

An Ethical Will
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An "ethical will" is a document analogous to the document specifying what one wants done with one's property after death. The ethical will attempts a succinct statement of "the values you most want to live on." The seminars I've given in recent years begin with sharing a summary "philanthropic autobiography," about the sources of our values, and end with a take-home assignment to write an ethical will.

I was interviewed yesterday by a doctoral student whose dissertation is on the emergence of "nonprofit centers," the field I prefer to call philanthropic studies. In addition to questions about the founding and development of the Center on Philanthropy, she asked me about its future.

Her questions prompted me afterward to reflect on an ethical will I might write for the Center on Philanthropy, for philanthropic studies at Indiana University after I'm gone. I write this on my 74th birthday but I'm still active, teaching and writing, and plan to continue through this academic year and next, year-by-year -- as long, in fact, as my wife's health and mine permit.

A second impetus is the interesting exchange Stanley Katz and Peter Dobkin Hall have had in the pages of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly on the emergence of this new academic field over the past quarter-century. That is, in looking forward I have had to look back, if only to see whether what I am saying now is consistent with what I said a dozen years ago when I came here. I think it is.

The study of philanthropy echoes the experience of the study of medicine, lagging behind more than a century but reflecting some of the same principles:

Philanthropy, like medicine, has its roots in practice. Like medicine, philanthropy has to ground practice that is tested and evaluated. The institutional mandate of philanthropic studies at Indiana embraces teaching, research, and service, the ambitious range of responsibility of the university itself, thanks to the mission that inspires medicine and the other professions. In practical terms, medicine set out to establish foundations of basic science underneath its practice: a strategy of inquiry guiding tactics of care.

Medicine also gives philanthropy a moral mandate: *Seek to do good, but do no harm*. By bringing the mundane practices of philanthropy - fund raising, first off - into the university, Indiana, declared its conviction that the practice of philanthropy could become, if not a profession, at least more professional, more competent, more ethical.

All this suggests a hidden desire to establish a professional school of philanthropic studies or a separate discipline, which was not my goal and not the goal of our policy. We founded a "center," which meant a structure that had some of the characteristics of the established disciplines and some of the characteristics of the professional schools, but was different from both. The center was to reach across those territorial boundaries; it was to be interdisciplinary and interprofessional. The Center on Philanthropy now has a faculty of sixty-five, drawing on more than two dozen departments and schools and several of the eight campuses of the University around the state.

That was a deliberate goal; it is now a fact.

Philanthropic studies, I argued then and still maintain, is a "field," a word chosen to distinguish it (and make it less self-important) and not a

discipline with an agreed-upon methodology or a profession with fixed criteria of education and training and membership and a code of ethics.

The Center on Philanthropy when I arrived in the fall of 1988 was a University-wide initiative. University budget policies soon forced a second major decision. If the Center on Philanthropy could no longer be attached to the Chancellor's office or the President's office, where might it find its home? The most obvious choice at the time was the School of Public and Environmental Affairs or perhaps the School of Business, both of which had multi-campus programs. The Center on Philanthropy was housed in Indianapolis and the intention was to keep it there because Indianapolis is the largest city, the principal corporate and banking headquarters, and the state capitol. The Center on Philanthropy was expected to be actively engaged in the life of the community. (The medical school also has its home in Indianapolis for analogous reasons.)

Our decision was to base the Center in the School of Liberal Arts on the Indiana

Purdue Indianapolis campus. In my opinion, finding the foundations of philanthropy means trying to find their roots in philosophy and history and literature and religion, in sociology and political science and economics and anthropology, in women's studies and urban studies and American studies and cultural studies. Those are the subjects analogous to chemistry and biology and microbiology and biochemistry and molecular biology and cytology and such in medicine.

The challenge has been to create an intellectual culture in which the disciplines and professions at least cohabit, if you will, if not marry. The problem is that both spouses have full-time jobs and not enough time for each other; it is not a happy home life.

Philanthropic studies at Indiana should be interdisciplinary and interprofessional and grounded in the liberal arts. That's the goal, that's the hope, that's the promise, that's the frustration.

An ethical will has to be administered by someone, usually someone of the same generation. It is written, however, for the children and grandchildren, for the next generation and even beyond. The balance of this is the text of my ethical will; the previous paragraphs were intended to sketch in some of the background.

I hope we continue to use the word "philanthropy." It is a normative term; like the word "law" it makes its core value explicit. Unlike "civil society," it also carries the implication of personal responsibility and personal values. Societies don't love their neighbors; people do. And unlike "nonprofit" it affirms something rather than nothing. It puts management in its place; that is, mission comes before organization.

Philanthropy, the way we continue to use the term, involves service as well as giving. And if we continue to use "philanthropy: voluntary action for the public good," we will link service and giving to voluntary association. Academics devote more time and more passion to such matters of usage than they deserve, and I can only be confident that what we settle on will change after a while.

What should remain constant is the notion that *philanthropy is moral at its core*: it is about "interventions in the lives of others for their benefit with no public mandate." That makes our work, like the work of medicine, impossibly ambitious and presumptuous. So be it.

Is it possible to be "actively engaged in projects of worth" (Susan Wolf's phrase in her essay on "Happiness and Meaning") and be reflective, analytical, critical? Can thought, action, and passion co-exist? The

pragmatist in me insists such a goal is not only worth striving for, it might be as achievable as any other that reaches beyond the known and the accepted. My hope is that the next generation is willing to take the risk. Philanthropy is [read: *ought to be*] about guilt and gratitude, thanksgiving and atonement, hope and disappointment, error, failure, pride, and weakness of will -- as well as efficiency in the use of resources and effectiveness in the achievement of goals, outcomes, results, and bottom lines. Philanthropy spans the spectrum from the unacceptable to the unattainable, "the social history of the moral imagination."

Philanthropy is also about causes: about the well-being of children, about the environment, about public health, about peace and justice and freedom and many other good and important things. That means that philanthropy is about controversy and conflict, because there is never full agreement and rarely even a strong consensus about such things. Philanthropy brings the most urgent issues facing the society into the intellectual life of the university to see whether the university has anything to offer in the way of advice and help. Sometimes the university does. The culture of the university changes some when it becomes thus engaged. It can quickly lose its soul to those immediate claims and pressures and seductive sources of support and praise.

So be it. It's the cost of relevance.

To be specific: Internships as well as seminars. Madison on faction as well as Rosso on mission. William James on "The Will to Believe" as well as the Filer Commission on private philanthropy and public needs. The United Way's annual Day of Caring. Twenly Years at Hull House as well as "The Gospel of Wealth." The Parable of the Good Samaritan and "Good Samaritan scams." Gandhi's seven social sins. Board retreats. Tzedakah and zakat. The joys of reading, thinking, talking - as well as the joys and sorrows serving, helping, solving, improving, rescuing, reforming,

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changing. Web sites for small nonprofits. Scholarship for the sheer fun of it as well as research in the cause of promotion and tenure. Empathic accuracy.

Your philanthropic autobiography: where did your values come from?

Your ethical will: what values do you most want to pass on?

Things like that.