

Afterword

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Philanthropy: Voluntary Action for the Public Good

This is adapted from a paper prepared for a conference at the Duke University Center for the Study of Philanthropy and Voluntarism, November 1986.

Philanthropics

This book is about a domain of knowledge. My proposal is that we call it "philanthropics," a coined word intended to be parallel and analogous to *politics* and *economics*. Philanthropics would be the domain of inquiry concerned with the organization, methods, and principles of voluntary action for public purposes.

William Drennan has written an unpublished book entitled *Neonyms*, a book about words that he has coined to address aspects of modern life. Although he gleefully mixes Greek roots with Latin prefixes and suffixes and vice versa, some of his coinages are promising, for example, *anaclysm*, to identify "a momentous, constructive upheaval, especially in politics"; while some are less so, for example, *chronoflake*, as the category of "someone who keeps offbeat hours."¹ John Money, according to an advertisement of Prometheus Books, writes about *sexosophy*. Scholars have given us *victimology* recently, and *narratology* as "the theory of narrative." Professor DeVito's textbook *Communicology* (Harper & Row, 1982) is now in a second edition. Mortimer Adler coined *propaedia* and *micropaedia* to embrace his new design of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Some important new domains have failed to arrive at consensus about a label for their field: *Women's studies* and *feminist studies* may ultimately

¹ Don Oldenburg, "Not Ready for Prime-Time Dictionary," *Washington Post*, August 7, 1987.

become *gender studies*, forever offending those who would limit gender to grammar.

Rhetoric seems unkillable, perhaps because its rivals are words like *communicology*. "I believe it was the Edinburgh logician Sir William Hamilton who said that a good new term is like a fortress to dominate country won from the forces of darkness; but those forces never sleep and will strive by their Philosophical Arm to recover lost territory." ² William H. Riker has defined "heresthetics" "to refer to a political strategy. Its root is a Greek word for choosing and electing.... And this is what heresthetics is about: structuring the world so you can win." ³

The Oxford English Dictionary includes *philanthrope* for philanthropist (as in *Too Late the Philanthrope*), and *philanthropism* was once proposed to identify "the profession or practice of philanthropy; a philanthropic theory or system."

I came to the notion of *philanthropics* first while reading a book on *dogmatics*, and was encouraged when later coming upon this passage in the introduction to Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*:

The systematic study of art, of its nature, effects, and its function as a distinctive value in human life, was not yet fifty years old. It had been started by A.G. Baumgarten when he founded what he called a new "science" and christened it Aesthetica (1750). From the very beginning the name gave rise to misconceptions. ⁴

² P. T. Geach, *The Virtues*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 75-76.

³ William H. Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, Yale University Press, 1986, p. ix.

⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, eds., Oxford University Press, 1982, p. xx.

Misunderstandings have occurred even before the coinage of the word *philanthropics*. First, insistence that the philanthropic tradition constitutes a domain of knowledge has prompted immediate suspicions that I am proposing to create an academic department. The place of the study of philanthropy in the university is a subject worthy of a separate essay, but I am most fearful personally that philanthropy might drift into academic isolation much as international studies and Afro-American studies have. I like the analogy to aesthetics because aesthetics fits comfortably within art history and philosophy as well as fine arts; *philanthropics* has even more opportunities.

The word *philanthropy* as presently used qualifies as what W. B. Gallie once called in a well-known essay an "essentially contested concept."⁵ The book entitled *Philanthropics* (to which I will turn after this book is completed) will include an essay on the competing conceptual claims that are obscured behind the word *philanthropy* (and charity, too, of course—but the claims differ in some important respects). I once discovered that in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, published in 1936, the index, under the entry *philanthropy*, says "see *charity*." In the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, published in 1967, the entry *charity* in the index advises the reader to "see *philanthropy*."

Teaching About Philanthropy

It is also presumptuous for me to discuss the teaching of philanthropy because as I write this I have not yet done it. That is, I have not yet taught a course on philanthropy open to undergraduates, an ambition I hope to realize in the near future. Should that happen, I will join a growing number

⁵ W. B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, (NS) vol. 41, 1956, pp. 167-198.

of college and university faculty members who are confronting philanthropy as a classroom challenge for the first time.

