria of cost efficiency, distribution, supply and demand of blood products, Titmuss clearly recognizes that the nature of blood

supply cannot be considered a purely economic issue. A purely economic analysis of blood procurement would ask the question, 'how can we obtain the most blood at the least cost?' Titmuss's fundamental question asks rather, 'what sort of society do we want?' His inquiry is not confined to blood systems but extends into the social fabric of values existing in society. As Titmuss asks:

> "If blood is morally sanctioned as something to be bought and sold what ultimately is the justification for not promoting individualistic private markets in other component areas of medical care, education, social security, welfare services, child foster care, social work skills, the use of patient and clients for professional training, and other 'social service' institutions and processes?"[17]

Titmuss clearly advocates that medical care, education and other social rights are not economic commodities. Some commentators may contend that therefore it would seem inappropriate to use economic language to describe such rights. Yet Titmuss boldly attempts to prove by means of economic concepts why they should not be considered commodities precisely to prove this point. His central thesis, however, moves beyond his empirical data.

Titmuss is first and foremost interested in the relationships that are derived from our character and the disposition of systems that foster or do not foster attitudes of altruism. As he states, "one cannot understand the part unless we also understand the whole. Society has to be studied in the individual, and the individual in society and those who wish to separate politics from morals will never understand either."[18] For Titmuss, issues about the morality of society must incorporate an individual's regard or disregard for needs of others.

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[17] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972:12
[18] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972:60

By understanding Titmuss's own convictions and the political climate at the time that he writes The Gift Relationship, the meaning and importance that he assigns to the notion of altruism becomes evident. It also provides insight into how he is interpreting altruism from a social science perspective. His discussion of blood donor's characteristics and their motivation for giving demonstrates Titmuss's integration of evolutionary biology and socio-psychology as a starting point in his implicit definition of altruism.

II.1 Titmuss's context and methodology

It is surprising to discover that Titmuss never had a formal education. Yet, he never regretted his uncertified career but applauded the public library as among the most precious of British social services.[19] Titmuss had a modest upbringing. After a six-month course in bookkeeping, he was employed as an office clerk in Standard Telephones until the age of eighteen. Titmuss was then hired as a clerk by the County Fire Insurance Office and served there for sixteen years. His first book entitled *Poverty and Population* (1938) was inspired by his social and political interests as well as by his insurance work that emphasised statistical technique. Titmuss's national and international distinction was later secured when he was asked to join a group of historians commissioned to write the official civil histories of WWII and to cover the work of the Ministry of Health. Titmuss was essentially a private citizen and scholar, a teacher and adviser, rather than a political leader. However, the political climate of his time was certainly a strong influence in fostering his interest in social policy.

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[19] Lord Blake & Nicholls, C.S. Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1986:849.

After WWII, socialist or labour parties increased their influence on politics in order to secure the well-being of its citizens. At the same time, Western market economies underwent unprecedented growth until the first oil crisis. Systems of public health and public education became universal services and by the mid 1970s the industrialized Western countries spent 15-30% of their gross domestic product on state social welfare. But as inflation was driven up later in the 1970s, efforts were made to cut public spending manifesting a crisis of values as well as finance and management.

Deep divisions in the perception of the role of social policy became evident. Anti-collectivists as they were called, rejected all interference with the market in the name of freedom and efficiency. Reluctant collectivists believed that it was impossible to have a self-regulating market and accepted some state intervention in reducing major injustices and inefficiencies.[20] Social Fabians to which Titmuss held allegience, were committed to three central socialist values - equality, freedom and solidarity. They assigned a positive role to the state in optimizing their social values in a democratic and gradual way. Collectivism was seen as a necessary and desirable means of enhancing social integration and social rights. However, in view of the establishment of stronger market-based economies, there was also a widespread cultural sanction in the West of self-interest and opportunism.

Titmuss was renowned for his work perhaps in part because of his lack of formal training and education. His personal work experience and modest

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[20] Kuper, Adam and Kuper, Jessica. The Social Science Encyclopedia 2nd Edition. London, England: Routledge, 1996: 803-808, 910-911

background may be two significant factors that contributed to his creative insight into social issues and policy as he had personal knowledge of its direct effects. Themes of *The Gift Relationship* are linked to issues of social justice that Titmuss pursued in previous books. However as the onset of capitalism began to grow in the 70s, many social policy makers such as Titmuss feared the disintegration of social welfare and universal access to institutions such as health and education. His analysis of blood donation was to represent this threat as a social indicator that was potentially measurable. Titmuss notes himself that British policy in the 20th century allowed sentiments of altruism, reciprocity and social duty to express themselves. This may illustrate why Titmuss in *The Gift Relationship* was so determined to defend it. It also suggests that those individuals whom Titmuss questioned in interviews and questionnaires may also have been under the same considerable influence of this era.

Although Titmuss's methodology will not be addressed in this analysis, it is important to acknowledge that a certain bias may be present in his findings.[21] Titmuss had a very strong personal conviction in his arguments. Thus, a biased interpretation of his empirical data to justify his position may be present. However, whether elements of Titmuss's analysis present weaknesses or not, his central thesis carries great merit as his principal interest is in the form and

[21] It is important to note that sociological research methods and the means by which the sociologist such as Titmuss gains systematic, reliable and valid knowledge in formulating sociological explanations has many problems. For example, some research has examined both the problem of the relation between attitudes and behaviour and the validity of the results of questionnaire and interview research. Findings have shown the extent to which the results of research can, within limits, vary according to the attributes of the interviewer and respondent and their interaction. Race, religion, age, sex, social status and personality have all been shown to influence the pattern of responses in social surveys. In addition, social psychological research has shown how the expectations of the researcher may quite unintentionally affect the results of experiments with

function of what giving embodies. Throughout the entire book, Titmuss's continual interest is in asking, who gives and why? In determining the answer, Titmuss attempts to characterise different types of donors into categories in order to differentiate a person's motivation to give and to define the meaning of a 'voluntary' donor. For Titmuss, the voluntary donor is the closest approximation in social reality to the abstract concept of a 'free human gift' and therefore may be the closest approximation of his meaning of altruism.

II.2 Characteristics of the blood donor and the motivation for giving

Titmuss asserts that to 'donate' is to give implying an altruistic motive.[22] In analysing a person's motivation or reason to give blood, Titmuss categorises donors from type A to type H based on their characteristics in order to illustrate some of the problems involved in defining 'voluntary' donor. Type A, for example, he labeled the 'Paid' donor who sells blood as a substitute for alternative ways for obtaining money. It is not a gift but rather a mechanical, impersonal transaction conducted on a private market basis. Price varies according to what demand/supply the situation is. Type B he describes as the Professional donor who gives blood on a regular, semi-salaried basis once or twice a week to mainly plasmapheresis programs. Type C are Paid-Induced Voluntary donors. They receive cash payment but claim that they are not primarily motivated by the payment. They acknowledge the community's need for blood but have been induced to donate through group pressures.

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human subjects. For a very comprehensive overview see: Bulmer, Martin. (1979). Sociological Research Methods. London, UK: Macmillan Press Ltd.

[22] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972:71

Type D Titmuss describes, as the The Responsibility Fee Donor. Patients who receive blood are charged a fee called a replacement or deposit fee. If patients have not donated blood, the hospital will 'lend' them blood on the condition that the loan is repaid in blood or money. Persons can also predeposit a donation of blood per year in return for which the donor and his family are 'insured' for their blood needs for that year. Those ineligible to donate may pay a fee to find an appropriate donor who will donate in their name. Titmuss defines this Type E category as the Family Credit donor.

Type F are the Captive Voluntary donors who are in positions of restraint and subordinate to authority, i.e., prisoners. They are called upon, required or expected to donate. Type G Titmuss refers to as the Fringe Benefit Voluntary Donor. These donors are induced to give by the prospect of other tangible rewards such as days off work, free meals and other benefits. Finally, Titmuss describes the Voluntary Community donor, type H, whom he declares to be those donating the closest approximation of a 'free human gift'. Such donations involve the absence of tangible immediate rewards and penalties as well as the knowledge that their donations are for unnamed strangers without distinction of age, sex, medical condition, income, class, religion or ethnic group. Titmuss then goes on to state that:

> "...no donor type can be said to be characterised by complete, disinterested, spontaneous altruism. There must be some sense of obligation, approval and interest, some awareness of need and purpose of the blood gift; perhaps some organized group rivalry in generosity; some knowledge that fellow-members of the community who are young or old or sick cannot donate, and some expectation and assurance that a return gift may be needed and received at some future time...Nevertheless, in terms of the free gift of blood to unnamed strangers there is no formal contract, no legal bond, no situation of power, domination, constraint of

> compulsion, no sense of shame or guilt, no gratitude imperative, no need for penitence, no money and explicit guarantee of or wish for a reward or a return gift. They are acts of free will; of the exercise of choice; of conscience without shame."[23]

Titmuss, like many social scientists and philosophers before him, points out the variations in the concept of voluntary and the many gradations of motive and behaviour that exist. It may appear by Titmuss's acknowledgement of 'complete, distinterested, spontaneous altruism' that he assumes the existence of a purer form of altruism as defined originally by Comte. Yet, in reality his view is that no persons may be able to achieve this distinct motivation as some degree of obligation is inevitably attached.

It appears that for Titmuss, donation of the 'free human gift' by the 'voluntary' donor is the closest example humans come to the notion of pure altruism. Titmuss appeals to an ideal in defining what he believes determines a free gift of blood to unnamed strangers, yet he simultaneously recognizes our human limitations. While a free gift of blood to the unnamed stranger is an act of free will and an exercise of choice in the ideal sense, even the closest approximation of the voluntary donor experiences a sense of obligation and an awareness of need.

Titmuss goes on to claim later in his text that social gifts and actions carrying no explicit or implicit individual right to a return gift or action are forms

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[23] Titmuss, op. cited., 1972:89 Titmuss attempts to classify the attributes of donors while also taking into account the pattern of values, culture, recruitment systems etc., underlying different motivations. His main consideration is to what extent donors in the US and UK can be allocated to one of these categories. He later concludes that UK donors, constituting an unpaid system were categorically type H donors and thus closest to the altruistic and 'free gift' donor motivation while donors in the US, making up a paid/market system, applied to all other types of donors. Titmuss acknowledges the many gradations in motivation but may also be interpreted as implying that there is a moral determination associated with these categories as those actions that are altruistic are more morally laudable than the rest.

of 'creative altruism'. He states that they are creative in the sense that the "self is realised with the help of anonymous others; they allow the biological need to help express itself." Titmuss appears to contend that creative altruism is, yet again, an ideal, but it is not certain whether Titmuss believes that it is actually possible in reality. While our biological need to give is real, one may ask whether 'creative altruism' is achievable in practice. Can we meet it fully or not? Titmuss is not clear on this point.

