

Depth Perception

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Narconomics: thoughts on drug lords as philanthropists

Perhaps it escaped your notice, but as the *Economist* (28 July 2012, p.61) recently pointed out, Mexico has eleven known billionaires, at least one of whom heads a drug cartel. The article, *Narconomics*, investigates why the drug business has stayed largely recession proof compared to other industries, and closes with an illustration of the billionaire's largesse—a beautiful new chapel constructed in Hidalgo State.

Responding to the question of the propriety of such a donation, one of Mexico's bishops replied that "*there is no reason to burn money just because its origin is evil. All money can be transformed.*"

This theme of whether to accept money from corrupt sources is one this column touches on frequently—usually pointing to the inherent paradox that makes this topic a heated dilemma.

- That money is better off doing something good, not continuing to do something bad;
- And yet, money should not be a means to purchase the ability to continue doing what is evil.

This is why we advocate the policy of serving as a broker. Should money be offered to your organization as an investment or as a donation to effect good, and you know it is from a corrupted source, rather than reject it or accept it, one does well to offer to help the money find a home where the contributor and the recipient have a substantial degree of separation. This creates the greatest potential for transformation of the money and a transformation within the person or organization who earned the money through corrupted means. Even more, it means a significant reduction in the possibility of spreading corruption from the contributor to you.

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