An insight into the likely character of teaching undergraduates about philanthropy may be gleaned from the winning entries in the competition sponsored by the Association of American Colleges. Fifty-one entries were received in the first round, and nine grants were awarded. The courses will be offered for the first time in the 1987-1988 academic year, and all that is available at this point are the proposals themselves. The winning entries received grants to sustain the courses over a three-year period of development, and funds could be used for purposes collateral to the courses themselves, as well as for released time. I have reviewed the 9 winning entries (as well as the other 42), asking myself a set of who-what-when-how-where and even why questions.

The winners come from an array of institutions: Regis College, Chapman College, Baruch College of City University of New York, Harvard University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Seton Hall University, Babson College, and Illinois State University. Fields of study range across American studies, economics, government, philosophy, and several interdisciplinary combinations.

Mary Oates at Regis College wants to offer the course "to deepen student understanding of the character, historical evolution and significance of philanthropy in American life." Chapman College, in the words of its president, G. T. Smith, considers "a life of service to others" as one of the six "central commitments" of its program.

Richard Freeman of Harvard will treat philanthropic behavior as "an important component of American capitalism." Freeman adds that

If the course is successful, it will place the issue of philanthropic and volunteer behavior, and the humanistic and moral underpinning of such behavior, into economics, currently one of the university's largest majors, and will alter the perspective of students toward the role of non-profit seeking behavior in a free enterprise economy.

William Brandon and Kenneth Fox of Seton Hall University, both political scientists, want their students to analyze the "social and political consequences" of the origins of philanthropy. They also say they want to "prepare our students to play a role in current policy debates about the appropriate roles for government and the private sector." Albert Anderson and Fritz Fleischmann at Babson College, along with some others, see in the study of philanthropy an opportunity to bring out the tension between individual success and individual responsibility in American culture.

Some of the courses, then, are intended to influence student behavior later in life as well as to expose them to the tradition. Chapman College believes that there is "self-fulfillment through service." Baruch College's course will try to inform students about the interaction among individuals, corporations, and public agencies. Margaret Wyszomirski and Leslie Lenkowsky of Georgetown offer their course in the context of a public policy program.

Even so, none of the winning entries includes an explicit intention to make use of the campus's own nonprofit sector, nor does there appear to be a special effort to engage in the courses themselves the faculty members and administrators who help to guide the campus nonprofits. The interaction of the campus and the classroom, even in the weak academic tradition of "co-curricular" studies, is not apparent in these proposals. Although some of the courses will draw on outside resources, most of them will not make important use of practitioners other than as occasional lecturers.

Most of the courses will be lecture courses, alas, with some extra effort given to discussion sections. Some will be offered in seminar format. Guest lecturers will be common. Babson and Illinois State will seek to involve the broader campus community, by offering some of the lectures as public lectures or, in Illinois State's case, conducting a campus-wide workshop.

All of the courses were designed for upper division undergraduates (with Georgetown allowing for the possibility of some master's students).

Courses designed for first- and second-year students—similar to Gettysburg's freshman colloquy on social justice and individual responsibility—did not appear. The profile of institutions would suggest a male and female population aged 20 through 22. Regis's course has a particular interest in the role of women and others "outside the mainstream" in philanthropy; Illinois State has express concern about the international influence of philanthropy; and several institutions will try to relate the course to foundations and nonprofit organizations. Most of the courses will be team-taught, and in some cases the teams will include lectures by outsiders.

The question of the organizational locus of philanthropy in the curriculum is obviously not one to be argued in such a competition. The academic culture devotes its primary political energies to quarrels over turf and territory. Only a handful of institutions—none of them among the entrants in the first AAC competition—have established academic centers for the study of philanthropy. Those that have carefully respect prior academic claims by insisting on joint appointments between philanthropy and established disciplines. The various interdepartmental and interdisciplinary forms of centers, institutes, and committees hold part of the future in their hands, assuming they achieve an adequate financial base and adequate enrollments.

The more interesting question is that quoted earlier from the Harvard proposal of Richard Freeman. There is an important intellectual issue in the establishment of the place of philanthropic behavior in economics. As Freeman's proposal makes clear, his course will confront students with difficult issues for philanthropy, such as those relating to free rider problems, public goods, and notions of the evolution of cooperation based on analysis of the prisoner's dilemma. Philosophy and religious studies have yet to establish such a beachhead. Political science accounts for philanthropic organizations under its rubric of interest groups, but there has been little exchange of ideas between the two fields.