In speaking of personal behaviour that lies outside of family obligations and kinship, Titmuss asserts that although we have a biological need to help, we are not necessarily born to give. Based on his statistics asking why people first decided to become a blood donor, he noted that nearly 80% of the answers suggested a high sense of responsibility towards the needs of other members of society. Voluntary donors whose answers were written in their own words expressed a moral vocabulary to explain their reasons for giving blood. As Titmuss states, "their view of the external world and their conception of man's biological need for social relations could not be expressed in morally neutral terms."[24] Not only does this serve as an illustration of an individual's motivation to give, but for Titmuss it also serves as an illustration of how social policy in one of its potential roles can help to actualize the social and moral potentialities of all citizens.

Titmuss contends that the voluntary donor is principally motivated by moral responsibility, which may suggest an alternative motivation in giving to

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[24] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972:237

that of self-interest. However, this does not exclude self-interest as an underlying motivation in Titmuss's contentions. As he proposes, the goal of altruism is to realise the self that is only achieved by helping the stranger.[25] One possible interpretation of Titmuss's notion of altruism can include both biological and social elements in his definition. He later states that:

> "In not asking for or expecting any payment of money, donors signified their belief in the willingness of other men to act altruistically in the future and to join together to make a gift freely available should they have a need for it."[26]

Titmuss is suggesting that individuals have an innate biological need to help and that a person acts altruistically with the belief that others will act altruistically in the future if there is a need. From an evolutionary biological standpoint, one could argue that Titmuss's definition of altruistic behaviour therefore incorporates natural selection theory and the idea of reciprocal altruism as previously presented by Trivers (1971). Altruistic behaviours are based in genes and are naturally selected for through evolution as it benefits the donor in the long run.

The arrival of evolutionary biology in the mid 70s was regarded as a foundation for ethics in that it illuminated behavioural predispositions toward certain core human values. E.O. Wilson, a forefather of Sociobiology, believed that it would explain the reasons why we make certain moral choices instead of others at particular times. Wilson and his colleagues eventually fell under sharp criticisms for committing the naturalistic fallacy, the illicit attempt to justify ethical prescriptions simply on the basis of purely descriptive claims about the

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[25] This will be discussed in more detail as it underlies some of the complexities in Titmuss's arguments.

[26] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 239

evolutionary process.[27] While it is not the purpose of this paper to examine these notions in detail, it is worth noting that these ideas most certainly influenced moral theorists and social thinkers of its time, Titmuss being among them.

Titmuss's findings, in a very general manner, can also correspond to orientations in developmental psychology, where altruism along with other forms of moral action occurs only at the highest stages of ethical growth. Altruism develops as persons learn to value other human beings. Yet, Titmuss would most likely contend that the social context has the greatest influence on, but is not exclusively responsible for, our motivations in giving since the ways in which society organizes and structures its social institutions can only encourage or discourage altruistic persons. As he states, "these systems can foster integration or alienation and can facilitate generosity toward strangers."[28] From this perspective, it seems that both personal and external factors provide the basis to altruistic behaviour indicating Titmuss's incorporation of a socio-psychological framework. Commentators such as Singer (1973) and Keoun (1997) share a similar interpretation in this regard.

Singer (1973) interprets Titmuss's understanding of altruism as a virtue. He states that altruism is a virtue that increases the more it is practiced. An individual who acts altruistically tends thereby to develop an altruistic character and become more rather than less disposed to acting altruistically.[29] Keown

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[27] Pope, Stephen. J. (1996) Descriptive and Normative Uses of Evolutionary Theory. In: Christian Ethics: Problems and Prospects. Cahill, L.S & Childress, J.F (eds.) Cleveland: The Prilgrim Press

[28] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 225

[29] Singer, Peter. Altruism and Commerce: A defense of Titmuss against Arrow. *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* 1973(2)3: 314.

(1997) contributes further to Singer's ideas by stating that it is all too obvious that the same holds true in relation to the person who performs selfish acts. Acts of altruism promote further acts of altruism in that they tend to reinforce altruistic dispositions where acts of self-interest would reinforce a self-interested disposition.[30]

Both Singer and Keown appear to endorse a social learning origin to altruistic behaviour. They agree that what Titmuss is asserting is the notion that a voluntary system fosters attitudes of altruism and a desire to relate to and help strangers. While a voluntary system fosters these attitudes and creates opportunities for their expression, a commercial system would have the opposite effect. Singer states that "the laws of the marketplace would in fact discourage altruism and fellow feeling. Even if the attitude to give still existed, the attitude toward giving and receiving would no longer be the same."[31] The character and disposition of the system would change entirely.

In terms of socio-psychology, one may argue that because our internal characteristic is inherently based on self-interest, a commercial system would only augment this disposition and facilitate a self-interested decision-making process. This creates a self-interest model that is learned and reinforced by donors receiving payment. A purely voluntary system therefore encourages altruism in a way that even a mixed commercial-voluntary system does not. For Singer, it is clear that the existence of a commercial system has a deleterious impact on voluntary giving. He states:

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[30] Keown, John The Gift of Blood in Europe: an Ethical Defense of EC Directive 89/381. *Journal of Medical Ethics,* 1997 (23): 98
[31] Singer, *op. cit.*, 1973: 314

> "The idea that others are depending on one's generosity and concern, that one may oneself, in an emergency, need the assistance of a stranger, the feeling that there is still at least this vital area in which we must rely on the good will of others rather than the profit motive - all these vague ideas and feelings are incompatible with the existence of a market in blood."[32]

As Singer points out, a commercial market is more inclined to consider altruism as a scarce resource as a result of an economic approach of inflated demand vs. minimal supply. He considers a different analogy that disconnects altruism from a market analysis where altruism is more like sexual potency - much used, it constantly renews itself, but if rarely called upon, it will begin to atrophy and will not be available when needed. Thus, Titmuss's fundamental assumption seems plausible namely, that relationships defined as commercial are governed by different expectations and norms than those defined through voluntary measures.

II.3 Conclusion

Titmuss's thoughtful book The Gift Relationship was strongly influenced by his personal background, political convictions and the mounting pressure of commercialization that he believed threatened medicine, education and other social structures. The book is recognized as his clearest statement of his moral philosophy: the view that a competitive and materialistic society that is based on hierarchies of power and privilege ignores the life-giving impulse towards altruism which is needed for welfare in the most fundamental sense.[33]

Although Titmuss never clearly articulates how he defines altruism through its various origins, elements of evolutionary biology and socio-

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[32] Singer, *op. cit.*, 318

[33] Titmuss, Richard M. Oakley, Ann and Ashton, John (eds). The Gift Relationship: from human blood to social policy. London, UK: LSE Books, 1997: 7

psychology can be found in his meaning and use of altruism. Titmuss appears to also demonstrate what the ideal notion of altruism is, yet concurrently recognizes that this ideal may or may not be achievable as some degree of obligation is present. This also represents some of the ambiguity in Titmuss's contentions.

Titmuss acknowledges that social structures help to facilitate altruistic behaviour, namely moral norms that are often embedded in social practices such as donating blood. Yet, Titmuss's account of altruism specifically in the area of blood donation has various complexities. This can in part be attributed to the unique nature of the blood gift as it is a gift of the body and given in an impersonal context. Ambiguities appear to be not only evident in Titmuss's conception of a voluntary donor's motivation in giving but such a motivation is based on the relationship that is established with gifts such as blood. Thus, depending on the motivation, the gift relationship itself may be understood in more than one way. As will be suggested below, Titmuss's understanding of altruism may be open to going beyond the self-interest paradigm.

PART ONE

Section III

Ambiguities & Complexities in Titmuss's account of Altruism

The complexities that arise in Titmuss's account of altruism can be addressed from several considerations, namely, the role gifts serve in general as well as the attributes and context that are specific in the gift of blood as described by Titmuss. More specifically, we are interested in examining the nature of the bond established by the gift. It is this aspect that deserves attention and that may entail the greatest ambiguity present in Timuss's analysis.

The idea of 'gift' has deep meaning that implies relationships and is linked to social ties. As Godbout (1998) states, the gift is nothing less than the embodiment of the system of interpersonal social relations. It is a symbol for and, in the case of blood, a manifestation of personal relationships.[34] The motivation that is based in the gift giving relationship is of particular interest. As was previously discussed in section I, the original secular and religious sources of altruistic motivations share common and compatible features. Both allow for the possibility of the same unselfish nature. Can it therefore be inferred from a religious understanding that this compatibility extends as well to the relationship itself established in the gift exchange?

Although Titmuss appears to define his understanding of altruism from a social science perspective, the ambiguity in his interpretation of altruism indicates the possibility of incorporating a religious motivation such as 'regard for the

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[34] Godbout, J.T. The World of the Gift. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. (1998)

other' or *agape*. It may provide an additional perspective or motivational source that enlightens the notion of altruism as defined by Timuss and allows our human capacity for giving as well as the relationship established by gifts to reach greater potential. A religious motivation can broaden Titmuss's thesis as it presupposes a covenant relationship. In a covenant relationship, persons create and enter into a relationship that is grounded by mutual trust and understanding of moral responsibility to and for each other.

III.1 The unique nature and context of the 'blood' gift relationship

Anthropologist Marcel Mauss, in his classic study *The Gift* (1967), describes the nature of gifts in tribal society. He states that, "among the Maori to give something is to give a part of oneself...while to receive something is to receive a part of someone's spiritual essence."[35] Mauss observed that the recipient's relation to the gift itself and the relation to the donor were simultaneously in effect. The gift remained in a continuing relation to the donor, specifically to the donor's will for the gift that in part motivated the giving. It may not be necessary to accept the Maori's animistic beliefs in order to recognize the meaning and symbolism that gifts elicit. This is particularly significant in gifts from the body where the giver in offering a part of their body tissue may be symbolically offering a part of his or her spiritual self, a part of their identity.

Murray (1987) offers an alternative conception of gifts of the body in their ability to bind one person to another. Gifts of the body present an occasion when an individual may feel morally obliged to make certain gifts. He suggests a

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[35] Mauss, Marcel. The Gift. New York: W.W. Norton, 1967: 10-58

number of reasons for this. More specifically, he proposes that the degree of moral obligation one feels to make a gift is greatest when the recipient's need is greatest. The more universal the need the more likely people are to feel a sense of obligation to give to those more distant.[36] The gift of blood in particular represents a universal need, as the majority of people recognize that at some time in their life they or their families may be in need of blood. Titmuss's conclusions recognize this precise point as "those who gave voluntarily, signified their belief in the willingness of other men to act altruistically in the future and join together to make a gift freely available should they have a need for it."[37]

Titmuss recognizes the multitude of roles gifts entail and the significance of gift giving in certain contexts. Refering to examples from both complex and traditional societies studied by Levi-Strauss Titmuss indicates that, "personal gifts and counter gifts where givers and receivers are known to each other and personally communicate with each other, are characterised by a great variety of sentiments and purposes."[38] He refers to theories presented by Gouldner (1960) and Swartz (1973) As Gouldner maintains, "initial gifts create a certain 'balance of debt' which is never quite brought into equilibrium because of their voluntary character which no return gift can have". This sustains the norm of reciprocity.

