



Stephen Colbert has long struck me as a "friend to humanity", in several different ways. First, his ability to make people laugh -- at himself, at themselves, at the world -- is a powerful medicine and an affirmation of our shared humanity. He also uses laughter, irony, and satire like a Socratic gadfly, to force people to grapple with their/our foibles and failures, and to motivate us all to do better. Second, his eager, curious, and generous mind helps to bring new or underappreciated intellectual ideas and creative artists to the public spotlight, enriching our shared human experience. Whether in his *Report* persona or now on *The Late Show*, he invites scholars, journalists, and artists into our living rooms, making them feel more human and accessible to his audience. Third, he has engaged in charitable acts throughout his career, from visiting the troops in Afghanistan, to mobilizing his viewers to donate to organizations that support schools, seek to end gun violence, address hunger, etc. He shares his own time as a Sunday school teacher (or at least I know he used to!) at his local Catholic Church. In terms of his affect, he seems to be a deep listener, who strives to be fully present with whomever he is in the company of. It seems, from what I've seen of him on TV and in a live interview I attended in New Jersey a few years ago, to derive real joy from sharing connections with his fellow humans.

Colbert's friendship to humanity seems to stem primarily from two factors: his upbringing in a Catholic but intellectually critical family; and the tragic death of his father and two brothers in a plane crash when he was 10. He was often described that he learned then the power of laughter to dispel grief, and was driven to comedy because of the good feeling he got when he was able to lift the spirits of his mother and siblings. The combination of faithfulness and intellectualism that was instilled in him early on can be seen in his generosity, his belief in human goodness, and his eagerness to engage with and highlight new ideas and human creativity. Moreover, I'm sure that his training in improv

comedy honed his ability to be present with others, to be generous and creative -- all of which contributes to his "friendship to humanity".

I would use "philanthropist" to describe Colbert, given his extensive charitable fundraising and giving, which is the much more limited sense of the word in use today.

Mallory Monaco Caterine

July 2, 2020

New Orleans, LA