The tentative conclusions to which I have come are these:

- The study and teaching of philanthropy can be used to illuminate other fields, just as these other fields can illuminate our understanding of philanthropy.
- Both specialized and interdisciplinary approaches are important.
- I see little evidence that the value of active learning as a pedagogical approach to the study of philanthropy has been recognized. The effort to use the study of philanthropy as a way to instill values or to make implicit values explicit-to surface the deep-seated dialectical tensions of philanthropy will fail unless there is a better fusion of theory and practice.
- There are abundant opportunities for field work and for the involvement of practitioners. Students should be able to observe firsthand what it means to be a philanthropic "professional."

Educating Ourselves

The field of philanthropy is filled with organizations, some of which are directly concerned with the welfare of the field itself. Independent Sector, the Foundation Center, the Council on Foundations, and United Way of America are among the best known. There is also a myriad of other professional organizations that seek to enhance the professional Development of their members: the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), for example, is well-known in higher education for the enormous array of courses and workshops it offers its members.

The nature of the meetings of professional organizations, of course, is such that emphasis is on the technology of the profession rather than on its philosophical basis, historical development, or ethical practices. Independent Sector commissioned *Major Challenges to Philanthropy* to contend with that problem. CASE has developed a code of ethics, as have other organizations that think of their members as full-fledged professionals.

The question of what professionals in philanthropy should know about *philanthropics*—about the organization, methods, and principles of voluntary action for public purposes, in case you've forgotten—needs wider consideration and discussion.

The educational model I propose would be close to the professional's home base. It would bring together professionals from the nonprofit world, from all sides of the desk—grantmakers, fund raisers, managers, trustees—and scholars from diverse disciplines. It would require of them a limited commitment of time: perhaps three or four hours at a session, eight or nine times a year. The commitment would also be a commitment of long duration: at least several years. Participation in such a group would call for

an occasional personal contribution: a paper, a lecture, or a presentation of some sort that might be defended against collegial critique and examination. On occasion, these materials might be published, and often made available for teaching.

The characteristics I have just outlined are roughly those that have emerged and survived over the four decades that the University Seminars at Columbia have played such an important role in the intellectual life of New York as well as of the University itself. These are among the issues that we struggled with as we attempted to create the Columbia University Seminar on Philanthropy.

Not everyone would want to join such a group, nor would everyone be able to make an appropriate contribution. Judgment has to be exercised on the sticky question of membership. Some people would have much to take away from their participation, but little to leave behind. Some are not in sufficient control of their lives and schedules to meet the requirements of regular attendance. Some people are not good at discourse that is more rigorous than that of a lively cocktail party. Others are not interested in any subject with enough intellectual intensity or focus to sustain their interest over time.

The questions of membership should thus also address (1) intellectual background; (2) facility in group discourse; and (3) breadth of interest in the subject.

The seminar that brings practitioners and scholars together on a continuing basis is a model that can be replicated in every community in America that houses an accessible college or university. At this point in time, there are no more than a handful of true experts in philanthropy in the entire country—even academics of narrow intellectual orientation with little

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hands-on experience, and practitioners with a wealth of experience and little grasp of the principles that guide their work.

What we have instead is a large and unevenly educated population concerned with philanthropy or interested in it with little or no opportunity to discuss it seriously. After four years' experience with the Columbia Seminar on Philanthropy, I am convinced that it is the best model to meet the needs of the field of philanthropy as a whole. I am also convinced of its usefulness in coming to grips with some of the underlying and intractable issues that confront us.

The most serious challenge to such a study is the problem of the agenda. What will claim first priority? What is "the subject" as far as the particular group is concerned? Part of the answer depends on what people have done to provide themselves with a base of experience or knowledge or both. Those details will vary widely from one group to the next.

This is as it should be in the American philanthropic tradition.

Prospective

After a philanthropy seminar (of fund-raising professionals) not long ago, someone asked me what one should read to pursue an interest in the subject. I was stumped. What one reads next depends on what one has already read. And we have all read many things about philanthropy, albeit without realizing we were doing so. (Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* comes first to mind.)

Even so, I've fretted over the question ever since. The obvious things are there, at least for me: Robert Bremner's *American Philanthropy* (University of Chicago Press, 1960; a new edition is in preparation); James

Douglas's *Why Charity?* (Sage Publications, 1984); the several works of Merle Curti and his colleagues (including Curti's essay in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*).

