“Eight Degrees of Charity”
(from lowest to highest)

Give, but with reluctance and regret. This is the gift of the hand but not of the heart.

The second is to give cheerfully, but not proportionately to the distress of the sufferer.

The third is to give cheerfully and proportionately, but not until we are solicited.

The fourth is to give cheerfully and proportionately, and even unsolicited; but to put it in the poor man’s hand, thereby exiting in him the painful emotion of shame.

The fifth is to give charity in such a way that the distressed may receive the bounty and know their benefactor, without being known to him.

The sixth, which rises still higher, is to know the objects of our bounty, but remain unknown to them.

The seventh is still more meritorious, namely, to bestow charity in such a way that the benefactor may not know the relieved persons, nor they the name of their benefactor.

Lastly, the eighth and most meritorious of all, is to anticipate charity by preventing poverty; i.e., to assist a reduced person so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding up his hand for charity. (Popple & Leighninger, p. 193)