According to Swartz (1973) gifts can act as generators of identity, as personal tools in the aspiration for the protection of status and control and in part be a mechanism for socialization. Consequently, to accept a gift is to accept at

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[36] Murray, Thomas H. The Gifts of the Body and the Needs of Strangers. *Hastings Center Report*, 1987 (April): 31

[37] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 239

[38] Titmuss, *op, cit.*, 1972: 210

least in part, an identity. But whatever the symbolic or obligatory role a gift may entail, the common factor that Titmuss points out in regard to all of these roles is the fact that there is the absence of anonymity. This aspect makes the blood gift relationship unique.[39] Relationships where givers and receivers personally know each other does not exist in the example of blood donation in the vast majority of cases. He adds quite understandably, that if the principle of anonymity were generally abandoned the consequences could be disastrous for givers and receivers as well as for all blood transfusion services.

Titmuss is not necessarily interested in the validity of theories concerning gift exchange. For him, the modern gift of blood is fundamentally different from the archaic understanding of gift because it is given in an impersonal context. It has certain attributes that assume that the gift is voluntary and carries with it no obligation to reciprocate. Titmuss's main point however is that theories concerning gift exchange entirely neglect large areas of gift actions and behaviour in both personal and impersonal contexts. While they involve the act of giving, they carry no explicit right, expectation or moral enforcement of a return gift. A gift in this context reaffirms what the relationship itself represents. As Camenisch (1981) similarly describes, gifts in this context can move a relationship to a significantly new level of intimacy, intensity or commitment that is only partially expressed by obligation. Thus, the gift exchange relationship that Titmuss describes, where the future outcome is not known, involves the virtue of trust.

Murray (1987) remarks on the unique nature of impersonal gifts as well, noting that gifts assuaging needs, and especially gifts of the body, are one of the

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[39] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 75

most significant means we have to affirm solidarity. "Gifts of the body, ministering to the need for health, are in this sense affirmations of interdepedence."[40] Murray goes on to say that, "gifts of the body express and affirm our bonds with strangers through the recognition of our physical commonality. It affirms solidarity in a gift that is quintesentially human." The gift of blood is a personal expression affirming our bonds with strangers through the recognition of our common needs. In giving blood, persons are agreeing to be joined together in a rich and growing way that cannot be completely spelled out in advance.[41] It is because of the impersonal context the relationship is established and sustained through the gift's open-endedness of reciprocity that for Titmuss is what precisely regulates larger social relationships not just relationships between specific individuals. Gifts to strangers or impersonal altruism therefore honours important human values that promote solidarity and fellowship. For Titmuss, markets or commerce threaten these values by attaching a monetary value to it.

The meaning of such gifts acknowledges a certain complexity in Titmuss's account of altruism. In what was described previously as his ideal meaning of altruism and what he feels necessitates a 'free' gift, the reciprocation of the gift is established through a cycle of giving and receiving. It is not expected and there is never a guarantee of a return gift. The norm of reciprocity develops from the nature and purpose of the relationship that is established from this significant gift. Gifts of this nature can therefore function in initiating and sustaining more rounded human relationships where future expectations are unknown and where

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[40] Murray, *op. cit.*, 32

[41] Murray, *op. cit.*, 31

the exchange of gifts is secondary in importance to the relationship itself.

But Titmuss appears to want to illustrate the personal moral dimension that gifts reflect. We noted previously that Titmuss's statistics of why people first decided to become a blood donor indicated that the majority of donors expressed, in general terms, the desire to help which Titmuss categorises as 'altruism'. He notes that 80% of the respondant's answers fell into the categories of altruism, reciprocity, replacement, duty and 'awareness of need'. This suggests a high sense of responsibility towards the needs of other members in society. It implies that by giving to the stranger there is an understanding of the stranger as a worthy human being where such worth is defined by our physical and nonphysiological needs that bind us together into a community of needs.

Historian Michael Ignatieff declares, "what others need and what they lack is constitutive of our own needs. One only knows their own need by recognizing the needs of the other."[42] What Titmuss describes as 'creative altruism' carries similar sentiments to those of Ignatieff. As aforementioned, Titmuss maintains that the self is realized with the help of anonymous others. By giving social gifts, one's biological need is able to express itself. Titmuss states that the manifestations of altruism in this sense can be thought of as self-love. However, he also states that as individuals, "they [donors] are taking part in the greater good transcending the good of self-love. To love themselves, they [donors] recognized the need to 'love' strangers." Hence, the motivation to give to the anonymous other recognizes the need 'of' and 'for' the other.

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[42] Ignatieff, Michael. The Needs of Strangers. New York: Chatto and Windus - the Hogarth Press. 1984: 17

Titmuss acknowledges the paradox that is characteristic of gifts. Their motivation is often selfish and unselfish. In the form and function of gift exchange there are "elements of generosity and self-interest, spontaneity and compulsion,"[43] Gifts are given under conditions of freedom, yet are powerfully binding. However, it appears that Titmuss is also inviting the possibility of a 'transcendental' interpretation of human motivation which, as indicated above, he subtly proposes as the need to 'love' the stranger but does not describe what this might mean in any greater depth. Could this be interpreted as or incorporate the Christian notion of 'neighbourly love' that demands a departure from pure self-regard and requires one to meet the needs of the neighbour without comparing her needs with those of self?

'Love' from a religious perspective gives transcendent and absolute worth to the life of the neighbour. Although Titmuss is vague -if not silent- on expanding his meaning 'to love strangers', his ambiguity suggests that a religious understanding is wholly compatible with his positions. Whether or not Titmuss intended to invite such an interpretation intentionally, one can usefully consider how *agape* or 'regard for the other' may enlighten or clarify his analysis and further develop what appears to be an attempt to go beyond a social science, self-interest paradigm of altruism.

III.2 The human condition: Beyond self-interest

Titmuss's contentions provoke one to consider whether the human condition is capable of more than self-interest. The purpose of this paper's inquiry is to consider how a natural or metaphysical order understood in religious

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[43] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 73

terms can present this possibility. However, before considering a religious understanding, it is important to pause and contemplate whether this can be achieved without relying on religious background or beliefs.

Studies conducted by Batson and collaborators in the 1980s focused on the distinguishing characteristic of altruism that they believed was oriented towards the welfare of the other. In spite of all the research on altruism, they believed the concept remained unclear and that no method had been found to measure its motivational base. They set out to determine whether or not there was such as thing as altruism which they defined as the concern for the other prompted by the perceived needs of the other.

Batson did not deny that the motivation for much of what we do, including much that we do for others, is self-interested. He states that:

> "even those people we consider martyrs or heroes can benefit from their acts of apparent selflessness. Such persons may have acted to escape anticipated guilt and shame for letting others die. Or they may have acted to gain rewards such as admiration and praise of those left behind or benefits expected in a life to come."[44]

But Batson et. al., claimed that there was more. They claimed that at least some of us, to some degree, under some circumstances, are capable of a qualitatively different form of motivation, a motivation with an ultimate goal of benefiting someone else. This genuine concern, however, would not be reducible to any ulterior motive attributable to the self-interest of the putative altruist.

Similar to what Titmuss is implying, Batson and colleagues believed that the answer to whether altruism was possible was one of the most fundamental

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[44] Batson, C. Daniel. The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991: 2

questions we can ask about human nature. As Batson points out:

> "Knowing whether we are or are not capable of altruism will not tell us what is morally right, either in a specific situation or as a general principle...Our potential does, however, set the boundaries for any consideration of what is morally right...If it turns out that we are capable of altruism, then our moral horizon - and our potential for moral responsibility - broadens considerably."[45]

The difficulty of course, was in determining whether a person is acting out of altruism or self-interest since motivation defies direct detection.

The Batson researchers established what they at least considered to be experimental and empirical evidence of altruism by finding a way to identify altruism at the level of behaviour, where it can be detected, rather than at a motivational level where it is elusive. The basis for their behavioural test was the hypothesis that altruism is a reflection of empathy. According to Batson's hypothesis, people can be expected to act altruistically, to the extent that they feel empathy for others.[46] The nature of altruistic and egoistic motivation for Batson was defined as a goal-directed force within the individual. Altruism therefore was a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare while conversely an egoistic motivational state has the ultimate goal of increasing one's own welfare. "As soon as benefit to the other becomes instrumental rather than an ultimate goal, the altruistic motivation evaporates. Only egoistic motivation remains."[47]

Batson noted that altruism and egoism are qualitative and not quantitative. The ultimate goal, not the strength of the motive, distinguishes the two. In a

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[45] Batson, *op.cit.*, 1991: 4
[46] Grant, *op. cit.*, 329 Due to the limited scope of this paper, Batson's methodology will not be discussed. Rather, we are more interested in his final conclusions and outcome.
[47] Grant, *op. cit.*, 329

sense, Batson attempted to define Comte's original hypothesis of a separate, distinct motivation to benefit others. Batson contended that as long as the motivated individual perceives a distinction between the self and other, a single motive cannot be both egoistic and altruistic. However, he noted that both egoistic and altruistic motive can exist simultaneously within a single individual that may lead to a motivational conflict. He goes on to distinguish the terms by declaring that a reflexive action without any goal, no matter how beneficial it may be, is neither altruistically or egoistically motivated. A person may also be egoistically or altruistically motivated and need not know it.

In order to provide empirical evidence that empathetic emotion leads to altruistic motivation, Batson needed to identify some point at which the egoistic and altruistic interpretations differ at a behavioural level. It was determined that if no such point could be found, then it must be concluded that the claim that empathy evokes altruistic motivation is of no real theoretical significance.[48]

Batson et al., did in fact find what they considered to be evidence confirming the empathy-altruism hypothesis and thus that altruism did exist. However, they remained cautious in proclaiming anything substantial. They were content to indicate that their research convinced them of the legitimacy of *suggesting* [their italics] that empathetic motivation for helping may be truly altruistic. The most they were willing to infer from their results in regard to the egoistic perspective was that they were less confident than they had been that all

[48] Due to the limited scope of this paper, Batson's methodology will not be discussed. Rather, we are more interested in his final conclusions and outcome.

altruistically motivated helping was limited to instrumental egoism and self benefit.[49] Batson concludes that:

> "contrary to the sense of altruism as an unnatural chore, typified by Kantian morally autonomous individuals facing constraining duty, the truth may be almost the exact opposite, that we are characterized by a natural inclination to care about other people."[50]

Batson believes that far from being a matter of empirical revision of our understanding of human nature, the altruism studies that he conducted involve a vision of human potential. He states that:

> "not only what we are but what we might become, as individuals and as a society, is at stake...If our belief in universal egoism is wrong and we are actually capable of altruism, the possibilities arise for the development of more caring individuals, and a more compassionate, humane society"[51]

Grant (1997) remarking on Batson's studies contends that what we are not only dealing with empirical information but also with moral transformation. How this transformation is to be achieved is the decisive question. According to Grant, the reality of altruism challenges the factuality of the self-interest paradigm in two senses: in terms of its accuracy and in terms of its adequacy. Grant notes that it is inaccurate to believe that human beings are only self-interested. Human beings are characterised by altruism as well as by self-interest. But what Grant feels has been considered with the Batson studies is a wider sense in which the whole way of representing human beings is basically inadequate.[52]

The methodology and structure of Batson's work determined that empathy was an other-oriented vicarious emotion produced by taking the perspective of a

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[49] Batson, *op. cit.*, 1981:302
[50] Batson, *op. cit.*, 1991: 230
[51] Batson, *op. cit.*, 1991: 4
[52] Grant, *op. cit.*, 1997: 334

person perceived to be in need: needs of the other must be identified; motivation must be based in the perceived needs of the other; and that this motivation must have the ultimate goal of reducing the needs of other and increase the other's welfare, not one's own. Thus, empathetic emotion evoked altruistic motivation based solely on the needs of the other.