But the movement of ideas means that topics and themes of little interest to one generation may become compellingly important to another.

Philanthropy has emerged from a place of relative obscurity to one of increasing respectability as well as current interest. The next decade will see a substantial increase in philanthropy research: in its most obvious manifestations of voluntary giving and voluntary service, but also in deeper study of the role of voluntary association in shaping the national agenda.

The research needs are at least as great conceptually as they are empirically. Analysis of the ideas and methods of philanthropy lags well behind empirical research at this stage. Even while the millions of participants in philanthropic practice do their work through hundreds of thousands of organizations, others are just beginning to examine the assumptions on which the system rests.

We are beginning to see increasing interest in comparative studies as well. The European traditions from which we borrowed our own practice are in the process of being rediscovered at home. The Japanese have recently become more interested in their own philanthropic practices and traditions, and in this area, as in most others, will quickly become important actors. Philanthropic funds from the Middle East have brought political controversy with them; recent controversies over politically oriented centers at Stanford and Georgetown indicate how complicated it is to shelter diverse philanthropic agenda on a campus.

Comparative studies prompt us to look at the diverse religious origins of charity and philanthropy, and to ask about the place of these activities in the ideologies of secular states. I have been cautioned recently for making

too much of the American tradition of philanthropy and not giving significant recognition to philanthropic traditions in other societies. To consider philanthropy a virtue (as I do) is assumed to imply criticism of those who don't practice it as we do. Defensiveness about other peoples' philanthropy is usually voiced in behalf of Third World nations and cultures. More careful ethnic studies would reveal patterns of philanthropic behavior in these cultures that would cause us to be more modest in our claims. I have observed the extraordinary hospitality of Africans toward strangers, for example, and the one-way transfers that take place among extended families and tribes, and there is obviously something at work in those societies akin to what we call philanthropy.

Having said that, and attended carefully to the criticism, it is time we put some substance into the argument. I don't think much is known about philanthropy on a comparative or cross-cultural basis, and we should begin to pull together what we do know and start filling in the gaps in our knowledge.

One place to begin—I keep telling my friends at NYU, City University, and Columbia—is in the New York Metropolitan Area. There is as much ethnic diversity within 25 miles of Midtown Manhattan as one could find in any thousand-mile radius elsewhere, yet so far as I know there are no doctoral students out there conducting surveys and interviews and gathering material.

People can't teach without materials, and scholars are producing those materials in increasing volume. Even so, the central text in one of the notorious controversies in American philanthropy—the John D. Rockefeller gift that prompted the famous "tainted money" article by Washington Gladden⁶—isn't conveniently available and hasn't been widely

⁶ Washington Gladden, *The New Idolatry*, McClure Phillips, 1905.

discussed among those of us most closely involved in analogous problems. Parallel to Brian O'Connell's celebratory anthology (*America's Voluntary Spirit*, The Foundation Center) should be a collection of essays that reveal the deep-seated controversies of our field: *Tainted money* is one; *factionalism* is another; *desert*, a third.

Philanthropy is an amorphous subject (or group of subjects). The University Seminar on Philanthropy at Columbia has been able to pursue its work for four years without agreeing upon a satisfactory definition of terms. There is also no agreed-upon taxonomy, no body of theory to be tested.

Yet because philanthropy exists—there really is something out there—one can only conclude that the next few years will be years of improved understanding.

I find that I can best think about the future of research in philanthropy by thinking about ideas discovered beyond the imprecise realm of the subject as it is usually identified. I am greatly impressed by the diversity of work that is germane to the study of philanthropy that has been written with other purposes in mind. Occasionally someone writes a book that reaches a wide audience: Waldemar Nielsen's best seller *The Golden Donors* (Dutton, 1985), Robert Bellah and associates' *Habits of the Heart* (University of California Press, 1985). Other things come along that seem to catch the interest of a scattered collection of us. As a lifelong believer in the idea of general education, I think it is useful that we be alert to insights that appear in other fields so that we might begin to build a shared body of literature.

