

## **Preface**

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*Philanthropy: Voluntary Action for the Public Good*

The purpose of this book is to stimulate reflection and discussion on the philanthropic tradition. The material thus mixes—as reality does—the uncomfortable combinations of high aspiration and low technique that emerge from the spirit of benevolence.

The perspective of the book is from within the American tradition of voluntary service, voluntary association, and voluntary giving. There is no apology for that, although there is little scholarly work on which to build an understanding of how the American tradition and practice compare with those of other societies and cultures.

My own experience in philanthropy began in 1957, when I wrote a speech (for someone else) on the future of the urban university for a convocation launching a capital campaign. Philanthropy is not a two-sided desk, but a many-sided table, and I have sat in most of the chairs: hospital board; family service agency board; and international technical assistance organization board. I have made fund-raising calls on corporations, foundations, and individuals. I have argued the case for public support of private higher education. I have lent my support to a symphony orchestra and to an organization that supports the art of jazz; to an organization concerned with dropout prevention and another committed to advancing personal excellence among young people. I have always welcomed the opportunity to work with those helping international educational exchange or the advancement of foreign language study. For ten years, I was privileged to be president of a corporate foundation.

Along with 90 million other Americans, in other words, I have found time and other resources—some of my resources of time and money along with

those provided by other people—to participate in the work of voluntary associations for the public good, just as Tocqueville said Americans do.

Over the course of time I began to realize that the philanthropic tradition is just that—a tradition, with some coherence, sense of direction, and abiding values. It is far more coherent than its diversity would suggest. There is a core to be found within the tradition, just as there is a constant process of testing its boundaries and the limits of its practices.

The first part of this book, "Major Challenges to Philanthropy," reprinted here with minor corrections, sketches an overview of that tradition. Preliminary to it is a brief chapter entitled "Gleanings," an effort to indicate the wonderful richness and perplexing problems that characterize philanthropy in America.

The second part is a collection of essays within the philanthropic tradition, intended to explore in varying degrees of depth some aspects of philanthropic theory and practice that are touched upon in other ways in Part I.

Part II includes an important chapter by Dr. Virginia A. Hodgkinson, Vice President for Research of Independent Sector, on the current status of research on philanthropy. Her essay is adapted from her report to the Independent Sector Research Committee, and I know of no one better qualified to present such a status report.

The "Afterword" discusses briefly three themes that are important to me: the notion of an intellectual domain that might be called *philanthropics*; the place of philanthropy in general education; and a model for continuing serious inquiry into "America's most distinctive virtue." ("I often quote myself," Shaw once said; "it adds spice to my conversation.")

I will caution the reader to treat this book as one would treat a work by Will Durant or other popularizers: as an encouragement to look further into the subject.

As I. A. Richards once wrote in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*:

I recall the painful shock I suffered when I first came across, in a book by Dr. Bosanquet, what he called the Golden Rule of Scholarship. "Never to quote or comment on anything in a book which you have not read from cover to cover." As with other Golden Rules a strange peace would fall upon the world if that were observed. I cannot say that I practice the Rule or recommend it. There is a middle way wiser for Children of This World. However, as I neither am nor hope to be a scholar, I have no occasion to practice it. (Oxford University Press, 1936, p. 32)

In the "Afterword," I warn the reader that I am already engaged in writing a second book on this subject (entitled *Philanthropics*), and two other books may have grown out of this one. It is also the case that as an ENTP (extraverted intuitive thinking perceiving) personality type, my ambition tends to exceed my ability. I prefer to be overcommitted, as do many of my peers in this work. To be committed to philanthropy as volunteer and professional is to work harder—if not more efficiently—than most people.

That continuing expenditure of energy is even more rewarding when one feels part of a great and noble tradition. This book is a tentative introduction to it.