Batson's work appears to provide evidence portraying an alternative possibility to our human potential than what has been traditionally thought to be the case by social science and psychology. It challenges us, as Titmuss attempts to do, to re-evaluate our human condition and perhaps expect more from it. It appears that a religious motivation is not the only possible avenue in order for the human condition to go beyond the self-interest paradigm.

III.3 Conclusion

Complexities in Titmuss's analysis arise in the nature of gift itself as it is a gift from the body and the interpretation of the gift relationship. We find in Titmuss's analysis, a predominantly social science perspective where self-interest is assumed as the basis in the motivation in giving. Yet, Titmuss simultaneously implies the possibility of transcending this self-love that could entertain religious ideas. In fact, Titmuss's approach to larger social relationships that are established and sustained in impersonal and creative altruism which he proposes may be considered implicitly Christian. To 'love' the stranger could imply 'neighbourly love' or *agape*. We also indicated that Titmuss has not explicitly considered the possibility of going beyond self-interest within the secular context. While Titmuss recognizes the existence of a purer form of altruism, he does not attempt to expand the possibility or ways it may be achieved in practical terms.

Thus it may be justifiable to conceptualize a religious motivation as a logical extension of the secular viewpoint. By not addressing such possibilities in greater or more adequate detail, Titmuss has constricted his argument and the possibility of expanding our human potential in terms of giving and other potentialities of the gift relationship.

The reluctance to assign a specific value to a gift is a virtue in the gift relationship, since it leaves forever open the cycle of giving and receiving. The point, as Murray (1987) states, is sustaining a relationship that is mutually desired. Titmuss attempts to broaden our view of relationships by demonstrating that voluntary giving to the stranger incorporates a sense of trust. There are no guarantees or expectations of reciprocation but rather a belief or trust that in giving, one's own need in the future will be responded to. As I will develop in Part Two, this idea implies the nature of a covenant relationship.

Fiduciary covenant, rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is understood as a concept grounded in trust - a trust that is mutual, that respects the person of the other and that recognizes the needs of the other and all parties involved. Trust in such a covenantal relationship has been expressed as something that is earned and reinforced by the making and keeping of promises, all in response to gifts received in the context of need. More clearly, the covenantal model articulates the irreducible interdependence of human beings. As Allen (1984) contends, covenant is a relationship that comes about through interactions of entrusting and accepting entrustment among willing, personal beings. As a result, the parties belong to the same moral community and have responsibility to and for one

another as beings who matter. Their responsibility in the relationship endures over time.[53]

The purpose of our analysis is not to present an elaborate theory of ethics. Our interest is to explore Titmuss's ambiguity and question what might happen to his approach if the concept of covenant were incorporated and applied to his account of the blood gift relationship. How might Titmuss respond to a notion such as covenant within blood systems? How is a covenant perspective compatible to his thesis? What can we gain through a concept such as covenant? These questions we address in what follows.

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[53] Allen, Joseph. Love & Conflict: A covenantal model of Christian Ethics. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1984:32

PART TWO

Section I

The Nature of the Covenant Relationship

As aforementioned, the religious motivation of 'other regard' may be considered distinct from a secular understanding. As part of the Christian faith's community, a believer adheres to a distinct form of recognizing the needs of the universal stranger, with God and Christ at the center of their belief system. The difficulty in accepting such suppositions is that it can create a moral perspective that is isolated in exclusive language and ethical discourse. However, in more real terms, what we do find is that although moral virtues and behaviours characteristic of Christian love for example may be clearly associated with a specific religion, the human possibility they describe are often familiar and admired, even among those who do not share the religious beliefs. Persons outside the community of faith may display its characteristics and virtues, and those who reject a particular religion may realize its moral ideals better than most of its adherents.[54] Thus, conceptualizing religious versus secular motivations as mutually exclusive may be erroneous.

Specifically in the domain of public policy, commentators such as Daniel Callahan (1990) point out that choices must be made for reasons accessible to all parties in the debate, and therefore public choices based on specific religious convictions are usually eliminated. Callahan suggests that a secularization that encourages a form of moral philosophy offers a common language since religious

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[54] Lovin, Robin. W. "Ethics: Religion and Morality" *In:* Reich, Warren T. Encyclopedia of Bioethics. McMillan Library Ref. USA. New York: Simon and Schuster Prentice Hall Int. Revised Ed. Vol. 2., 1995: 763

convictions are considered too 'personal' and bespeaking a particular cultural and ethnic background that reveals an individuals inner life.[55] An alternative viewpoint is made by Lovin (1995) who states that:

> "although the standard of 'secular arguments' or publicly accessible reasons is appealing, what one may find is that strictly defined 'secular arguments' may be insufficient to yield a determinate solution to the problems. Some appeal to religious convictions or other private views may be necessary if we are to advance issues and debate."[56]

While both perspectives are equally significant, our approach to Titmuss's notions and ultimately social relationships established by gifts is a speculation about covenant that is historically based in religious roots. For this reason, our approach may be persuasive to those who hold similar religious beliefs. However, our interest is more that of what flows from a covenant relationship. It offers an alternative account of the dedication and commitment of individuals and collective life without relying on rationalised self-interest or contractually limited origins.

The objective of this section is to provide a clear understanding of the covenant relationship, both in its religious and historical roots as well as its contemporary usage. While the notion of covenant is an ancient and complex concept, it is used frequently in the realm of public policy as depicted in the 'Covenant of Human Rights.' Covenant in a religious sense however is different than that of a legal understanding. Covenant in the legal sense is defined as an obligation created by deed which is far more restrictive in nature.[57] However,

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[55] Callahan, Daniel. Religion and Secularization of Bioethics. *Hastings Center Report*, July/August, 1990: 4

[56] Lovin, *op. cit.*, 1995: 763

[57] Covenant used in legal terms usually refers to issues pertaining to land and property. Martin, Elizabeth. A Concise Dictionary of Law. 2nd Ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1990.

given its own ambiguity, it remains an accessible and inclusive concept that has functional value.

I.1 The Religious and Historical Roots of Covenant

In its most significant form, covenant represents historical and symbolic events in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible where according to Judeo-Christian beliefs, God seeks to bring humans into fellowship with Himself and into His likeness. In doing so, God forms covenants with humanity to produce beings that are more akin to Himself. The Scriptures of ancient Israel for example consist of such covenants. In addressing a narrative such as the Sinai Covenant, the Old Testament signifies the knowledge of a divine will, laws that guided the actions of its people and mutual obligations established between covenantal parties. Religiously, the covenant is instituted by a particular motivation and is rooted in a special obligation to one God.

The word '*hesed*' translated as 'steadfast love', or 'covenant-fidelity' conveys the sense of enduring and unchanging faithfulness, of unwavering responsibility to obligations undertaken and of loyalty to the covenant relationship.[58] In the Old Testament, God is described as One who is great in *hesed* and wishes to have a reciprocal relationship with his people, based on this motivation. The narrative of Mount Sinai and the deliverance of the Israelites is clearly the pivotal section of the Old Testament.

The Israelites, called before a trembling and smoking mountain by loud trumpet blasts, received something unique in all history: a stone document, the

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[58] Rust, Eric. Covenant and Hope: A Study in the Theology of the Prophets. Waco, Texas: World Books. 1972

sacred covenant formulating the ten commandments and signed by the finger of God Himself. The covenant is confirmed by the promise the Israelites make to obey the laws of the Lord. (Exodus, 24:7-8) "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all of these words." (Exodus, 24:8)

In this narrative, it is God who takes the initiative in choosing Israel, "Yahweh found Israel in the wilderness and bound them to himself." (Exodus, 13:4-5) Israel is thus made into God's people, a whole that is his special concern and to which he has freely bound himself in gracious activity. God does not force himself and His covenant on the people but rather presents them with a choice. "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession." (Exodus 19:5) This classic proposition is placing the choice before Israel to choose freely between a special relation with Yahweh or to choose another god. The people are asked but never compelled to enter into the relationship.

As the narrative describes, the Israelites are challenged by poor conditions, hunger and desperation. Ultimately they break the covenant with God. In the context of the Old Testament, God is free to make the decision as to whether he will or will not respond to the need of the Israelites. In choosing to act, the act does not arise from a sense of obligation or merely from just a binding commitment, but from a sense of personal loyalty upon which the relationship is

based.[59] God ultimately makes His definitive and unconditional love for humanity apparent in the New Testament.

The narrative of Jesus' crucifixion on the cross is a new covenant that God makes with humanity. Within the Christian tradition, it is a story of God who 'died' because God's all too human covenant partner broke the covenant. According to Christian theology, it is through Jesus Christ, that the fidelity of the covenant is realised. In this person, two elements are fulfilled, the invitation and the reply of perfect fidelity or faithfulness.[60] Christ is called to be the representative of all humanity. As a free person, Jesus reveals the divine invitation of love while simultaneously accepting it in the name of all humanity. For the Christian believer, it is only by uniting oneself with Christ that personal fidelity to the covenant and God become possible, since it is through Jesus' obedience and faithfulness even up to his death that redeems humanity. He represents God's love and fidelity that knows no bounds.

Christ is a visible human image of God, the once and for all sacramental sign in which the mystery of the divine and redeeming love is represented to everyone.[61] The symbolism of Christ fulfills the reciprocal nature of the covenant, ultimately completing the Old covenant and determining its whole and true meaning. The new covenant depicts an unconditional and eternal nature to the relationship that can be broken but cannot be undone. The new covenant of

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[59] Dumbrell, William. Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants. New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1984: 112-113

[60] Schillebeeckx, Eduard. The Sacrements, An Encounter with God. *In:* Bowden, John and Richmond, James. A Reader in Contemporary Theology. Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1967: 72

[61] Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, 1967:78

God with humanity becomes that basis in which human beings are to have covenant with one another. Thus conditions have been created, whether through religious sources or narrative that are more historical and symbolical in nature, that establish an alternative or additional perspective in formulating and sustaining relationships with others.