Some of the things I have read recently or have scanned and plan to read more carefully in the immediate future (*pace* Professor Bosanquet) indicate—to me, at least—the wonderful range of possibilities:

- Robert H. Walker's *Reform in America* (University Press of Kentucky, 1984) prompts me to look much more carefully at the interaction of philanthropy and reform in American life. Walker traces the idea of reform across areas as diverse as banking and finance, abolition and civil rights, and utopian communities. He proposes a taxonomy of reform that may be helpful in constructing a taxonomy of philanthropy.
- Franklin I. Gamwell's *Beyond Preference* (University of Chicago Press, 1984) is a bold effort to find a secure base for voluntary association. Gamwell examines the work of economist Milton Friedman and philosophers Alan Gewirth, John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, and Charles Hartshorne in the course of offering his own conceptual framework. Gamwell wants to base his own theory on a defensible metaphysics.
- Robert E. Goodin's *Protecting the Vulnerable* (University of Chicago Press, 1985) examines our moral duties and the mechanisms we develop to meet them.
- Lawrence C. Becker's *Reciprocity* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986) offers a study of reciprocity as a fundamental moral virtue.
- Amartya Sen's *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford University Press, 1981) includes a chapter on "the Ethiopian famine"—the famine of 1972-74, however, not the famine of 1984-85. (The Columbia Seminar has devoted a year and a half to consideration of the response to the recent famine as an informal case study of philanthropy in action.)

- A Polish scholar at the University of Warsaw, Stanislaw Ehrlich, has written *Pluralism On and Off Course* (Pergamon Press, 1982), a rare opportunity (for me) to look at an eastern European perspective.
- The sociologist Donald N. Levine of the University of Chicago, an authority on Georg Simmel, has written *The Flight From Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1985). I found it helpful in many ways; thinking about "strangerhood," for example.
- Michael Ignatieff, in *The Needs of Strangers* (Viking, 1985), writes with occasional elegance and sharp insight about the thorny idea of desert and the "complex human emotion" of pity, "mingling compassion and contempt," and draws from King Lear, Augustine, Pascal, and Adam Smith, among others.
- Dante Germino's *Political Philosophy and the Open Society* (Louisiana State University Press, 1982) builds on the work of Eric Voegelin. Germino's discussion of the idea of metaxy ("the between" the human and divine) offers a tantalizing insight into the realm of the philanthropic.

I find that I need to go back to some other things. I want to read much more deeply in and about Aristotle, the Stoics, Thomas Aquinas, Jeremy Bentham, and Henry Sidgwick. I continue to remain hopeful that someone will compile an anthology or guide to philanthropy in literature. Beyond Norris Pope Jr.'s *Dickens and Charity* (Columbia University Press, 1978), I know of no guides to the work of authors who have shaped public attitudes toward charity and philanthropy. Is there a comparable study of Balzac, for example? Of Jane Austen? Of Kurt Vonnegut and other contemporary writers?

Professor James Childress, a colleague at the University of Virginia, and I will co-chair a project funded by the Lilly Endowment on the place of philanthropy in world religions. We hope that it will help all of us find our way in traditions unfamiliar to us. I have yet to find a collection of essays that would introduce me to the basic writings or other manifestations of the values on which non-Western religions and cultures have developed their philanthropic practices. That should be a piece of cake for anthropologists and other students of comparative religion (my perennial nominee is Clifford Geertz, whose field experience ranges across Islam from Indonesia to Morocco).

I am also hopeful of finding (for example, in the recent writings of Jon Elster for Cambridge University Press) an insight into what Marxists think about philanthropy (if they were ever to take it seriously and not simply repeat clichés).

Finally—although that is merely a phrase indicating that I am about to end this piece, not that I'm going to shorten my reading list—I would like to understand the link between philanthropy and personality. Could one find common personality traits among people engaged in philanthropic work? How would the personality traits differ between those, say, who work as grantmakers in foundations and those who work abroad in relief agencies? Do the volunteers brought together by the independent sector share characteristics of behavior as well as values? How does personality affect career patterns? Relationships among professionals and volunteers? And so on.

For the new inquirer into philanthropy, then, I would draw from the following insight into academic learning: in *Human Beings*, the British psychologist Liam Hudson told of discovering that successful students in the humanities varied quite widely in their IQ scores. They also differed in their work habits and in the range of their reading.

The inter-correlations between these three variables were, effectively, nil. I noticed, though, that among the most successful each student was either high in I.Q., or very widely read, or exceptionally hard-working.... Only if he lacked all three of these qualities was a student in academic difficulties.⁷

Most of us have at least one of these academic virtues going for us. We think we know where we want to go. All we need now is a map.

⁷ Liam Hudson, *Human Beings*, Jonathan Cape, 1975, p. 39.