As Ethicist William F. May (1984) describes, a dialogue of acts exists between the invitation and proposal of love by God and the personal loving response or refusal of love by God's people. There is an alternation between God's constant fidelity, His commitment to His relationship with humanity and the ever-recurring infidelity of His people. Ultimately, in the belief of Christians, God desires to lead His people to a final and definitive fidelity through Jesus Christ.[62]

That God conceives of such a covenant relationship to exist, based on His own demonstration of loyalty and commitment to humanity throughout both Testaments, signifies perhaps symbolically, the greatest potential for our human condition to achieve. Although the biblical notion of covenant in its essence demands a great deal from our human condition to establish and sustain a covenant relationship, it in fact provides a normative and descriptive understanding of relationships that non-adherents of the Judeo-Christian belief can also acknowledge. As May (1984) notes, while such a view of moral life threatens to harden into a narrowness and exclusivity, loyalty to such a God requires a loyalty to all His creatures. Thus covenant that distinguishes Jews and

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[62] May, William F. The Physician's Covenant: Images of the Healer in Medical Ethics. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press. 1984: 129-137

Christians from others, at the same time requires them to deal 'openhandedly' with others, not only toward those within the circle of believers but also toward the universal stranger.[63] It represents simultaneously an exclusiveness in belief and an inclusiveness in action as it is responds to the needs of the universal stranger.

In its contemporary usage, as found in bioethical literature, "covenant" is frequently understood to be a term describing a special one-to-one or personal relationship, such as the doctor/patient relationship, as opposed to the term "contract" to describe this same relationship. Both the contract and covenant model encompasses a binding relationship between persons. However, in order to understand the unique nature of the covenant relationship, it is important to consider both of these terms in their different contexts so that they may clearly be differentiated.

I.2 Contemporary Usage of Covenant and its Application

The nature of our modern health care system consists of hospitals and other medical institutions that serve a wide range of the populace. Medical relationships are therefore essentially between strangers. Physicians taking care of strangers is the norm rather than the exception in much of modern technological medicine. Due to the increasing fear of negligence and liability in the clinical context, our litigious society finds the contract model appealing. However, this model enforces a limited commitment between parties and fails to recognize the full scope of open-ended, unpredictable professional duties to the doctor-patient relationship. Contract enforces a self-interested minimalism as the

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[63] May, *op. cit.*, 1984: 137

norm in the contractual arrangement. As a dominant paradigm, contract tends to translate an ethical question into what is permitted by the law. Covenants on the other hand, are able to incorporate the positive values of contract and also go beyond to correct some of its limitations. Covenant therefore is a more efficacious model for social structure since it is based on the virtue of trust and the needs of the universal stranger.

May (1984) has written extensively on the covenant relationship and how it applies to the professional relationship. He contends that there is a reciprocal need for and a sense of indebtedness to the other. May states:

> "...a reciprocity of giving and receiving nourishes that professional relationship. The professional does not function as a benefactor alone but also as a beneficiary. In teaching for example, students need a teacher, but the teacher also needs students. They provide the teacher with a regular occasion and forum in which to work out what he or she has to say and rediscover the subject afresh through the discipline of sharing it with others. Likewise, the doctor needs patients....A covenantal ethic helps acknowledge this context of need and indebtedness in which professionals undertake and discharge their duties."[64]

Paul Ramsey, a theologian and one of the forefathers of modern medical ethics, describes covenant as persons having a common sacredness in the social, political and biological orders. Because of this, fidelity and faithfulness is normative for all covenant or moral bonds of life with life. For Ramsey, it is consent that expresses or establishes this relationship as the cardinal canon of loyalty joining two persons together in medical practice and investigation. It exhibits and establishes medical practice and investigation as a voluntary association of free persons in a common cause.[65] Ramsey states:

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[64] May, *op. cit.*, 1984:115-116

[65] Ramsey, Paul Patient as Person: Exploration of Medical Ethics. New Haven, London: Yale University Press. 1972: xii

> "...consent therefore lies at the heart of medical care as a joint adventure between patient and physician. Precisely because covenant reflects a lasting relationship that enfolds the promise to respect the other and/or sacredness of persons, it ensures that persons will not be treated as things, degraded or treated as merely means."[66]

Theologian Miroslav Volf comments on the notion of covenant as a more encompassing social metaphor and defines covenant as cutting deeper into personal identity. He maintains:

> "...because covenant is a lasting relationship, the parties themselves cannot be conceived as individuals whose identities are external to one another and who are related to one another only by virtue of their moral will and moral practice. Rather, the very identity of each is formed through relations to others, the alterity of the other enters into the 'very identity to each'"[67]

Interaction with the other, understanding and mutual respect for the other that is grounded in our common state of being emphasizes and nurtures a more fluid dynamic between individuals. As each person enters a covenant, they enter a promise to understand one's own behaviour and identity as complementary to the behaviours and identity to other covenant parties. Contract, on the other hand, defines a limited commitment.

Volf contends that contracts have certain notable features that distinguish them from covenant. First, contracts are performance oriented and insure that a task is accomplished. Second, contracts are limited in that they only oblige what was implicitly or explicitly stated. And third, contracts are reciprocal in that they are designed to make parties mirror each other's behaviour. Volf argues that the contractual model of a society deems human beings 'autonomous' individuals

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[66] Ramsey, *op. cit.*, 1972: xii

[67] Volf, Miroslav. Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press. 1996: 154

who associate only to perform tasks that advance their own self-interest. Mutual commitments cannot be limited by terms and conditions that are specified in advance. May (1984) would most likely agree.

May explains that contract presupposes that self-interest primarily governs people and this extends into the professional relationship. A contractualist approach tends to reduce professional obligation to self-interested minimalism. For May, contract produces a professional too self-seeking, too calculating, too lacking in spontaneity, too quickly exhausted to go the second mile for patients. He states:

> "Furthermore, the contract model suppresses that element of 'gift' in human relationships which is central in human medicine and in taking care of patients. The contract model diminishes this by increasing the temptation for doctors to practice defensive medicine, to protect their own self-interest out of anxiety of the law."[68]

Covenant fulfills the contract model by endorsing a continual and growing relationship. It is much more binding and extensive than that between buyer and seller in a market. Camenisch (1981) believes that the concept of covenant captures some of what makes gift-based relationships different from contractually based ones:

> "While there is something of obligation in covenant, covenants also run beyond specifiable obligations...showing that their essence is not the exchanging of some carefully defined functions or values as in contract, but truly a meeting of persons who agree therein to be joined together in a complex, rich and growing way which cannot be completely spelled out in advance."[69]

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[68] White, W.D. The Necessity and Limitations of the Contract Model. *Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine,* 1993(60) 1: 21. White gives a thorough analysis of the contract and covenant models referring largely to William F. May's work.

[69] Camenisch, *op. cit.*, 1981: 8-19

Thus, covenant may be considered the archetype that fulfills or deepens the notion of contract which some commentators believe to be covenant's equivalent counterpart.

As a social framework, covenant appears to endorse Titmuss's description of the ideal non-obligatory nature of the gift relationship that he envisions as the cornerstone of a voluntary/unpaid system, while a contract model would be representative of a paid blood market system, which Titmuss wholly rejects. In prescribing a framework for blood systems, Titmuss may be interpreted as implying a social-contract model. As May asks, "can social contract offer a surrogate for covenant, free of the self-interest forums that sully marketplace contracts?"[70]

May notes that social contractarianism in its conception of humankind is insufficiently communal. He asks whether the self requires a more communal sense of humankind, a more spacious sense of the common good, in order to sustain its commitment to a principle of fair distribution under pressured conditions of existence.[71] For May a "steadfast commitment to the needy and their cause requires more than an appeal to an ideal of rational self-interest abstracted from the world we know. It requires viewing that harsh world in the context of yet another world." He therefore contends that a discussion of contract and covenant

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[70] May, William F. Code, Covenant, Contract or Philanthropy. *Hastings Center Report*, 1975 (5): 29-38

[71] May, *op. cit.*, 1983: 126

forces a return to the world that the biblical covenant presents.[72]

I.3 Conclusion

Returning to the roots of the covenant notion provides clarification in understanding its authentic meaning and nature. Allen (1984) in describing the Sinai and New Testament covenants states that:

> "covenants involve the giving of priceless gifts. All these covenants show God's grace and God's covenanting to be inseparable. Yet acts of entrusting and accepting entrustment among human partners may or may not directly come about through the giving and accepting of gifts. What is directly conveyed may not be the gift but responsibility"[73]

Covenant represents a commitment to the other where persons freely or voluntarily enter the covenant relationship and come to have enduring responsibility to one another throughout the life of the covenant. In a covenant we must also accept responsibility over time for the effects of our behaviour upon the other.

The notion of covenant illustrates how a relationship originally motivated in religious terms provides an alternative understanding to human social relationships and expands the possibility for human interaction that is mutual and based in the 'regard for the needs of the other.' The discussion of covenant in its contemporary context is described as a personal relationship based on gifts given and received in a context of needs and where both parties are present to one another in a common pursuit.

Ramsey noted that covenant can be described as a 'joint adventure' joining two persons together where future benefits are not specifiable. It is a

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[72] May, *op. cit.*, 1983: 126
[73] Allen, *op. cit.*, 1984: 36

decision based on trust as the individual chooses to enter the relationship. May described covenant as a reciprocal relationship where a need and indebtedness is experienced by both parties for the presence of each other. While the donor/recipient relationship in blood systems is anonymous, covenant in its personal nature extends to the impersonal context. As May states:

> "Covenant reminds that professional community that it is not good enough for the individual doctor for example to be just a good doctor to the patient, but that it is important also for whole institutions - the hospital, the clinic, the professional group to keep covenant with those who seek their assistance. The concept permits a certain broadening of accountability beyond personal agency."[74]

Thus, in its normative and descriptive meaning, covenant has its greatest power and value. Covenant, as a responsive ethic deepens Titmuss's position as it challenges the human condition to step beyond self-interest in its personal and larger social relationships. It is for this functionality that covenant can have application in blood systems and in Titmuss's analysis that will now be addressed.

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[74] May, *op. cit.*, 1983:126

PART TWO

Section II

Applying Covenant to Titmuss's Analysis

The donative element as described symbolically by God's or Christ's donative love to humanity in the Old and New Testament, nourishes the covenantal relationship through the infusion of care between partners. By the same token, the donative element may also have the same nourishing effects in blood system relationships. The professional covenant concerning health, and specifically in the donative categories of human tissue transfer, can be situated within a larger set of covenant obligations that both donor and recipient have toward each other. Institutions equally have the responsibility of reciprocal obligations to donor and recipient since they collect and distribute the gift of blood. The bond of covenant weds institutions to individuals. Hence, the blood donation context provides an appropriate and logical application of covenant, as such a relationship encompasses all the necessary ingredients of the personal and of commitment.

In recognizing the donor's blood as a gift and as an act of generosity toward a person or persons in need, covenant represents a cooperative act of commitment to the community at large. While the donation remains anonymous, it nevertheless establishes the donor's personal relationship to their fellows within the community.[75] However, while the covenant relationship may have endearing qualities that persons may strive toward, how efficacious is such a model? How

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[75] Beal, R.W. and van Aken, W.G. Gift or Good? A Contemporary Examination of the Voluntary and Commercial Aspects of Blood Donation. *Vox Sang*, 1992 (63) 2

can the covenantal model be utilized in practical terms rather than merely theoretical terms, and specifically, if one is to apply it to some of Titmuss's principal arguments? From the discussion that will follow, we conclude that Titmuss's concerns about ensuring a safe blood supply, truthfulness and equal distribution of blood implicitly invite the workings of a covenantal model. Furthermore, as technology advances the possibility of transferring various types of human tissue, the covenant model can be involved to prevent the commodification of the body.

II.1 Ensuring a Safe Blood Supply: Endorsing the Principle of Stewardship

The greatest effort in regulating relationships is in deepening a sense of responsibility and accountability. In ethics today, the test of moral seriousness may well depend upon our personal preparedness to hold ourselves responsible and to also hold other responsible. As part of a covenant relationship, we entrust each other with the responsibility to act in the best interests of the other and to our larger social structures. What can be applied is a principle of stewardship where our fiduciary duty is to serve as trustees for the greater good of our relationships.

The stewardship model involves a demanding standard especially if the steward takes seriously the positive responsibility to use the gift one has been entrusted with for general benefit of the common good, and the specific purpose of preserving the life and health of others.[76] In terms of the blood gift, this responsibility extends to: the donor in telling the truth and admitting to potentially contaminating behaviour such as needle sharing in drug use; the blood clinic

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[76] Campbell, Courtney. Body, Self and the Property Paradigm. *Hastings Center Report*, 1992 (Sept./Oct) 4:1

and/or government systems of licensing in using the most stringent techniques for blood testing so that inspection and quality validation for proper collection of blood is flawless; and to the recipient in the proper use of the gift. This means a responsible lifestyle and willingness to offer a blood gift in the future if needed.

Courtney Campbell (1992) notes in her discussion of the religious concept of stewardship over the body that:

> "basic moral orientation to the tradition of stewardship indicated that persons receive gifts and are entrusted with property by the creator not to hide or preserve the gift but to use it in a responsible manner so that its value is increased....but the criteria for responsible use relies largely on what will best enhance the being of the moral community."[77]

In Titmuss's analysis, it is clear why such a principle is essential. Titmuss notes that the recipient is not only unknowingly the laboratory test of 'goodness' but that he and his family must bear the biological, social and economic costs of infected blood and misplaced trust in terms of physical incapacity, loss of earnings, career prospects, the effects on family life and other unquantifiable factors.[78] Titmuss contends that for these reasons and many others, those responsible for blood transfusion services have stressed the great importance of maintaining the most rigorous standards in the selection of donors. What Titmuss does not emphasize as much, although they must equally endorse the principle of stewardship, are the collection and distribution centers themselves.

Donated tissue can be considered as belonging to the 'community' and therefore tissue procurement teams can be conceived as trustees and stewards for the community as a whole. One need only be reminded of the conclusion made

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[77] Campbell, *op. cit.*, 1992:41
[78] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997:265

by Justice Horace Krever after he conducted a comprehensive inquiry into Canada's blood system where contaminated blood was found, consequently affecting the lives of thousands of Canadians. Krever maintained that the federal government and Red Cross had failed in their primary responsibility for implementaing measures to reduce the risk of transfusion-associated AIDS in Canada. Furthermore, the measures taken by the Red Cross in response to the risk of transfusion-associated AIDS were ineffective and half-hearted. This lead to the establishment of a new national blood service.

There are risks for the recipient of blood derived from cross-matching, storage, labelling and above all transmission of infections such as viral hepatitis and AIDS. For hemophiliacs and other persons afflicted with disease that demands continual transfusions, these risks are a constant fear and concern. In addition, the supply of blood is finite for many systems, since only half of the population is medically eligible to give blood. The amount of blood one person can donate in a year is limited, and blood can be stored for only so long. Hence, at least temporary shortages of blood in most societies are inevitable, demanding importation from other countries to meet needs and opening up a window of possibility for less stringent quality control and contaminated blood products.

The concern over safety and security of blood is not a foreign concept nor is it likely to become less of a concern. More recently, there have been the fears of the transmission of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Syndrome, more commonly known as Mad Cow disease, via the transfusion of blood, though no case of transmission by blood has been verified. Given these implications, the covenant model has strong application.

The element of risk, largely for the recipient, indicates an unspecifiable outcome. The donor/recipient/institution must submit themselves to a level of trust. In entering a covenant, a promise is made by all members: the donor in supplying a clean gift; the recipient in using the gift respectfully by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and offering a blood gift in the future; and the institution in fulfilling the requirements of a public agent in ensuring a clean gift. As part of the covenant, all parties agree to a shared commitment, responsibility and accountability to sustain such a partnership that is collaborative, responsive and prepared to take part in all levels of the blood product life cycle. The covenant is substantiated through mandates, regulations, codes and informed consent that clearly indicates risk factors and possibilities of contaminated blood.

II.2 Truthfulness: The tenor of relationships within blood systems

For Titmuss, the dishonesty of donors has great consequences since it not only denies personal freedoms but it can result in the death of strangers. Titmuss argues that a paid seller of blood is confronted with a personal conflict of interest. To tell the truth about herself, her way of life and her relationships may limit her freedom to sell blood in the market. Titmuss is referring to sellers who in their drug use and abuse have shared needles and increased the possibility of infecting their blood. Because the blood seller desires money and is not seeking in this particular act to affirm a sense of belonging, she thinks primarily of her own freedom and she separates her freedom from other people's freedom.[79]

Titmuss points out that in not being truthful, recipients in immediate need

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[79] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997:308

who do not have the freedom to choose from whom they receive their blood, are left to bear the possible debilitating risk of contaminated blood. While techniques in blood screening in developed countries have become quite advanced since the time that Titmuss wrote this book, only systems able to afford them can benefit despite the possible untruthfulness. For developing systems, where expensive testing techniques are not in place, truth telling is still a vital element in the supply, collection and distribution of blood. Thus, truthfulness sustains the covenant relationship by its nondiscriminative virtue while the social cost of untruthfulness falls randomly on all persons alike.

In blood systems the quandary of truth telling demonstrates the difference a covenantal ethic can make in quality control. The covenant model is intended to affect our personal conduct as the virtue of covenant fidelity for example can expand the question of truth-telling in our moral lives. Truth becomes a question not only of telling the truth but of being true.[80] For Titmuss, the unethical consequences of not seeking what is true in one sector of medical care spreads corrosively into other sectors and begins to envelop broader areas of social life. As Titmuss states, "in situations of total ignorance and total helplessness this is one social right individuals have - the right to truthfulness.[81]

II.3 Responding to Universal Needs: Distribution of Blood Services

The cardinal principle of the distribution of blood services is its availability. No one who needs blood should lack it. The value of saving life or health emerges as paramount. This necessity argument is also one of the more

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[80] May, *op. cit.*, 1984: 142
[81] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997:202

forceful arguments invoked for justifying the sale of tissues as a public necessity claim.[82] However, Titmuss contends that the "greatest good possible is that there is no prescribed and specified discrimination in the destination of the gift"[83] As Titmuss notes, the National Blood Transfusion Service and the National Health Service provide services on the basis of common needs where the allocation of resources do not create any sense of separateness between people. He states:

> "It is the explicit or implicit institutionalization of separateness, whether categorised in terms of income, class, race, colour or religion, rather than the recognition of the similarities between people and their needs, which causes much of the world's suffering. By not doing something - by not giving donors a right to prescribe the group characteristics of recipients - the service presumes an unspoken shared belief in the universality of need."[84]

Titmuss's main contention was that a market in blood products was distributive in the wrong direction. A market system distributed blood and blood products from the poor to the rich, from the disadvantaged, desperate and exploited to the powerful and privileged.[85] A covenant relationship is based on the equal regard of and need for the universal stranger regardless of class, race, or monetary status. Covenantal partners enter a moral community that is devoid of any sense of separateness. In making available the gift of blood, one actively responds to the needs of the universal stranger and goes beyond simply an

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[82] Although it is not the purpose of this paper to address this in detail, typically the argument is that sales or financial incentives are necessary to avert the greater and avoidable harms of human suffering, illness or death which arise from acute, persistent scarcity. See McAully, C. Plasma Exchange and the Paid Donor System. *Lancet*, 1980 (18): 855

[83] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997:305

[84] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997:306

[85] It should be noted that in the new edition of The Gift Relationship (1997), the editors believe that Titmuss's redistributive argument was incomplete. It failed to note that although paid donation may result in blood and blood products flowing from poor to rich, precisely because it is a commercial operation, this flow is matched by a flow of money the other way. Furthermore, it states that while the idea of the poor selling their blood to the rich is morally repulsive, it is

awareness of the stranger's needs. Furthermore, the public's willingness to donate presupposes confidence in the fairness of the system's pattern of distribution.[86]

II.4 Preventing the Commodification of the Body:

The tension between blood as a vital life saving substance and its opposing danger of threatening a life if contaminated provokes the question of whether blood should be regarded as a commodity and private property or as public property and a gift. On the one hand, it is private and intimate, on the other hand it meets a public need.[87] Private interest in blood is probably best illustrated by the case of John Moore in the United States. Moore's cells became the basis for the development of the 'Mo-cell Line' from which a number of valuable substances were produced. The cell line was patented and sold to two biotechnology companies, at which point Moore sued them for a portion of the profits of 'his' blood cells.[88] If the body is property then it could be bought and sold like other commodities. The question then becomes, who owns it? Commentators such as Murray (1986) asked whether Moore abandoned or transferred title to his cells when he let the physician/technician remove them? If

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difficult to claim that the poor are actually made worse off by doing so. In their own estimation, they are likely to be better off. (Titmuss, 1997:334-335)

[86] Childress, James. Body as Property: Some Philosophical Reflections. *Transplantation proceedings*, 1992 (24) 5:2146

[87] von Shubert, Hartwig. Donated Blood - Gift or Commodity? Some Economic and Ethical Considerations on Voluntary and Commercial Donation of Blood. *Social Science and Medicine*, 1994 (39): 201

[88] It should be noted that the physician and technician received Moore's initial consent to use his blood and bodily substances in research unrelated to treating his illness. However, Moore won his case on appeal. For more detailed discussion see *Yale Law Policy*, 1988 (6): 179-189.

it is a gift, what are the ethics when one person makes a gift to another who then attempts to use it for personal enrichment?[89]

Debate over commercialization of the human body appears to open up disturbing possibilities of treating the human body as a commodity, which arguably devalues it. Keown (1997) appropriately asks that "if the human body is treated as something suited for commercial exchange, does it not promote an instrumental view of human beings, as means rather than ends, as moral and legal objects rather than subjects?"[90] Such a perception may encourage the view of persons as a source of raw material to be exploited. Moreover, what prevents this view from encouraging other bodily parts being seen as property? Titmuss feared this possibility. He states:

> "If blood is considered in theory, in law, and is treated in practice as a trading commodity then ultimately human hearts, kidneys, eyes and other organs of the body may also come to be treated as commodities to be bought and sold in the marketplace."[91]

The precise characterising of specific bodily substances like blood as non-commodifiable or commodifiable is disputed. Andrews (1986) has questioned whether bodily substances are property that may be exchanged as part of ones exercise of free will.[92] Some commentators such as Caplan (1985) argue that the answer depends on the bodily substances themselves. The regard and treatment of waste products like perspiration or urine, renewable substances like sperm and

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[89] A thorough discussion of these issues are addressed in Thomas H. Murray's article, "The Gift of Life Must Always Remain a Gift" *Discover,* 1986 (March): 90-92.
[90] Keown, *op. cit.*, 1997:99
[91] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 12
[92] Andrews, L. My Body, My Property. *Hastings Center Report*, 1986 (16): 28

blood and non-renewable tissues like kidneys, would all be different.[93] Murray (1987) however, makes the point that whereas the sale of urine or hair would be unlikely to cause a great moral outcry, such products are less central to what characterises living human persons, members of the human community, than are organs and blood. He argues that bodily substances like blood are associated with our integrity as persons, tantamount to or symbolic of human dignity and personhood.[94]

A covenant model clearly suggests Murray's understanding where the philosophical theory of moral personhood distinguishes 'persons' from 'things'. Persons, as subjects of free will, are entitled to respect and should never be treated as things or as means to an end. To regard a donor as a perpetually renewable blood resource tends to reduce a human to an object. Paul Ramsey's notion of covenant fidelity deals specifically with this notion where he argued that a common sacredness exists between persons making fidelity and faithfulness normative for all covenants or moral bonds with life. Because covenant reflects a lasting relationship that encompasses promise to respect the other and/or sacredness of persons, it requires that persons will not be treated as things, degraded or treated as merely means.[95]

II.5 Conclusion

Donated blood may be considered a 'public good' like water and air. This theory implies a preference for voluntary donation, bloodbanking by public and

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[93] Caplan, Arthur L. Blood, Sweat, Tears and Profits: The Ethics of the Sale and Use of Patient Derived Materials in Biomedicine. *Clinical Research,* 1985 (33) 4: 448-451
[94] Murray, *op. cit.,* 1987: 35
[95] Ramsey, *op. cit.,* 1978: xii

non-profit organizations. Legislation and practice seem to be convinced by this theory and have endorsed voluntary non-remunerated donation. The European Economic Community directive 89/381 for example, states that:

> "member states shall take the necessary measures to promote community self-sufficiency in human blood or human plasma. For this purpose, they shall encourage the voluntary unpaid donation of blood and plasma and shall take the necessary measures to develop the production and use of products derived from human blood or plasma coming from voluntary donations."[96]

Although the debate continues as to whether a mixed system or additional commercial supply of blood would amend scarcity issues while still confirming public motivation towards a gift relationship, the quality and quantity of blood depends first and foremost on the willingness to donate, the honesty of the donors about their health and the duty of blood agencies to ensure that the gift of blood is a good one. A covenant model has practical application given these determinants. Covenantal members act as trustees and stewards of this common good in terms of public interest and well-being. Covenant demands a shared ethic of responsibility by all members of the relationship. Thus, a covenant model can have significant application as a preventative or protective measure. Applying it can prevent or decrease the risk of a contaminated blood supply and prevent the commodification of the body and bodily products by regarding the gift of blood as expressing a common sacredness among persons. Furthermore, John O'Neill (1994) notes that a covenant theory of institutions requires of us a practice of civic

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[96] Voluntary non-remunerated blood donors are 'persons who give blood, plasma or other blood components of their own free will and receive no payment for it, either in the form of cash, or in kind which could be considered a substitute for money. This includes time off work, other than reasonably needed for the donation and travel. Small tokens, refreshments and reimbursement of direct travels costs are compatible with voluntary, non-remunerated donation.' This definition has

witness extended to mutual care for persons and things in their wholeness and integrity.[97] The role of institutions therefore plays an important role in what might be considered covenant practice.

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been accepted by the International Society of Blood Transfusion and the Council of Europe, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

[97] O'Neill, *op. cit.*, 1994:80

PART TWO

Section III

The Role of Institutions

Central to Titmuss's thesis is the understanding that the gift of blood to a stranger helps to strengthen the bonds of communal life and fraternity. For Titmuss, "voluntary blood donor systems demonstrate fellowship relationships and are one example of how such relationships between free and equal individuals may be facilitated and encouraged by certain instruments of social policy."[98] Thus, personal altruism and solidarity can exist within a voluntary blood system and in the encouragement of institutional altruism. Titmuss believes that the opportunity for altruism promotes and fosters further expressions of altruism.

As previously suggested by Singer (1973), communities should have the right and the opportunity to shape their institutions so as to encourage altruism among its members. Singer defends Titmuss's argument that in accepting the sale of blood, this opportunity would not exist since the character of the system would change. "The laws of the marketplace would discourage altruism and fellow-feeling. Even if the opportunity to give still existed, the attitude toward giving would no longer be the same."[99] Titmuss and others clearly assume that we are capable of altruistic motivation or why would they encourage it. Thus, to what extent can institutions, policies, programs etc., built on such premises make spontaneous altruistic expression possible and effective?

This final section addresses the roles of institutions in how they can shape

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[98] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997: 243
[99] Singer, *op. cit.*, 1973: 314

public awareness to the needs of strangers. Titmuss believed that social policy, with a focus on institutions, process and transactions, can promote an individual's sense of identity, participation and community. He suggests that the way in which society organizes and structures its social institutions - health and welfare systems - can encourage or discourage altruism in persons. "Such systems can foster integration or alienation, can allow the 'theme of gift'- of generosity toward strangers - to spread among and between social groups and generations.[100] As institutional structures provide a significant influence on our awareness of individual and societal needs, is an institutional dimension necessary to channel the way we respond to needs?

While some of Titmuss's claims have been rightfully challenged on various grounds, one is convinced that the role of institutions and their impact on our social consciousness should not be underestimated. French sociologist Emile Durkheim, writing in the 20th century and highly influenced by the ideas of August Comte, considered the collective mind or consciousness to be the most important aspect of society. As Durkeim maintains, the collective consciousness determines thought and thereby behaviour as it works through the individual consciousness and affects the individual will.[101] He notes that "there can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and personality." For Durkheim, this is achieved by means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where individuals, being closely related to one another,

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[100] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1997: 225

[101] Durkheim, Emile. Sociology and Philosophy. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press of Glencoe, 1953: 93

reaffirm in common their common sentiments. Institutions therefore, function as a common place for their expression.

Recognizing that Titmuss was a sociologist, one observes that he may well be drawing upon these notions. For Durkheim however, religion represented a vast symbolic system that made social life possible in this way. Thus, a concept such as covenant when considered in its religious nature and meaning, can represent a symbolic metaphor or principle that can shape human conduct, particularly in our relation with fellow beings. As institutions provide the place for the collective expression of sentiments, they serve as role models where motivation to give or regard the other can take form in some direction. This is evident in the Christian church for example. Our awareness of the other's needs is actively translated to that of responding to her needs based on its principles and practice.

The impact insititutions have in their potential to shape 'regard for the other' and the depth that such arrangements serve in public consciousness deserves great attention and comprehensive research. However, due to the limited scope of this paper, only a brief discussion is presented here. We will first examine Titmuss's position on the role of institutions, and then determine how the concept of covenant as a symbolic representation may function to reinforce our individual and collective concern for others.

III.1 Titmuss and his Critics on the role of institutions

Comparing the United States to the UK, Titmuss concludes that the existence of the National Health Service in England based in voluntary donation encourages altruism while the American mixed system inhibits it. Godbout

(1998), commenting on Titmuss's analysis notes Ttitmuss's contention that the public sphere, unlike the market, tends to disseminate the spirit of the gift throughout society as state solidarity and the gift reinforce and supplement one another. By initiating the gift to strangers, the state encourages the rest of society to follow its example. "As giving comes to embrace the stranger, it will bring about a shift in values to more and wider acts of altruism in gift relations."[102] Singer (1973) writing in agreement with Titmuss concluded that the available evidence did suggest that paying some people discouraged others from donating altruistically. This was supported by the fact that in countries dependent on unpaid as opposed to paid donation, supply tended to keep up with increases in demand. However, critics of Titmuss remain relatively unconvinced by Titmuss's main argument.

Plant (1997) observes that the kind of fraternity in the case of the gift of blood that Titmuss addresses is very remote and impersonal. "After giving blood one may have a sense of fraternity or fellow feeling, but with no one in particular, and this seems an odd way of strengthening community."[103] Arrow (1972) notes that there is something of a paradox in Titmuss's philosophy. While Titmuss wishes to promote a rather diffuse expression of confidence by individuals in the workings of society as a whole, Arrow contends that such impersonal altruism is as far removed from feelings of personal interaction as any marketplace.[104] Critics of Titmuss may present valid arguments. However, Titmuss's objective is

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[102] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 225-226

[103] Plant, Raymond. Gifts, Exchanges and the Political Economy of Health Care. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 1997 (997) 3: 166-173

[104] Arrow, Kenneth. Gifts and Exchanges. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1972 (1) 4: 343-362

to provide insight into the potential of gift relationships that function to defy limited relationships governed by markets and contracts. For Titmuss, contractual relationships act to minimalize moral and social dimensions. As noted previously by Murray, (1987) "gifts to strangers affirm solidarity of community over and above the depersonalizing, alienating forces of mass society and market relations. They express the moral belief that it is good to minister to fundamental and universal human needs which irrevocably tie us together in a community of needs with the shared desire to satisfy them and see them satisfied in others."[105]

Titmuss appears to reason that areas of social relationships must rely on the good will of the other. A gift relationship in a voluntary system depends on the generosity and concern for the stranger while simultaneously acknowledging that one may oneself in an emergency, need the goodwill of the stranger. The role of institutions provide a structure for encouraging an ethic of good will that can make a significant contribution to solidarity among its community. Health care institutions for example are made up of a body of individuals who are organized with codes of conduct in order to assure that they serve the well-being and interest of their clients.

Titmuss contends that the possibility of giving to strangers is typical with a gift such as blood and is encouraged by the state and by the public control of blood donation which allows "ordinary people to articulate giving in morally practical terms outside of their own network of family and personal relationships."[106] He admits however, that this theory is contradicted in part by

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[105] Murray, *op. cit.*, 1987: 35
[106] Titmuss, *op. cit.*, 1972: 226

situations in other industrialized countries such as Sweden and the [now former] USSR where the social role of the state is more central yet blood tends to be sold.

In addition, Godbout (1998) believes that, "the state taking over social programs, while still desirable for other reasons including fairness, does not necessarily shape people or reinforce an individual's altruistic tendencies." He notes that it can actually shatter the gift-giving network and encourage individualistic or technocratic behaviour as evident in blood scandals where the initial gift-giving act is perverted by intermediaries. At the very least, Godbout contends, the state system establishes relationships between strangers that are different from those in the marketplace, but they are also different from those of the gift.[107]

In a gift system, even among strangers, gifts are symbolic of personalized ties. The point that Godbout attempts to make is that the state tends to make decisions independently of personal relations and characteristics on the basis of abstract criteria such as derived rights. As a result, intermediaries impose their logic on both donor and recipient. For Godbout, Titmuss's analysis of blood donation confused the system of the gift with that of the state where Titmuss presents the state as the champion of the gift. Godbout provides a very important viewpoint. Nevertheless, it is unclear how this might constitute a strong objection to Titmuss's thesis. In what way does the system confuse the giving of the gift?

Titmuss appeals to the potential of institutions and policy that function within the social system. The state as part of this system has a role to play in

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[107] Godbout. *op. cit.*, 61

ensuring that the gift of blood is safe yet it leaves it to the individual to ultimately express their altruistic motivation and give voluntarily. The state does not decree individuals to give blood but rather, can encourage it. The state can equally discourage altruistic motivation if it does not adhere to its responsibility to play its role effectively. What Titmuss is specifically interested in is the role of the implicit social ties that arise out of gift relationships and which forms the basis to larger social relationships as well as the character of the system in general. He places emphasis on the moral assets of individuals and of societies such as trust, loyalty, truthfulness and good will that can be reinforced in the spirit of altruism within the system.

III.2 The Symbolic Significance of Covenant: Shaping 'regard for the other'

When considering Christian ethics, Gustafson (1971) states that certain moral conditions, similar to those expressed by Titmuss, must exist for any human community to maintain itself, not to mention to enrich and improve itself. For example he mentions that the existence of human communities depend on moral conditions such as trust, faith and love which describes a covenant reality. However, when discussing the role of institutions that shape covenant theory, it appears to be appropriately exemplified through an institution such as the Christian church. Here, individuals come together sharing common beliefs and participate in an integrated system of symbols, activities and practices which provide meaning. As Parsons observes (1952) humans not only modify their environment but their orientation to it is generalized in terms of systems of symbolic meaning. Thus, the biblical Sinai or Jesus Christ narrative provides explanatory significance that facilitates the reaffirmation of solidarity and

community sentiments by acting as a foundation. As a symbolic representation, it reinforces and integrates the identity and character of a responsive community since it conceives of covenant relationships that are based on God's own demonstration of loyalty and commitment to humanity.

Hence, the covenant model offers a metaphor for the social determinism of Individuals where the Christian church represents an institution promoting and facilitating these attitudes and relationships. One may interpret that we pattern our lives after the character and action of the covenanting God. Allen (1984) states that:

> "the church is an institution arising out of God's action in fulfilling the promises of the covenant....The church's mission is to proclaim God's inclusive covenant...to unite with the whole of humanity in one covenant community."[108]

For Christians, the character of God radiates through persons through their belief in Jesus Christ. In entering a covenant relationship with God, one promises to enter and establish covenant relationships with their neighbour. Symbolically these relationships may signify the greater potential for our human relationships to achieve. Furthermore, the Church along with its basic message, "do unto others as you would have others do unto you", provides an example of how altruism can be institutionalised based on the needs of the neighbour. Although the state does not have to incorporate such religious notions, for certain individuals, the church serves as an example of the ideal kind of altruism that perhaps Titmuss wants to strive toward.

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[108] Allen, *op. cit.*, 1984

III.3 Conclusion

In its essence, covenant relationships are expressed in the symbolic and personal language of the heart as one responds to the neighbour's needs where the covenant relationship ultimately unfolds into actions of trust, faith and love. The church, as well as other social institutions, have various roles and distinctive features. Certain narrative and principles serve as reinforcing images that provide a model for motivation and behaviour. They demonstrate that they serve a potential role in shaping persons and communities yet, we mutually participate as persons who are prepared to shape institutions based on a responsibility to ourselves and for the well-being of others.[109] This may have been Titmuss's implicit proposal in his analysis of the gift relationship, simply that in our regard of the other and equally in our actions for the other we form the basis to the character of the system that we participate in and that participates in us.

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[109] Baum , Gregory. Karl Polanyi on ethics and economics. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996: 79

CONCLUSION

Within Titmuss's title, "The Gift Relationship" a covenant is suggested by means of the notion of the 'gift'. In biblical terms, the 'gift' is incorporated into or is part of the covenant relationship through God's gift of grace in making a promise to humankind. Covenant represents God's personal relationship with humanity. The features that unfold from this covenant relationship such as commitment, loyalty, and trust act as the basis which symbolize its inherent personal conviction. This aspect is something that is not easily enshrined by any system or structure. One may even argue that both a market or unpaid system can in fact be antithetical to a covenant relationship. However, as Titmuss and other sociologists want to contend, institutions can shape the possibilities of 'other-regarding', communtarianism and fellowship ultimately providing the framework for personal covenant to exist.

Titmuss offers his findings and commentary about the consequences, effects and outcomes of primarily two blood systems functioning within different structures, but nowhere does he offer a precise remedy or alternative model. However, Titmuss asks important questions regarding the particular set of conditions, principles and arrangements necessary to permit and encourage the maximum potential or ideal nature of gift relationships. Furthermore, Titmuss appears to fulfil his own objective: to study the quality of relationships and human values prevailing in a society. His arguments are both thought provoking and convincing.

The purpose of this analysis was to consider the motivations that establish and sustain gift relationships and to determine if a greater potential of the human

condition to which Titmuss implicitly appeals, exists beyond universal self-interest that dominates Western thought. Our objectives have been manifold. We first explored Titmuss's understanding, interpretation and application of altruism and assessed how a religious motivation of other-regard clarifies, modifies or distorts Titmuss's position. We noted that the secular notion of altruism in its purer form, although not explicitly religious, is compatible with religious notions. Both secular and religious altruistic motivations demand a departure from any self-regard. However, it was acknowledged that a religious motivation may provide a deeper meaning to the secular form of altruism through its distinct motivation of love or *agape*. Love is the ideal that is nourished and supported by viewing the needs of the neighbour from a transcendental perspective. It involves not only treating the stranger in a spirit of generosity but also in reciprocity.

Titmuss noted that the gift relationship assumes our biological predisposition in giving to the other. Elements of socio-psychology can also be found in his use and meaning of altruism since he associates both personal and external factors as the basis to behaviour. Thus, it appears that he defines his understanding of altruism from a social science perspective. However, the ambiguity in his interpretation of altruism indicated the possibility of incorporating a religious motivation such as *agape* or neighbourly love. Titmuss believes that within the human condition we are able to transcend 'self-love' through loving the stranger. He therefore invites the possibility of a transcendental interpretation of human motivation though he only subtly proposes the need to love the stranger and does not describe what this entails in any great depth. Thus, we have considered how *agape* or 'regard for the other' may prove

compatible to Titmuss's position. This religious motivation broadens Titmuss's thesis as it presupposes a covenant relationship where persons create and enter a relationship by their own free will that is grounded by mutual trust and understanding of moral responsibility to and for each other. Titmuss's own empirical findings suggested that donors are in fact prinicipally motivated by moral responsibility. A covenant relationship responds to this finding by obliging those within the partnership to affirm responsibility for one another. This in turn deepens the altruistically based relationship that Titmuss is describing in blood systems.

But Titmuss's account of altruism is not devoid of certain complexities that are evident in the gift relationship itself. The gift relationship is characterised by its role in sustaining the norm of reciprocity. Titmuss's main point concerning the gift relationship is that the act of giving where there is no expectation of a return gift reaffirms what the relationship itself represents. Gifts in this context move a relationship to a new level of commitment as the future outcome is not known and where it involves the virtue of trust. The impersonal context allows the relationship to be sustained through the gift's open-endedness of reciprocity. This is precisely what Titmuss believes should regulate larger social relationships and as we have pointed out, it also grounds the covenant relationship. Gifts to strangers therefore honour important human values that promote solidarity and fellowship that is simultaneously represented in the normative and descriptive meaning of covenant found in its religious and historical origins. More specifically, we have defined a religiously rooted concept such as covenant to exemplify the greatest potential that human relationships can achieve. The

covenant relationship represents the personal and responsive nature necessary in our regard for the other yet is not exclusive for only those persons who appeal to Judeo-Christian convictions. As implicit as it may be, Titmuss provokes us to consider whether the human condition is capable of more than self-interest. We have also demonstrated that our human capacity to go beyond the self-interest paradigm is possible even within the secular context.

Finally, we found that many of Titmuss's arguments concerning blood gift relationships were compatible with a covenant model. Titmuss's concerns for ensuring a safe blood supply, truthfulness of donors about their health, the responsibility of blood agencies to ensure equal distribution, and a 'clean' gift of blood invite the workings of a covenant model. We noted that covenant encompasses protective measures and prevents the commodification of the body that appears to be of great consequence in a market context of human tissue.

What covenant symbolizes is a shared commitment to the other where persons freely enter into the relationship and come to have enduring responsibility to and for one another. As members of a covenant relationship, we act as trustees and stewards in responding to and satisfying our common needs. It illustrates how a relationship, originally arising from a historical event and expressing a religious motivation provides an alternative understanding to human and social relationships even in contemporary, non-religious contexts. It expands the possibility for human interaction that is mutual and that is based in the regard for needs of the stranger. One of the paper's conclusions is that Titmuss would no doubt appeal to covenant theory because it must be understood independently of any economic claims. He himself wants to transcend speaking of altruism

exclusively in economic terms when according to him what is involved is injustice, exploitation and demoralization.[110] Covenant provides a meaningful anchor that holds against the debilitating pressures of markets and commercialization which Titmuss would welcome. As O'Neill notes, (1994) "in remaining faithful to its historical and original openness, covenant requires us to extend ourselves in a community of civic obligation and commitment towards others whose recognition simultaneously affords our own moral worth."[111]

Furthermore, covenant provides a symbolic representation of the potential that exists in human relationships but that can be reaffirmed in our collective sentiments and effectively expressed by and through institutions. Thus, institutions, including those involved in blood systems, can serve as role models, which can shape and reinforce both our individual and collective regard for others.

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[110] O'Neill refers to Titmuss's work when discussing covenant theory and the child but does not indicate how Titmuss would respond to the concept of covenant. O'Neill was also a former student of Titmuss's at the London School of Economics.

[111] O'Neill, *op. cit.*, 80

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